THE ROLE OF ONSETS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STRESS PATTERNS


Abstract: It is found that languages with onset-sensitive stress, in which the location of stress is dependent upon the presence or quality of an onset, exhibit the same patterns of symmetrical and asymmetrical stress assignment as languages with rime-based weight (McGarrity 2003). An OT analysis of languages with asymmetrical patterns of onset-sensitive stress (in which primary stress behaves independently of secondary stress) is presented which appeals to primary-stress-specific versions of several prominence-enhancing positional markedness constraints that require stressed syllables to have onsets of low sonority. The relative paucity of fully developed languages with onset-sensitive stress is contrasted with the fairly common tendency in children's early words for low-sonority onsets in unstressed (deleted) syllables to relocate to the syllable bearing stress.