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“The Syllable in English, Bulgarian and Hungarian – Comparison of Onset Structure”

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The paper examines the structure of the syllable in three languages – English, Bulgarian and Hungarian. It focuses on the onset structure and reviews the principles, regulating the construction of the onset in the languages in question. Its aim is to establish whether the non-linear model of the internal structure of syllables in general can be applied, and a common model for the onset of the compared languages can be deduced.

With the registration of the existing consonantal combinations in English, Bulgarian and Hungarian, a maximum of four positions for the possible consonantal clusters at initial margins is established. The counting from 1 to 4 starts from the sonority peak in the syllable. It is indicated that position 1 and position 2 correspond to the two-slot limit in the structure of the onset for the compared languages. Positions 3 and 4 are appendices, which are introduced in order to account for the excess of consonants in the onset and the violation of the Sonority Sequencing Principle. Each position corresponds to a certain set of consonants, i.e. the consonants in all three languages seem to have preferences for a particular position and their occurrence somewhere else within the structure is highly restricted. The paper examines to what degree these positions and sets overlap in English, Bulgarian and Hungarian.

Despite the differences of the phonological systems of the compared languages, the paper shows that a common model can be established and a general conclusion about the structure of the onset can be drawn.

