

Vowel Harmony

An Account in Terms of Government and Optimality

Vowel Harmony deals with some theoretical problems concerning the phenomenon of vowel harmony, in a framework combining insights from Government Phonology, Optimality Theory and Lexical Phonology. The dissertation introduces and motivates the general framework and examines three issues. The first concerns the typology of vowel harmony systems and how an element-based feature theory, comprised of the three elements **I**, **A** and **U** and supplemented by the property of headedness, can account for all the different types of harmony. The second concerns the domain of harmony and the question of how to handle disharmonicity in the proposed model. The third involves the so-called neutral vowels, i.e. those vowels in a system that do not have a harmonic counterpart. It is claimed that the behaviour of neutral vowels can be predicted from their segmental make-up and from particular properties of the vowel systems involved.

It is argued that the theory of Government Phonology (a principles-and-parameters approach) needs to be supplemented by constraint ranking, because certain types of phenomena cannot be accounted for otherwise. Since ranking is shown to be necessary, language variation can now be exclusively expressed by this device, and the notion of parameters can be abandoned. Finally, it is argued that a non-derivational version of the Strict Cycle Condition also needs to be incorporated into the theory to account for so-called derived environment effects (of which disharmonicity is shown to be an example).

The book is of interest to a general phonological readership.

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