Interactions between prosody and morphosyntax in Fuzhou VO phrases

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This study examines how tone sandhi domains (TSDs) are determined in Fuzhou. The data include: (i) regular verb-object phrases (VOs) where the verb takes a direct bare noun object; and (ii) non-canonical VOs where the verb takes an adverbial expression as a surface object.

Several observations are made. First, a three-way sandhi exists within every TSD. All antepenultimate syllables neutralize to low tones. A penultimate syllable’s sandhi tone is dependent on the final syllable’s citation tone, which remains unchanged. Second, in regular VOs, a monosyllabic verb consistently forms a single TSD with its direct bare noun object, but a disyllabic verb and its object are separated into two TSDs. Third, in non-canonical VOs, a monosyllabic verb never forms a single TSD with its adverbial object. Three questions are raised. First, what is the nature of each TSD? Second, why does the number of syllables in a verb determine the distinct TSDs formed in regular VOs? Third, how can we account for the different patterns of TSD formation in two types of VOs?

We propose that each TSD equals to a prosodic word (PrWd). OT analyses are provided to show how PrWds are derived. The analysis of regular VOs relies on the ranking of a prosodic markedness constraint ft bin above the word-level interface correspondence constraints. The contrast between two types of VOs is explained by applying the model of Multiple Spell-Out and a cyclic interaction of morphosyntax and prosody. This approach is new in explaining the TSDs that are constrained by morphosyntax.

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