

No prosodic word constraint on German subword Right-Node Raising

Eva Neu
University of Massachusetts Amherst

1 Introduction

Right-Node Raising (RNR) is a construction in which an element at the right edge of a coordination – the so-called pivot, underlined in the following – is interpreted as part of multiple conjuncts (1):¹

- (1) Kristine enjoyed, but Andreas disliked, the annual asparagus festival.

The pivot and the coordinated elements can be smaller than a word (2). I refer to such examples as subword RNR.

- (2) a. under- and overestimate
b. pre- and post-war
c. socio- and psycholinguists

The present paper focuses on subword RNR in German (3-4):

- (3) a. Herren-schuhe und Damen-schuhe
men-shoes and women-shoes
'men's shoes and women's shoes'
b. Herren- und Damen-schuhe
men and women-shoes
'men's and women's shoes'
- (4) a. Freund-schaft und Feind-schaft
friend-DER and enemy-DER
'friendship and enmity'
b. Freund- und Feind-schaft
friend and enemy-DER
'friendship and enmity'

Specifically, we will be concerned with subword RNR involving compounds (3b) and derivational suffixes (4b). For some remarks on subword RNR with prefixes, see Smith (2000). Inflectional suffixes appear to be systematically unable to serve as pivots in German; Section 4 later briefly touches on a possible reason for why this might be the case.

Subword RNR with compounds and derivational suffixes in German is not universally licensed either. For instance, example (5b), in which the pivot is the derivational suffix *-ung*, is strongly unacceptable:

¹Glossing conventions used in this paper: DER = derivational affix, DIM = diminutive.

- (5) a. Prüf-ung und Untersuch-ung
 assess-DER and examine-DER
 ‘assessment and examination’
 b. *Prüf- und Untersuch-ung
 assess- and examine-DER
 Intended: ‘assessment and examination’

The broader goal of this paper is to understand what rules out illicit instances of subword RNR in German such as (5b), or in other words, what constraints hold on this construction.

A proposal that has been put forward repeatedly in the previous literature is that for RNR to be licensed in German, the pivot must be at least the size of a prosodic word (ω). Under this view, what accounts for the contrast between (6a) and (6b) on the one hand and (6c) on the other is that in the latter, the pivot is not parsed as a prosodic word by itself, but only as part of the prosodic word containing the stem (Höhle 1982; Wiese 2000; Féry 2025; see also Booij 1985 for the same claim for Dutch and Artstein 2005 for a similar claim for English):

- (6) a. Herren- und Damen-(schuhe) ω
 men and women-shoes
 ‘men’s and women’s shoes’
 b. Freund- und Feind-(schaft) ω
 friend and enemy-DER
 ‘friendship and enmity’
 c. *Prüf- und (Untersuch-ung) ω
 assess- and examine-DER
 Intended: ‘assessment and examination’

Conversely, the ability to serve as an RNR pivot has been considered a diagnostic for prosodic words in German (Wiese 2000; Féry 2025).

The more specific concern of this paper is to argue against this claim. I show that a prosodic word constraint on German subword RNR lacks independent motivation and fails to correctly separate acceptable from unacceptable examples. In addition, I will discuss in more tentative terms what else constrains subword RNR.

A brief word on the limitations of this paper. The syntactic and morphological literature has long debated the underlying structure of both subword RNR and standard phrasal RNR (e.g., Wilder 1999; Hartmann 2001; Chaves 2008; Wilder 2008; Chaves 2014; Kubota & Levine 2015; Citko 2017; Belk *et al.* 2023; a.m.o.). Three competing analyses have been proposed. According to the surface coordination or base generation analysis, the pivot merges directly with the coordinated structure. According to the ellipsis or prosodic deletion analysis, the pivot is underlyingly present in all conjuncts but is deleted in all but the final conjunct. Lastly, according to the multidominance analysis, the pivot is multidominated across conjuncts and linearized only once at the right edge of the coordination. For the purposes of this paper, I set this debate aside and focus in purely descriptive terms on

