
Haplogy effects on morphological processing: Evidence from spelling variation

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A number of recent studies indicate that some morphological units are more prone to spelling errors than others, partly depending on the degree to which they are perceived as separate units (e.g. Bar-On & Kuperman 2019). Take, for example, the following spelling errors that are usually viewed as “slips of the pen”, i.e., errors that depend on general cognitive factors like concentration:

- (1) a. <verloren> (instead of *verlor-en-en* ‘lost’)
b. <schwere> (instead of *schwer-er-e* ‘heavier’)
c. <abgebenen> (instead of *ab-ge-geb-en-en* ‘handed in’)

All three of these forms are attested in GraphVar (Berg et al. 2021), a corpus comprising 1,667 German school-exit exams. What sets these examples apart from other cases of graphemic erosion in the corpus is the occurrence of haplogy, the dissimilatory process of one of two consecutive identical sequences being omitted. All of the examples in (1) are adjectives and involve at least one inflectional affix. However, they show different patterns of haplogy: In (1a), two homonymous inflectional suffixes are involved, in (1b), the stem and two inflectional markers are affected, and in (1c), the past participle prefix and the beginning of the root *geb-* ‘give’ are identical; however, they contain /ə/ and /e:/ respectively, perhaps revealing a coinciding graphematic influence.

In this study, we would like to focus on the interplay between graphemic and phonological word forms during the mental writing process in German. What is more, we are dealing with haplogies neither lexicalized nor representing grammatically correct forms in their specific context, providing us with further insight into language processing. From a cognitive angle, we will take a closer look at this phenomenon, since research on the influence of phonology on writing is inconclusive as of yet (cf. Qu et al. 2015, 251f.), annotating all instances of haplogy for their specific type of haplogy and factoring in prosodic influences created by syncretisms within and across the inflectional paradigms of German adjectives, as well as the impact of stress and syllable structure.

References: • Bar-On, A., & V. Kuperman (2019). Spelling errors respect morphology: A corpus study of Hebrew orthography. *Reading and Writing*, 32(5), 1107-1128. • Berg, K., Romstadt, J., & C. Neitzert (2021). *GraphVar – Korpusaufbau und Annotation. Version 1.0*. Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. • Qu, Q., Damian, M. F., & X. Li (2015). Phonology contributes to writing: evidence from a masked priming task. *Language, Cognition and Neuroscience* 31(2), 251-264.