

Linguistics 212. Seminar in Phonology: The Phonology of Syntax.

Description: Variation in the phonology of words according to their contexts within larger expressions. Syntactic, morphological, lexical, and stylistic factors conditioning this variation. The place of these phenomena in a theory of grammar.

“External sandhi”, “phrase phonology”, “postlexical phonology”, “shape alternations”, “precompiled lexical phonology”: a few of the names that have been used (in various theoretical frameworks) for variation in the phonology of words according to their contexts within larger expressions. Such variants can be (a) meaning-bearing, (b) facultative, or (c) complementarily distributed (or, frequently, some combination of (b) and (c)). The words subject to variation can be picked out by virtue of their phonological form or their morphosyntactic properties, or the selection can be idiosyncratic (or, frequently, all three factors are relevant). The environments in which particular variants occur can be similarly phonological, morphosyntactic, lexically idiosyncratic, or some combination of these.

This seminar focuses on the phonological side of these matters, though there will be plenty of syntax and morphology (and stylistic variation). We’ll look at a few cases in great detail and also survey a wide range of phenomena, with a view towards finding a place for these very complex (but also very commonplace) phenomena in a theory of grammar.