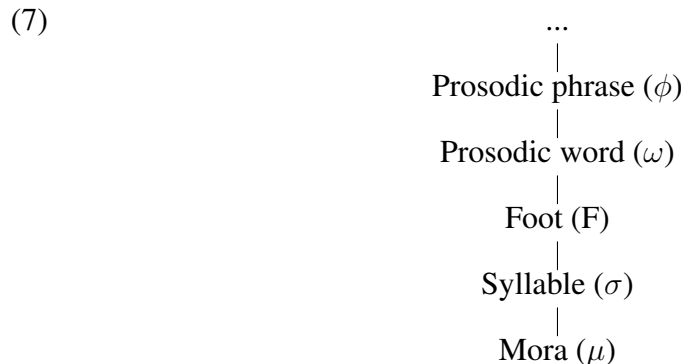
the factors constraining RNR in German. For some recent remarks on its syntactic analysis, see Neu & Guo (to appear).

In the following, I do not presuppose that subword RNR is a construction distinct from standard phrasal RNR, and I use the term ‘word’ purely descriptively. I assume that RNR of any flavour is underlyingly the same grammatical phenomenon. Subword RNR provides an insight into the minimal requirements that must be met in order for this construction to be possible.

I proceed as follows. Section 2 lays out some necessary background on German prosody. In Section 3, I then critically examine the claim that the pivot in German subword RNR needs to be at least the size of a prosodic word. Section 4 deals with other potential constraints on subword RNR, and Section 5 concludes.

2 Background

I begin with an overview over German prosody, drawing on Wiese (2000) and Féry (2025). Prosodic constituents are commonly assumed to be organized according to the prosodic hierarchy in (7): one or several moras are grouped into a syllable, one or several syllables into a foot, one or several feet into a prosodic word, and one or several prosodic words into a prosodic phrase. For simplicity’s sake, I omit the level of the foot and any levels above the prosodic phrase in the following; for our purposes, neither will be relevant.



Moras are the constituents of syllables. Each short vowel or consonantal segment in the nucleus or coda of a syllable contributes one mora; long vowels contribute two. For instance, the word *Welt* /'vɛlt/ ('world') consists of a tri-moraic syllable, with the short vowel in the nucleus and the two consonants in the coda each counting as one mora. As an exception to the rule, syllables containing a schwa are analyzed as non-moraic, with /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ being considered allophones of schwa. German syllables can be non-moraic, bi-moraic or tri-moraic.

Prosodic words in German have been argued to allow for a recursive structure, with minimal, intermediate and maximal levels (8):



One example for a recursive prosodic structure are compounds, as in (9). Here, each stem is parsed as a minimal prosodic word, and both together form a maximal prosodic word.²

- (9) a. Finanz-amt ((fi'nants)_ω (amt)_ω)_ω ('tax authority')
- b.
- $$\begin{array}{c}
 \omega_{\max} \\
 \swarrow \quad \searrow \\
 \omega_{\min} \quad \omega_{\min} \\
 | \quad \quad | \\
 \text{fi'nants} \quad \text{amt}
 \end{array}$$

Affixed words have been argued to be parsed with different kinds of recursive prosodic word structures, as will be discussed in the next section.

Three diagnostics for prosodic words have been advanced, summarized in (10). All diagnostics must be met, and they apply to minimal, intermediate and maximal prosodic words alike:

- (10) Diagnostics for prosodic words
- a. Contain a stressable syllable
 - b. Block resyllabification at the left edge
 - c. Can serve as a pivot in subword RNR

The first diagnostic requires each prosodic word to contain at least one stressable syllable. All syllables are stressable unless they are non-moraic. Note that the diagnostic does not require each prosodic word to contain a *stressed* syllable.

The second diagnostic states that a prosodic word must block resyllabification at its left edge. In German, resyllabification generally applies word-internally across morpheme boundaries to avoid onset-less syllables. Word-internal morpheme boundaries that block resyllabification are argued to correspond to the left edges of prosodic words. For instance, recall that compounds such as *Finanz-amt* 'tax authority' are analyzed with the recursive prosodic word structure in (11), with *-amt* 'authority' constituting a minimal prosodic word. This correctly accounts for the fact that no part of the coda of *Finanz-* is resyllabified as an onset for *-amt*. Instead, the latter is optionally pronounced with an initial glottal stop.

