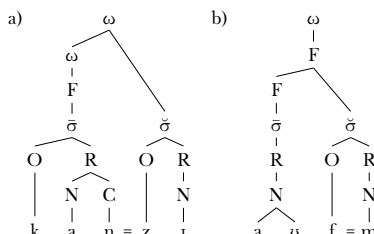


Prosodic asymmetries between simple and special clitics in German

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The distinction between ‘simple’ and ‘special’ clitics (Zwicky 1977)—the former productive and phonologically transparent and the latter more restricted and phonologically opaque—has a long history, but attempts to differentiate the two often focus on syntactic, rather than phonological structure. This paper provides a formal account of their phonology, arguing that the distinction results from differing prosodification. Simple clitics attach at the postlexical level, resulting in nested prosodic words (ω), e.g. (1a). However, as their more affix-like behaviour suggests, special clitics are lexically stored and attach at the lexical level, e.g. (1b).

(1) Prosodic representation of (a) [kantzɪ] (< kann=sie ‘can she’) and (b) [aʊ̯fm̩] (< auf=dem ‘on the’)



The need for recursion within the prosodic hierarchy is increasingly recognised (cf. Gussenhoven 1986; Zec & Inkelas 1991; McCarthy 1993; Booij 1995; Selkirk 1996; Wiese 2000) and this paper assumes default cliticisation in German to be left-leaning, producing a single ω comprising a lexical host and one or more unstressed function words (cf. Lahiri & Wheeldon 1997; Lahiri & Plank 2010). This is reflected in the behaviour of enclitic pronouns (see Bögel 2021 for similar findings for Swabian), which freely alternate with their full forms and—especially in colloquial speech—produce full paradigms: [habiçs] (< habe=ich=es ‘I have it’), [hastəs] (< hast=du=es ‘you have it’), [hatəs] (< hat=er=es ‘he has it’) etc. (Nübling 2010). Furthermore, simple clitics often fail to conform to phonological generalisations applying to ω s, such as the constraint against final full lax vowels. This leads Hall (1999) to assume such clitics attach directly to the phonological phrase. However, these constraints in fact appear to take the F rather than the ω as their domain; reduced forms such as [dʊ] (< /du:/ ‘you’) are thus accounted for by this analysis, as they are dominated by a ω , not by a F.

In contrast, special clitics *are* constrained by foot structure and are not synchronically derivable from their full forms, such as *Verschmelzungsformen* (VF_n, ‘fused forms’), where definite articles encliticise to prepositions (e.g. [tʃʊm] < zu=dem ‘to the’). Although much of the literature takes a syntactic approach (cf. Nübling 2005; Hinrichs 1986), Wiese (1988) suggests that these articles attach at the lexical level, implicitly referring to a disyllabic (i.e. quantity-insensitive) trochee in describing the maximal VF. However, this is at odds with the German metrical system, which constructs weight-sensitive (moraic) trochees (Jessen 1999). Assuming that German permits a minimally recursive F, incorporating a light syllable into a F with a monosyllabic F as its sister (cf. Booij 1995; Kager & Martínez-Paricio 2018 for Dutch), one can account for the behaviour of VF_n without abandoning weight sensitivity (1b). Full VF_n must comprise a prosodically well-formed F, with a preference for a heavy stressed syllable; monosyllabic [H]_F forms, e.g. [am], are preferable to disyllabic [[H]_FL]_F forms, e.g. [[aʊ̯f]_Fm̩]_F. [LL]_F forms, e.g. [anə]_F (< an=die) are less desirable and trisyllabic [[H]_FL]_FL forms are ungrammatical, e.g. */hɪntəʁɪ/ (< hinter=der), */tʃʌvɪʃənə/ (< zwischen=die).

This preference scale is reflected in the degree of integration of such forms into the dialects and written standard language, with [H]_F forms the most lexicalised (and mostly obligatory); [[H]_FL]_F forms are an optional, colloquial feature and [LL]_F forms are restricted to rapid speech. The present analysis accounts for this in formal terms: whether or not VF_n truly represent grammaticalisation in action (Nübling 2005), they must synchronically be accounted for in phonological terms. The present analysis explains their special phonological behaviour and their apparent reference to syllabic trochees, despite the language’s weight-sensitivity. In addition, it formally accounts for the asymmetries between simple and special clitics, including the failure of certain phonological constraints to apply to simple clitics.