

Prosodic Domains Across Time and Space

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Prosodic domains are central to synchronic descriptions of sound patterns. Whether one is determining the inventory of contrastive features, identifying phonotactics, or analysing alternations, reference must be made to a specific prosodic domain, most commonly, the phonological word. In contrast, historical descriptions of sound patterns make little reference to prosodic domains. Though words are central units of comparison, and regular sound change is assumed to apply within such units, there has been relatively little study of the role of prosodic domains in determining the nature and direction of sound change. This talk presents an overview of two ways prosodic domains can influence sound change, working primarily with historical data from Austronesian and neighboring languages. In the first case, an inherited prosodic domain is self-reinforcing over time. In the second case, a prosodic domain is superimposed on a language via contact, leading to a range of sound changes that are unattested in non-contact situations, but which serve to satisfy the imposed prosodic domain. A range of hypotheses are suggested by this study, from restrictive contact origins of sesquisyllabic domains, to accounts of prosodically determined allomorphy.