- (11) Finanz-amt ((fi'nants)_ω (amt)_ω)_ω ('tax authority')

Lastly, according to the third diagnostic, the prosodic word status of an element can be diagnosed by whether it can serve as a pivot in subword RNR. We turn to this claim in the next section.

3 A PWd constraint on German subword RNR?

To recap, this paper is concerned with the question of what distinguishes licit instances of subword RNR in German such as (12a) and (12b) from unacceptable examples such as (12c):

²Féry (2025) assumes that in such examples, the compound as a whole is an intermediate prosodic word in addition to being a maximal prosodic word. For simplicity, I omit this additional level since it does not affect the argument made.

- (12) a. Herren- und Damen-schuhe
 men and women-shoes
 ‘men’s and women’s shoes’
 b. Freund- und Feind-schaft
 friend and enemy-DER
 ‘friendship and enmity’
 c. *Prüf- und Untersuch-ung
 assess- and examine-DER
 Intended: ‘assessment and examination’

Höhle (1982), Wiese (2000) and Féry (2025) have argued that this pattern can be accounted for by assuming that an element can only serve as a pivot in subword RNR if it is at least the size of a prosodic word, and that vice versa, being able to serve as an RNR pivot can be used a diagnostic for prosodic words in German. In the following, I critically examine this idea in the light of the other two diagnostics for prosodic words introduced earlier.

I begin with compounds. For simplicity, let us focus on structures with only two stems. Recall that compounds have been argued to be parsed with the recursive prosodic word structure in (13), where each stem is realized as a minimal prosodic word and the compound as a whole as a maximal prosodic word:

- (13) a. Finanz-amt ((fi'nants)_ω (amt)_ω)_ω (‘tax authority’)
 b.
- $$\begin{array}{c}
 \omega_{\max} \\
 \swarrow \quad \searrow \\
 \omega_{\min} \quad \omega_{\min} \\
 | \quad \quad | \\
 \text{fi'nants} \quad \text{amt}
 \end{array}$$

We saw earlier that this analysis correctly predicts resyllabification to be blocked at the left edge of the second stem. Moreover, since each part of the compound consists of a stem that is able to stand on its own – and thus be stressed –, it also contains at least one stressable syllable.

Thus, compounds are predicted to allow for subword RNR freely. And in fact, subword RNR with compounds is highly productive in German, *modulo* some restrictions that are clearly semantic in nature, reviewed in Section 4. It is also possible to construct instances of RNR with a vowel-initial pivot (14); again, no resyllabification takes place at the left edge of the pivot.

- (14) Wasser- und Schiff-fahrts-ämter
 water and shipping-authorities
 ‘water and shipping authorities’

The same holds for subword RNR with affixoids, which are morphemes on the borderline between affixes and stems. On the one hand, affixoids can be used productively in a wide variety of contexts, resembling affixes in this respect; on the other, they retain a core of lexical meaning and have a corresponding free-standing

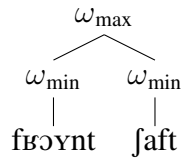
form. Examples from English include *-less* and *-free*. Complex words with affixoids are assumed to have the same recursive prosodic structure as compounds, with both the stem and the affixoid being parsed as minimal prosodic words and the complex word as a maximal prosodic word. As predicted, in (15), the affixoid *-artig* ‘-like’ can serve as a pivot, and no resyllabification takes place at its left edge.

- (15) holz- oder eisen-artig
 wood or iron-like
 ‘wood- or iron-like’

In the following, I will not discuss compounds and affixoids separately.

