

FUNCTIONAL HIERARCHIES AND PHONOLOGICAL BLOCKING IN A'INGAE

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1 OVERVIEW In this abstract, I describe and analyze cases of syntactically-conditioned phonological blocking in A'ingae (or Cofán, ISO 639-3: con, an indigenous isolate spoken by ca. 1,500 people in the Amazon). The core generalization will be that a morphophonological operation (otherwise regularly triggered by a suffix) is blocked if the base of suffixation has undergone phonological evaluation triggered by a functional head and the suffix does not belong to same functional sequence as the base. This shows that phonology must have direct access to the base's syntactic category, *pace* strict modularity (e.g. Chomsky, 1966; Sadock, 2012). All the data has been collected by the author.

2 BACKGROUND A'ingae is a highly agglutinating, exclusively suffixing language characterized by a system of complex morphologically mediated interactions between metrical stress and glottal stops (which are analyzed as a prosodic feature e.g. by Dąbkowski, 2025). In many complex words (to be seen in §3), the phonological effects associated with the outermost suffixes override the stress and glottalization established in previous cycles (Dąbkowski, 2025), as predicted by most cyclic frameworks of the phon-morph interface, including LMP (Kiparsky, 1982), Stratal OT (Kiparsky, 2000), and Cophonology Theory (Orgun, 1996). Here, I focus on cases which depart from those predictions.

3 DATA When a low nominalizing suffix, such as the bounded space classifier *-khû* BND or the place classifier *-ʔthi* PLC, attaches to (a bare root or) a base with a low verbalizer (1) or another low nominalizer (2),¹ the outermost suffix applies its phonology (e.g. deletes the base's glottalization and reassigns stress). (In the derivations below, each step is an independently well-formed word, annotated with a description of the phonological process triggered by the suffix that formed it, as well as the meaning of the output. Stress is marked with the acute accent (´) and **boldface**.)

- (1) / **púʔ**ta -en / root is underlyingly stressed and glottalized
 / [**púʔ**taen]_{vP} -khû / -en CAUS does not affect stress or glottalization ("shoot")
 [**putá**enkhû]_{nP} -khû BND deletes ʔ and stresses the penult ("shooting room")
 pierce -CAUS -BND
- (2) / **tsúʔ**tha -ʔchu / root is underlyingly stressed and glottalized
 / [**tsúʔ**thaʔchu]_{nP} -ʔthi / -ʔchu RND deletes previous ʔ and stresses the antepenult ("knee")
 [**tsúthá**chuʔthi]_{nP} -ʔthi PLC deletes ʔ and stresses the antepenult ("knee area")
 bone -RND -PLC

When a high nominal inflectional affix attaches to a (derived) noun (3), or a high verbal inflectional affix attaches to an (inflected) verb (4), the higher affix likewise overrides the base's stress (and ʔ).

- (3) / panza -ʔsú / root is underlyingly stressless
 / [**pán**zaʔsú]_{nP} -ndekhû / -ʔsú SN stresses the antepenult ("hunter")
 [**panzasú**ndekhû]_{#P} -ndekhû PL.ANIM deletes ʔ and stresses the antepenult ("hunters")
 hunt -SN -PL.ANIM
- (4) / panza -ʔfa / root is underlyingly stressless
 / [**panzá**ʔfa]_{TP} -jama / -ʔfa PLS stresses the penult ("(they) hunted")
 [**panzaʔfá**jama]_{CP} -jama PROH retains ʔ but stresses the antepenult ("don't y'all hunt")
 hunt -PLS -PROH

However, when a nominal derivational affix attaches to a base carrying verbal inflectional morphology (5), or structurally high nominal case marking (6), the overriding is blocked. The overriding

1 The following glossing abbreviations have been used: 1 = first person, ANIM = animate, BND = bounded, CAUS = causative, GEN = genitive, NEG = negative, PL = plural, PLC = place, PLS = plural subject, PROH = prohibitive, RND = round, SG = singular, SN = subject nominalizer.

is also blocked when a nominal inflectional affix attaches to a base with high verbal inflection (7). (After *-mbi* NEG, *-ndekhû* PL.ANIM is realized as *-ndekhia*. For an analysis, see Dąbkowski, 2023.)

- (5) / *panza -ʔfa* / root is underlyingly stressless
 / [*panzáʔfa*]_{TP} -ʔthi / -ʔfa PLS stresses the penult (“(they) hunted”)
 [*panzáʔfaʔthi*]_{nP} -ʔthi PLC’s overwriting blocked: *[*panzáʔfaʔthi*], cf. -ʔthi PLC in (2)
 hunt -PLS -PLC (“area where (they) hunted”)
- (6) / *ñá -mbe* / root is underlyingly stressed
 / [*ñámbe*]_{KP} -khû / -mbe GEN does not affect stress (“mine”)
 [*ñámbekhû*]_{nP} -khû BND’s overwriting blocked: *[*ñámbekhû*], cf. -khû BND in (1)
 1SG -GEN -BND (“my room”)
- (7) / *panza -mbi* / root is underlyingly stressless
 / [*panzámbi*]_{TP} -ndekhia / -mbi NEG stresses the penult (“did not hunt”)
 [*panzámbindekhia*]_{#P} overwriting blocked: *[*panzámbindekhia*], cf. -ndekhû PL.ANIM in (3)
 hunt -NEG -PL.ANIM (“those who did not hunt”)

4 ANALYSIS I assume that (i) “low” derivational suffixes are heads of categorizing projections (e.g. *vP*, *nP*, *aP*, ...), (ii) “high” inflectional affixes are heads of functional projections (e.g. *AspP*, *TP*, *CP*, *#P*, *KP*, ...), (iii) functional projections are organized in standard projection hierarchies, e.g. *C* > *T* > *Asp* > *Vce*, and *K* > *D* > *#* (Adger, 2003), and (iv) each suffix triggers a cycle of spell-out. When the base of affixation (consists of a bare root or) has only categorizing suffixes, the outermost suffix overrides that base’s stress/? (1-3). This shows that the spell-out of categorizing projections does not block later overriding. If the base has undergone a functional projection spell-out (e.g. *TP*), but the outer suffix ranks higher than the base in a functional projection hierarchy (e.g. the prohibitive *C*-head *-jama* PROH), overriding also takes place (4). **However**, if the base has undergone a functional projection spell-out, and the attaching suffix does not belong to the same functional hierarchy as the base—either because it involves a nominal suffix attaching to a verbal base (5, 7), or because the suffix ordering violates a functional projection hierarchy, e.g. *nP* coming after *KP* in (6)—the overriding is blocked.

5 DISCUSSION The condition on phonological blocking underlined above relates affixes to the syntactic category of their base, showing that (morpho)phonological grammar must have some access to syntactic information. This challenges frameworks which bake bracket erasure into their architectural assumptions (e.g. Kiparsky, 1982; Orgun, 1996; Kiparsky, 2000).

Instead, A’ingae data support approaches where some syntactic information is preserved and available to phonology after spell-out. This includes *SPE*, where phonological rules can reference syntactic labels, as well as an increasing number of modern proposals which allow for some permeability between phonology and morphosyntax (e.g. Simpson and Wu, 2002; Fox and Pesetsky, 2005; Dobler et al., 2011; Gribanova and Harizanov, 2017; Newell, 2017; Branán, 2018; Martinović, 2019).

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