Iterativity in Bemba H Tone Spread

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This talk presents a case of mutually-feeding iterativity in phrasal phonology where a single High tone in an initial phonological phrase can surface on each lexically toneless syllable of subsequent phonological phrases in cases of multiple complementation. Mutually-feeding iterative H spreading only occurs across a series of single-word phonological phrases. Thus compare (1a) where it applies to (1b) where it does not.

(1a)   (Verb-Object Pronoun) (Object) (Object) (Adverb)
        (b**á**-ká-mú-shíík-íl-á) (Chítúúndú) (cáángá) (bwíínó)
        'they will bury the bush-baby for Chitundu well'
(1b)   (Verb Object) (Object) (Adverb)
        (b**á**-ká-shíìk-ìl-à Chìtùùndù) (cààngà) (bwìinò)

This tonal spreading pattern follows from a number of tonal spreading processes that are sensitive to phrase boundaries in Copperbelt Bemba: (i) Unbounded High Spreading, (ii) Bounded High Spreading and (iii) Inter-word H Doubling. Of these, Unbounded Spreading most clearly diagnoses phonological phrase boundaries. Specifically, the rightmost lexical H in a word will undergo unbounded spreading if that word is phonological phrase-final (1a), but will undergo bounded spreading if another word follows in the same p-phrase (1b). (Lexical Hs are in bold and underlined. Phrasing is indicated by brackets).

What this iterative tone pattern in (1a) betrays is syntactic constituency where an object co-occurring with an object-marked verb is not part of the same constituent, contrasted with (1b) where no object marker is present. In this case we can argue that the iterative process is licensing particular syntactic structure and in this sense can be subject to a non-iterative formal analysis that relies on the specific syntactic conditions.