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English En: Prefix or Suffix?

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The purpose of our investigation is to shed light on the behavior of English category-changing affix en, to which little attention has been paid in the generative phonological framework. We were concerned only with the affixation of en to adjectives and attempted to answer the three questions in (1), adopting as a basis of our analysis the framework proposed by Halle and Mohanan (1985) (hereafter H&M).

- (1) a. Which stratum does en belong to in the lexicon?
- b. Is en basically a prefix or a suffix?
- c. Why does not en as a prefix change into *el- or *er- even if it is followed by [l] or [r], while it does change into em- if followed by [m]?

In the first place, we argued that en, whether a prefix or a suffix, is a Class I affix, hence belonging to Stratum 1 in the sense of H&M. We pointed out two pieces of evidence for this claim. First, en as a prefix turns into em if followed by a [+labial] consonant, as shown in (2a). This sort of assimilation is a typical characteristic of other Class I prefixes. Second, as shown in (2b), such a Class I suffix as -ity can be attached to the stem even after en is prefixed to it.

- (2) a. en-brown → embrown
- b. [[enlargeabil]-ity]

Next, we considered en as a suffix. The absence of t in such forms as moisten [mɔys(ə)n] (Cf. moist [mɔyst]) and soften [sɔf(ə)n] (Cf. soft[sɔft]) suggests that the underlying form of

en be /N/, that is, /-[+nas]/. This also suggests that the optional schwa-insertion in the environment __n] should be ordered after t-deletion. There are independent grounds that schwa-insertion should be ordered at Stratum 2. It follows

that t must be deleted before a lexical item enters Stratum 2, in other words, at the end of a derivation at Stratum 1. Taking into consideration the fact that the segment /N/ should exist before t in order for t to be deleted, the suffixation of en should be ordered at Stratum 1.

The answer to the second question is that en is basically a suffix. Then, it appears strange that en functions as a prefix under certain phonological environments. However, this problem can be solved if we analyze such an en as copied from the word-final position to the word-initial position. The evidence for this claim is that Adj-en and en-Adj are in near complementary distribution. More specifically, as indicated in (3), en appears as a prefix when the stem-final segment is [+son] or [+voice, -cont, -cor]; otherwise, it appears as a suffix (a small class of exceptions existing, for example, enlarge and enrich).

(3) a. prefix:

b: ()	r: *sur-en	en-sure
m: ()	l: *nobl-en	en-noble
n: *brow-en	em-brown	V: ()

b. suffix:

p: deep-en		
f: tough-en	v: liv-en	k: weak-en
θ: ()	ð: smooth-en	
t: short-en	d: hard-en	
s: loos-en	z: wiz-en	
š: fresh-en	ž: ()	
č: (rich-en)	ǰ: (larg-en)	
(Cf. en-rich)	(Cf. en-large)	

(Cf. Jespersen MEG VI (351-59))

N.B.: (): an accidental gap; (en-large): an archaic but grammatical form.

Based on the observation just above, we argued that such forms as embrown and embitter are derived by means of Copy α, Obligatory Contour Principle ((4a)), convention (4b), and assimi-

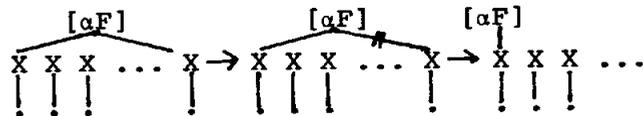
lation rule (4c). We illustrate the derivation of embrown as in (5).

(4) a. Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP):

At the melodic level, adjacent identical elements are prohibited.

(McCarthy 1986: 208)

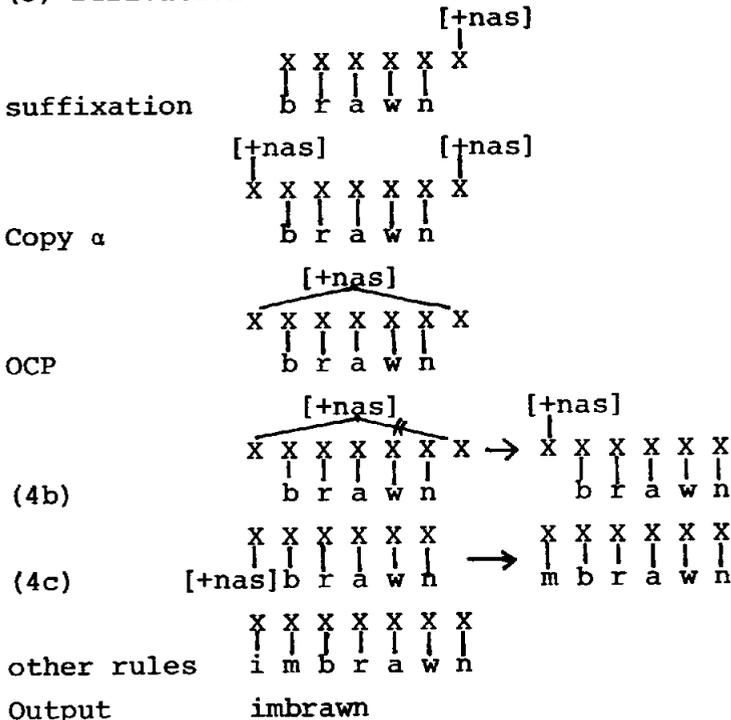
b. Convention:



c. Assimilation:

[+nas] → m / ___ [+cons]
[+lab]

(5) Derivation



We are now left with the last question. It is naturally solved by formulating n-deletion as in (6), which would also explain the lack of n in illegal and irregular, and by assuming that this rule applies before convention (4c) does. Thus, the the phonological representation (7) is apparently sensitive to

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