Nuuchahnulth Suffixation: Morpho-phonological Interactions in a Dynamic Model

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The arrival of Optimality Theory (OT, McCarthy & Prince 1993) has provided a challenge to derivational approaches to phonology. Nonetheless data from a wide variety of languages seem to demand some notion of derivation (Roca 1997). One solution to this problem has been to combine OT with the idea from Lexical Phonology and Morphology of multiple strata. Stonham (2004) suggested an analysis of this sort to explain a variety of morpho-phonological patterns in the Southern Wakashan language Nuuchahnulth. This paper provides an alternative solution, compatible with the antilexicalism of Distributed Morphology (DM, Halle & Marantz).

Suffixes in Nuuchahnulth have been divided into two categories: 'formative' and 'incremental' (Sapir & Swadesh 1939). This paper argues that differences between the morpho-phonological effects of the two types can be traced back to different points of merger in the syntax, and consequent differences in the timing of Spell-out with respect to their hosts. In particular, phase boundaries (Chomsky 2000) play a crucial role in the analyses of the various patterns of glottalisation, lenition, delabialisation and reduplication.

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