

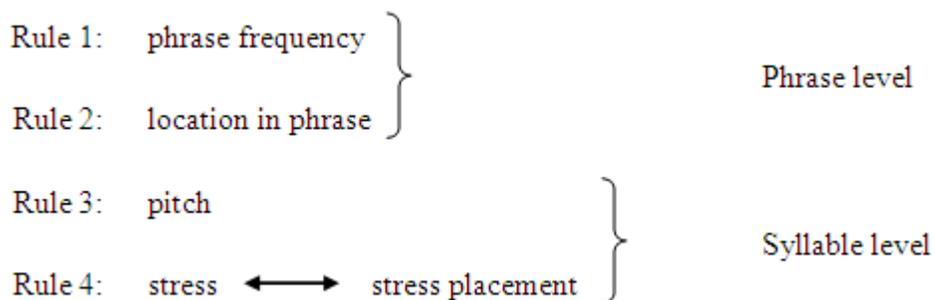
On Sandhi of Zero-onset in New Guangzhou Cantonese

In New Guangzhou Cantonese (NGC) such kind of sandhi is permitted: when some of the syllables with zero-onset ([\emptyset -]) follow syllables with nasal coda ([-n], [-m], or [-ŋ]), they can optionally acquire the nasal consonant as their onset. For instance, the sandhi [fan¹ uk¹ k^hei⁵] → [fan¹ nuk¹ k^hei⁵] in the verbal phrase 番屋企 ([fan¹ uk¹ k^hei⁵], “go home”) is accepted for some young native speakers. Based on a survey of ten college students from Guangzhou whose native tongue is Cantonese and subsequent quantitative analysis, this paper argues for four rules that control the sandhi. Influence of stress placement is also evaluated via comparing NGC with Mandarin. The four rules are:

1. The sandhi is more easily accepted in higher-frequency phrases;
2. The sandhi is more easily accepted within a phrase than across the boundary of two phrases;
3. The sandhi is more easily accepted when the pitch of the zero-onset syllable is lower;
4. The sandhi is more easily accepted when the zero-onset syllable is light/unstressed than when it is heavy/stressed, as it shows in the case of the prefix “阿”.

These rules determine whether and to what extent the sandhi is accepted in NGC. This paper also discusses the relationship among the rules. The first two rules are on the same level, i.e., the phrase level. While Rule 1 focuses on the frequency of a given phrase in Cantonese speech, Rule 2 reveals the correlation between the acceptability of the sandhi and its location in a phrase or between two phrases. The other two rules are on the syllable level. Rule 3 discloses the influence of pitch value; Rule 4 focuses on the syllable weight. In addition to Rule 4, which highlights the heavy/light syllable contrast in Cantonese, the different stress placements between Cantonese and Mandarin and the diversity in sandhi acceptability caused are also discussed.

Therefore, the relationship among the rules is shown as following:



Key references:

Duanmu, San. 2007. Stress, Information, and Language Typology. *Linguistic Science*, 6.5: 3-16.

Fry, D.B. 1958. Experiments in the Perception of Stress. *Language and Speech*, 2:126-152.