

The Reconciliation of Body and Rhyme: Bare Syllable Structure

Patricia Schneider-Zioga

CSU, Fullerton

Saturday, January 19th, 2008 4:45

There has been long standing disagreement in the literature over the internal structure of the syllable:

- Onset/Rhyme (e.g. Pike and Pike 1947) where the syllable consists of two subconstituents: C+VC
- Body/Coda (e.g. McCarthy 1979) or moraic theories, where the onset and nucleus form a constituent that excludes the coda: CV+C

In this paper I propose that a CVC syllable consists of two dependency relations: {C,V} and {V,C}, each of which constitute a phase. The existence of these two phases in the syllable explains why the analysis of a CVC syllable into body and coda and onset versus rhyme each find support in the literature. They are looking at two different phases of structure.

Considerations of economy within CHL recommend the pursuit of a common mechanism underlying the construction of sentences and syllables. Therefore, I assume the relevance of Bare Phrase Structure to syllables. In Bare Phrase Structure, the labeling of a constituent and its head is identical: take two items, α and β . Through Merge, construct a new item γ . Give γ the label of the head of the newly formed constituent: Merge (α , β) \rightarrow { α , { α , β }}. Given the view that labeling is expressing an equivalence relation between a constituent and its head, the following analysis of phases is expected (examples and analysis from Vergnaud et al 2005)

(1) (C that (_T Past ((she) (_{v-v} see him))))

(2) (i) Phase I: (_{v-v} see him)

(ii) Phase II: (C that (_T Past (_{v-v} (she) see)))

I propose this view be extended to syllable structure, in which case a constituent, VC, and its head, V, are equivalent. This means that the form: CV is a priori ambiguous between: CV and CVC unless it is known whether the V in CV is a head or a label for a constituent.

(3) bæt \rightarrow

(4) (i) Phase I: (æ t) VC

(ii) Phase II: ((b) æ)) CV

The relation between CV and CVC can be mediated by generalized transformations as proposed by Vergnaud et al (2005) for sentence level syntax. As this involves the substitution of a phase for its head, we do find recursiveness in syllables contra the claims of Carstairs-McCarthy (1999).

Evidence that these two levels of analysis: Phase I and Phase II can be treated independently by the grammar can be found in a version of the secret language Kall (Wolof, field notes, a version slightly different from those reported in Ka 1988).

(5) [dama] [dem] = I go; I left \rightarrow amada emde Kall version

Note that the initial mora of each prosodic word is copied and the initial rhyme is left behind. The appearance of both the rhyme (word initially) and the initial mora (word finally) can be economically accounted for by allowing for reduplication of phases, with subsequent deletion as in Halle (ms.).

(6) {de} {em} # {de} {em}

The independent treatment of these units by the phonology is predicted by the view advocated here.

References

- Carstairs-McCarthy, A. (1999). *The origins of complex language*. OUP
- Halle, M. *Reduplication* ms. MIT
- Ka, O. (1988) 'Wolof Syllable Structure: Evidence from a Secret Code.' *Proceedings of ESCOL*.
- McCarthy, J. (1979) 'On stress and syllabification.' *LI* 10
- Pike, K and E. Pike (1947) 'Immediate Constituents of Mazateco syllables.' *International Journal of American Linguistics* 13: 78-91.
- Vergnaud et al (2005) *A format for syntactic analysis*. ms. USC