

“On the status of onglides in American English”

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In this article, Davis and Hammond argue that the structure of the onglides [w] and [y] are asymmetrical in CVG sequences. Using phonotactic evidence, as well as evidence from Pig Latin and the “Name Game,” they maintain that [w] in a CwV sequence is part of the onset, while [y] in a CyV sequence is co-moraic with the following vowel. They also argue against [y]-insertion that was previously analyzed by Halle & Monahan, and believe that the [y] is part of the underlying representation. They conclude that CwV sequences and CyV sequences are indeed different in terms of syllable structure.

The phonotactics of CGV sequences provide evidence of asymmetry between CwV and CyV sequences. Two constraints that are taken into consideration are sonority distance and homorganicity. The constraints based on sonority distance between the consonant and glide give evidence of subsyllabic structure as well as evidence of the glide belonging to the onset. The constraints on homorganicity (having the same place of articulation) in tautosyllabic sequences can apply regardless of the subsyllabic structure.

Two examples of the constraints on homorganicity occur with CwV sequences. There are no sonority constraints between /w/ and the following vowel; however, there are sonority constraints between /w/ and the preceding consonant. But these two constraints can be explained based on place of articulation, so they do not provide information about the syllable structure.

Evidence for /w/ being part of the onset is shown in the sonority distance constraint. The initial consonant in CwV sequences must not be a sonorant because

English does not allow two sonorants in the onset. Therefore, /w/ acts as a sonorant consonant as it will not allow another sonorant to precede it. This sonority distance relationship provides evidence that /w/ is part of the onset. In addition, the pattern of stress in English indicates that /w/ is non-moraic as it does not add weight to the syllable in such words as *equity*, *requisite* and *Aquila*.

Evidence for /y/ not being part of the onset is shown in the fact that “/y/ can occur after a syllable-initial sonorant consonant” (163). If /y/ is considered co-moraic with the following vowel, then the CyV sequence does not violate the constraint against two sonorants in the onset. Nonetheless, there is a constraint against coronal consonants occurring before /y/, but this is a matter of homorganicity rather than sonority distance.

An interesting observation of CyV sequences is that the vowel is restricted to only [u]. Because of the close relationship between [y] and [u], Davis and Hammond conclude that the underlying representation is a diphthong with an onglide, /ɪu/. The co-moraic structure of CyV sequences, as opposed to the bimoraic structure, is supported by the stress pattern. The /ɪu/ onglide does not add weight to the syllable in words of three or four syllables in which the onglide is an open penultimate syllable, such as *accuracy*, *cálculus*, *immáculate*, and *tarántula*, et al.

Language games such as Pig Latin and the Name Game also provide evidence of the asymmetry of the CwV and CyV sequences. In Pig Latin, the initial onset of words is moved to the end and [e] is inserted after it. With CwV sequences, the initial consonant and /w/ both move to the end of word, therefore /w/ is treated as part of the onset. For example, [kwin] becomes [inkwe] and [swun] becomes [unswe]. CyV sequences are more complicated, however, because of the existence of two dialectal variations. In

Dialect A, [kyut] becomes [yutke] and [pyuk] becomes [yupke], which provides evidence that /y/ is not part of the onset because it remains at the beginning of the word.

Yet in Dialect B, the /y/ has disappeared from the phonetic form: [kyut] becomes [utke] and [pyuk] becomes [upke]. To account for these forms, and in order to maintain that /y/ is not part of the onset, Davis and Hammond adopt a proposal that /y/ moves into the onset by a later rule (the /ɪ/-to[y] rule). Therefore, both dialects have the same underlying representation, but the Pig Latin Rule is applied first in Dialect A and then the /y/ is moved into the onset, whereas in Dialect B, the /y/ is moved into the onset first and then the Pig Latin rule is applied.

Two pieces of evidence that show /y/ is moved into the onset include the use of glottal stops and the indefinite articles. Glottal stops and the article “an” can only occur before a nucleus rather than an onset. However, the Dialect A form [yutke] cannot be pronounced with a preceding glottal stop, nor can “an” be used before it, because [y] has fulfilled the position of the onset.

In addition, the Name Game supports the distinction between CwV and CyV sequences. In this game, the first consonant or onset of a name is replaced by [b], [f], and [m]. Names like Gwen substitute the Cw sequence because it is an onset, while names like Beula do not substitute the Cy sequence because [y] is not part of the onset.

Davis and Hammond argue against the [y]-insertion analysis of CyV sequences introduced by Halle and Monahan (1985). The first problem with the [y]-insertion analysis is that it posits absolute neutralization of the vowel system in English. The [u] that triggers the [y]-insertion is considered to be [ɪ] underlyingly, and all instances of [ɪ] are realized as [u] in the surface representation. Davis and Hammond prefer an analysis

that does not involve absolute neutralization because “underlying representations that are similar to surface representations are more learnable” (172).

Previous observations by Borowsky (1984, 1986) also help to strengthen Davis and Hammond’s argument against [y]-insertion. Borowsky notes that Halle and Monahan are unable to account for the lack of [y]-insertion in syllables that are unstressed and begin with a coronal, such as *tuition* and *altruism*, environments in which [y]-insertion should occur.

In words such as *volume* and *voluminous*, the [y] occurs in the first word, but does not in the second. The presence and lack of [y] is accounted for with the [y]-insertion rule, but Borowsky analyzes them differently with no insertion whatsoever. She concluded that English resyllabifies “an onset consonant of a stressless syllable into the coda of an immediately preceding (stressed) syllable” (173). As a result, the [l] of *volume* belongs to the coda of the initial syllable, and the [l] of *voluminous* remains the onset of the peninitial syllable because it precedes a stressed vowel. However, after the resyllabification, [l] and [y] remain in the same syllable, which violates the constraint against coronals occurring before [y] at the beginning of a syllable. Therefore, there is a rule of Onglide Deletion that deletes [y] after a coronal in the same syllable.

Pig Latin provides the final argument against [y]-insertion. Although the insertion rule can correctly predict the two dialectal forms of *cute*, it wrongly predicts that there are two dialectal forms of *tune*. In fact, both dialects have [unte] for *tune* rather than the [y]-insertion derivations of [yunte] for Dialect A and [unte] for Dialect B. In Davis and Hammond’s analysis, because *tune* lacks an onglide in the underlying

representation, only the Pig Latin rule will apply. Therefore, both dialects produce the form [unte].

In this article, Davis and Hammond have argued that [w] in CwV sequences is part of the onset of the syllable, whereas [y] in CyV sequences is co-moraic with the following vowel. Data from phonotactic constraints and from language games such as Pig Latin and the Name Game show that the onglides are treated differently. Furthermore, patterns of stress in English illustrate that [y] is co-moraic rather than moraic. Lastly, several arguments against [y]-insertion indicate that onglides in English are part of the underlying representation, and that the onglide diphthong /ɪu/ exists. Because of all of this evidence, Davis and Hammond conclude that the structure of onglides is asymmetrical in American English.