The Morphology of Past Perfective in Catalan

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The Catalan past perfective tense shows up to three different forms. There is a synthetic form, which is spoken in some varieties of Valencian and Balearic Catalan, in (1a). And two analytic forms, the standard form, which contains an inflected element historically derived from the present tense of the verb *go* and the infinitive of the corresponding verb, in (1b)*;* and a non-standard variant, which can essentially be heard all over the Catalan-speaking area, whose first element resembles the synthetic past, in (1c). They all have exactly the same semantics, 'you-sg sang', and speakers use some subset of them without distinction.

(1) a. cantares
b. vas cantar
c. vares cantar

These forms pose a number of problems. A first question concerns the relation between the auxiliary of the analytic forms in (1b) – *vaig, vas, va, vam, vau, van* – and in (1c) – *vàreig, vares, va, vàrem, vàreu, varen* – and the present tense indicative of the lexical verb *anar* 'go' – *vaig, vas, va, anem, aneu, van*. If related, we must account for the different forms appearing in the plural, as well as for the syntax-morphology mismatch arising from the fact that the auxiliary in (1b) is in the present tense, but the whole expression conveys a past perfective meaning. The form in (1c) is especially interesting in that it seems to be the result of mixing the other two, thereby being apparently marked twice for past perfective, i.e. the periphrastic form in (1b), which is already a past perfective, is added the past perfective morphology *-re-* found in the synthetic form (1a). Thus, a detailed analysis of the internal structure of these forms is necessary to determine the exact parallelisms. A second issue is related to the combinations that speakers use without distinction, and the kind of structural micro-variation that can derive those differences.

In this talk I will address these and other questions and suggest some preliminary answers within the Distributed Morphology framework (Halle & Marantz 1993 and related work).