ABSTRACT. This paper deals with a class of morphological alternations that seem to involve syntactic adjacency. More specifically, it deals with alternative realizations of syntactic terminals that occur when a particular phrase immediately follows a particular head. We argue that this type of allomorphy is not conditioned by a syntactic adjacency condition. Instead, it is found when the head and phrase in question are contained in the same prosodic phrase at the interface that connects syntax and phonology (PF). We illustrate our approach with six case studies, concerning agreement weakening in Dutch and Arabic, pronoun weakening in Middle Dutch and Celtic, and pro-drop in Old French and Arabic.

1. INTRODUCTION

Various apparently syntactic phenomena seem to be conditioned by adjacency. Perhaps the best-known example is case assignment in English. Abstracting away from details, a DP dependent on the verb for case must be adjacent to it, whereas the distribution of caseless elements, such as PP complements, is not restricted in the same way (Stowell 1981):

(1)a. John read (*slowly) the book
    b. John read (slowly) to his children

We assume that syntax deals with hierarchical rather than linear relationships, which means that linear locality conditions such as adjacency are alien to it. Hence, linear locality conditions that seem syntactic at first
blush must be reanalyzed in one of two ways. The first is to develop a hierarchical account that happens to have the adjacency effect as a by-product. This is essentially the approach that Chomsky (1995) adopts for the data in (1). The alternative is to analyze the adjacency requirement in terms of the phonology-syntax interface, which by its very nature deals with matters of linear order and therefore provides a natural locus for linear locality conditions.

We do not address the issue of case adjacency in this paper (see Neeleman and Weerman 1999 for a prosodic account). Instead, we show that for a range of phenomena that are apparently conditioned by syntactic adjacency, a PF approach is more attractive, both conceptually and empirically. The data we discuss involve agreement weakening under subject-verb inversion in Dutch (section 3) and Standard Arabic (section 4); object cliticization in Middle Dutch (section 5), subject cliticization in Celtic (section 6), and pro-drop in Old French (section 7) and Arabic (section 8). Before we turn to these phenomena, however, we make explicit our assumptions about the syntax-phonology mapping and discuss the kind of rules we will employ.

2. AlloMORPHY RULES AT THE PF INTERFACE

As is well known, phonological representations are not necessarily isomorphic to syntactic representations, and phonological and syntactic primitives are members of disjoint sets. A simple example illustrating this, borrowed from Jackendoff (1997, p. 26), is given in (2). In syntax, a big house is a DP that consists of a determiner and a complex NP complement. In phonology, it consists of two phonological words, the first of which is formed by the determiner and the adjective. So, both constituency and labels differ.

\[
(2)a. \quad [\text{DP a [NP [AP big] house]]}
\]
\[
(2)b. \quad [\phi [\omega a \text{big}] [\omega \text{house}]]
\]

One interpretation of the different nature of syntactic and phonological representations is that syntax and phonology each constitute an autonomous generative system that creates structures governed by its own wellformedness principles.

This hypothesis in turn entails that there must be an interface, usually referred to as PF, at which syntactic representations are mapped to their phonological counterparts. We assume that the following operations take