
Syntax and prosody in parallel systems

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The talk is intended to show how a modular grammar with parallel architecture can deal with mismatches and reciprocal influences at the syntax-prosody interface. The first part of the talk looks at mismatches at the DP level in structures like (1). It will be argued that phonological conditions (based on stress) as well as interface conditions (based on syntactic relationship) lead to the indicated prosodic phrasing. Such structures can be made more isomorphic by speakers through an adjustment of the syntactic and the information-structural encoding, which results in a different prosodic structure.

- (1) a. [dass [[der Jäger des Königs] starb] syntactic phrasing
 that the.NOM hunter the.GEN king died
 b. [dass der Jäger] [des Königs starb] prosodic phrasing

The second part of the talk concentrates on pre- and postnominal modifying genitives like (2) and their alternatives. The syntactic case feature on the modifier in (2) is not realized phonologically because of a degemination process. Thus speakers avoid such phrases and use prenominal datives or postnominal PPs instead.

- (2) a. Jonas' Buch
 Jonas.GEN book
 b. das Buch Jonas'
 the.NOM book Jonas.GEN

Phonological reduction like degemination in (2) or erosion as part of grammaticalization processes can lead to a loss of grammatical encoding, because phonology does not care about the realization of syntactic features. So phonology takes an indirect influence on syntax here. In a modular grammar with parallel architecture, the interface component can function as a control system, which links the outcomes of the individual modules, evaluates them and informs the syntactic component about a non-optimal structure, so that an alternative can be chosen instead.