

THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday 16/06/2024

16:15-17:45

Webb 103

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The Role of Frequency in Phonological Cliticization

A clitic is a unique linguistic element, as it is a morpheme that has two allomorphs – bound and unbound. The unbound allomorph has an independent prosodic structure and has the status of a Prosodic Word. The bound allomorph lacks that status and has no independent prosodic structure. It cliticizes to an adjacent word, which serves as its host, altering its prosodic structure. In this case, a clitic can exhibit segmental reduction. Several factors, such as degree of accessibility (Cohen 2003) and lexical status (Ganani 2022) can play a role in cliticization.

This study examines whether the token frequency of the host is an additional factor that may affect the production of the clitic. Studies on frequency show that frequency can affect various aspects of phonology, including perception (Lorenz and Tizón-Couto 2019), production (Hooper 1976b, Coetzee 2008), and historical changes (Hare and Elman 1995). In phonological production, lexical items with high token frequency tend to undergo phonological reduction. Lexical items with low token frequency, on the other hand, tend to preserve their structure and resist phonological reduction (Hooper 1976b, Coetzee 2008, Bybee 2001).

In this study, I show that the Hebrew clitic *leḵa* ‘to you’ tends to undergo more phonological reduction when paired with a host that has high token frequency. I argue that this result indicates that cliticization is a gradient phenomenon rather than a binary one. Furthermore, I claim that frequency must be viewed as an inherent part of phonological grammar and must be accounted for by formal theories of phonology.

Click [here](#) to see the colloquium program.