

The beginning of the word revisited

Katalin Balogné Bérces

The present paper aims to revise and re-evaluate some of the advantages gained from two suggestions made by Jean Lowenstamm. The first one (Lowenstamm 1996) introduced a new type of phonological skeletal structure, in which syllabic constituency and timing are merged into a tier composed of strictly alternating CV units, and parametric variation in syllable structure is expressed with reference to the licensing of empty positions rather than branching. (The popularity of this suggestion amongst the practitioners of Government Phonology (henceforth GP) soon led to the birth of a radical offspring christened (Strict) CV Phonology.) The second one (Lowenstamm 1999) armed this bare skeleton with an empty CV unit attached to the left edge of every word of a major category. The urge to license the empty vocalic position of this boundary marker is then the source of various phenomena, dynamic (e.g. alternations in cliticisation (Lowenstamm 1999), and the lack of lenition in certain phonological environments (e.g. Ségéral and Scheer 1999, Szigetvári 1999)) as well as static (e.g. the (absence of) phonotactic restrictions on word-initial consonant clusters in different languages (Lowenstamm 1999, Szigetvári 1999)).

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 relates the story of the development Strict CV Phonology has undergone since Lowenstamm came up with the idea of the empty boundary marker. This includes a redefinition of the notions “government” and “licensing”, and also a repartitioning of the CV skeleton into VC units. At the end, the issue of the source of the boundary marker is addressed, which leads us to go back in time in Section 3 and investigate another line along which Chomsky and Halle’s (1968) (henceforth SPE) theory of syntax-phonology mapping in terms of boundary symbols developed into the framework of Prosodic Phonology (henceforth PP), the theory of the domains of phonological rules. (See e.g. Nespor and Vogel 1986) It is in Section 4 that the two narratives meet; the inadequacy of both is pointed out and an attempt is made at reaching a compromise. Finally, this section concludes the discussion and highlights a set of data which undermines most previous analyses of, and sheds new light on, the data used.

Throughout the paper, one process attested in several dialects of English, e.g. in Standard American English pronunciation (General American, henceforth GA), is focussed on, namely the allophony resulting from *t/d*-flapping and the aspiration of voiceless plosives. GA stop allophones provide a case in point since their distribution is governed by the principles under investigation (prosodic constituency, morphosyntactic properties).

References

- Chomsky, Noam & Morris Halle (1968) *The Sound Pattern of English*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lowenstamm, Jean (1996) CV as the only syllable type. In Jacques Durand & Bernard Laks (eds.) *Current Trends in Phonology: Models and Methods*. European Studies Research Institute, University of Salford Publications. 419-442.
- Lowenstamm, Jean (1999) *The beginning of the word*. In John Rennison & Klaus Kühnhammer (1999) *Phonologica 1996. Syllables!?* The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics.
- Nespor, Marina & Irene Vogel (1986) *Prosodic Phonology*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Ségéral, Philippe & Tobias Scheer (1999) *The Coda Mirror*. Ms., Université de Paris 7 & Université de Nice.
- Szigetvári, Péter (1999) *VC Phonology: a theory of consonant lenition and phonotactics*. Doctoral dissertation, MTA/ELTE, Budapest.