Functional vs Lexical Structure without the Prosodic Hierarchy

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The Prosodic Hierarchy (Selkirk, 1972; Nespor and Vogel, 1986) is a staple phonological tool across theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless, its status has always been somewhat extra-phonological; it reflects the interface between the morphosyntax and the phonology, rather than being projected by the phonology-proper. Some note that the PH stands out as the one exception to modularity in frameworks that otherwise disallow direct conversation between the morphosyntactic and phonological modules (Bermúdez-Otero, 2012), and others go so far as to propose that the PH is an impossible phonological object (Scheer, 2008). Some recent work within the framework of Government Phonology has begun to make it possible take seriously the task of proposing a theoretical alternative to the PH. Various functions have been proposed for empty syllabic space (CV) as a demarcative object. Empty CVs have been proposed to mark the edge of words (Lowenstamm, 1999), phases (D'Alessandro and Scheer, 2015), and stressed syllables (Ségéral and Scheer, 2008). Other CV units found in the output of phonological computation are proposed to be inherent to the input; morphemes are generally lexicalized with their syllabic structure. Of interest are the environments in which morphemes are proposed to not be lexically-imbued with CV structure (ignoring for the moment templatic languages). These environments can be generally categorized in two ways; they are edges of lexical items, or they are functional items/affixes. In this talk I will begin explore how the above proposals allow us to capture distinctions in the phonological behaviour of lexical and functional words without appealing to an inherent ability to project (or not) a prosodic word. Specifically, I will examine the different kinds of stress that can be attributed to extra CV structure and will propose that functional items that are otherwise lexicalized as floating melody will gain CV structure via the phonology-syntax interface in nuclear stress positions, focus positions, and at the edges of phases. Specifically, we will examine the different phonological outputs attributed to pronouns in weak and strong positions and will compare the predictions of and problems in accounting for this behaviour inherent to both a theory that assume the PH (Selkirk, 1995) and a theory that does not.

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