

## The $\Omega$ of A

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In Government Phonology, the special status of the element A has long been noted (Cobb 1995, 1997; Kaye 2000). In this talk I take up a recent proposal (Kaye & Pöchtrager 2009) that A is not melodic, but structural. I will illustrate the thrust of the argument (mostly) with examples from English, but the implications are assumed to be universal.

English has monosyllables of the type V:C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>, such as *paint*, *feast* or *weird*. In such structures both members of the cluster must be coronal (Fudge 1969), i.e. contain A, with a proviso for *a* (as in *task* or *draft*). The systematicity does not end there, however: There is a clear connection between vowel height and the voicing of C<sub>2</sub>, as noted in Pöchtrager (2006).

i: ( <b>I</b> )	u: ( <b>U</b> )	e: / eɪ (A · <b>I</b> )	o: / ou (A · <b>U</b> )	ɔ: (U · <b>A</b> )	ɑ: ( <b>A</b> )
<i>fiend</i>	<i>wound</i>	*	*	*	<i>command,</i> <i>demand...</i>
*	*	<i>paint, saint...</i>	<i>wont, don't...</i>	<i>taunt, haunt...</i>	<i>aunt, grant...</i>

After vowels with no A we only find *nd*, after vowels with A and some other element only *nt*, after vowels with only A – both. The interdependencies vary with the cluster; but again, A plays a crucial role: e.g. long A-headed vowels can be followed by *rt* and *rd* (*board*, *card*, *court*, *cart*), long vowels with A as a non-head cannot be followed by either, and long vowels without A – only by *rd* (*weird*).

Under current assumptions it is unclear *why* a melodic property such as vowel height (presence/role of A) would interact with an unrelated property such as voiceless/neutral, argued to be a structural difference in Pöchtrager (2006). The inevitable conclusion is that A must be structural itself. What English monosyllables show is not an interaction between structure and melody, but between two structural properties. This allows for a non-arbitrary explanation.

My claim will be that expressions previously assumed to contain A are structurally bigger than those without. This has a number of interesting corollaries, all of which seem to be correct.

- (1) The number of coronals in English outweighs the number of e.g. labials. If coronality (formerly: A) means more structure and hence more positions to exploit, this is to be expected.
- (2) A-harmony is surprisingly rare (Kaye p.c.). If A is structural, this is expected, as structure does not “spread”.
- (3) If A is structural, coronals will provide extra room, which can explain why “superheavy rhymes” of the type V:C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub> are possible in the first place.
- (4) Kaye (2000), Pöchtrager (2006) propose that A can govern non-A. The governing potential might be derivable from structural size (cf. the metrical requirement of many languages that heads [governors] of feet need to branch.).

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