

## **The representation of syllabic consonants in strict CV frameworks**

**Sylvia Blaho**

In this paper, I examine the question of the representation of syllabic consonants, based on data from Slovak, in a recent development of the paradigm of Government Phonology (Kaye et al. 1990), strict CV Phonology (Lowenstamm 1996).

Traditionally, it is assumed that there is a distinction between syllabic and non-syllabic liquids on the one hand and between short syllabic and long syllabic liquids on the other hand in Slovak. However, both of these distinctions have been questioned recently, partly because the three types of liquids do not occur in the same environment in Slovak.

First, I show that both distinctions must be acknowledged. Syllabic and non-syllabic consonants behave differently with respect to stress facts and constraints on possible words: while the former pattern with vowels in that they can be stressed and function as the head of a phonological word, the latter cannot.

The distinction between short syllabic and long syllabic consonants is also phonologically relevant in Slovak, despite the fact that there are no minimal pairs which differ in the length of the syllabic consonants in this language. However, this is also true for certain short-long vowel pairs, but not for others. Moreover, syllabic consonants pattern with vowels in length alternations such as the Rhythmic Law and morphologically conditioned lengthening processes. Therefore, if one claims that there is a distinction between short and long vowels, making this distinction within the class of syllabic consonants is also justified.

Next, I show that syllabic liquids pattern with non-syllabic ones as far as restrictions on word-initial consonant clusters are concerned. Therefore, representing syllabic consonants by their melody being linked to a vocalic and a consonantal slot at the same time (as suggested by Harris 1994, Szigetvári 1999, Scheer 2001, Toft 2001) reflects their phonological behaviour. However, I argue that instead of the representation where the vocalic slot occupied by the syllabic consonant precedes the consonantal slot, it is more appropriate to represent syllabic consonants as linked to a vocalic slot following a consonantal slot, as restrictions on consonant clusters are better captured by this representation.

Apart from contributing to the better understanding of the data, my research also sheds new light on the interpretation of associations between the skeletal and the melodic tier, more precisely, issues of segmental length. Contrary to Toft (2001), it is argued that segments whose melody is linked to more than one skeletal position do not always count as long, rather, one has to distinguish between long vowels and geminates on the one hand and syllabic consonants on the other hand.