

German Umlaut at the Interface

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Roots have been said to have very little phonological or morphosyntactic content, sometimes none at all. I will argue, based on a discussion of German Umlaut, that roots are far from being passive players. Rather, they must have, at least, some morphosyntactic content (in fact, even quite a bit). German Umlaut poses an old and well-known problem: why does suffix *+lich* trigger Umlaut on *Mann* 'man' (*männlich* 'manly') but not on *Amt* 'office' (**ämtlich* vs. *amtlich* 'official') and how can something like that be learnt? Much time has been devoted trying to find phonological solutions to this problem, and results have by and large been inconclusive. I intend to show that phonology has virtually nothing to say about the German Umlaut conundrum. Morphosyntax, on the other hand, is the key.