

The Research Institute of Linguistics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

16 November 2017

Abstract

Acoustic prominence and phonological head-dependent structure

Kuniya Nasukawa (Tohoku Gakuin University, Sendai, Japan):

We find a mismatch between phonology and syntax with regard to the roles of heads and dependents. In phonology, heads are important in both structural and informational terms. In syntax, on the other hand, heads have a different function: syntactic heads, like phonological heads, have an important structural role because they license dependent structure, but unlike phonological heads their informational role is relatively unimportant because they usually bear less linguistic (e.g. lexical) information than dependents. In order to achieve a greater degree of uniformity between phonology and syntax, this talk proposes a reassessment of the roles of heads and dependents in phonology. Contrary to the established view, it is argued that heads in phonology, like those in syntax, are structurally important but lexically unimportant whereas dependents are structurally unimportant but lexically important. This view is supported not only by segmental distribution patterns but also by referring to acoustic evidence, specifically, the size of the modulated carrier signal (cf. the more standard phonetic measure of sonority).