

On the integration of gradient inter- and intra-speaker variation in linguistic data into formal grammatical theory: A look at prosodic phrasing in Spanish

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This paper presents an experimental study on the prosodic phrasing of sentences with (embedded) *clitic left-dislocations* (CLLDs) in Peninsular Spanish and offers new perspectives on how the phenomenon of inter-speaker variation in linguistic data can be integrated into formal grammatical theory. Results from a production experiment based on scripted speech show that CLLDs have an obligatory left and right boundary (typically a high edge tone at the intermediate phrase level), while other sentence-internal boundaries are subject to inter-speaker variation. The hypothesis presented here suggests that prosodic boundaries which mark information structural (IS) categories (such as the ones for CLLD) are more necessary than boundaries which satisfy alignment constraints; only the latter can show inter-speaker variation (*IS-over-Alignment Hypothesis*, see also Feldhausen 2016). A modified version of the Stochastic Optimality Theory (SOT, Boersma & Hayes 2001) is proposed to account for the attested inter-speaker variation. By assuming that the degree of constraint overlap can vary between individual speakers while the underlying hierarchy remains invariant, the modified version of SOT is applicable beyond variation in the output structure of a whole population.

References: Boersma, Paul & Hayes, Bruce (2001). Empirical tests of the gradual learning algorithm. *Linguistic Inquiry* 32, 45–86. Feldhausen, Ingo (2016). Inter-speaker Variation, Optimality Theory and the Prosody of Clitic Left-Dislocations in Spanish. *Probus* 28(2), 293–334.