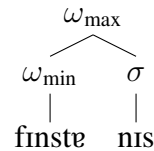
So far, the data are in line with a prosodic word constraint on subword RNR. The true test case, however, are affixed words. Höhle (1982), Wiese (2000) and Féry (2025) have argued that derivational suffixes fall into two groups. Suffixes in the first group such as *-schaft* /ʃaft/ are parsed as prosodic words on their own (16a). The resulting complex words have the same prosodic structure as compounds. By contrast, suffixes in the second group such as *-nis* /nis/ are parsed as prosodic constituents smaller than a prosodic word – in (16b), a syllable – and form part of the prosodic word containing the stem (16b). I will refer to the two groups of suffixes as group 1 and group 2 suffixes, respectively.

- (16) a. Group 1 suffixes:



Freund-schaft (‘friendship’)

- b. Group 2 suffixes:



Finster-nis (‘darkness’)

Group 1 suffixes, which are allegedly prosodic words, are a small set, including *-bar* /baʁ/, *-sal* /za:l/, *-sam* /za:m/, *-heit* /hait/, *-keit* /kait/ and *-tum* /tu:m/. By contrast, group 2 suffixes form a heterogeneous group, including non-moraic suffixes such as *-lich* /lɪç/ and *-ung* /ʊŋ/, bimoraic suffixes such as *-ie* /i:/ and *-ell* /ɛl/, trimoraic suffixes such as *-esk* /ɛsk/ and *-al* /a:l/, and even bisyllabic suffixes such as *-ismus* /ɪsmʊs/. Some group 2 suffixes are stressed, others unstressed; some are vowel-initial, others consonant-initial. The claim is that only group 1 suffixes, by virtue of forming prosodic words, are able to serve as pivots.

Against the background of the previous section, we can now examine whether this classification of derivational suffixes is in line with the other diagnostics for prosodic words. Recall that the first diagnostic proposed by Wiese (2000) and Féry (2025) is that prosodic words need to contain at least one stressable syllable, with all except non-moraic syllables qualifying as stressable. A subset of group 2 suffixes are non-moraic and thus not stressable. In contrast, all group 1 suffixes are stressable.

Containing a stressable syllable is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for being a prosodic word. Thus, this diagnostic is in line with the claim that group 1 suffixes are prosodic words and group 2 suffixes are not. However, it does not

constitute independent evidence for the claim that group 1 suffixes are prosodic words; it merely establishes that some group 2 suffixes cannot be prosodic words.

Turning to the second diagnostic, prosodic words are expected to block resyllabification at their left edge if vowel-initial. We find that those group 2 suffixes that are vowel-initial do not block resyllabification, indicating that they are indeed not prosodic words. This is shown in (17) for *-ung* /ʊŋ/:

- (17) Prüf-ung pʁy.fʊŋ ‘assessment’

However, since resyllabification across morpheme boundaries only applies to create, not to maximize an onset, this diagnostic is only applicable for vowel-initial affixes. All group 1 suffixes – allegedly prosodic words – happen to be consonant-initial. Thus, while evidence from resyllabification again confirms that some group 2 suffixes are not prosodic words, it does nothing to establish that group 1 suffixes are in fact prosodic word.

In sum, both stressability and resyllabification confirm that some group 2 suffixes are not prosodic words, but neither diagnostic offers any independent evidence that group 1 suffixes are prosodic words. In further support of her argument, Féry (2025) also points out that there exist free-standing words that are homophonous, although semantically unrelated, to some group 1 suffixes, such as the nouns *Schaft* ‘shaft’ or *Bar* ‘bar.’ But this is in no way evidence that the corresponding affixes are indeed prosodic words. The only motivation behind the latter claim, then, is to account for the subword RNR data themselves: that is, to explain why some but not other derivational suffixes can serve as RNR pivots.

But in addition to lacking any independent motivation, this analysis also fails to make the right cut empirically. For one, we find licit examples of subword RNR with group 2 suffixes (18). Both suffixes contain either a schwa or an allomorph of schwa, are thus not stressable and cannot be prosodic words. Moreover, the diminutive suffix *-chen* /çən/ begins with a palatal fricative, which cannot surface at the beginning of a prosodic word in German (Wiese 2000).

