

**Network Core Mechanisms of Exponence**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Network Meeting, January 2008**

*Bernd Wiese*

*The form-function relation in German ablaut*

**1 Approaches to ablaut**

<b>word-and-paradigm</b>	/teyk/ 'take' /tuk/ 'take, past'	ablaut forms listed in the lexicon
<i>no proper account of the morphological connection between base and ablaut form</i>		
<b>root-and-pattern</b>	/t...k/ 'take' + /...ey.../ 'pres' /t...k/ 'take' + /...u.../ 'past'	ablaut forms composed of consonantal roots and vocalic patterns
<i>introduces a fundamental difference between bases of strong and weak verbs which is not backed up by evidence</i>		
<b>item-and-process</b>	/teyk/ 'take' /teyk/ 'take' + /-ey +u/ 'past'	ablaut forms formed by vowel replacement
<i>non-morphemic</i>		
<b>item-and-arrangement</b>	/teyk/ 'take' /tuk/ 'take' + 0 'past'	ablaut forms composed of stem allomorph and affix-allmorph, the latter may be zero
<i>misrepresents the form-meaning-relation: 'covert differences' are treated as meaningful while overt differences are treated as meaningless</i>		

Bloch, B. (1947), English verb inflection, *Language* 23, 399-418

Nida, E.A. (1948), The identification of morphemes, *Language* 24, 414-441

## 2 Notes on ablaut in German

- Ablaut in Contemporary German “is, synchronically, a totally unpredictable vowel change”, “all types of bidirectional relations between vowels exist” (Wiese, Richard. 1996: Phonological versus morphological rules: on German Umlaut and Ablaut, *Journal of Linguistics* 32.)
- “we cannot attribute any grammatical meaning to alternating vowels in isolation” (Durrell, Martin. 2003: From regularity to irregularity in morphology: 'Ablaut' in the West Germanic Languages. In: Tschichold (ed.). 2003)
- if the finite past is in *o*, then the past participle is also in *o*, cf. Wunderlich, Dieter. 1992: *A minimalist analysis of German verb morphology*. Düsseldorf/Köln/Wuppertal. (=SFB 282. 21).

## 3 Form-function-relation (overview)

primary pres. stem form	secondary pres. stem form	past part. stem form	primary finite past stem form	secondary finite past stem form
<i>reit</i>		<i>ritt</i>		
<i>gieß</i>		<i>goss</i>		<i>göss</i>
<i>sauf</i>	<i>säuf</i>	<i>soff</i>		<i>söff</i>
<i>sing</i>		<i>sung</i>	<i>sang</i>	<i>säng</i>
<i>sprech</i>	<i>sprich</i>	<i>sproch</i>	<i>sprach</i>	<i>spräch</i>
<i>komm</i>			<i>kam</i>	<i>käm</i>
<i>geb</i>	<i>gib</i>		<i>gab</i>	<i>gäb</i>
<i>fahr</i>	<i>fähr</i>		<i>fuhr</i>	<i>führ</i>
<i>ruf</i>			<i>rief</i>	
<i>fall</i>	<i>fäll</i>		<i>fiel</i>	

  

—	umlaut breaking	ei-i-change o-ablaut	ā-ablaut ū-ablaut ī-ablaut	umlaut
—	fin -subj/-plu/-1p/ (-imp)	past	past fin	past fin subj

( ) : only umlaut

### 4 Gradations and verb classes

		—	past	past fin				
I	23	/aɪ/	/ɪ/ -		V	5	/ɛ/	/a:/ +
	16	/aɪ/	/i:/			6	/e:/	/a:/
II	1	/ɪ/	/ʊ/		1	/ɪ/, /ɛ/	/a:/ +	
	2	/ɪ/	/ɔ/		1	/ɪ/, /e:/	/a:/	
	7	/ɛ/	/ɔ/		1	/i:/, /e:/	/a:/	
	1	/œ/	/ɔ/		1	/ɔ/	/a:/ +	
	1	/aʊ/	/ɔ/ -					
	11	/i:/	/ɔ/ -					
	11	/i:/	/o:/					
	3	/y:/	/o:/		VI	6	/a:/	/u:/
	5	/e:/	/o:/		4	/a/	/u:/ +	
	3	/ɛ:/	/o:/					
	1	/ø:/	/o:/					
III	2	/aʊ/	/o:/		VII	4	/a:/	/i:/
	16	/ɪ/	/ʊ/	/a/	4	/a/	/i:/ +	
	6	/ɪ/	/ɔ/	/a/	1	/u:/	/i:/	
	9	/ɛ/	/ɔ/	/a/	1	/o:/	/i:/	
IV	5	/ɛ/	/ɔ/	/a:/ +	2	/aʊ/	/i:/	
	1	/e:/	/ɔ/ -	/a:/	1	/aɪ/	/i:/	
	3	/e:/	/o:/	/a:/	1	/a/	/ɪ/	
	1	/ɛ:/	/o:/	/a:/	1	/ɛ/, /a/	/ɪ/	

