

ABSTRACT

CONTRAST PRESERVATION IN PHONOLOGICAL MAPPINGS

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The present study investigates how information about contrasts is employed in the grammar. It is proposed that contrast preservation exists as an independent principle, which, within the framework of Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky 1993), is formalized as a family of rankable and violable constraints on preserving contrasts. Those constraints interact with one another and with conflicting markedness constraints resulting in preservation or neutralization of underlying distinctions in surface forms (cf. Trubetzkoy 1971, Martinet 1967, Kiparsky 1973).

This work contributes to the growing body of research on the status of contrast in phonology (cf. Flemming 1995, Padgett 1997, 2000). In standard OT (Prince and Smolensky 1993) and derivational approaches to phonology (Chomsky and Halle 1968), contrast preservation follows from other components of the grammar and is not stated as an independent principle. By re-examining the role of contrast, this study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of a phonological system and the nature of a phonological mapping (cf. Kaye 1974, 1975, Kisseberth 1976).

The proposal to treat contrast preservation as an independent principle has far-reaching consequences: (i) it provides new insights into possible interactions between phonological mappings, and in so doing gives a more accurate typology of chain shifts

(see chapter 4); (ii) it provides a uniform analysis of opaque and transparent phonological processes (chapters 2, 3 and 5); (iii) it eliminates the need for constraint conjunctions and other mechanisms needed to account for opacity (chapter 4); and finally, (iv) it sheds new light on the role of faithfulness and markedness in the grammar (chapter 1).

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 1 presents the proposal. Chapter 2 examines typological implications of the proposal. Chapter 3 provides empirical support based on the example of Finnish chain shifts. Chapter 4 examines the predictions of the proposal and compares them to previous approaches. Finally, chapter 5 applies the proposal to the study of stress-epenthesis interaction in dialects of Arabic.

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