

## French liaison and data

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The purpose of this talk is to take another look at liaison in French and to examine the interaction between data and theoretical claims.

Historically, liaison phenomenon is part of a general process of consonant linking which survived final consonant deletion. From the earliest comments made by grammarians to recent accounts within OT, an explanation has been offered in terms of phonotactic requirements such as 'maximize CV syllables'. If there is no disagreement on the morphological role often fulfilled by the liaison consonant and on the fact that the most frequent liaison consonants are /z, n, t/, the nature of the process and the conditions under which it occurs have been subject to intense debate. As some of the data often presented and accounted for is drawn from manuals aimed at teaching French to foreign students (f.ex. Fouché, 1959) or drawn from questionable intuitions about what is possible or not, another look at the data is called for. We will briefly introduce the project PFC (Phonology of Contemporary French, coord. Durand, Laks, Lyche) where liaison consonants have been coded for a number of surveys and show that the range of systematic liaison is in fact highly restricted. The results point to a morphologized liaison when systematic (f.ex. a plural marker /z/ treated by some, as in Morin 1986, as a noun prefix). We will examine prenominal adjectives in more depth and show the importance of repetition and frequency supporting a construction analysis (Bybee 2001, Croft 2001). Preliminary PFC results indicate an extremely limited use of liaison even within the reading part of our protocol. We will show that our results point toward a phenomenon relatively uniform across regions but which cannot be attributed to a single process. We will then propose elements towards a more complex analysis.

### References

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