

Coordinator with Laura Downing of the Franco-German project,

## Phonology/syntax interface in Bantu languages

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### 1 Goals

This project has both theoretical and descriptive goals. Theoretically, most work on the phonology-syntax interface in Bantu languages is 12-30 years old. In light of current syntactic models, we intend to investigate which aspects of syntax phonology has access to. For example, Truckenbrodt (1995, 2007) argues that phonology only refers to syntactic constituent edges like XP and CP; however, recent work by Kratzer & Selkirk (2007), among others, has argued for the role of the syntactic phase in determining prosodic phrasing.

- Can one account for prosodic phrasing in Bantu languages only by referring to XP and CP edges?
- Which constituent edges are crucial in conditioning phrasing in complex constructions like relative clauses and dislocations?
- Do only syntactic constituent edges condition prosodic phrasing, or do other factors, like information structure (topic and focus distinctions) or argument and adjunct distinctions play a role?

In order to investigate these questions, we will concentrate on the following constructions where previous work has shown that both syntax and non-syntactic factors play a complex role in conditioning the prosody: dislocations, questions, relative clauses (comparing restrictive relatives, non restrictive relatives and clefts). The languages chosen have a variety of morphosyntactic systems. For example, some indicate dislocation through object marking on the verb or disjoint verbal morphology, while others do not. In some languages, clefts are required to question subjects but not objects. There is also great variety in relative clause structures in these languages. The phonological and syntactic analysis of several languages will allow us to investigate whether there is any correlation among these morphosyntactic factors that might also explain differences in prosodic phrasing. It will also allow us to determine whether there are cross-linguistically common prosodic patterns for particular morpho-syntactic structures.

Current prosodic models (Truckenbrodt 1995, 2007), Nespor & Vogel (1986), Selkirk (1986, 2000), Ladd (1995) assume only two (potentially recursive) phrasal levels in the Prosodic Hierarchy, the Phonological Phrase and the Intonational Phrase. However, this proposal has not been tested on very complex syntactic structures nor on languages with complex phrasal phonology. Further, phonetic analyses motivating more than one level in any particular language are generally lacking, outside of some well-studied languages like English or Japanese. For this reason, we intend to undertake a detailed syntactic, phonological and phonetic study of more complex syntactic constructions than are usually considered in the literature on prosodic phrasing. Looking at the influence of focus constructions on phrasing will allow us to test for potential mismatches between syntactic constituent edges and prosodic domains. The languages under investigation have a variety of prosodic systems, ranging from stress languages (Swahili and Chitumbuka) through pitch accent languages (Shingazidja) to more tonal languages (Sambaa, Chichewa, Haya, Mbosi), which will allow us to test whether there is any correlation between the type of prosodic system and the number of phrasal levels required to account for the prosody. The phonetic and syntactic analysis of a

several languages will allow us to investigate whether distinct levels of prosodic phrasing have consistent syntactic and/or phonetic correlates.

Our research will not only have implications for theories of phonetics, phonology, syntax, information structure and the interface, it will also lead to a more detailed and thorough description of these aspects of the languages under investigation.

It would not be possible to provide a detailed syntactic, phonological and phonetic analysis of this range of languages without this kind of cooperative project. While the French team has outstanding expertise in the phonetics and phonology of Bantu languages, there is no one in France primarily engaged in researching Bantu syntax. The German team brings this expertise, along with phonological expertise for a different set of languages. The prosodic and morphosyntactic diversity of the languages to be studied is also only made possible through the cooperation of the French and German teams: Shingazidja and other Comorian languages, Makonde, Haya and Sambiaa (phonology), Mbozi, Swahili (French team); Haya and Sambiaa (syntax), Swahili, Zulu, Chitumbuka and Chichewa (German team). While our main goals are to arrive at an improved analysis and description of the languages, we will be working closely with native speaker linguists, so that the project will also provide opportunities for training and intellectual exchange among European and African colleagues.

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