

Michal Starke
Professor of Linguistics
Center for Advanced Study in Theoretical Linguistics
University of Tromsø

In the past few years, there has been a growing interest in the fact that some patterns of morphosyntax seem to be impossible, and hence morphosyntax may be more principled than originally thought. I will survey one striking set of findings: in some configurations, two morphemes are not allowed to be homophonous. I will then show that these gaps -- "impossible syncretisms" -- follow naturally from an approach to language in which the atoms of grammar are not words or morphemes, but rather features themselves -- together with some very simple "competition principles" for spelling out those features. One of the result will be a new methodology for discovering grammatical structures from simple patterns of morphological homophony.