Morpheme Repair

Background. In spontaneous speech errors, an erroneous string is sometimes brought in line with grammatical constraints thanks to a post-error repair strategy ("accommodation"; Garrett 1980). Repairs may involve morphosyntactic features (e.g. gender in German), but they may also have an impact on the choice of derivational morphemes. For illustration, consider the examples in (1). In the English stem exchange in (1a), the error element *care* appears with the appropriate derivational suffix, which, however, is different from the suffix present in the intended utterance (Fromkin 1973). Similarly, in the self-corrected German slip in (1b), the stem *erzähl* surfaces with a nominalizing suffix that is not part of the intended utterance.

(1) a. *I think it's **care**-ful to measure with **reason***
(intended: *it's reason-able to measure with care*)

b. *er hat ein-e **Erzähl**-ung, äh, ein-en Schwank […] erzähl-t*
he has a-F.ACC tell-NMLZ(F), er, a-M.ACC tale(M) […] tell-PART
'He has told a (merry) tale from his youth.'

Research Question. What can the apparent repair of derivational morphemes in speech errors like those in (1) tell us about the relation between form and meaning in morphology?

Account. Based on (mostly German) speech errors, drawn from a corpus of 829 slips, I will argue for a form-follows-meaning approach couched within Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993). However, I will depart both from accounts that argue that derivational morphemes are "functional roots" drawn from the Lexicon (Kihm 2005) and accounts that assume late insertion of derivational morphemes at PF (Harley & Noyer 1998; Marantz 2001). I will argue that both views are problematic in light of the speech error data. First, a functional root account would have to assume that the Lexicon is accessed again after the error has taken place in order to select the appropriate derivational morpheme. Second, German nominalizing suffixes are gender-relevant – as is evident from (1b), where the suffix *-ung* contributes the feature [+fem], which is copied onto the determiner. Consequently, morpheme insertion must precede feature copy, i.e. it cannot apply at PF.

Instead, I will argue that the slip data provide strong evidence for the assumption that derivational morphemes are inserted post-syntactically at the level of Morphological Structure based on the licensing environment in which a root surfaces (e.g. [+d] in (1b)). This account has the advantage that all apparent repairs come for free, as they involve processes that apply in the course of the derivation anyway (i.e. morpheme insertion and gender copy in (1b)).

In addition, I will discuss the complicating fact that for many roots, alternative nominalizations are available. √ERZÄHL in (1b), for instance, might as well combine with the agentive suffix *-er* (yielding *Erzähler* 'narrator'). This suggests that the insertion of a derivational morpheme is further influenced by DP-internal functional structure (Alexiadou 2001; Harley 2009). Actually, the speech error patterns provide intriguing psycholinguistic evidence for the assumption of such additional functional structure. [474 words]

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