Review by Geoff Schwartz

The first comment I have is that the Author’s attempt at anonymity in the text is problematic, although this may be more the fault of the journal’s submission guidelines. If one is going to employ a non-mainstream framework like GP 2.0, then it is not a good idea to cite “Author” when introducing the framework, because it becomes immediately obvious that the author is also the creator of the framework, and we all know who that is. If full citations are given, there would at least a plausible case that the author of this paper is NOT the creator of GP 2.0, but is simply someone who follows the framework and uses it. I too am the creator of a non-mainstream framework, and have run across this problem – but by giving the full reference I can at least pretend that someone else is using my model (alas, this is rarely the case). Anyway, in this situation I have no problem lifting my anonymity (sort of) by saying the author of this review is the creator of the Onset Prominence representational framework (Author of review 2010 et seq.), which in fact shares many important assumptions with GP2.0. Perhaps more importantly, both GP2.0 and OP are non-mainstream frameworks that struggle to attract a larger audience, so the comments I have are, I suppose, more general questions I would pose to GP2.0, which may not need to be all answered in this particular article. However, I think that GP2.0 would be well served to address them at some point as it seeks to gain followers.

The first question is this: how would GP2.0 model the differences between a language with vowel reduction and a language without vowel reduction? Both GP2.0 and OP have the ambitious goal of merging segmental phonology with prosodic phonology, so GP2.0 definitely should address the question of why some languages have vowel reduction and some don’t (OP definitely has a story about this). After all, if /a/ is a larger structure in all languages, why does it only reduce in some languages? Or perhaps the “A as structure” postulate is not intended as a universal?

@ the structures in (9): the difference between ɛ and ɔ is that the former has 2 xN nodes (it is higher) and the latter has 2 xN nodes. On its face, this suggests that I is a “higher” element than U. I think more could be said here – maybe there are some links that can be drawn between this and other asymmetries between I and U, which if I remember correctly “Author” has written about.

@ 4.1 and 4.2: the difference in behavior between vowels following so-called empty onsets and filled onsets is explained in the paper by positing different structural adjustments to the vowels themselves. This seems to me like a very roundabout way of addressing the problem. I would say a more plausible approach would be to explain the difference as a function of the onset’s structural properties. When the onset is filled,
reduction causes raising of both front and back vowels. In vowel-initial words, raising only happens in front vowels. What this suggests to me is that initial front-vowels are true empty onsets (the h-aspire type, if you will), and so the reduction patterns mirror the consonant-initial words, while initial back vowels are not. This difference is easily explained in OP with parametric VO specification in vowels – i.e. a phonetically derived difference between the two types of empty onset found. This, in turn, loops back to my previous comment that I is “higher” than U (for OP this is more “onset-like” – I still can’t figure out whether Onsets or Nuclei are higher in GP 2.0), which would perhaps explain why the vowels containing I are better as empty onsets than those containing U. I could come up with a phonetic argument why I is better as an empty onset than U – it contains more acoustic energy in the most perceptually sensitive frequency range (between 1-5 khz), and as such as probably more perceptually robust. This whole issue speaks to a more general question about GP2.0 – where does the distinction between onset heads and nuclear heads come from? Is it necessary? For that matter, where does the difference between xn and xN come from? What is the source of the bipartite structure, with xn on top of xN? Why can’t xN be on top?

I got a bit lost in the discussion of the links between the Empty Category Principle and the Portuguese data with regard to whether or not the onset was filled. Perhaps this whole section was a little too GP-internal in its orientation. In any case, I was not quite convinced by the argument, for the reason outlined in previous comment – it seems much more likely that EP has two types of empty onset, and that is what explains the vowel initial asymmetry between front and back vowels. On a more general level, the discussion here raises the question of how much GP2.0 is intended to be a break from the original version. How much do you want to borrow from the original GP? In any case, the discussion could be clarified greatly with additional diagrams of the GP2.0 structures showing the difference between vowels with and without consonantal onsets.

I think a similar comment about theory-internalness may be made about the discussion of diphthongs and why they are not reduced. I think it might be enough to say that reduction is blocked because it would entail the loss of melody in a way that reduction of monopthongs would not – of course, that might mean abandoning the A as structure postulate. In any case, to clarify things, I think in (13) there should be a side-by-side GP2.0 presentation of the diphthong that is already there with a monophthong that is subject to reduction.