

Positions of suffixes in word structure: A general model of phonology-morphology interaction applied to Danish

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Basbøll (2005: 351-513) is a comprehensive presentation of a general crosslinguistic model for word structure based upon different degrees of integration of suffixes with their stems, and at the same time a detailed application of this model to modern Danish whose prosodic morphology presents the challenge of combining the general Germanic stress and intonation with the stød (a laryngeal syllabic rhyme prosody, see Basbøll 2005: 82-87, 265-292, 318-321, Grønnum & Basbøll 2007). The talk will depart from this model and develop it further with particular reference to its methodological foundation and its typological and psycholinguistic applicability.

Suffixes can be more or less integrated with their stems. Just as there can be, in some languages, different syntactic positions for e.g. adverbials, different positions are available for suffixes (only inflectional suffixes are treated in this presentation, but the principles also apply to derivation). I shall propose the following (prosodic) word structure for modern Danish: [(stem P1) P2] P3. Evidence for these positions are phonological rules, or principles, having either “(...)”, “[.....]” or the whole word as their domain; particularly important is a large complex of stød alternations as well as stress. It will be shown that the positions in Danish word structure follow from general principles, and the relations between these principles and specific Danish inflectional paradigms will be discussed. Each grammatical category has one (and only one) suffix that can take the position P3; some of these can also occur at P1 (for simple nouns and adjectives) or P2 (for verbs). Inflectional suffixes with another phonological content than that of the P3-suffix (for the grammatical category in question) thus always occurs in P1/P2 (depending on word class as just mentioned). The existence of the P2 position is related (surprisingly) to the particular Danish imperative-formation.

Implications of the model concerning variation and change in morphology and phonology will be discussed, in particular the variability of certain inflectional suffixes and the possibility of an ongoing change (Grønnum 2005, Grønnum & Basbøll 2007: 203-205) in the Non-Stød Principle (Basbøll 2003, 2005: 379-383).

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