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A Prosodic Account of To-Contraction

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In this talk, we focused upon wanna-contraction, as exemplified below, and argued that it is possible to characterize the phenomenon as one of the cases for which any version of prosodic theory is responsible, as opposed to the generally accepted view that the presence or absence of wh-traces must bear the responsibility.

(1) a. Who, do you \{want to\} see t₁?

{ wanna }

b. Who, do you \{ want t₁ to \} see Bill?

{ \*wanna }

Adopting the prosodic theory of Nespor and Vogel (1986), we propose that want and to are contracted only when they are within the same intonational phrase (IPh). Following the syntactic projection system of Fukui (1986), we assume that the S-Structures of (1a) and (1b) are given respectively as follows:

(2) a. [who, do you want \_{ \_ \_ \_ } to \_{ \_ \_ \_ } PRO \_ see t₁]\)

b. [who, do you want \_{ \_ \_ \_ } IP t₁ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ to \_{ \_ \_ \_ \_ } see Bill]

We also assume that the categories of XP level constitute an IPh in the prosodic component. Thus (2a) and (2b) are mapped onto (3a) and (3b), respectively:

(3) a. [IPh who, do you want to see]

b. [IPh who, do you want] [IPh to see]
In (3a), contraction of want and to is permitted since they are within one IPh, while it is blocked in (3b) since they are contained in different IPh's.

Appealing to the prosodic domain in this way to account for wanna contraction, we have no need to say that wanna contraction is the isolated case that is sensitive to the presence of wh-traces, in light of the observation that external sandhi rules are generally not sensitive to the presence or absence of such traces:

(4) Nasal Assimilation in Spanish:
Que1 canta[m] t1 para navidad? (<canta[n]>)
who they-sing for Christmas
"Who do they sing for Christmas?"

(5) Gorgia Toscania in Italian:
Chi1 hai invitato t1 [h]on Marco? (<[k]on>)
who have you-invited with
"Who did you invite with Marco?"

The wh-traces are invisible to the application of these rules. Rather, the rules may apply when the relevant elements are within the same IPh:

(6) [IPA que1 cantan t1 para navidad ]

(7) [IPA chi1 hai invitato t1 kon Marco ]

The prosodic-theoretic analysis can also cover the cases where the structural 'distance' between want and to, rather than the presence of traces, is relevant:

(8) a. I don't want [c. [IPA to flagellate oneself in public] [ to become standard practice in this monastery]]
(*I don't wanna flagellate....*)

b. I don't want to flagellate oneself in public to become standard practice in this monastery.

(*I don't want anyone who continues to wanna to stop wanting*)

These syntactic structures are mapped onto the following prosodic structures:

(9) a. [IPh I don't want] [IPh to flagellate oneself in public to become standard practice in this monastery]

b. [IPh I don't want] [IPh anyone who continues to want] [IPh to stop wanting]

In each structure, want and to belong to different IPh's so that contraction is not permitted.