The (Morpho-)Syntax – Phonology Interface in Complex Word Structures
Irene Vogel (University of Delaware)

Since Selkirk (1972) drew attention to the intricacies of the interaction between the application of phonological phenomena and syntactic structure, there has been a great deal of investigation into the nature of this interaction. Two main approaches have typically been taken according to which the phonological phenomena are accounted for: i) by direct reference to syntactic structure (among many others Odden 2000; Elordieta 2007; Samuels 2009), or ii) by reference to a distinct phonological structure that is derived from, but not necessarily isomorphic to, syntactic structure (among many others Selkirk 1978; Nespor and Vogel 1986; Beckman and Pierrehumbert 1986; Truckenbrodt 1995). There are also some proposals to combine the two approaches (e.g. Kaisse 1985; Seidl 2001).

I will first briefly review some evidence that syntax alone cannot account for phrasal phonology. Once it is accepted that we cannot simply read phonological domains off (morpho-)syntactic structure, we must then ask what aspects of this structure are relevant for phonology, and how the phonology accesses the relevant information. Much of the discussion of these issues focuses on the larger structures which may be referred to broadly as Phonological Phases and Intonational Phrases.

There is much attention also focused on the Phonological Word (PW), but this often leaves a “gray area” of phenomena that are not adequately incorporated into the phonological hierarchy. The usual approach is to identify a relatively small core PW which serves a clear domain for such phenomena as stress, and certain phonotactic constraints and phonological processes. To maintain such a consistent domain, many elements must be excluded, for example, some types of affixes, clitics and multiple members of a compound. This rather heterogeneous collection of elements often finds itself grouped under an ill-defined label of recursive PW (PW‘), although the properties of this type of PW are crucially distinct from those of the “usual” core PW. Two simple examples of this difference can be seen in relation to compounds: in English, word stress is generally assigned from the right edge of the word while compound stress generally applied from the left edge; in Hungarian, vowel harmony operates within a PW, but it does not operate throughout a compound, as each member constitutes its own harmony domain.

In this presentation, I will primarily examine the “gray area” of interface between the PW and the Phonological Phrase and assess to what extent several approaches (prosodic hierarchy, alignment, matching (cf. Selkirk 2011)) are able to account for the data. I will investigate phenomena at the more complex end of the spectrum, since simple cases may lend themselves more easily to multiple treatments. First, I will examine the phonological structure of the extensive sequences of morphemes claimed to form single words in polysynthetic languages. Although there may be ways to analyze such strings as words syntactically (cf. Baker 1996), I will extend the type of proposal advanced for polysynthetic languages such as Cree (Russell 1999) and Cayuga (Dyck 1994), where the sentence-like words are analyzed as containing multiple PWs. Second, I will examine the phonological structure of particularly complex compounds as in The dog’s [don’t-leave-without-me bark] (cf. The dog’s intruder bark) and argue that an analysis in terms of a recursive PW fails to account for the phonology, in particular the stress patterns, of such constructions.

Finally, I will examine the polysynthetic and compound structures in light of a proposal I have advanced elsewhere that a phonological constituent, the Composite Group (replacing the Clitic Group in Nespor and Vogel 1986 and others), is needed to account for the phenomena arising between the PW and the Phonological Phrase (e.g. Vogel 2009, 2010).
References