- (18) a. mütter- und väter-lich
 mother- and father-ly
 ‘motherly and fatherly’
 b. Brüder- und Schwester-chen
 brother- and sister-DIM
 ‘little brother and little sister’

Addressing such counterexamples in a footnote, Wiese (2000) argues that the affixes in question must be prosodic words after all, but this is in clear violation of the diagnostics for prosodic words proposed in the same work. It is true that the examples in (18) are rare exceptions; in most contexts, *-lich* and *-chen* cannot be pivots. Nonetheless, these data pose a challenge for the claim that RNR pivots are subject to a prosodic word constraint.

What is more, subword RNR with group 1 suffixes – those that are allegedly prosodic words – is not licit across the board. Rather, its acceptability depends on the stems involved, as shown by the contrast between (19) and (20):

- (19) a. Freund-schaft und Feind-schaft
friend-DER and enemy-DER
'friendship and enmity'
- b. Freund- und Feind-schaft
friend and enemy-DER
'friendship and enmity'
- (20) a. Eltern-schaft und Gefangen-schaft
parent-DER and captive-DER
'parenthood and captivity'
- b. *Eltern- und Gefangen-schaft
parent and captive-DER
Intended: 'parenthood and captivity'

Thus, there is no clear line that could be drawn between suffixes that can and those that cannot serve as RNR pivots.

To summarize, the claim that derivational suffixes can only serve as RNR pivots if they are parsed as prosodic words is both ill-founded and empirically inadequate. On the one hand, there is no independent evidence that some derivational suffixes in German form prosodic words. On the other, the prosodic word constraint fails to correctly separate acceptable from unacceptable cases of subword RNR. In the next section, I turn to alternative explanations for contrasts in acceptability with subword RNR.

4 Discussion

In the following, I discuss which other factors might constrain German subword RNR, touching on prosody, morphology, semantics and frequency.

To begin with, the previous section has argued against the claim that an RNR pivot needs to be at least the size of a prosodic word. However, it is possible that subword RNR in German is subject to a more minimal prosodic constraint which requires the pivot to be at least the size of a syllable. Such a constraint would be in line with the data adduced so far, and I am not aware of any counterexamples. However, its explanatory power is limited.

For compounds (including affixoids), recall that resyllabification is blocked at the left edge of each stem. As a result, the pivot in subword RNR with compounds always constitutes at least a syllable even if it is vowel-initial. On the other hand, vowel-initial derivational suffixes do not block resyllabification at their left edge and are thus not parsed as syllables on their own. As seen previously, vowel-initial stems can serve as pivots in compound structures (21a), whereas vowel-initial derivational suffixes – which are resyllabified with the stem (22) – cannot be pivots (21b):

- (21) a. Wasser- und Schifffahrts-ämter
water and shipping-authorities
'water and shipping authorities'

- b. *Prüf- und Untersuch-ung
 assess- and examine-DER
 Intended: ‘assessment and examination’

- (22) a. Prüf-ung pʁy.fʊŋ ‘assessment’
 b. Untersuch-ung ʊn.tɐ.zu:.xʊŋ ‘examination’

If the pivot needs to be minimally the size of a syllable, and if what blocks resyllabification is indeed prosodic wordhood, then the prosodic word status of the pivot does matter for the well-formedness of subword RNR, but only indirectly insofar as it blocks resyllabification and thus ensures that the pivot is parsed at least as its own syllable. There would still be no evidence that some derivational affixes are prosodic words.

As additional, albeit tentative evidence for a syllable constraint on RNR pivots, I briefly noted in the introduction of this paper that inflectional suffixes seem to be categorically unable to serve as pivots in German, seen for the plural morpheme in (23):³

- (23) a. Hund-e und Pferd-e b. *Hund- und Pferd-e
 dog-PL and horse-PL dog and horse-PL
 ‘dogs and horses’ Intended: ‘dogs and horses’

Cross-linguistically, this is in fact an uncommon pattern. Subword RNR is generally more freely available with inflectional than with derivational affixes (see, e.g., Kabak 2007; Kornfilt 2012 for Turkish). Crucially, all inflectional suffixes in German are smaller than a syllable (Féry 2025). For instance, the plural nouns in (23) syllabify as in (24):

- (24) a. Hund-e hʊn.də ‘dogs’
 b. Pferd-e pʰɛ:ʁ.də ‘horses’

Hence, it might be that inflectional suffixes cannot serve as pivots in German for prosodic reasons.

