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The Consonant Phonotactics of Georgian

The central topic of this thesis is the study of Georgian consonant sequences, e.g. forms of the CCC type. It demonstrates that the complexity of the Georgian consonant clusters is related to morphological complexity and to processes of vowel reduction and complex segment formation. Thus, the Georgian 'complex' CCC sequences are derived from structures of the CVCVCV type.

For the representation of the consonant phonotactics of Georgian, a phonological hierarchy is introduced in which the stem domain is intermediate between the segment and the word domain. It is proposed that a number of phonological principles, the Obligatory Contour Principle, the Sonority Sequencing Principle, the Syllable Contact Law and the Principle of Resolvability are instantiations of a single principle, the Balancing Principle. They govern the consonant co-occurrence restrictions and function at the stem or the word domain, depending on the language type.

The hypothesis that a language which has C_iC_j clusters will also have C_iVC_j stems is proposed and verified on the basis of Georgian data. This relates to the claim that Georgian clusters are maximally biconsonantal.

The Gradual Consonant Analysis, based on different types of evidence - (i) paradigmatic and syntagmatic, (ii) historical, (iii) phonetic and (iv) comparative - provides a direct and clear link between empirical structures and theoretical constructs, and explains why consonants form complex structures in Georgian.

This book is of interest to linguists studying phonotactics, phonetics, the phonology-morphology interface and Georgian.

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