

Syllable Structure in Kerinci

Malay exhibits diverse medial CC sequences (e.g. *pergi*, *indah*, *putra*, *ilmu* etc.). There is some debate regarding the syllabification of such sequences (cf. Teo, 1994; Zaharani, 2005; Tadmor, 2006; *inter alia*). In the case of homorganic nasal + obstruent clusters (e.g. *mimpi*, *indah*, *banjit* etc.), for example, one hypothesis is that the C₁ is syllabified into the onset of the following syllable (i.e. ...V.C₁C₂V...). An opposing hypothesis states that C₁ is syllabified into the coda of the preceding syllable (i.e. ...VC₁.C₂V...). A third hypothesis, which has not yet been proposed for any medial CC sequence, is that C₁ occupies its own syllable (i.e. ...V.C₁.C₂V...). In this paper, we develop an account of syllable structure in Kerinci (Malayic, Sumatra). We argue that the ‘Syllabic C’ hypothesis provides a better account for the properties of certain medial CC sequences in Kerinci. One argument in support of this analysis comes from ‘Vowel Coloring’ phenomena (Mckinnon, 2011). Vowel Coloring refers to free variation between schwa and [a] in certain positions. As the following examples from Tanjung Pauh Kerinci illustrate, Vowel Coloring occurs in antepenultimate syllables (1), but not in penultimate or final syllables (2).

(1) [ə] ~ [a] in antepenult

| | | | |
|------------|---|------------|---------------|
| [bələlɨ́] | ~ | [baləlɨ́] | ‘grasshopper’ |
| [bəʔaŋʔʌe] | ~ | [baʔaŋʔʌe] | ‘BER-promise’ |
| [səkula] | ~ | [sakula] | ‘school’ |

(2) [ə] does not alternate with [a]

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| a. Penultimate syllable: | bəlʌe | *balʌe | ‘buy’ |
| b. Final syllable: | atək | *atak | ‘roof’ |

Forms with certain types of medial CC sequences also exhibit vowel coloring e.g. *səgru/səgru*, *kərtəh/kartəh*, and *bərsəʔəh/barsəʔəh*. Both the ‘Coda Hypothesis’ (whereby these forms are syllabified as *səg.ru*, *kə.r.təh*, *bə.r.səʔəh*) and the ‘Onset Hypothesis’ (whereby these forms are syllabified as *sə.g.ru*, *kə.r.təh*, *bə.rsəʔəh*) claim that schwa will occupy the penultimate syllable. Therefore, both of these hypotheses fail to predict that schwa can occur in free variation with [a] in these forms. In contrast, the Syllabic C Hypothesis correctly predicts that schwa will freely vary with [a], since schwa appears in the antepenultimate syllable as a result of the syllabification scheme (i.e. *sə.g.ru*, *kə.r.təh*, *bə.r.səʔəh*).

This paper examines several word-internal phonological processes which are sensitive to syllable and foot structure in Pondok Tinggi Kerinci and Tanjung Pauh Kerinci. Based on this evidence, we develop a general account of syllable structure for both varieties. Moreover, we consider the implications of this analysis for other Malayic languages, such as Minangkabau.

Works Cited:

Ahmad, Zaharani. 2005. "Phonology-Morphology Interface in Malay." *An optimally theoretic account*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics

Mckinnon, T. A. 2011. *The Morphophonology and Morphosyntax of Kerinci Word-shape Alternations*. University of Delaware.

Tadmor, U. 2006. Are there Clusters and Diphthongs in Malay? 16th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (SEALS XVI), Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta

Teo, Boon Seong, 1994. *The Sound System of Malay Revisited*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.