

# New evidence for prosodic parallelism in German(ic) morphophonology

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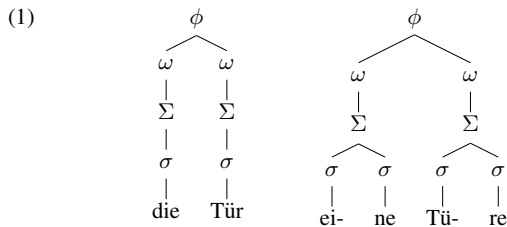
## Abstract

This paper presents two studies that make the case for prosodic parallelism as a factor in German(ic) word formation.

**Index Terms:** prosodic parallelism, prosody, morphology, prosodic morphology, Germanic

## 1. Introduction

In their recent contribution, Wiese & Speyer [1] (henceforth W&S) come forward with a very interesting proposal regarding the effect of supra-lexical prosody on word prosodic structure. The proposal, in nutshell, is this: when given the choice, speakers strive for a rendition that maximizes prosodic parallelism; for two words that are prosodic phrase mates, the foot structures are preferably parallel, i.e. the feet have the same number of syllables and stress pattern. W&S build their account of prosodic parallelism on the analysis of optional schwa, examining a large corpus of written German. Among other things, they investigated several cases of nouns with apparently freely alternating monosyllabic and disyllabic variants like *Tür* ~ *Türe* ('door') or *Tags* ~ *Tages* ('day<sub>Gen</sub>') in the context of (preceding) monosyllabic or disyllabic determiners.



Using chi-square tests on bigram frequencies, they disprove statistical independence of the prosodic shapes of co-occurring determiner and noun. The results suggest that, more often than not, the number of syllables in the alternating noun corresponds to the number of syllables in the determiner as in (1), in line with the assumption of a constraint on prosodic parallelism.

In a response to W&S, I pointed out several problems concerning the case of determiner-noun sequences and the use of written corpora to ascertain the effect of prosodic parallelism [3]. Specifically, referring to common reduction phenomena in spoken speech, I questioned W&S's assumption that the determiner corresponds to a prosodic foot. A subsequent study [4] on the alternating adverbs *gern*~*gerne*, *selbst*~*selber*, *lang*~*lange* ('happily, oneself, for a long time') preceding various verb forms suggested that avoidance of stress lapse and stress clash, but not prosodic parallelism, account for the presence or absence of the schwa syllable on the adverb. Correspondingly, as it stands, the case for prosodic parallelism as a constraint on word or phrasal prosody appears to be weak.

Here, I present two case studies providing fresh evidence for the role of prosodic parallelism in German(ic) morphophonology. The cases suggest that a constraint on prosodic parallelism, albeit weak, is active on the word and phrasal level.

## 2. Parallel reduplication in German

The first case concerns rhyme and ablaut reduplications in German (2-a). These word formations are prime examples of prosodic morphology in that reduplication is only licit when native prosodic feet are involved [2]. Although rhyme and ablaut reduplication are mainly found in playful or facetious registers, they are subject to clear restrictions: Firstly, while reduplication is possible on the basis of monosyllables or trochees, reduplication with non-native feet or more complex foot structures are ungrammatical or at least clearly degraded (*\*Yvónnepivónne* < *Yvónne*, *\*Manuélapanuèla* < *Manuèla*). Secondly, rhyme and ablaut reduplications observe a strict non-identity requirement regarding the segmental structure; base and reduplicant need to differ minimally, yielding the characteristic ablaut or rhyme. Crucially, however, non-identity on the prosodic level (2-b), (2-c) is illicit – the two feet involved in reduplication have to be strictly symmetric, i.e. parallel in shape: if the base is monosyllabic, the reduplicant must be monosyllabic. Conversely, when the base is disyllabic, the reduplicant has to be disyllabic, too.

- (2)
- Mischmasch, Hickhack, Krimskrams, Schickimicki, Ilsebilse, doppelmoppel  
'mishmash, bickering, bric-a-brac, posh person, proper\_name-RED, double-RED'
  - ?? Mischemasch, ?? Hickehack, ?? Krimsekrams, ?? Schickimick, ?? Ilsebils, \*doppelmopp
  - \*Mischmasche, \*Hickhacke, \*Krimskramse, \*Schickmicki, \*Ilsebilse, \*doppmoppel

This requirement on reduplication is best captured with the constraint on prosodic parallelism. The data thus constitute evidence for its validity in German morphophonology.

## 3. Prosodic parallelism in coinages

For the second case study, (mostly English) coinages for musical genres from the website *everynoise.com* were examined. These coinages are names and as such a suitable test case. In contrast to generic words, names are not as open to morphological processes like inflection or derivation which would potentially alter the prosodic rendering.

Besides simplex words (e.g. *pixie*), these coinages are either phrases (e.g. *swedish metal*), or compounds/blends (e.g. *trip hop*). To ascertain the effect of prosodic parallelism, all dyadic coinages (n=714) listed in *everynoise.com* were scrutinised. While the majority of these was non-parallel in na-

ture (e.g. *chicago house*), the subset involving only monosyllables and trochees as members of the dyad ( $n=498$ ) did show a significant influence of prosodic parallelism (cf. Table 1) over and beyond a strong preference for monosyllabic constituents.

		right constituent	
		monosyll	trochaic
left constituent	monosyll	221	48
	trochaic	164	65

Table 1: Cross-tabulation of coinages by prosodic shape of left and right constituent.

A general linear model with binomial link function that was applied to this subset confirms that the prosodic shape of the left member of the dyad (usually the morphological or syntactic dependent) is not independent of the prosodic makeup of the morphological head in the right member ( $z=2.611$ ,  $p=0.009$ ). Moreover, the morphosyntactic status of the dyad (compound or phrase) significantly affected the prosodic shape of the left member ( $z=5.364$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with a higher number of trochees in the case of phrases.

#### 4. Conclusions

The two case studies suggest that, even though the effect of prosodic parallelism on optional schwa appears to be limited, it nevertheless systematically conditions the phonological makeup of complex words and phrases – at least as long as native prosodic feet (i.e. monosyllables or trochees) are involved.

#### 5. Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Marc Schwab who helped sieving and annotating the `everynoise.com` corpus.

Note that parts of the introduction are taken verbatim from [3].

#### 6. Bibliography

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