New High German so-called „unparadigmatic" interfixation as a matter of paradigmaticity

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So far, a lot of research has been done concerning the aspect of interfixes in German nominal compounds, such as *Liebe-s-brief* ‚love letter', *Schönheit-s-operation* ‚operation in favour of beauty', *Benutzung-s-anweisung* ‚instruction of use'. From a diachronical perspective, the situation is quite complicated which also has certain consequences for contemporary German: Particularly, German nouns ending in -*schaft* and -*tum* can only derive lexemes by taking an paradigmatic interfix (such as *Ärzteschaft, Professorenschaft, Studententum*). This raises the question of a historical development of these formational processes and what their specific status in contemporary German could be. Concerning affix order it is a well-known fact that inflectional morphemes follow derivational morphemes, but not vice versa (which means that derivational morphemes are affixed on the lexical stem). In this theoretical framework, the general question and limits of diachronic research of interfixation are being discussed with a special focus on the question of what the motivation of interfixes in synchrony can be.

Recent research on contemporary German demonstrates the role of derived nouns ending in -*heit, -keit, -schaft, -ung* and -*ling* (see Wegener 2003). This raises firstly the question of why nouns marked by these suffixes combine with interfixes while unmarked nouns do not, and why only some of these combine with inferfixes while other suffixes such as –*nis, -sal, -tum?, -er, -erich* and others do not. Taking a closer look at the suffixes which combine obligatorily with the interfixes (which could already be interpreted as a matter of paradigmatic obligatory) it seems that not all of them are still productive in the sense of creating new words. In particular, the suffix -*ling* has no longer been not productive since early New High German times. It is neither possible to create deadjectival nouns with native or non-native bases like **Kleinling, *Großling, *Coolling*, nor deverbal nouns like **Fahrling, *Ausrutscherling, *Befeuchtling*. Interestingly, concerning the suffix -*er*, these formal restrictions do not exist, cf.: *Kleiner, Großer, Cooler, Fahrer, Ausrutscher, Befeuchter.* This result puts a different light on interfixation in general: The only suffixes which remain (namley -*heit, -keit, -schaft, -ung*) build feminine nouns. This provides strong evidence supporting the fact that grammatical gender of determiner nouns plays an important role with respect to interfixation. Nevertheless, this important impact has been neglegted by contemporary research even though it is a relatively well-known fact that marked nouns function as „gender-markers" (Wegener 2000) and that gender itself functions as a grammatical category for nominal quantification in all Germanic languages (see Siemund 2008 on dialects of English; Brinkmann 1965, Leiss 1997, 2005, Weber 2001, Vogel 1996 and Bittner 1999, 2002, 2004 on German; Beito 1976 on West-Jutlandic, a Danish dialect; Steinmetz 1985, 2001 on Jiddish; an many others). While masculine nouns are defined as being [+count], neuter nouns are [-count], and feminine nouns (abstract, collective nouns) as being [+count] on a formal basis due to their ability to be put in the plural, but semantically [+mass] (Krifka 2004), cf. German: masc. *der Ausrutscher* ‚(the) slip-up' – neuter *das Ausrutschen* ‚(the) slipping-up' – fem. *die Ausrutscherei* ‚(the) slipping-up'[1]

The talk therefore tries to combine and – as far as possible - reconcile both approaches: productive interfixation at marked nouns can be explained by the fact that nominal quantification plays an important role.

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[1] The distinction between neuter and feminine gender is neutralised in English due to nominal aspect (see Rijkhoff 1992 for further details).

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