

Burzio, L. (1999). 'Missing Players: Phonology and the Past-tense Debate,' ms. Johns Hopkins University.

Abstract

The proposition that the mental lexicon is a 'dual route' system, advanced by Pinker and others to account for regular and irregular morphology, overlooks the important fact that morphological regularity correlates inversely with phonological regularity --'regular' past-tense *beeped* being phonologically *irregular* (exceptional syllable), while 'irregular' past-tense *kept* is phonologically just regular.

I argue that the correlation, which is general, can only be captured under a single -rather than 'dual'- architecture, and an associational -rather than rule based- theory of morphology. Where morphological associations are strong, morphology looks regular and phonological alternations are inhibited, making phonology look irregular. In a system in which regularities are attributed to 'rules', rules should be able to coexist with other rules, and morphological and phonological regularities should correlate directly, rather than inversely.