Further contributions of Xitsonga

to the theory of the Syntax-Phonology interface

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Patterns of the blocking of high tone spreading in Xitsonga sentences, originally described and analyzed in Kisseberth 1994, provide evidence that both the right and left edges of syntactic phrases play a role in the establishment of phonological phrases. Selkirk 2011 draws on this evidence from Xitsonga in putting forward the Match theory of syntactic-prosodic constituency correspondence.

The basic facts are these: (i) H tone never spreads from the left onto the rightmost syllable of a phrase, a phenomenon that can be attributed to the constraint NonFinality (φ, H), and (ii) H tone never spreads from the left onto the leftmost syllable of a noun phrase, when that NP consists of a Noun plus a Modifier word, and effect that can be attributed to high ranking of the constraint CrispEdgeL (H, φ). In Xitsonga it appears that single word phrases in the syntax do not count as phrases in the phonology, a fact accounted for by ranking BinMin (φ, ω) over Match (XP, φ) in Xitsonga.

This paper uses additional data from Xitsonga to argue that the Match Phrase constraint of Selkirk 2011 should in fact be understood as two constraints: Match (XP, φ) would call for any syntactic phrase, whether a lexical or a functional projection, to correspond to a phonological phrase (Elfner 2012), while Match (LexP, φ) would call for a correspondence between just lexically headed phrases and phonological phrases. The phrasing facts concerning post-verbal ditransitive constructions as compared to post-verbal simple multi-word objects suggest that Match (XP,φ) may be violated in the case of functional projections. Substantiating evidence is provided by the phrasing facts involving noun class prefixes, which are understandable if these prefixes are taken to be the heads of a functional projection, and therefore not located at the blocking left edge of a φ.