7th Manchester Phonology Meeting, 13–15 May 1999

Repatterning the skeleton: VC phonology

Péter Diénes dienes@nytsud.hu and Péter Szigetvári szigetva@nytsud.hu

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

handout and paper downloadable from http://budging.nytsud.hu/~szigetva/papers.html

1. Preliminaries

(a) two types of lenition:
- consonantal lenition – debuccalization ([t] → [θ], [s] → [ʃ])
- vocalic lenition – vocalization/sonorization ([b] → [β]; [t] → [ɾ])

(b) the meaning of government and licensing is not made explicit in previous theories (see, e.g., Scheer and Szegő, 1998, 1999)

(c) the phonological skeleton is made up of strictly alternating C and V slots; no branch constituents: apparently adjacent CC or VV is separated by an empty V or an empty C (cf. Lowenstamm, 1996)

2. Goals and restrictions

(a) we elaborate on the inherent properties of V and C

(b) we intend to give an account of possible lenition sites and the types of lenition occurring there

(c) a theory of phonotactics

(d) if the phonological skeleton is restrained as above then it is made up of VC units rather than CV units

(e) for the moment, branching onset are disregarded

(f) we do not look “above” the skeleton: suprasegmentals, licensing between vowels, stress, are not dealt with here

3. Conventions

(a) V: any vowel position

(b) C: any consonant position

(c) V: melodically not empty vowel position

(d) v: melodically empty vowel position

(e) C: melodically non-empty consonant position

(f) c: melodically empty consonant position

4. Primitives

(a) vocalicness is inherently loud; V aims at being pronounced

(b) consonantsness is inherently mute; C aims at remaining silent

(c) licensing supports the expression of the melodic elements of the target (cf. Scheer and Szegő, 1998, 1999)

(d) government destroys the inherent nature of the target (i.e., a C becomes loutier if governed; a V loses its loudness if governed)

References


(c) CV...CV as the unmarked skeleton

i. word-initial V – it cannot dispose of its governing/licensing power – \( \hat{T} \) V C

   preferred

ii. word-final C – unlicensed and un-

   governed C remains silent (C’s in-

   herent property is muteless?)

   a t

iii. languages prefer to mark the word boundary by a peripheral unit, i.e. by a V C unit on left and by a C V unit on right (cf. Minimal Word)

9. The minimal word contains at least one non peripheral unit (word boundaries are indicated)

(a) a CV word is subminimal, it does not contain any non peripheral unit: vC V

(b) a VC word is ok: VC

(c) a CVV word is ok: vC V C

(d) a VV word is ok: V C V C

10. Phonotactics – coda clusters vs. bogus clusters

(a) */# rt, */# tm: word initially none of them is allowed

(b) rt# vs. *tm#: word finally codas are OK, bogus clusters are not

(c) different kinds of lenition

(d) *arte: no adjacent coda clusters

(e) if CCC clusters exist: only a coda cluster followed by a bogus cluster (art#) is OK, bogus
coda cluster followed by a coda cluster (art#) is OK, bogus cluster followed by another bogus cluster
(art#), or coda cluster followed by another coda cluster (art#) are not

11. Summary

(a) We define what vocalicness and consonantsness mean.

(b) We elaborate on the meaning of government and licensing.

(c) We account for different lenition types at different sites.

(d) We resolve the stop paradox (the stops have the longest lenition trajectories vs. they are the least marked consonants.)

(e) We claim that if we are to accept a skeleton made up of strictly alternating C’s and V’s and that these form units (i.e., if a string begins with one, it must end with the other), then it must be made up of VC and not CV units.

(f) We explain the different behaviour of coda clusters and bogus clusters.
5. Relations

(a) The unmarked direction of GOVERNMENT and LICENSING is right-to-left (but branching onsets!?)

(b) LICENSING

i. Vs are inherently licensed

ii. V licenses the preceding C

(c) GOVERNMENT

i. A C has governing power which it prefers to dispense of:
   - it tries to govern the preceding V if it is empty (i.e. v) else
   - it governs the preceding C

ii. A C can govern the preceding C if
   - it is not governed itself by a C (cf. government in the case of vowels!) and
   - the vowel between them is empty (v) – BURIAL

iii. A governed V loses its inherent properties, i.e. its loudness as well as its inherent license: it becomes silent and it cannot license or govern – it is DEAD

iv. A governed C loses its inherent property, i.e. its muteness: it becomes louder, more sonorous – vowel licensing (cf. below)

(d) BURIAL – Coda cluster

i. A C which is not governed by another C can govern the preceding C if the vowel between them is empty (v)

ii. In this case the V is BURIED and it remains silent, i.e. it is DEAD

iii. BURIAL is lexically determined

iv. Nothing can “see into” the burial domain, i.e. the following V cannot govern the empty V (cf. Minimality Condition)

v. Coda cluster

- C is governed by C →
- V cannot govern v →
- V must govern C
- V licenses C
- Buried (dead) V neither licenses nor governs the previous C
- C is not governed by a C (but it is governed by a V!), hence it can govern

(e) An (empty) vowel is DEAD if it is

i. Governed or

ii. Buried

(f) The Empty Category Principle (ECP)

An empty category loses its inherent properties if governed or buried.

i. V remains silent (losing its inherent loudness) if governed or buried (i.e. if it is dead)

ii. C is pronounced (losing its inherent muteness) if governed or buried (?)

6. Types of C = types of licensing

(a) | Licensed | Governed | Status | Licensiation |
---|----------|---------|--------|-------------|
-  | -        | -       | bad    | no          |
-  | +        | bad     | consonantal |
-  | +        | very bad| vocalic |

(b) 

i. GOVERNED C; vocalic licensing

ii. UNLICENSED C; consonantal licensing

(c) LICENSED and UNGOVERNED C:

second in a bogus cluster:

V C — C-V

at k a

(d) UNLICENSED and UNGOVERNED C:

first in a bogus cluster

V C — C-V

at k a

(e) LICENSED and GOVERNED C:

intervocalic or second in a coda cluster

V C — V — C-V

at a an ta

(f) UNLICENSED and GOVERNED C:

first in a coda cluster

V C — V — C-V

an ta

7. Problems

(a) 

i. Word-initial consonant both governed and licensed: a possible licensing site – not attested

ii. Solution: the skeletal tier must start with a V (cf. Lowenstamm to appear) – no word-initial licensing

(b) Word-final empty nuclei – how can they remain silent and why? Our ECP does not cover them

i. Solution: a word must end in C

ii. Word-final C is also an UNGOVERNED and UNLICENSED C – consonantal licensing

8. VC theory

(a) The phonological skeleton is made up of V/C units.

(b) Motivations

i. Word-final V has lost its importance, since we allow unlicensed Cs

ii. The situation that word-final V is licensed to remain silent by the word-boundary is strange and lacks satisfactory explanation

iii. Word-final V is different from word-medial V: cf. Charette (1992), Szigetvári’s proposal

iv. The Cs in Lowenstamm (to appear)’s word-initial empty cws are functionless

v. Allowing empty C units in a CV-theory raises the problem of proliferation of such units...