

Templatic Structures and Affix Ordering: an Interface between Phonology and Syntax

The functional head approach suggests that inflection is not a morphological phenomenon, but it cannot account of affix orderings which are not sensitive to syntactic properties (cf. Stump, 1998). This is the case for Afar verbal inflection: the initial sound of the stem determines the prefixation or the suffixation of person and aspect markers (cf. Hayward, 1978) as shown below for *taduureh* 'you return' and *faktah* 'you open':

t-a-duure-h [2ndsg-Imperfect-return-foc] vs *fak-t- a-h* [open-2ndsg-Imperfect-foc]

Developments within the Minimalist Program (cf. Chomsky, 1999) suggest that the phonological component may be an eligible candidate for relating syntactic input to legible form. In other respects, templatic analysis within Government Phonology - CVCV option (cf. Kaye & al., 1990, Lowenstamm, 1996) suggest that there are specific templatic positions depending on syntactic category. Thus, I assume that lexical roots can acquire their category when they are inserted in a template which contains a position corresponding to a syntactic category.

I will argue that syntactic heads have a phonological interpretation. They provide specific templatic domains: templates tie the syntactic component and the phonological component together. Then, the templatic structure at the morphological level is the same as the syntactic structure; consequently syntactic constituents correspond to templatic domains that share the same hierarchical structure. Then, I show how syntactic movements progressively construct the template of the complete form. Constraints on the well-formedness of templatic domains interact with syntactic movements. Templates act as an interface between syntax and morphology. Depending on the well-formedness of a templatic domain under a head, the CV unit of the next functional head will be directly adjoined on the left-edge of the previous template, or move to its right-edge.

In Afar, differences between roots of strong and weak verbs have an effect on the templatic construction that predicts the possibility of having prefixes with strong verbs but not with weak verbs: prefix verbs never exhibit a vowel between the two first root consonants whereas suffix verbs always do. Now, the initial CV position of the verbal template (cf. Lowenstamm, 1999) must be properly governed to remain empty. It is the case for suffix verbs: then, verbs move to the inflectional head and thus, person and aspect are suffixed. On the contrary, prefix verbs never exhibit a vowel that could properly govern the initial CV: thus, it has to be identified. Markers from the inflectional head are the best candidates to do that. Then, the verbal head merges with the inflectional head. The phonological constraint on templates formation activates the adequate syntactic operation.

If we assume that templatic domains lie at the interface between syntax and phonology, we account for some issues of affix ordering, that involve no syntactic property, while syntactic structures remain. Principles that govern templatic well-formation put constraints on syntactic operations at the interface of the phonological form. However, some issues may arise from languages that don't exhibit explicit templatic structures, but we can assume that some specific templatic positions, corresponding to syntactic heads, have to be identified within words of those languages.

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