Intrasegmental Consonant Structure
in the Light of Consonant Prevocalization

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This paper proposes a new approach to intrasegmental consonant structure based on the first detailed synchronic, diachronic, intra-linguistic, and cross-linguistic analysis of consonant prevocalization.

Consonant prevocalization (CP) refers to phonological processes that have in common the development of a vocalic prearticulation by consonants. As an example of the processes involved may be cited the following forms from Apinajé, a Northern Jê language of Central Brazil. The forms show the development of a palatal glide between mid nonnasal vowels and syllable-final /ɲ/. For reasons which will be made explicit in the paper, this subsegmental glide is interpreted as a vocalic onset generated by the nasal rather than as a dipthongal offglide generated by the preceding vowel.

| /mbjeɲ/ | [mbzeⁱɲ] | 'husband' |
| /rɔɲ/ | [rɔʲɲ] | 'macaúba (palm sp.)' |

The main proposal of the paper is that traditional consonant-level units, with the sole exception of laryngeals, are bigestural in the sense of including an underlying vocalic component or V-gesture. The paper further hypothesizes that the consonant's vocalic element is specified underlyingly. And finally, it is hypothesized that CP consists of the breaking up of consonants into sequences of their internal components, or gestures, which leads to the emergence of a surface vocalic element not present in the underlying (or abstract) phonological segmental order. To express the proposed intrasegmental structure and CP processes in precise terms, the paper relies on the conceptual apparatus and representational conventions of articulatory phonology.

The research reported in the paper is contained in the author's monograph (Operstein 2010).

Reference

Operstein, Natalie. 2010. *Consonant Structure and Prevocalization*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.