

LSA model abstract – for 1997 Linguistic Society of America meeting

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## **Licensing of prosodic features by syntactic rules: The key to auxiliary reduction**

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Auxiliary reduction (e.g. *she's* for *she is*) is well known to be blocked before sites of VP ellipsis (*\*She's usually home when he's*), pseudogapping (*\*It's doing more for me than it's for you*), wh-movement (*\*I wonder where he's now?*), etc. Most analyses connect this to empty categories. We show that this is incorrect.

Selkirk (*Phonology and syntax*, 1984:366) proposes a syntactic condition on prosody: Deaccenting is necessary for reduction, and a phrase-final monosyllable cannot be deaccented. Inkelas & Zec (1993) place the condition on prosodic (not syntactic) phrases, assuming the mapping principle that a dislocated syntactic phrase begins a new phonological phrase. Such accounts fail to predict correctly on comparative subdeletion (*\*She's a better scientist than he's* [NP *an* [QP  $\emptyset$ ] *engineer*]) or examples with subject-auxiliary inversion (*\*He's taller than's his friend* [AP  $\emptyset$ ]). Here the empty category or extraction or ellipsis site does not abut the auxiliary, yet still it cannot reduce. Inkelas & Zec posit (on rather weak arguments) dislocation in subdeletion and pseudogapping and thus predict the lack of deaccenting; but they must allow reduction in subject-auxiliary inversion sentences to get *Who's your friend?*, so they apparently cannot block *\*He's taller than's his friend* [AP  $\emptyset$ ].

Previously unnoticed is the relevance of rejoinder emphasis with *too/so*, as in *I am TOO gonna fix it!*. Reduction is blocked (*\*I'm TOO gonna fix it!*)--but here THERE IS NO DISPLACED OR ELIDED CONSTITUENT. This is the key to the constraints on auxiliary reduction. A syntactic condition of rejoinder emphasis calls for light accent on the auxiliary verb and heavy accent on *too/so* (prosodic conditions of this sort on syntactic constructions are not uncommon). But since (as noted by Selkirk) an auxiliary can reduce only when completely stressless, the requirements of rejoinder emphasis and auxiliary reduction clash irresolvably.

All the other constructions mentioned above similarly require lightly accented auxiliaries. For example, the VP ellipsis construction could be described as one in which a VP contains nothing but a lightly accented head (applied semantically to a free variable over VP meanings). What this means is the distribution of reduced auxiliaries can be completely accounted for by Selkirk's stresslessness condition--except that there are certain left context conditions on cliticization (noted by Kaisse 1983), these being the only remaining syntactic conditions on reduction: Auxiliaries cliticize only to (1) subjects, (2) subordinators (*than, that*), (3) proadverbial *so*, or (4) *wh*-words.

Our analysis needs no special rule for auxiliary reduction at all. As a matter of morphology, the auxiliaries have (at least) two shapes, one when completely deaccented and one when accented, and the syntax of certain constituent types determines light accent on head verbs (something that has to be stated anyway). This analysis offers no support for traces; in fact if traces exist,

then Selkirk's condition has to be modified rather awkwardly to say not just 'if it ends a constituent' but 'if it ends a constituent or has as its complement a case-marked trace.'