Variability in morphological "richness": typological comparison

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In typological comparisons of complexity, languages are often described as having rich or poor linguistic systems, whether phonological, morphological, or syntactic, treating the complexity of the system as monolithic. In morphological typology (among other fields), this has begun to change, as recent approaches have begun to tackle the many separate dimensions of complexity, such as syntagmatic/paradigmatic, enumerative/canonical, or cumulation/alternation/suppletion (e.g. Plank 1999, Haspelmath 2009, Nichols 2020, Arkadiev & Gardani 2020). In this talk I investigate another dimension, that of "morphological combinatoriness," or the degree of restriction on how affixes and clitics are able to co-occur in natural language usage.

The first part of the talk will briefly introduce the DoReCo database (Seifart et al. 2022), a collection of 51 spoken corpora of mostly lesser-documented languages (38 including morphological annotation), from which the data are extracted. The second part will introduce a problem of word-hood, where we find that the predictability between adjacent morphemes in running speech is not always that much greater within words than without, suggesting that some languages may have less restricted morpheme combinations than others. The third part will detail a set of quantitative analyses of this morphological combinatoriness, exploring the variability of this dimension of morphological complexity.