

Hierarchical and linear contrasts in prosody and syntax

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This talk involves joint work with Dicky Gilbers.

Differences in prominence are pervasive in the language system. In this explorative work, we show that it is not only the case that contrasts between adjacent elements play a role at many different hierarchical levels within both phonology and syntax, but also that there are asymmetries *between* levels of description, leading to disharmonic orderings. Concretely, we will look at the prosodic (stress) system in Dutch, at the X-bar configuration (resulting from Merge), and at word order variation and syntactic categories (including the head final filter and VO/OV issues in Germanic).

On a more abstract, conceptual level, I'd like to initiate a discussion about the question how 'third factor' principles can be implemented in the language system and how it is possible that one of such factors (a cognitive desire for contrast) has a variety of consequences that range from basic principles (headedness) to 'emergence of the unmarked' effects.

Keywords: asymmetry, contrast, disharmony, head-final/initial, HFF, OCP, prominence, prosodic hierarchy, stress, syntactic categories, word order, X-bar system