

Reading guide: Zec (1995)

Note: The author's name is Serbian/Croatian. The <c> represents an anterior coronal affricate, [ts].

Background: This paper proposes syllable-structure-related constraints, but it is based on older work by Zec and does not present any explicit OT analysis. (In fact, some of the discussion shows that Zec is assuming a derivational/serial/rule-based approach, not a constraint-interaction approach as in OT.) You may wish to think about what other constraints might interact with the constraints presented here, and what the factorial-typological predictions might be, if these constraints were implemented in OT.

For class discussion, we will focus on the aspects of this paper that bear on our understanding of syllable structure and sub-syllabic constituents, but we can talk about other points as well as time permits.

Points raised in the paper

- (1) Z draws a distinction between the way she uses sonority to account for segment organization, and the way that this is traditionally done. What's the difference?
 - While reading this article, be thinking about the sonority-related patterns in syllable structure that you know of. Can all of them be captured by Z's approach, or do we need to consider other factors as well?
- (2) (Only marginally relevant for our discussion:) Z considers what features are involved in defining the levels of the sonority scale. Does it matter if each step on the scale corresponds to one and only one new feature specification? Or is it enough if stage of the scale can be given a unique phonological/featural description?
- (3) §1.2 is about sonority requirements imposed by the μ and σ levels of representation. What kind of phenomenon does this section address? What insight is the formalism intended to model?

A few points concerning the difference between “syllabicity” and “moraicity” requirements in §1.2:

- (a) I suspect there is a mistake in (13b). What formalization would make more sense here, given the following discussion?
 - (b) Z distinguishes between the two moras of a heavy syllable in terms of “strong” and “weak” labels (see ex (15)). If we think about this more generally, with reference to the prosodic hierarchy, do we need this s/w distinction formally?
- (4) §1.3 is about another factor that determines whether or not a segment can be moraic; what is this factor? Does Z's formalism do what she wants it to do, or are there complications? Can you think of an alternative to Z's approach?

- (5) In §2, what is Z trying to show by presenting the language examples that she does? Do these examples actually provide the type of evidence she needs? (Note: for a lot more about Lardil in OT, see Prince & Smolensky (1993).)
- (6) To what extent does Z think that sonority-related constraints can account for the cross-linguistic typology of syllable-related restrictions? Are any other factors also relevant?
- (7) In §4, what typological implicational relationships does Z discuss? Does her model account for them, and if so, how? Can you think of other relevant factors that might alter these predictions — for example, other known OT constraints that might interact with Z's constraints?

Implications and further extensions

- (8) Z makes the point that her proposal depends on a moraic-theory approach to syllable structure. Is this necessarily true? Can we implement Z's approach in an onset/rime, nucleus/coda model also? If so, what assumptions about (or changes to) that model are necessary?
- (9) Z assumes a rather simple version of the sonority scale (probably mainly for convenience). If the sonority scale actually has more distinct levels than this, what different predictions are made by Z's system? Do these predictions seem reasonable or problematic?
- (10) p 94: "The special issues addressed by geminates will not be addressed here." Hmmm; is there anything interesting to be learned by thinking about how geminates relate to sonority constraints on syllable and mora structure?
- (11) How should Z's σ and μ constraints be stated if we are to implement them in OT? For example, is there a difference in how (a) and (b) would assess violations? Are there any other ways we can think of to formalize a [+son] requirement for μ ?

