

BCGL 14: Where syntax and phonology meet

The nature of PF and the syntax-phonology boundary

Call for papers

The Center for Research in Syntax, Semantics, and Phonology (CRISSP) of KU Leuven invites abstracts for the 14th edition of the Brussels Conference on Generative Linguistics (BCGL 14), to be held on 16–17 December 2021. The conference will take place in Brussels if permitted by local COVID 19-regulations, and online if not. The theme of BCGL 14 is the nature of PF and the syntax-phonology boundary.

Work on the interface connecting phonology and (morpho)syntax has been the topic of much generative linguistic research throughout the last couple of decades. Recurring topics of investigation within this tradition are (i) reference strategy (whether the domains where phonological processes apply are determined by syntax directly, or are mediated by the Prosodic Hierarchy), (ii) locality (what kinds of syntactic objects constitute the domain for phonological operations, e.g. X^0 , XP, CP, or phases), (iii) exponence (what are the targets of phonological realization, e.g. syntactic terminals, syntactic constituents, or spans), and (iv) visibility and directionality (how much access and influence syntax and phonology have on each other). See Elordieta (2008), Scheer (2011, To appear), Shih (2017), and Dobashi (2020) for an overview and relevant references.

A crucial component featuring in most of the work addressing the aforementioned topics is PF, which is traditionally considered the interface level connecting morphosyntax and phonology. However, since the scope of narrow syntax has been progressively shrunk in Minimalism, properties previously attributed to this component are being outsourced to PF, which has thus been argued to host operations such as linearization, heavy NP-shift, head movement, clitic placement, copy deletion, etc. Hence, whereas within the traditional Y-model PF was conceived of as an interpretive component coextensive with the phonological module, in recent years it has come to refer to a component that hosts a whole range of operations that deal with non-(exclusively-)phonological matter. This can be clearly observed in DM-based approaches, where PF is conceived of as an internally complex derivational component (Pak 2008), but also in more phonologically oriented work (Samuels 2011, Idsardi and Raimy 2013), where the mapping between narrow syntax and phonetics is decomposed into several computational systems.

The overall picture is one in which, despite the considerable explanatory burden placed on PF, the latter's properties are poorly understood, often vaguely and inconsistently defined, hardly compatible with modularity, or, possibly, with phonology itself. For instance, the 'P' in PF is variably understood as standing for 'phonology' or 'phonetics' (Chomsky 1995, 2000, 2001), and despite the fact that PF is often assumed to be coextensive with the phonological module, it is argued to be able to handle both phonological and morphological primitives (Hornstein et al. 2005, and much DM literature). We believe that the central role played by PF in current theorizing requires us to sharpen our understanding of this component, and ideally to converge on a conception of it that is compatible with the properties of the interfacing modules and the overall architecture of grammar.

Work addressing such topics is usually carried out within a single subdiscipline, i.e. either by syntacticians, morphologists, or phonologists, who rarely have the chance to compare and discuss each other's perspectives, thereby benefiting from each other's insights. A couple of notable exceptions are two workshops organized at Stanford University in 1988 (resulting in Inkelas and Zec 1990) and 2012 (resulting in Gribanova and Shih 2017). BCGL14 intends to continue along this path, and aims at bringing together phonologists and (morpho)syntacticians to stimulate an interdisciplinary discussion on the nature and the properties of PF, with specific reference to the following questions:

- What are the status and the properties of PF in modular Minimalist approaches?
- If PF imposes conditions on syntactic computation, what kind of conditions would they be? How

would this conditioning work exactly, i.e. how would it be implemented? How and when do syntax and PF “see each other”?

- If these conditions are of a phonological nature, what is the kind of phonological information syntax can access? Relatedly, how does this fit with the assumption that syntax is phonology-blind?
- Is it possible to develop a (representational) theory of phonology such that some of the alleged PF-operations can be understood as purely phonological?
- Would an explicit distinction between phonology and phonetics help in further reducing PF to a purely phonological component?

Invited speakers

- Vera Gribanova (Stanford University)
- Andrew Nevins (University College London)
- Tobias Scheer (Université Côte d’Azur)

Organizing committee

- Edoardo Cavirani (KU Leuven–CRISSP)
- Nikos Angelopoulos (KU Leuven–CRISSP)
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Abstract guidelines

Abstracts should not exceed two pages, including data, references, and diagrams. Abstracts should be typed in at least 11-point font, with one-inch margins (letter-size; 8½ by 11 inch or A4) and a maximum of 50 lines of text per page. Abstracts must be anonymous and submissions are limited to 2 per author, at most one of which is single-authored. Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Please submit your abstract using the EasyChair link for BCGL14: <https://easychair.org/my/conference?conf=bcg114#>

Important dates

- First call for papers: June 25, 2021
- Second call for papers: August 27, 2021
- Abstract submission deadline: September 17, 2021
- Notification of acceptance: October 29, 2021
- Conference: December 16-17, 2021

Conference webpage

<https://www.crissp.be/bcgl-14-where-syntax-and-phonology-meet/>

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