

The segment in monostratal phonology

Kuniya Nasukawa (Tohoku Gakuin University, Sendai, Japan)

The segment, which is usually written as a single alphabetic symbol, has played a central role in phonological theories. It is typically considered that segments lie at the interface between prosody and melody: while they often function as the terminal units of prosodic structure, they can also be simultaneously viewed as bundles of melodic features.

Phonological studies have employed the notion of the segment in different ways as a means of capturing (i) lexical contrast and (ii) phonetic interpretation, both of these being indispensable notions for the purposes of phonological description: the first is one of the fundamental notions of phonological thinking while the second concerns the interface between phonology and the articulatory-perceptual systems. In classical phonemics (Jones 1950), for example, the segment is considered to be the minimal unit of phonological contrast as well as the minimal unit of phonetic interpretation. According to this view, features are no longer regarded simply as taxonomic properties of phonemes (cf. Trubetzkoy 1939). Early generative phonology provides another example, where in SPE the segment (i.e. a full set of distinctive features) is still the minimal unit of phonetic interpretation, but it loses out to features as the minimal unit of contrast. In the SPE framework, contrasts are expressed in terms of features, which are taken to be universal properties. Yet another view is to be found in frameworks which utilize monovalent primes (Anderson & Jones 1974, Anderson & Ewen 1987, Schane 1984, Harris 1999, Backley 2011), in which the segment does not play any contrastive or interpretable role in phonology. Both of these roles are taken over by features.

This paper compares the three traditions described above, by analyzing patterns of static distribution and dynamic alternation involving segments. It also discusses how the monovalent approach to segmental representation (where the feature, rather than the segment, functions as the minimal unit of both phonological contrast and phonetic interpretation) is appropriate in monostratal models of phonology (cf. Harris 2004), in which all intermediate levels of representation (to which redundancy rules and repair strategies apply) are excluded and in which lexical entries make specific reference to prosodic structure and melodic units (both of which are regarded as idiosyncratic, unpredictable properties). Ultimately, the paper concludes that, while the segment may continue to be employed as a convenient notion for describing phonological patterns, it can no longer be regarded as a formal representational unit in monostratal phonology.

References

- Anderson, John & Charles Jones (1974). Three theses concerning phonological representations. *Journal of Linguistics* 10: 1-26.
- Anderson, John & Colin M. Ewen (1987). *Principles of Dependency Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Backley, Phillip (2011). *An introduction to Element Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Harris, John (1999). Full interpretation in phonology. Ms. University College London.
- Harris, John (2004). Release the captive coda: the foot as a domain of phonetic interpretation. In John K. Local, Richard Ogden & Rosalind A. M. Temple (eds.), *Phonetic Interpretation*, 103–129, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, Daniel (1950). *The phonemes: Its Nature and Use*. Cambridge: Heffer.
- Schane, Stanford A. (1984). The fundamentals of Particle Phonology. *Phonology Yearbook* 1: 129-156.
- Trubetzkoy, Nikolai S. (1939). *Gründzuge der Phonologie*. (Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague 7.)