
TWO CRITICAL PROBLEMS IN ACCENT RULES

(Shortened version of the paper given at the Congress)*

MANFRED BIERWISCH

Since 1956 Chomsky and Halle have developed a theory of accent which accounts for the complex pattern of relative prominence in compound words and phrases by fairly simple rules. These rules are strictly local transformations, recognizing only branching and categorization of the final derived constituent structure as well as the previously assigned stem-accent. They are operating cyclically from the innermost constituents upward to more and more embracing constituents. Two critical problems of this theory are discussed.

Firstly it is shown that the correct determination of the accent pattern of arbitrary sentences requires a specification of the domain in which the accent rules are to operate. This domain cannot be given by particular categories such as NP, VP, Sentence, etc. It must be connected somehow with the specification of breath groups or phrasing units. No solution is available for the moment.

Secondly it is shown that the accent pattern of whole sentences, but also of noun phrases does not only depend on labelled bracketing, but also on deeper syntactic, in particular on contextually determined information. From this it follows that the basic assumption that accent rules operate cyclically recognizing only the final derived constituent structure must be modified somehow.

* The complete text appeared in *Journal of Linguistics* Vol. 4. 1968. p. 173—178.