Vowel : Consonant :: Functional head : Lexical argument

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Taking a bird's-eye view, linguistic elements at various levels (phonemes in the case of morphemes; words or morphemes in the case of sentences) are distributed in such a way that qualitatively different elements alternate:
Within and across languages, phonotactic rules obtain a roughly regular alternation of vowels and consonants (ideally: CVCV). Syntactic rules, on the other hand, obtain a roughly regular alternation of (functional) heads and (lexical) arguments. There seems to be a deeper sense to the observed parallelism inviting reductionist speculations. Note the following parallels between syntax and phonology that correlate with the above observation:

i. both within phonology, as well as in syntax, there is a clear asymmetry between heads (functional heads in syntax, vocalic syllable heads in phonology) and dependents (syntactic arguments, consonantal syllable margins).

ii. somewhat paradoxically, heads do not obligatorily surface, but dependents do:
There are languages in which words may consist of consonants only (Berber) but no language that allows (longer) sequences of vowels to form a root (not sure if that's really true).
There are languages in which sentences may consist of lexical words only, i.e. that do without functional morphology; but there is no language that forms sentences by concatenating functional heads, leaving out lexical words.

iii. Relatedly, the lexical morphemes are bearers of core meaning while the functional morphemes serve a syntactic function. As for phonology, Nespor and colleagues suggest that, within morphemes, consonants represent the lexical meaning while vowels tend to carry syntactic information (syntactic category, tense, number etc.) – cf. semitic root and pattern morphology with consonantal and vocalic tiers.

iv. Functional morphemes are often referred to as "closed class" elements, while lexical morphemes belong to the "open class". Similarly, vowel inventories are usually smaller than consonant inventories.

This talk seeks to explore the above stated parallelism(s). The question is, whether these parallels hint at a core mechanism that is active in both the syntactic and the phonological domain and how, and to what extent it operates with both kinds of basic vocabulary.

Reference

Nespor, Marina, Marcela Peña, and Jacques Mehler. 2003. On the different roles of vowels and consonants in speech processing and language acquisition. *Lingue e linguaggio* 2.2: 203-230.