CROSS STYLE ARGUMENTATION

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It is generally held that Polish has no syllabic consonants. In a recent article, Dressler and Madelska (1989) claim that, in fast/casual Polish speech, vowel deletion may provoke the syllabification of a tautosyllabic consonant, e.g.,

b. *tylko* ‘only’ L [tłko] : F/C [tlko]
c. *na przykład* ‘for example’ L [na pjakwat] : F/C [na pjkwat]

According to Dressler and Madelska, these syllabic consonants have a longer duration and a higher amplitude than non-syllabic counterparts. The Polish subjects also perceive them as syllable peaks, e.g., that both [na pjakwat] and [na pjkwat] sound trisyllabic to them.

If sonorants and even spirants are syllabic in fast/casual speech, the question now arises as to whether these consonants can perform the function of syllable peaks in slow speech in contexts such as those in (1). Let us consider the following examples, all of which violate the Sonority Principle:

(2) a. *rdest* [rdest] ‘knot-grass’
   b. *krtan* [krtan] ‘larynx’
   c. *kadr* [kadr] ‘film frame’
   *łgnie* [łgне] ‘cling’ (3rd sg.)
   *módl* (śię) [mudl] ‘pray’ (2nd sg. imp.)
   *mgła* [mgва] ‘fog’
   *kadm* [kadm] ‘cadmium’

Final and medial sonorants in (2b.) and (2c.) are devoiced, and, in fast speech, may be deleted in the absolute final position, e.g., *mysł* ‘thought’ L [mws] : F/C [mс] (cf. Wierzchowska 1980:120, 127).

These observations demonstrate that sonorants, like those in (2b.) and (2c.), are not good candidates for syllabics since syllabicity favors voicing, e.g., Polish *krvi* ‘blood’ (gen. sg.) [krфи] is monosyllabic while Serbian [krви] is disyllabic (cf. Abele 1924-5).
Initial sonorants are not usually devoiced, e.g., *mżawka* [mʒafkə] ‘drizzle’ or *rężysko* [rjɛskɔ] ‘stubble’ (cf. Wierzchowska 1980:69-70).

My data from slow speech demonstrate that sonorants, in contexts like those in (2a.), do not differ from sonorants in typically non-syllabic contexts in terms of duration and intensity. In the subject, the reader a list of words and the resulting recording was analyzed in the Micro Speech Lab (MSL). For example, the *r* in *rdest* has a duration of 105 msec while the *r* in *kora* [kora] ‘bark’ has a duration of 104 msec.; the intensity values are 4241 and 4618, respectively. Contrary then to fast/casual speech, the slow speech sonorants in ‘potentially’ syllabic contexts do not exhibit any characteristic phonetic properties (cf. Awedyk 1990). It is also obvious that the words in (2a.) are monosyllabic.

Let us analyze the forms in (1c.) again. It is claimed that both [na pʃkwaɾ] and [na pʃkwat] are trisyllabic. However, in still faster/more casual speech ‘syllabic peaks can be lost with resulting resyllabification’ (Dressler and Madelska 1989:86). The resyllabification results, in turn, in the shift of stress placement according to the Polish rule of penultimate stress, i.e., [na pʃkwat] with the stress on [ʃ] is trisyllabic while [na pʃkwat] with the stress on the first [a] is dissyllabic. The latter pronunciation was regarded as ‘sloppy’ by the subjects.

The description of the syllable in Polish must then incorporate stress analysis as well (cf. Hjelmslev 1939). Such a comprehensive theory would then explain why [pʃkwat] with the stress on [ʃ] is dissyllabic while [pʃkwat] and [rdest] with the stress placed on the vocalic segment are monosyllabic.

Summing up, the above discussion demonstrates how Cross Style Argumentation can contribute to the refinement of a theory (model) of the syllable in Polish. This analysis also demonstrates how the stress-rhythmic pattern is superimposed on the segmental structure and may be an argument for the hierarchical organization of the phonological component of grammar.

REFERENCES


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2 The energy calculation is a simple measurement of the total of all amplitude values.

3 A syllable is a chain of expression including one and only one accent (Hjelmslev 1939:270). Thus in *doctor* there are two syllables because the form consists of two chains of expression /do/ and /k/. The former carries strong stress, while the latter weak stress.