

A POSSIBLE 'NON-AUTONOMOUS' PHONOLOGICAL UNIT IN NORWEGIAN

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There is some evidence that one domain for tone-assignment rules in Norwegian is close to, but not identical to, the word as defined by syntactic or morphological criteria: this unit is a morphological/syntactic word combined with unstressed neighboring elements and may hence be called a phonological word. One example is units like br²enner-opp ('2' indicating tone 2) ('burns up'), where opp may be seen as contracted to brenner, which has tone 1 in isolation, inducing tone 2. A rule accounting for this fact can be naturally obtained as an expansion from a general tone-rule schema whose other expansions can apply to syntactic/morphological words. Another example is given in the contracted for-lit¹en ('too small'). In isolation, lit²en has tone 2, but assuming that for lit¹en here acts as a word with regard to the tone-rule, the 'change' is accounted for by the general rule that only word-initial syllables can have tone 2.

Given that this phonological word is created (formally, presumably, by a 'restructuring' process applying to some syntactic level of representation) specifically for the demands of phonological rules, it might conceivably be a highly 'autonomous' phonological unit, internally structured only with regard to phonemes, syllables, quantity and stress at the point where tone rules apply. As shown in Haugen 1967, however, tone rules require a very articulate morphological analysis in their input. One instructive example is that although bisyllabic words often have tone 2, there is a regular rule to the effect that when the second syllable is a morph representing the definite article (which is suffigated), be it in the form -en, -a or -et, then the word has tone 1. The only exceptions to this rule are even more indicative of the abstractness of the input to tone rules: they are words like g²ata, h²ytta, whose indefinite forms are g²ate ('street') and h²ytte ('cabin'), both bisyllabic, as opposed to the monosyllabic indefinite forms in the cases where we get tone 1. A simple segmentation of g²ata cannot bring this fact out.

Further demonstration of the lack of phonological autonomy of the 'phonological word' will be given, also drawing on stress and quantity assignment.

Reference: Haugen, E. (1967): "On the rules of Norwegian tonality", Lg. 43, 185-202.