

Where do Phonological Words come from?

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Phonological words are necessary to get anywhere in analyzing the domain of application for language-specific demarcative rules, stress assignment, and minimal word constraints. Selkirk's (1995) influential theory of the syntax-phonology interface assumes that morphosyntax sensibly defines lexical words, which are mapped to phonological words—in the unmarked case, one-to-one. But, as Svenonius (2016) points out, it is far from clear whether modern incarnations of syntax provide a theory of the units that phonological words correspond to. The question I ask in this talk is whether phonological word formation can be predicted from morphosyntactic principles alone. I investigate the properties of a borderline category: prepositions. The many prepositions of Russian vary widely in their phonological and morphosyntactic characteristics. I demonstrate that whether prepositions project their own phonological words depends on some factors that are narrowly phonological, while others are purely morphosyntactic. Even when these factors are taken into account, the conclusion suggested by my investigation of Russian preposition is that some phonological word formation has to be determined diacritically, on an item-by-item basis. This richer theory of phonological word formation sheds light on certain phenomena whose analysis has been controversial, such as approximative inversion.

References

- Selkirk, Elisabeth. 1995. The prosodic structure of function words. In *University of Massachusetts Occasional Papers: Papers in Optimality Theory*, ed. Jill Beckman, Laura Walsh Dickey, and Suzanne Urbanczyk, 439–470. Amherst, MA: GLSA Publications.
- Svenonius, Peter. 2016. Spans and words. In *Morphological metatheory*, ed. Daniel Siddiqi and Heidi Harley, 201–222. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.