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Danish Names and the Duke of York

Hankamer & Mikkelsen (2002:151–152) observe that singular proper nouns in Danish can never have the definite suffix, but plural ones can (similar facts obtain in Swedish):

(1) *Maria-en (Maria-DEF)   (2) Maria-er-ne (Maria-PL-DEF)

H&M suggest (p. 158) that this pattern can be explained as resulting from a blocking effect, since the suffixed form **Maria-en* would fill exactly the same morphological niche as the name *Maria*. Borrowing a term from Pullum (1976), we call this kind of blocking "Duke of York Blocking"; we argue in this paper that Duke of York blocking is universal and derivable from a general theory of morphological blocking. Note that the blocked process (-DEF suffixation) is productive.

Morphological blocking (Paul 1896, Aronoff 1976, Andrews 1990) depends on two basic properties of morphological systems: (a) forms based on a given stem are organized into paradigms (in an extended sense), where a paradigm is a collection of slots or "Funktionen" (Paul's term); and (b) forms produced by different morphological processes compete for occupation of a slot, since paradigm slots cannot be doubly filled. What has remained unresolved in the extensive literature on blocking is the nature of paradigms in general and the nature of the principles that decide the winner in a competition. We address both issues.

Aronoff (p. 43) suggested that productive processes are not subject to blocking, because Ns in *-ness* are not blocked by the existence of underived base Ns (*glory*, *glorious*, **gloriosity*, *gloriousness*); but Aronoff himself invokes blocking again (p. 55) to account for the absence of nouns in *-ness* when there is a noun in *-cy* (*decent*, *decency*, **decentness*). Here a productive rule (the *-ness* rule) is blocked by forms derived by another productive rule (*-cy* productively attaches to adjectives in *-ate*/*-ant*/*-ent*). We conclude that blocking is not restricted to non-productive rules, and offer an alternative explanation for the failure of basic Ns to block *-ness* Ns (essentially, we argue that *-ness* Ns do not compete for the basic N slot).

Further, we argue that there is just one principle determining which form will win the competition for a slot, and that is (following Kiparsky (1982:6–9)) the Paninian principle: whenever two rules are in competition, the rule with the more restricted domain of application wins. We will show that this holds in the two cases analyzed by Aronoff, and in several other cases (from Paul, Scalise, and others).

H&M argue (p. 158) that **Maria-en* (see (1)) could only result from a derivation

$$[\text{Maria}]_D \rightarrow [\text{Maria}]_N \rightarrow [[\text{Maria}]_N \text{ -en}]_D$$

in which a sequence of derivational processes beginning with a base form results in a derived form which would compete with the base form for its own slot. We propose that such derivations are universally prohibited by the Paninian principle, since the lexical rule listing the base form (*Maria*) is more restrictive than the general rule producing the derived D (*Maria-en*). We will provide several further examples of Duke of York blocking.

References

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