

Segmental and prosodic cues for phrasing in Akan

Frank Kügler
Potsdam University

In this talk prosodic units in Akan such as prosodic words, phonological phrases and intonation phrases will be analyzed by means of segmental and prosodic cues. Akan is a two-tone Kwa language spoken of about 8.3 m speakers in Ghana. The phonology of Akan employs an ATR vowel harmony within polysyllabic words. For instance, tense, aspect and modality markers are affixed to the verb and these agree in ATR vowel specification of the verb stem. The emerged verb forms thus a prosodic word. Vowel harmony also serves as an indicator of phonological phrases. While verb-object sequences show the vowel harmony process, subject-verb sequences do not. The conclusion is that subject NPs on the one hand and VO on the other hand form separate phonological phrases in Akan. Data from left-dislocation show that topicalized (left-dislocated) elements form its own prosodic unit. Topicalized elements may occur with or without morphological marking. Prosodically, final lengthening and tone polarity indicate a prosodic boundary. It is argued that topicalized elements form their own intonation phrase. Data from embedded sentences further corroborate this analysis of a distinct prosodic phrase. The data from Akan are discussed in light of recent proposals on the syntax-phonology interface indicating that Akan might be classified as a moderate wrapping language.