MORPHOLOGICAL AND/OR PROSODIC PLACE HOLDERS

João Costa & M. João Freitas
ZIF, Bielefeld, July 2001
GOALS:

- To discuss the status of vowel insertion before words
- To present further arguments against a syntactic analysis for these vowels
- To defend the prosodic approach for these vowels (modulo Scarpa 1995, 1999a,b)
About Place Holders

Emerging vowels before nouns
(Bottari et alii 1994)
– Commonly taken as proto-determiners

Example:
(1) [ ] mãe  (M:1;4,8)

Common analysis
– Vowel before noun - argument for continuity hypothesis: DP from the beginning
Pre- and Proto-morphological fillers
(Peters 1995, CHILDES)

1st stage:
Premorphological fillers:
- lexically unselective
- not targeting form of adult morphemes
- functioning as word extensions
Pre and Proto morphological fillers (Peters 1995, CHILDES)

"Premorphological recognition criteria:

- Not readily mappable onto target adult morphemes.
- No systematic morphosyntactic function (however idiosyncratic).
- May be restricted to full syllables."

Correlation with one-word / two word stages
“In hindsight, once an individual child has moved past this stage, her premorphological fillers may be seen to have served as an utterance-planning bridge from one-word to two-word utterances and/or served a rhythmic function, enabling the child to achieve the gestalt of a full adult sentence. Thus, the ultimate decision about the status of a given child's early fillers must be made post-hoc: if they just disappear, they were purely phonological; if they evolve continuously into identifiable morphemes they were (or became) protomorphemic."
Pre and Proto morphological fillers
(Peters 1995, CHILDES)

2nd stage:
Proto morphological fillers:
- lexically selective
- may target form of adult morphemes
- morphological and rhythmic placeholders
Pre and Proto morphological fillers
(Peters 1995, CHILDES)

"Protomorphological recognition criteria:

• Acquiring some distributional and phonological characteristics of adult functors.

• Individual fillers may be associated with classes of target morphemes (protodeterminers, protoauxiliaries), but these classes are not yet internally differentiated.
Pre and Proto mophological fillers (Peters 1995, CHILDES)

"Protomorphological recognition criteria (II):

- Fillers in different syntactic positions becoming increasingly distinguishable on phonological grounds.
- Some fillers are multisyllabic amalgams modelled on frequently occurring clumps of target functors (e.g. wanna, umma, didja). "
Pre and Proto morphological fillers (Peters 1995, CHILDES)

3rd stage:

Full Morphemes

- adult-like behavior
Vowels emerge before word classes other than nouns (Freitas 1996, Scarpa 1995, 1999a,b):

(1) não [ʊ'nʊ̯] (I:1;1), (I:1;5)
(2) dá [ʊ'da] (I:1;1), (I:1;4)

Problematic for Proto-Determiner analysis!
PROBLEMS FOR PETERS’ CLASSIFICATION

- Post-hoc criterion for classification - impossible uniform analysis.

- Co-occurrence of full morphemes with premorphology:

  (1) no número [ znale 'niech ʊpu] (P:2;11)
PROBLEMS FOR PETERS’ CLASSIFICATION

Transition from protomorphology to full morphemes is based upon articulatory correspondence to the target form - problematic for other word classes (e.g. a noun pronounced with just one syllable is still a noun...)

Evidence for protomorphological level is scarce: if phonological form corresponds to lexical selectivity, the difference between stage 2 and 3 may be just a matter of production of the morphemes not matching the target, although they may be analyzed as morphemes
Distinction between premorphological and protomorphological based upon whether the productions is target-like does not hold crosslinguistically: identity of vowel insertion and D.

(1) pato  [ˈtɒ]  (J:0;11)
(2) pão   [ˈpɐ̃w]  (I:1;5)
Place Holders are not morphological
(along the lines of Scarpa 1999a,b)

Emerging vowels before words may be interpreted as having a prosodic function: to create iambic binary feet.
ARGUMENTS (I)

There is a correlation between the length of the word and vowel insertion (Freitas and Miguel 1997):

(1) Pedro [\text{te’te}] (J:0;11)
(2) Pedro [\text{ɪ’te}] (J:0;11)
Vowels are inserted typically before monosyllabic words:

a) If they were just MPHs, this correlation should not hold.

b) If there is a protomorphological stage, there should be a stage in which this correlation should not hold.
ARGUMENTS (II)

Children make disyllabic words with iambic pattern in early stages of production:

(1) Isabel [be 'bɛ] (I:1;1)

(2) cavalo [ko'kaw] (M:1;2)
These examples provide independent evidence for the unmarked status of iambs, making the proposal plausible, especially since there is a coincidence between the stages at which there is vowel insertion and productions of disyllabic words with iambic pattern.
If vowel insertion before nouns were to be interpreted as MPH for Det, there should be a tighter relation between the behavior of determiners in adult grammar and the behavior of MPHs:
i) Null determiners should appear less than expletive determiners:

(1) O João

(2) a. Que(r) pai (M:1;2.0)
    b. Olha bebê (M:1;3.0)
    c. É n(a)riz (M:1;6.23)

⇒ It can't be argued that null determiner is the underspecified one in EP (contra Soares 1998)
ii) Possessives co-occur obligatorily with determiners in the target system (see Castro 2000 for analysis). It should be expected that possessives occur with MPH:

(1) a. O meu livro
   b. *Meu livro.

(2) a. Olha a minha cadeira
   [']
If inserted vowels were marking the determiner position, according to the continuity hypothesis, there should be much less deviance with respect to adult grammar. In particular, since EP has expletive determiners, they should be emerging much more frequently.
ARGUMENTS (IV)

In Aux-a-Infinitive constructions, children omit the preposition between the two verbs (Freitas and Gonçalves 1995):

(1) está a chorar ['tadu’dar ] (LU:1;11)
(2) estou a fechar ['tof½' < a] (LA:2;4)
The preposition is functional just like the determiners.

If there were a MPH-stage, there should be no asymmetry between IP and DP (Abney 1987), functional elements should be marked with inserted vowels in both contexts.
The fact that there is no lexical selectivity is an argument for this analysis, since there is no prediction regarding the relationship between word classes and word initial vowel insertion (Scarpa 1999a,b).
For the MPH analysis, vowels should occur only before nouns.

Under Peters' classification, lexical selectivity is crucial for defining proto-morphemes (which makes it a post-hoc criterion).
In words with word final stress, children exhibit a stage where there is rightward prosodic extension:

(1) caracol  [kə’kəlʔ]  (M:2;0)

(2) tambor  [tə’porʔ] (LU:1;11)
The existence of strategies of leftward and rightward prosodic extensions shows that the analysis of rhythm is not yet stable.

Under Peters' classification, it should be the case that MPH emerge when phonological extensions disappear. Her criterion for distinguishing between premorphology and protomorphology based on the existence of prosodic extension is not strong enough, since there is prosodic extension until stages in which determiners occur target-like.
FINAL REMARKS

If this analysis is on the right track, word-initial vowel insertion should not be taken as an argument in favor of the projection of D from the beginning.

If vowels are inserted in order to create binary feet with an iambic pattern, then children have not yet figured out that EP is trochaic, which may cast some doubt on a treatment of rhythmic patterns across constituents.
This proposal leads to a simplification of the acquisition path:

Premorphology  ➔  Full Morphemes