In sum, a syllable constraint on RNR pivots is not only possible, but would also account for the typologically rare pattern that derivational but not inflectional morphemes can in principle serve as pivots in German. However, the evidence for such a constraint remains tentative, and I must leave it open why exactly it would hold. More importantly, it does not account for all relevant contrasts in acceptability. For instance, it would not block the examples in (25), in which the pivot is parsed as its own syllable:

- (25) a. *Eltern- und Gefangen-schaft
 parent and captive-DER
 Intended: ‘parenthood and captivity’

³The German plural morpheme has several allomorphs and can trigger vowel changes in the stem, which would complicate the picture. In (23), both nouns take the same plural allomorph, -e /ə/, and no vowel changes in the stem take place.

- b. *Ereig- und Ärger-nis
occur and annoy-DER
Intended: ‘occurrence and annoyance’

Thus, a prosodic size constraint alone is not sufficient to explain when subword RNR is and is not licensed in German.

An alternative – or complementary – explanation is that the pivot not only needs to be of a certain prosodic size, but also needs to be semantically identical across conjuncts. That is, in *A- and B-X*, X needs to be semantically identical to the element that would follow A in the corresponding full coordination, *A-X and B-X*. Chaves (2008) has shown that such a constraint holds for compounds: for instance, example (26) is odd since *armed* receives a wholly different interpretation in the two conjuncts.

- (26) *a one- and well-armed man (Chaves 2008:274)

An analogous example from German is given in (27); here, the noun *Decke* has the only loosely related meanings ‘blanket’ and ‘ceiling’ in the two conjuncts:

- (27) *Bett- und Zimmerdecke
bed and room-cover
Intended: ‘blanket (lit. bed cover) and ceiling (lit. room cover)’

Interestingly, Chaves points out that the same effect obtains for RNR at the phrasal level. Example (28), in which *bank* receives a clearly distinct interpretation in the two conjuncts, is equally ill-formed:

- (28) *I put the money, while Roger left the boat, in the bank.
(Chaves 2008:274)

This indicates that semantic identity is a requirement holding on RNR in general. For a discussion of why this should be the case, see Neu & Guo (to appear).

Chaves also points out that subword RNR is blocked with coordinations in which one or both conjuncts receive a non-compositional, idiomatic interpretation, as in (29):

- (29) *butter- and fireflies (Chaves 2008:274)

A parallel example from German is given in (30):

- (30) *Küchen- und Nach-tisch
kitchen and after-table
Intended: ‘kitchen table and dessert (lit. after-table, something that is eaten after a meal)’

Assuming that in the case of idioms, an interpretation is assigned only to the compound as a whole (here, *butterflies* and *Nachtisch*), not its individual parts, the unacceptability of these examples equally falls out from a semantic identity constraint. For instance, in (29), the pivot *flies* does not receive the same interpretation in both conjuncts since at least in the first conjunct, it does not itself receive an interpretation at all but is only interpreted as part of the compound *butterflies*.

To recap, this section has so far been concerned with two kinds of possible constraints holding on subword RNR in German: a constraint requiring the pivot to be at least the size of a syllable, and a constraint requiring the pivot to be semantically identical in all conjuncts. In addition, the felicity of subword RNR in the language appears to depend on whether the two coordinated stems are semantically similar and/or whether they frequently co-occur, as shown by the contrasts in (31–33):

- (31) a. Freund- und Feind-schaft
friend and enemy-DER
‘friendship and enmity’
b. *Eltern- und Gefangen-schaft
parent and captive-DER
Intended: ‘parenthood and captivity’
- (32) a. hör- und sicht-bar
hear- and see-able
‘audible and visible’
b. *sicht- und ess-bar
see- and eat-able
Intended: ‘visible and edible’
- (33) a. mütter- und väter-lich
mother- and father-ly
‘motherly and fatherly’
b. schwester- und brüder-lich
sister- and brother-ly
‘sisterly and brotherly’
c. ??schwester- und väter-lich
sister- and father-ly
Intended: ‘sisterly and fatherly’

Note that it is true that the full coordinations corresponding to (31b), (32b) and (33c) are semantically odd, and it is difficult to find contexts in which they could be used naturally. However, they are grammatically well-formed, whereas the subword RNR examples are not.

