Prosodic constraint on prenominal modification

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It has been argued that the head of a prenominal modifier must be adjacent to the head noun (Grosu & Horvath 2006, Haider 2010).

1. a. a [baby [sleeping [on the sofa]]]  (English)
   b. *a [[sleeping [on the sofa]]] baby

2. a. ein [[in Saarbrücken] wohnhafter] Professor
   a in Saarbrücken living professor
   b. *ein [[wohnhafter [in Saarbrücken]]] Professor

However, the head-to-head adjacency condition cannot be assumed in the minimalist framework with no linear order in syntactic derivation. Moreover, the adjacency condition wrongly rules out head-initial phrasal compounds in English and German and head-initial modifiers in Russian.

3. a. [[over-[the-fence]] gossip]  (English)
   b. der ['Fit-[statt-fett]'-Bürowettbewerb
   ‘the fit-over-fat office contest’  (German)

4. [[gotovy [na vse]] student]
   ready on everything student
   ‘a student ready for anything’  (Russian)

Instead of the adjacency condition, we propose a prosodic constraint to the effect that the modifier and the noun it modifies cannot be separated by a prosodic boundary. In (1a) and (2a) the noun phrase has no prosodic boundary between the modifier and the head it modifies because of its uni-directional branching structure (Tokizaki 1999). We argue that a phrasal compound may not have a prosodic boundary at its right edge and that the proposed constraint may be relaxed in languages without determiners, such as Russian (cf. Bošković 2008).