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## A theory of direct consonantal interaction

One classical issue addressed by models of syllabic representation is to account for the non-arbitrary distribution of word-initial consonant clusters in languages of the indo-european type. Moreover word-internally, the clusters that can be observed at the left edge of words (henceforth TR) show a different behaviour with respect to RT-groups ("closed syllable"-phenomena). This situation led to the familiar notions of *branching Onsets* and *Coda-Onset* sequences.

The talk I propose raises the question **why** TR-and RT-clusters behave in different ways. This issue is real because standard syllabic models do merely encode an *observation* into a frame dealing with abstract vocabulary: the only reason why branching Onsets are said to host TR-clusters and no RT-groups precisely are the mentioned observations. If the observational situation were the reverse, RT-clusters would be said to hold within branching Onsets. Other attempts to derive the prevailing phenomenology from some principle such as "within a branching Onset, sonority must increase" do nothing more than introduce an arbitrary stipulation.

Thus, the discussed phenomenon still requires an explanatory approach. This is what I will be concerned with.

To do so, I shall first investigate on what the distributional evidence forces to take as the origin of the TR - RT contrast: the **phonological identity of each consonant**. There is no way not to conclude on its crucial relevance for the phenomenon under scope, and all existing models do refer to inherent properties of consonants like sonority or Charm.

I will therefore introduce the model of consonantal representation that I have established on independent grounds. Within this model, there are no special primitives expressing major class- or sonority contrasts. The categorisation of consonants into these categories entirely follows from the role the primitive responsible for the aperture/retracted tongue root plays within the different segments. Roughly, more prominent the influence of that primitive is, the more sonorous is the segment.

It will be my claim that this *paradigmatic* contrast (absence vs. presence of the aperture-primitive) is also the crucial factor that determines the *syntagmatic* behaviour of two consonants when they come to stand one next to the other ([tr] ok, but \*[lr]). I propose that both can contract a lateral relation iff they exhibit a contrast in what Harris (1990) calls complexity. Besides this paradigmatic conditioning of consonantal interaction, I will also be concerned with its syntagmatic conditions. The idea I shall develop is Charette's (1990) Government-Licensing saying that two consonants can contract a relation only if the head of the domain is licensed to do so.

In sum, I aim at developing a model of direct consonantal interaction where the mentioned distributional restrictions 1) have nothing to do with syllable-structure, 2) receive an explanation (that could not do with the reverse phenomenology), 3) follow from paradigmatic (segmental complexity) and syntagmatic (Government-Licensing) conditions on the involved consonants. A consequence of such a perspective is that a strict CVCV-structure not only is possible (the consonantal interaction doing the job of branching Onsets) but necessary.

## References:

Charette (1990) = Charette, Monik: Licence to govern. In: Phonology Yearbook 7.2, 233-253.

Harris (1990) = Harris, John: Segmental complexity and phonological government. In: Phonology Yearbook 7.2, 255-300.