A similar picture has been reported for Turkish. Subword RNR with derivational suffixes has been reported to be impossible in the language except for certain

common, high-frequency coordinations such as (34) (Kornfilt 2012; Kabak 2007; but see also Akkuş 2016):⁴

- (34) a. ana ve baba-lik
mother and father-DER
‘motherhood and fatherhood’
b. tuz ve limon-luk
salt and lemon-DER
‘salt shaker and lemon squeezer’

For both German and Turkish, judgments in this domain are highly variable and gradient, but some effect of semantic similarity or frequency of co-occurrence of the stems seems to obtain.

It might be argued that this fact should again be attributed to an identity constraint holding on the pivot. Let us return to (35):

- (35) a. Freund- und Feind-schaft
friend and enemy-DER
‘friendship and enmity’
b. *Eltern- und Gefangen-schaft
parent and captive-DER
Intended: ‘parenthood and captivity’

Assume that the morpheme spelled out as *-schaft* receives different interpretations in different contexts. Since the coordinated stems in (35a) – ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ – are semantically parallel, they might be expected to trigger the same reading of *-schaft*, in line with the identity constraint. On the other hand, in (35b), the coordinated stems – ‘parent’ and ‘captive’ – are semantically distinct, which might also go along with different interpretations assigned to *-schaft*. Since the pivot thus does not receive the same interpretation in both conjuncts, RNR fails. As a variant of this idea, what is violated might be morphological rather than semantic identity: in (35b), *-schaft* might occupy a different structural position when it combines with *Eltern-* than when it combines with *Gefangen-*.⁵

This is a possible analysis, but it is difficult to see how it would deal with the data in (32) and (33), repeated below as (36) and (37):

- (36) a. hör- und sicht-bar
hear- and see-able
‘audible and visible’
b. *sicht- und ess-bar
see- and eat-able
Intended: ‘visible and edible’

⁴In Turkey, salt and lemon are used together in a similar way to salt and pepper in Western cuisine.

⁵I thank Andreas Pankau for this suggestion.

- (37) a. mütter- und väter-lich
 mother- and father-ly
 ‘motherly and fatherly’
 b. schwester- und brüder-lich
 sister- and brother-ly
 ‘sisterly and brotherly’
 c. ??schwester- und väter-lich
 sister- and father-ly
 Intended: ‘sisterly and fatherly’

There is no reason to assume that, e.g., in (36), the version of *-bar* ‘able’ that combines with ‘hear’ and ‘see’ is distinct from the one that combines with ‘eat.’ Instead, these examples suggest that it is indeed the semantic similarity or frequency of co-occurrence of the stems as such that matters.

In response to the Turkish data seen earlier in (34), Kabak (2007) and Kornfilt (2012) have argued that subword RNR with derivational affixes is only licensed for rigid idiomatic coordinations that are stored holistically in the lexicon. This is too strong a claim, as shown by Akkuş (2016) and Türk *et al.* (2026) for Turkish and as should also have become clear from the German data reviewed in this paper. However, it indeed appears to be the case that the acceptability of subword RNR depends on whether or not the coordinated stems can be parsed in some sense of the word as a coherent whole. What would motivate this constraint is far from clear. Discussing it further is beyond the scope of this paper (see Türk *et al.* 2026 for a recent proposal), but I hope to have shown that even considering other factors constraining RNR such as the prosodic size and semantic identity of the pivot, the semantic coherence or frequency of co-occurrence of the coordinated elements appears to play a role in licensing this construction.

