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Representations are either well- or ill-formed, they are not interchangeable nor a matter of taste

A well-known and truly antipathetic property of SPE-type rewrite rules is their intrinsic **overgeneration**. Indeed, the universal rule-format  $A \rightarrow B / K$  does not impose any restriction on what kind of object can instantiate A, B and K. Anything may be turned into any other thing in the vicinity of any possible context. Argumentation is hardly needed in order to understand that nature does not work like that.

This problem was approached in the 70s by two different strategies that emerged from the early and long-lasting debate on abstractness: markedness (following the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of SPE) and restrictions on the computational part of the grammar. The former line of thought has led to Natural (Generative) Phonology (theory only recognises "natural" processes and objects), while the latter gave rise to the theory of Lexical Phonology.

In a parallel evolution that was originally independent from the issue of overgeneration, autosegmental structures and hence representations have been developed. An unintended side-effect of multilinear structures was then discovered in the late 70s and early 80s: representations restrict the generative power of the grammar in rather spectacular fashion for the sake of properties that are in-built. A very early and entirely universal case in point is the fact that association lines may not cross. This rules out a fairly remarkable number of phonological processes that would have been well-formed in linear paradigms.

As a consequence, early spartan representations were continuously enriched throughout the 80s and led to rather complex structures. This evolution was parallel to the expansion of arboreal structures in syntax during the same period. Feature Geometry for instance has built autosegmental structures that are self-restrictive in the sense that their arboreal properties exclude quite a number of processes and structures.

In sum, it is probably not wrong to say that the enrichment of representations was the specific answer to the problem of abstractness and overgeneration that united phonological research throughout the 80s.

The advent of constraint-based theories in the 90s has set back the role and the functional load of representations in a rather radical fashion. Different and mutually exclusive representations may be taken as the input into the constraint-chamber, and will be able to be modified in such a way that both produce the correct surface form. For instance, Optimality Theory has no claim to make on the question whether Codas exist, whether they are able to branch one, two, three, ten or twenty times. Any theory of syllabic representation will do, even the one that claims that Codas can branch twenty times: a Coda of that kind will not survive the application of the constraint NOCODA, but nothing prevents it from existing in nature. It will be said that a language with Codas that branch twenty times is a possible human language, but that the probability of its actual occurrence on the surface is very small: NOCODA is never ranked low enough not to filter out this kind of monster-Coda.

In sum, the functional load of representations was replaced by constraints (as everything else). The representational residue in theories such as OT is merely decorative and interchangeable. OT produces the "correct surface result" (SPE) with any possible representation and its reverse. Representations do not contribute anymore to the discrimination of well- and ill-formed objects. Overgeneration, which was not the initial spark for representations but guided their further development, is not a concern in OT and the like.

My take is that the 80s are right and the 90s are wrong. There can be no phonological theory without representations; these representations carry a precise functional load and are not interchangeable. Note that this view does not imply that there are no constraints. It merely establishes a hierarchy: representations are the core instrument of the theory. They do a precise job, and it is erroneous to conceive of a grammar where the computational module usurps their function.

The talk also shows that representations are a condition on the explanatory power of grammar: every syntactician knows that, for example, there is no explanation of a wide array of facts without empty categories, which in turn can only exist because there are representations. Hence, doing away with the functional load of representations is 1) missing the point on abstractness and overgeneration, 2) forgetting about the evolution of generative phonology until 1993 and 3) parting the company of syntactic theory. If theory is to be cumulative in the sense of Durand & Laks (1996), it ought to strengthen the role of representations, instead of depleting it. Constraints make sense only if they complete the functional domain of representations, rather than usurping it.

The presentation takes advantage of two well-known phenomena in order to demonstrate the crucial role played by representations: the difference between internal and final Codas and the analysis of (Slavic) vowel-zero alternations.

## References

Durand, Jacques & Bernard Laks 1996. Why Phonology is one. *Current trends in Phonology: Models and Methods*, edited by Jacques Durand & Bernard Laks, 3-13. Manchester, Salford: ESRI.