

What final empty Nuclei are good for

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A genuine claim made by Government Phonology is the fact that word-final consonants belong to Onsets whose Nucleus is empty. The existence of final empty Nuclei (FEN) has been challenged in recent work by Dienes & Szigetvári (1999), Szigetvári (2000) and Polgárdi (1998, in press). This talk discusses two reasons why FEN are desirable and necessary, that is "extrasyllabicity" and the Coda-context $_\{\#,C\}$.

The reason for the existence of FEN is a solid empirical record showing that in many languages, Coda-effects fail to occur in word-final position: final Codas¹ (e.g. l-vocalisation in French) and their preceding vowels (e.g. closed syllable shortening (CSS) in Icelandic) remain unaffected, cf. Kaye (1990), Harris (1994), Gussmann & Harris (1998).

The conclusion that is drawn upon this evidence by all phonologists is that word-final consonants cannot belong to Codas in these languages. The mainstream interpretation declares them extrasyllabic. Extrasyllabicity supposes that syllable structure is built by some syllabification algorithm. This is the reason why nothing of that kind may exist in Government Phonology where strings are fully syllabified in the lexicon. Accordingly, this theory holds that word-final consonants belong to Onsets whose Nucleus is empty.

A consequence of this interpretation is that Standard Government Phonology (SGP, Kaye et al. 1990) is unable to refer to the Coda-context in a uniform and non-disjunctive fashion. It dismisses the very simple fact that there are many segmental processes that affect both internal and final Codas alike (e.g. l-vocalisation in Brazilian Portuguese), and both internal and final closed syllables alike (e.g. CSS in Czech and Turkish).

Hence, the empirical record obviously calls for a parameter setting: there are languages that do count word-final consonants as Codas, while others do not. Significantly, there is no language where consonants would be affected in final, but not in internal Codas, and no closed syllable effect is ever produced on a vowel in word-final position to the exclusion of the word-internal location.

For the reasons exposed, SGP is unable to set such a parameter. I show how the syllabic model known as CVCV (absence of Codas and branching constituents, Lowenstamm 1996) can do justice to the empirical record at stake. Under this analysis, the identity of consonants that occur in the Coda-context $_\{\#,C\}$ enjoys a non-disjunctive definition: they occur before a governed empty Nucleus. Furthermore, the Coda Mirror (Ségéral & Scheer 2001), interprets lenition in Codas as a consequence of a lateral relation: Coda-consonants are both ungoverned and unlicensed because their Nucleus is empty and hence disqualified for lateral action. However, it is an established fact² that internal and final empty Nuclei possess a different lateral potential: internal empty Nuclei can be laterally active under no circumstance and in no language, while FEN can do "more" than their internal peers. Given these premises, a very simple parameter can be set: FEN can or cannot dispense Licensing. If they do not, both internal and final Codas will behave alike (vowel length in "CSS" systems is also a consequence of (internuclear) Licensing). If they do, damage/ short vowels will be observed word-internally, while word-final consonants and their preceding vowels are protected through Licensing and thus will not show any damage/ may be long.

In sum, this talk intends to: 1) expurgate the inability of SGP to reduce the Coda-context $_\{\#,C\}$ to a non-disjunctive statement, 2) achieve the lateralisation of both phonological structure and causality, 3) provide an account for the word-final situation that does away with extrasyllabicity, and 4) show the crucial functional load that is supported by FEN. I submit

¹ In this text, I use the term "Coda" in its classical meaning " $_\{\#,C\}$ ".

² For example, SGP has to assume that the FEN in a word such as *parc* = /parkø/ is able to government-license its Onset. By contrast, word-internal empty Nuclei can never act as government-licensors.

that the existence of the latter is a condition on an appropriate approach to "extrasyllabicity".

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