

Distinguishing *prosodic constituents* from *recursive domains*

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This talk bears on one of the most controversial issues related to prosodic hierarchy, namely, the status of recursive domains in phonology.

Recursion is often taken to be a property of syntax but not phonology (see, e.g., the review in Van der Hulst 2010). Current work on prosodic structure adopts different views. The most restrictive one is shared by Nespor & Vogel (1986/2007), Frota (2000, 2012), Vogel (2009), Vigário (2010), a.o.: prosodic trees are composed of a limited and fixed set of phonological constituents, and are by nature non-recursive; hence, syntactic structures are deeper, while phonological structures are flatter. Frota and Vigário (like Ladd 1992, 1996/2008) also admit limited compounding, that is limited layers of constituents of the same type. Importantly, compound (recursive) prosodic domains and (non-compound) prosodic constituents display different phonological behavior: lower and higher levels within a recursive domain exhibit the *same kind* of phonology, the difference between layers being set in the *strength of that evidence* (e.g. more final lengthening at outer boundaries); while distinct prosodic constituents define the domains of *different kinds of phonological phenomena*. Other approaches, however, adopt a recursive view of prosodic structure (Ito & Mester 2009, 2012; Selkirk 2009, 2011; Van der Hulst 2010b, a.o.). Most often, *RECURSION is taken to be a constraint imposed on prosodic structures, despite the fact that it is violable (e.g. Selkirk 1995, among many others). Somewhat more hybrid positions include Ito & Mester (2012: 288), where distinct prosodic domains are considered to display *substantial and 'categorical' (i.e., not merely gradient) differences*, unlike varying layers of the same category, but what might be considered categorical-like phenomena is actually used to demonstrate distinct layers of the same category.

Although it is not impossible that languages could in principle vary with respect to the ranking of *RECURSION relative to other constraints, so that in some languages, but not others, it would inhibit the emergence of recursive configurations, I would like to pursue the more restrictive hypothesis that *RECURSION is a property of prosodic structure, playing a fundamental role at the syntax-phonology interface, so that categorical phonological phenomena apply with reference to prosodic structures that do not include (balanced) recursive groupings (prosodic groupings of constituents of the same level), and instances of recursive grouping may only be signaled by gradient, more superficial, phonetic-like cues.

Because ultimately this is an empirical question, my goal in this talk is to (i) concentrate on the structural difference between prosodic constituents and (balanced) recursive domains, (ii) establish the predictions of each configuration, and (iii) confront these with empirical facts found in language. Specifically, I will assume that *prosodic constituents are distinct prosodic domains*, whereas *recursive domains are instances of the same prosodic constituent*. The distinction between these two types of prosodic groupings predicts that prosodic constituents typically display (at least partially) distinct phonology, whereas the phonology of lower and higher levels in recursive structures will essentially coincide. Taking this view, I will review a variety of phenomena from different languages showing that a portion of what has been considered in the literature to signal *recursion* has in fact the properties expected from distinct, non-recursive prosodic constituents. I conclude discussing the implications of these observations to the theory of prosodic structure.