INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed there are two prosodic units in French:
- a larger unit: the Intonation Phrase, IP
- a smaller unit: the Accentual Phrase, AP

There is some evidence for a third level of phrasing in French
But the existence of this intermediate phrase (ip) is still controversial.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Jun & Fougeron’s model of French intonation (Jun & Fougeron, 2000)

Jun & Fougeron proposed an intermediate level of phrasing (ip) to explain specific syntactic structures:
- the ip distribution is restricted to specific structures
- the phonetic and phonological properties of the ip are still unclear

The ip definition of Jun & Fougeron is not sufficient:
- the ip distribution is restricted to specific structures
- the qnestion of the Noun Phrase/Verb Phrase break (NP/VP break) in French

The question of the Noun Phrase/Verb Phrase break (NP/VP break) in French

-Delais-Roussarie (1995) proposed a constraint which aligns the right edge of an NP with the right edge of an IP in French.
- HOWVER: No phonetic argument to justify that the NP/VP break correspond to an IP boundary.

ISSUES

- Is there an intermediate phrase in French?
- Are the boundaries cues gradual or categorial?

HYPOTHESES

- The ip is not restricted to specific structures
- The ip right boundary is aligned with a NP/VP break
- The ip right boundary is marked by stronger preboundary lengthening

METHOD

Stimuli

20 SVO utterances with the target syllables at 4 contexts:

Prosedic boundary condition Sentences
1- at a PW boundary Les grenadiers de Marrakesh ne poussent pas…
Pomegranates of Marrakesh do not grow up…
2- at an AP boundary Le saunaJAP de Paolo deviendra…
Paolo’s sauna will become…
3- at an AP Boundary which is also a NP/VP break Le saunaJAP/XP deviendra…
The sauna will become…
4- at an IP boundary Le saunaH, d’après ce qu’on m’a dit…
The sauna, according to what I was told…

Measures

Target syllable and vowel durations (in ms) in the 4 contexts

Task

Two French native speakers read the sentences 4 times at normal and fast speech rates
(for a total of 320 sentences)

Statistics

Two linear mixed models

RESULTS

Vowel duration in (ms)

Syllable duration in (ms)

AP/XP final syllables are significantly different from AP and IP final syllables at normal speech rate

FINDINGS

At normal speech rate

A syntactic constraint is responsible for the ip right boundary placement

ALIGN (XP;IP;R): align the right edge of a maximal syntactic projection with the right edge of an ip

At fast speech rate

Only IP and AP/XP vowels were significantly longer than within AP vowels

DISCUSSION

Is the syntactic constraint sufficient for the ip boundary placement?

F0 Height in Hz

F0 values of AP/XP syllables are not significantly higher than AP final syllables

In the AP/XP condition, the NPs were always produced as a single AP

A length constraint might interact with the syntactic constraint

What is the nature of the boundary cues discret/gradient?

In a study to appear, Michelas & D’Imperio showed that the number of constituents did not affect the relative strength of phonetic cues associated to the ip boundary

CONCLUSION

In French:
- AP/XP final syllables are significantly different from AP and IP final syllables
- A NP/VP break reenforces preboundary lengthening

The results show a mixed marking for prosodic boundaries (compensatory effect between lengthening and tonal cues at fast speech rate)

References


A good bottle of Champagne would be like it?

[Une bonne bouteille de champagne]IP

A good bottle of Champagne, would be like it?

Les amis de Pauline adoraient ce restaurant.

Pauline’s friends love this restaurant

The sauna, according to what I was told…

The diary of Lola’s sauna in Djebra is full until next year.

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REFERENCES