

# Instructions for ACL 2020 Proceedings

## Anonymous ACL submission

### Abstract

## 1 Introduction

Formal language theory has long been used to study the complexity of linguistic dependencies. Recent research in this sense has posited that the phonotactics of natural languages can be described by subclasses of the regular languages. In particular, tier-based strictly local (TSL) grammars — a minor extension of  $n$ -gram models — have been shown to be able to capture a variety of non-local, unbounded processes (Heinz et al., 2011; McMullin, 2016; McMullin and Hansson, 2016). Recently however, it has been suggested that the particular notion of relativized locality employed by the TSL class is unable to describe a variety of complex phonotactic patterns cross-linguistically. Based on this linguistic motivation, extensions have been proposed in the search of the right fit for natural language phonotactics. Specifically, input-sensitive TSL languages have been suggested as being able to encode a combination of local and non local requirements on the well-formedness of strings in the language.

Apart from typological coverage, an important aspect of evaluating the linguistic relevance of these analyses is to understand under which conditions such patterns are learnable. In this sense, an approach to learning grounded in grammatical inferences is interesting, as it illuminates how properties of the patterns can restrict the learning space in useful ways. In this framework, TSL languages have been shown to be efficiently learnable from positive input only. While ITSL languages have been argued to share the same property, no learning algorithm exists for this class. In this paper, we extend McMullin et al. (2019) inference algorithm for multiple tier-based strictly 2 local languages

(MITSL<sub>2</sub>), in order to learn patterns in the intersection closure of ITSL<sub>2</sub> which consider 2-local contexts for segments in the input string (MITSL<sub>2</sub><sup>2</sup>). The intersection closure is essential, if we strive to provide learning approaches able to capture the whole phonotactics of a language, and not one single pattern at the time. We evaluate our algorithm qualitatively over a variety of natural and formal examples, and discuss known limitations of the framework and possible extensions.

## 2 MITSL Languages and Linguistic Motivation

Many dependencies in phonology can be captured by strictly local (SL) grammars: *local constraints* that only make distinctions on the basis of contiguous substrings of segments up to some length  $k$  (essentially,  $k$ -grams; Heinz, 2011). For example, a ( $k=2$ ) local dependency requiring /s/ to surface as [z] when followed by [l] can be captured by a grammar that forbids the sequence [sl]. However, while prominent in natural language phonology, (unbounded) long-distance dependencies cannot be captured by local constraints. To account for this, work studying linguistic dependencies from a formal language theoretical perspective has characterized long-distance phonotactic patterns as *tier-based strictly local*.

Tier-based strictly local languages (TSL) are able to encode a notion of relativized locality inspired by the idea of phonological tier, already popular in autosegmental phonology (Goldsmith, 1976). While a formal introduction to the properties of TSL is beyond the scope of this paper, a TSL dependency is intuitively non-local in the input string but local over a *tier*. A tier is defined as the projection of a subset of the segments of the input string, and the grammar constraints are characterized as the set of sequences of length  $k$  not allowed on the

tier. For instance, the example in Figure 1 (from Aari, an Omotic language of south Ethiopia) shows how to enforce long-distance sibilant harmony in anteriority. First one projects from the string a tier  $T$  that only contains sibilants, and then one bans contiguous  $[ʒs]$  and  $[sʒ]$  on  $T$  (see Hayward, 1990).

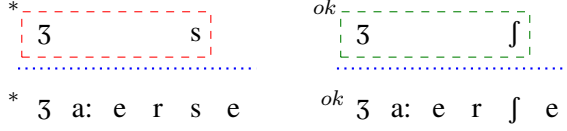


Figure 1: Example of sibilant harmony over tier from Aari.

The class of TSL languages has been shown to have good cross-linguistic coverage, accounting for a variety of different phonotactic patterns cross-linguistically (Heinz et al., 2011; McMullin, 2016; Graf, 2017). Moreover, and most interesting to us, TSL<sub>k</sub> languages have been shown to be efficiently (polynomial in time and input) learnable in the limit from positive data, even when the tier-alphabet is not known *a priori* (Jardine and Heinz, 2016; Jardine and McMullin, 2017).

However, there are two main known limits to TSL as a good formal account for natural language phonotactics.

The first issue lies in the simplicity of TSL’s projection mechanism. Recently, several patterns have been reported that cannot be described by the way TSL’s tier-projection masks out parts of a string before enforcing some strictly local constraint (McMullin, 2016; Mayer and Major, 2018; Baek, 2017; Graf and Mayer, 2018; De Santo and Graf, 2019). These patterns include the long-distance sibilant harmony in Imdlawn Tashlhiyt (McMullin, 2016), the nasal harmony pattern in Yaka (Walker, 2000), the unbounded stress of Classical Arabic (see Baek, 2017, and references therein), and cases of unbounded tone plateauing. These patterns share the common trait that one has to inspect the *local context* (i.e., the surrounding environment) of a segment before projecting it on a tier.

Consider the case of Consonantal Nasal harmony in Yaka, in which a nasal stop induces nasalization of voiced consonants occurring at any distance to its right (Hyman, 1995; Walker, 2000). For instance, the segmental alternation shown in Ex. (1) is due

to the phoneme /d/ surfacing as [n] after a preceding nasal (cf. Ex. (1a, 1b vs. 1c)). Vowels and voiceless consonants intervening between the two harmonizing stops remain unaffected (cf. Ex. (2)).