Roman numbers: verb classes, arabic numbers: number of simplex verbs;  
 two vowels in unmarked column: special present tense formations;  
 '-': Shortening, '+': Lengthening

Example verbs:

- I REITEN, BLEIBEN
- II SCHINDEN, GLIMMEN, FECHTEN, ERLÖSCHEN, SAUFEN, GIESSEN, BIEGEN, LÜGEN, HEBEN, GÄREN, SCHWÖREN, SAUGEN
- III SINGEN, SPINNEN, BERGEN
- IV SPRECHEN, NEHMEN, STEHLEN, GEBÄREN
- V MESSEN, GEBEN, SITZEN, BITTEN, LIEGEN, KOMMEN
- VI SCHAFFEN, FAHREN
- VII BLASEN, FALLEN, RUFEN, STOSSEN, LAUFEN, HEISSEN, FANGEN, HÄNGEN

ū-ablaut

Strong verbs show *ū*-ablaut if, and only if, their base form conforms to one of the following patterns:

$$/a/ + C_{-voice} (\neq /s/)$$

$$/a:/ + C_{+voice} (\neq /z/)$$

Examples: *waschen, backen, schaffen, wachsen; fahren, graben, schlagen, tragen, laden*

### 5 Formation of past stem forms: affixation vs. ablaut

	weak verbs:	strong verbs, class IV ( <i>o</i> , <i>ā</i> ):	strong verbs, class IV ( <i>o</i> , <i>ā</i> ):
example:	SPIELEN ‘play’	SPRECHEN ‘speak’	SPRECHEN ‘speak’
form: make-up:	<i>spielt-</i> is a <i>t</i> -suffixed form	<i>sproch-</i> is an <i>o</i> -form of a stem of a strong verb of class IV,	<i>sprach-</i> is an <i>ā</i> -form of a stem of a strong verb of class IV,
class:	of a stem of a weak verb,	a strong verb of class IV,	a strong verb of class IV,
lexeme:	viz. SPIEL	viz. SPRECH	viz. SPRECH
function:	<i>spielt-</i> is a past stem form (of SPIEL)	<i>sproch-</i> is a past stem form (of SPRECH)	<i>sprach-</i> is a finite past stem form (of SPRECH)
exponent: (operation)	<i>-t</i> (add <i>-t</i> to base)	<i>...o...</i> (replace stem vowel of base by <i>o</i> )	<i>...ā...</i> (replace stem vowel of base by <i>ā</i> )
exponendum:	past	past	finite past
exponence:	past stem forms of weak verbs are formed by <i>t</i> -suffixation	past stem forms of strong verbs of class IV are formed by <i>o</i> -ablaut	finite past stem forms of strong verbs of class IV are formed by <i>ā</i> -ablaut

#### References

Anderson, Stephen R. (1992): *A-Morphous Morphology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bloch, Bernard (1947): "English verb inflection". *Language* 23. 399-418.

Durrell, Martin (2003): "From regularity to irregularity in morphology: 'Ablaut' in the West Germanic Languages". In: Tschichold, Cornelia (ed.) (2003): *English Core Linguistics: Essays in Honour of D.J. Allerton*. Bern: Lang. 125-145.

Matthews, Peter H. (1972): *Inflectional Morphology. A theoretical study based on aspects of Latin verb conjugation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nida, Eugene A. (1948): "The identification of morphemes". *Language* 24. 414-441.

Wiese, Bernd. (2008): "Form and function of verbal ablaut in Modern Standard German". In: Sackmann, Robin (ed.). *Explorations in Integrational Linguistics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Wiese, Richard (1996): "Phonological versus morphological rules: on German Umlaut and Ablaut". *JL* 32. 113-135.

Wunderlich, Dieter (1992): *A minimalist analysis of German verb morphology*. Düsseldorf/Köln/Wuppertal: Universität. (= SFB 282. 21)