

Syllabic consonants and the mechanism of element extension

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This presentation is going to address the problem of the syllabic consonants in the selected Slavic and Celtic languages. We shall consider this issue through the optic of Government Phonology (henceforth GP), as defined e.g. in Harris 1994, Cyran 2003 and Gussmann 2007. Within the framework of GP, the phonological structure of morphemes is constructed in terms of the licensing and governing relations between adjacent skeletal positions – the timing slots. The prosodic positions are then projected onto the syllabic constituents of nuclei (the heads of rhymes) and onsets. In such configurations, onsets are always dependent on their nuclear licensers. A specific proposal advocated in this presentation is that onset-nucleus domains are not only licensing domains but they also constitute the so-called extension domains. It will be further maintained that the phenomenon of the syllabic consonants can be analyzed in terms of segment extension occurring within such onset-nucleus extension domains. It will be demonstrated that this solution effectively accounts for the relevant linguistic facts attested to in Polish, Czech, Slovak or Serbo-Croatian. In our analysis, the distinction between the syllabic and trapped consonants will be adopted which, as will be proposed, derives from different lexical structures of either type. Apart from the available dictionary entries, we shall rely on the data provided by Scheer (2003), Dalewska-Greń (2002) and Rubach (1997). The evidence concerning the behavior of the syllabic consonants in the Slavic languages will also be compared to the Irish situation. It will be proposed that the observable differences are contingent on both structural representations and different parameter settings in the languages under discussion.

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