

Floating Consonants in French: the need for (at least) the skeleton at input

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This presentation concerns itself with showing how a correspondence theory of OT, due to its bare input, creates opacity from simple French floating consonants as these cannot be understood in a theory with a single step of derivation *and* lack of syllabification of the input.

The problem stems from the fact that a floating consonant is a lexically specific part of a root which, unlike other segments in the root, only appears in the output under specific phonological conditions. As correspondence theory does not allow syllabification in the input (by specifying that syllabification itself is a phonological process governed by markedness constraints such as NO CODA) it's impossible to see how a floating segment of an input can be differentiated by a non floating segment. French adjectives therefore are rendered impossible to understand as some end in consonants that are not floating and others end in consonants that are floating:

'petit' (feminine) --> [une petit chat] [une petit amis] 'small cat, friend'

'petit' (masculine) --> [un peti chat] [un petit amis] (Charette p.c.)

In order for the phonology to treat the two word final t's differently it must syllabify the two adjectives and *then and only then*, can it differentiate between a fixed and a floating consonant. That is, PARSE X, can only consider the inputs *after* the consonants have(n't) been attached to skeletal points, this is a type of opacity.

It will further be argued that a containment *can* account for the data but only by specifying that the floating consonants are contained by < > and thus only partially part of the input. This, though, is nothing more than an ad hoc observation that *in the input* some segments are attached to skeletal points and others are not. In practice this is nothing more than introducing syllabification (at least up to the skeleton into the input).

The presentation will conclude by asking: if syllabification up the skeleton is in the realm of the lexicon and certain phonological syllabification are universal ie. #C = onset etc..., then why not reduce the redundancy of OT by introducing more syllabification into the input. We will end by showing that such an approach is essential to truly understanding other areas of OT theory such as Kenstowicz's Base-Identity constraint and its application to Spanish' /-ito/ vs. /-cito/.

Bibliography

Kenstowicz, M. ms. Base-Identity and Uniform Exponence: Alternatives to Cyclicity. ROA 103-000.