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A better solution for extrasyllabicity than extrasyllabicity

The concept of extrasyllabicity requires two theoretical devices: 1) unsyllabififed lexical strings that are parsed by a syllabification algorithm and 2) autosegmental structures. The latter point is self-evident, and the former follows from the fact that something may only stand astray (even temporarily) if it was 1) unsyllabified in the lexicon and 2) neglected by the syllabification algorithm.

The purpose of this talk is to confront the well-established tool of extrasyllabicity with Government Phonology. In this particular theory, strings are fully syllabified in the lexicon, and consequently there is no syllabification algorithm whose action could be interspread with other phonological rules. Hence, extrasyllabicity may not be accommodated within Government Phonology. Another genuine feature of this theory is the claim that all word-final consonants belong to an Onset whose Nucleus is empty (Kaye 1990). More recently, the beginning of the word which is usually referred to by the hatchmark "#" has been given a truly phonological interpretation, i.e. an empty Onset followed by an empty Nucleus ("initial CV", Lowenstamm 1999).

Government Phonology has been challenged in the past because of final empty Nuclei: they remain inaudible for a strange reason ("Licensing of final empty Nuclei") that betrays the regular way of handling empty Nuclei (i.e. Proper Government). I intend to show that final empty Nuclei are not a burden, but on the contrary cover the facts that are usually treated as right-margin extrasyllabicity. That is, "extrasyllabicity" is in-built in the theory. On the other hand, the facts known as left-margin extrasyllabicity fall under the scope of the initial CV. As a consequence, Government Phonology has to claim that the special behaviour of consonants at both edges do not instantiate two variants of the same phenomenon (extrasyllabicity), but are different in kind: one is due to the presence of a final empty Nucleus on its righthand side, the other stems from the presence of an empty CV on its lefthand side. In other words, there are not two (internal vs. edges = extrasyllabicity), but three different phonologies (internal, left edge, right edge). What is called for is a theory of the margins, whereby the identity of the left margin must be distinct from the one that covers the right margin.

Interestingly, this very result has been arrived at within typical extrasyllabic approaches: Booij & Rubach (1990) conclude that in Polish, the kind of extrasyllabicity found at the left edge is different in kind and behaviour from the one that occurs in word-final position. They accommodate this fact by two different adjunction-rules (to the phonological word) of both initial and final stray consonants, i.e. an early "Initial Adjunction", and a "Housekeeping Adjunction" that occurs at a late stage of the derivation.

The facts that will be reviewed are of two kinds. On one hand, I interpret phenomena that are classically viewed as instances of extrasyllabicity in terms of the two distinct tools mentioned, i.e. final empty Nuclei and the initial CV. These fall into two categories: motivation for extrasyllabicity comes from either the sheer existence of "supernumerary" consonants at word-edges that cannot be accommodated by syllabification-algorithms, or it stems from the strange behaviour of word-final consonants that could well be syllabified as Codas, but refuse to behave as a Coda (i.e. preceding vowels show no closed-syllable effects, and the Codas themselves no Coda-effects). Significantly, the first motivation concerns both edges, while the latter is restricted to the word-final situation (i.e. word-initial consonants may be "supernumerary", but they always behave as Onsets).

On the other hand, I challenge the concept of extrasyllabicity by data that have been produced by extrasyllabic analyses. One overt shortcoming is the prediction that a language

could well support two, five, eleven or thirty-six extrasyllabic consonants in a row: since everything that is not parsable by the syllabification algorithm is left astray, and since the later integration into the prosodic hierarchy does not obey any co-occurrence restrictions[1], a string such as [fdgltprkot] should be perfectly well-formed in a language that allows for extrasyllabicity (i.e. /fdgltpr-/ being extrasyllabic). As a matter of fact, natural language does produce this kind of monster-clusters in no event. I present one of the "wildest" systems of initial clusters, Polish, in order to show that even here one extrasyllabic consonant at most occurs. In contrast to this awkward prediction made by extrasyllabicity, the analysis of initial "supernumerary" consonants along the lines of the initial CV predicts that languages may tolerate at most one consonant that violates Sonority Sequencing.

In sum, I argue that extrasyllabicity has come into being because the syllabic theory that was available at the time when it was developed crucially relied on the existence of a syllabification algorithm and ordered rules. Had the strange facts that occur at word-margins been looked at through a prism that lacks syllabification algorithms and serialism, no-one would have had the idea to account for the two distinct phenomenologies related to both margins with a single theoretical tool. Government Phonology assigns a specific and yet independent identity to both margins, neither of which has been built for the accommodation of "extrasyllabic" data. I submit that they can and should give way to a theory (or rather: two distinct theories) of word-margins.

References

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[1] Depending on the theory, either hybrid Onsets and Codas that violate Sonority Sequencing are created "on the surface", or extrasyllabic consonants are adjoined to some higher unit such as the phonological word where no co-occurrence restrictions are defined anyway.