5 Conclusion

To summarize, this paper has been concerned with the question of what constrains subword RNR in German, adopting a purely descriptive perspective. In the previous literature, it has been argued that the RNR pivot needs to be at least the size of a prosodic word, with similar claims having been made for Dutch (Booij 1985) and English (Artstein 2005). Focusing on German, I have shown that such a constraint lacks independent support and fails to do any work empirically. A consequence of this finding for German prosody more generally is that *pace* Wiese (2000) and Féry (2025), there is no evidence that some derivational suffixes in German are prosodic words.

Instead, I have looked at three other kinds of possible constraints holding on subword RNR. First, modifying the prosodic constraint proposed in previous work, I have discussed whether pivots in German need to be at least the size of a syllable, which would also account for the fact that RNR in this language appears to be systematically ruled out with inflectional affixes. However, the evidence for this constraint is still inconclusive. Second, as shown previously by Chaves (2008), the

pivot needs to be semantically identical across conjuncts. While I believe that this is a robust constraint, the question remains open how much of the data it can explain. Lastly, subword RNR with derivational affixes seems to be sensitive to whether the coordinated stems are semantically similar and/or frequently co-occur, in a way that is not reducible to an identity constraint holding on the pivot. A key task for future work is to gain a better understanding of the nature of this constraint.

References

- Akkuş, F. 2016. Suspended affixation with derivational suffixes and lexical integrity. In *Mediterranean Morphology Meetings*, volume 10, 1–15.
- Artstein, R. 2005. Coordination of parts of words. *Lingua* 115. 359–393.
- Belk, Z., A. Neeleman, & J. Philip. 2023. What divides, and what unites, Right-Node Raising. *Linguistic Inquiry* 54. 685–728.
- Booij, G. 1985. Coordination reduction in complex words: A case for prosodic phonology. *Advances in nonlinear phonology* 7. 143–160.
- Chaves, R. P. 2008. Linearization-based word-part ellipsis. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 31. 261–307.
- Chaves, R. P. 2014. On the disunity of right-node raising phenomena: Extraposition, ellipsis, and deletion. *Language* 90. 834–886.
- Citko, B. 2017. Right node raising. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Syntax* 1–33.
- Féry, C. 2025. *German phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Hartmann, K. 2001. *Right node raising and gapping: Interface conditions on prosodic deletion*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Höhle, T. N. 1982. Über Komposition und Derivation: zur Konstituentenstruktur von Wortbildungsprodukten im Deutschen. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 1. 76–112.
- Kabak, B. 2007. Turkish suspended affixation. *Linguistics* 45. 311–347.
- Kornfilt, J. 2012. Revisiting ‘Suspended Affixation’ and other coordinate mysteries. In *Functional Heads: The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*, ed. by L. Brugé, A. Cardinaletti, G. Giusti, N. Munaro, & C. Poletto, volume 7. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Kubota, Y., & R. Levine. 2015. Against ellipsis: Arguments for the direct licensing of ‘noncanonical’ coordinations. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 38. 521–576.
- Neu, E., & L. Guo. to appear. Unifying phrasal and subword Right-Node Raising: A multidominance account. In *Proceedings of NELS 56*, ed. by G. Correa & K. Morand. Amherst, MA: GLSA.
- Smith, G. 2000. Word remnants and coordination. *Deutsche Grammatik in Theorie und Praxis* 57–68.
- Türk, U., E. Neu, Ö. Bakay, B. Dillon, & G. Jarosz. 2026. Frequency modulates structural choice in Turkish suspended affixation: a latent-process account. *Proceedings of SCiL 2026*.
- Wiese, R. 2000. *The phonology of German*. Oxford UP.
- Wilder, C. 1999. Right Node Raising and the LCA. In *WCCFL 18*, ed. by S. Bird, A. Carnie, J. D. Haugen, & P. Norquest, p. 586–598. Cascadia Proceedings Projects, Somerville, MA.
- Wilder, C. 2008. Shared constituents and linearization. In *Topics in Ellipsis*, ed. by K. Johnson, 229–258. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.