Morpheme ordering, and the syntax phonology interface

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Within current formal syntactic approaches, there is quite widespread agreement for a late spell-out model, where syntactic structure building feeds spell-out and interpretation cyclically, in phases. The choice of the particular phonological forms is determined on the basis of local syntactic configurations, with more specified forms blocking less specified forms. But beyond this, there is much less general agreement or general discussion on what the syntactic atoms are (where are the atoms that spell out linkers, case markers, theme vowels, agreement features merged?), what the derived structures on which phonological insertion operate look like (are these X zeros?) What do we mean when words are said to have (layered) feature bundles? Is this a shortcut for syntactic structures? How exactly are morphological objects built? By head movement or by phrasal movement? Does this question make sense within Bare Phrase structure? Is there structure building post-syntactically (as in Distributed Morphology)? How rich is syntactic structure? Are hierarchical structures antisymmetric? How exactly are hierarchical structures linearized? etc

Against this general theoretical background where there is no separate morphology, my presentation will argue for some very specific answers to these questions. More specifically:

1. I will present an argument in favor of syntactic (merge account) treatment of word structure, based on attested and unattested patterns crosslinguistically. These yield information about the mechanism by which word structure is formed from syntactic hierarchies (second merge, i.e. phrasal movement for suffixes) and map onto linear orders (Cinque 2005, Koopman and Szabolcsi (K&Sz, 2000), Koopman (2005)).

2. I will examine what exactly needs to be said about epp related spell-out properties of individual atoms of syntactic structure. Rather than approaching this from traditional morphological objects, I will approach this problem by looking at heads that are clearly part of the syntactic structures, and show that heads (LIs) in general can idiosyncratically impose various types of phonological properties on their second merged objects (but (probably) not on first merges objects). Such properties,

should be localized on the structure building epp property of a LI (a structural atom) (Koopman 2002, 2012), and are quirky, i.e. they may vary with individual atoms, and across dialects. More specifically, these properties encode the maximal depth at which phonological material may appear in a specific local location, and are calculated on the output of the syntactic derivation. This property, "grafted" on the epp, reins in syntactic recursion, accounts for dialectal and speaker differences, and other puzzles that have resisted principled accounts. Once the general need for this property established, it extends naturally to what are traditionally morphological heads. Under this view, it is expected that tense affixes show the behavior of phrasal affixes in some languages (yielding what I take 'suspended affixation' to be in Turkish), but not in others (English), or why different affixes within the same language show different properties.

3. Lastly, I will discuss the list of often cited differences between word structure and phrases and show how each of these, including lexical integrity/islandhood, are properties that cut across syntax and morphology, but do not distinguish them, as expected.