

Re: Patterns of phoneme sequences in words

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- *From:* "Neeraj Mathur" <neemathur@xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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"Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:448C0DD8.71DF@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Neeraj Mathur wrote:

"Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:448C09C4.2DBC@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

The rule is about as simple as a rule can be: one- or two-syllable adjectives (long, blick, thring, shitty) take -er/-est, longer ones take more/most. (Note, however, that "wrong" doesn't insert /g/.)

This rule I certainly know. The question is whether it is a productive rule of our grammars, or whether – for some speakers at least – it is simply a general observation about the lexicon.

What is your explanation for what seems like the insertion of /g/ in 'wronger' as described by John and Brian?

I didn't notice such a description. Or is that what I mentioned sounded Bronx? (Nonstandard, that is.) No, I think that was "singer" with a g. (A problem is that there are so few final -N adjectives and verbs.)

Well I'd quoted it in my posts; John wrote: 'In my (Australian) dialect, [g] is only added to [N] morpheme-final when the following morpheme is comparative <-er> or superlative.<-est>. Thus <longer>, 'more long' and <longer> 'a person who longs' aren't homophones.' Brian said that the same thing happened to him. I'm happy for this to be non-standard, but I wonder if I can make it consistent with my earlier position (that [Ng] only appears morpheme-internally) by suggesting that for these speakers, the comparative

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'longer' is a single morpheme, not two.

The whole point of this is that, if one could predict on the basis of morphology alone, whether you get [Ng] or just [N], there would be a case to make that these are both realisations of the phoneme sequence /ng/, and that English has no phoneme /N/. So 'sin' and 'sing' don't differ phonemically as /sIn/ and /sIN/, but as /sIn/ and /sIng/, and that at the morpheme–boundary that sequence /ng/ is pronounced [N].

To accommodate John's and Brian's pronunciations, we could modify this to make a specific exception for the –er and –est suffixes, but it would be most compact if we simply made 'longer' and 'longest' into single–morpheme units, and deny that there is any morpheme boundary inside these words.

Neeraj Mathur