- (1) a. yán-ini ‘to cry out’  
b. yád-idi ‘to spread’  
c. \*yán-idi
- (2) a. hámúk-ini ‘to give away’  
b. mǐítuk-ini ‘to sulk’
- (3) a. bíímb-idi ‘to embrace’  
b. kúúnd-idi ‘to bury’  
c. nááng-ini ‘to last’

A TSL analysis for this pattern seems straightforward, as the data can be captured by projecting a tier of voiced consonants, and enforcing constraints banning tier adjacent [nd]. However, observe now the examples in Ex. (3): consonantal complexes composed of a nasal and a voiced oral stop neither trigger (Ex. (3a), 3b) nor block nasality agreement (Ex. (3c)). Fig. 2 exemplifies why this interaction of a local and a non-local dependency is not TSL. Since [nd] is sometimes observed in a string-adjacent context (as in Ex. (3b)), it must be permitted as a 2-gram on a tier — even though it is only allowed when [n] and [d] are immediately adjacent in the string. But then, a TSL grammar would have no means of distinguishing Ex. (1c) from Ex. (3b).

The reader might point out that the difference between Fig. 2.a and Fig. 2.c can be resolved by extending the tier-grammar to consider 3-grams. However, in order to enforce harmony correctly, the tier-projection places every occurrence of voiced stops in the string on the tier, thus making 3-grams constraints insufficient (e.g., Ex. (3c)). Moreover, since the number of segments between harmonizing elements is potentially unbounded, no TSL grammar can generally account for this pattern, independently of the dimension of the tier  $k$ -grams.

Let us consider the examples in Ex. (3) once more. Any nasal immediately followed by a voiced stop does not trigger harmony. In fact, since they do not block the harmonic process, neither the nasal nor the stop participate in the harmony at all. If we could make the projection of nasals and stops avoid those segments that appear in specific consonant clusters (e.g., [nd]) the tier constraints discussed

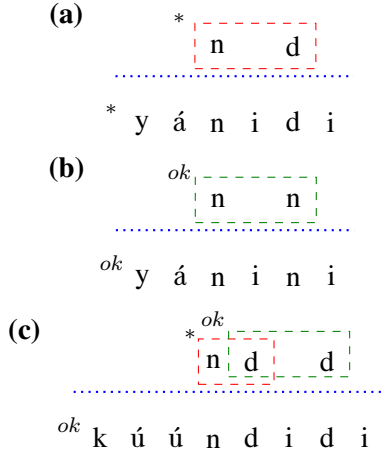


Figure 2: Example of a TSL analysis of nasal harmony in Yaka: (a) is ill-formed because of tier adjacent \*[nd]; (b) is well-formed since there are no voiced stops on the tier disagreeing in nasality; (c) is well-formed because the [d] immediately following [n] stops the latter from being a trigger for harmony, but it is still ruled out by the constraint needed for (b).

above would work once again. This is not possible with TSL as originally defined in (Heinz et al., 2011), as TSL selects tier elements only based on their 1-local properties (i.e., which kind of segment they are). However, this kind of expressivity can be accomplished by increasing the locality window of the *tier projection mechanism*.

This is the intuition behind De Santo and Graf (2019)’s ITSL class: a TSL grammar can be made simultaneously aware of local and non-local properties of segments in the string with a natural change to the definition of the erasing function. Fig. 3 shows how, by increasing the locality of the projection to 2, we allow the grammar to project a nasal iff it is not immediately followed by a voiced oral stop, and a voiced stop iff it is not immediately preceded by a nasal. Then, we can use 2-local tier constraints to ban [nd]. This time, possible intermediate clusters are not a problem, since the projection is able to infer that they are in local contexts that make them irrelevant to the harmonic process.

ITSL languages have been shown to properly extend TSL, and fix a gap in its typological coverage. However, there is a second shortcoming to adopting TSL as a model for natural language phonotactics, that carries over to ITSL: TSL (and thus ITSL) languages are not closed under intersection.

Lack of closure under intersection is problematic as

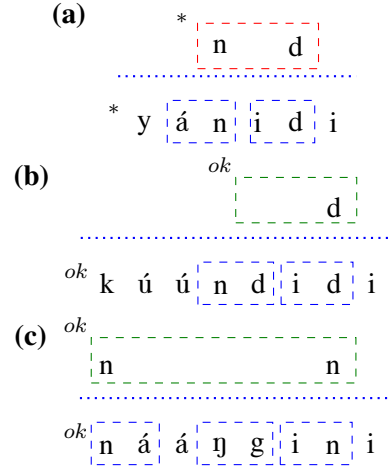


Figure 3: Example of a ITSL analysis of nasal harmony in Yaka: (a) is ill-formed because of adjacent \*[nd]; (b) is well-formed since [n] is followed by another [n] later in the string; (c) is well-formed because the [nd] cluster does not enforce nasality on the following stops. Note that [n,d,g,ŋ] are projected on the tier only when not immediately adjacent in the input.

it entails that the complexity of phonological dependencies is no longer constant under factorization. This implies that the upper bound for phonological phenomena would shift, depending on whether one treats a constraint as a single phenomenon or the interaction of multiple phenomena. Moreover, we clearly want to be able to consider multiple phenomena at the same time when describing the phonotactics of a language. Consider the following additional data from Yaka.

- (4) a. kém-ene  
b. kéb-edé

Ex. (4) shows a vowel alternation that is independent of the nasality process, and is instead due to vowel height harmony. Vowel harmony can be easily accounted for with a TSL grammar. However, this is only true if we analyze it by itself, and fails if we try to model nasal harmony and vowel harmony in a single grammar. In order to account for this, vowels would need to be projected on the tier, thus interfering with the nasalization process. To account for this, De Santo and Graf (2019) propose working with the intersection closure of TSL (MTSL) and ITSL languages (MITSL).

Intuitively, MTSL and MITSL can be conceptualized as encoding multiple projections (tiers) at the same time, and enforcing independent strictly

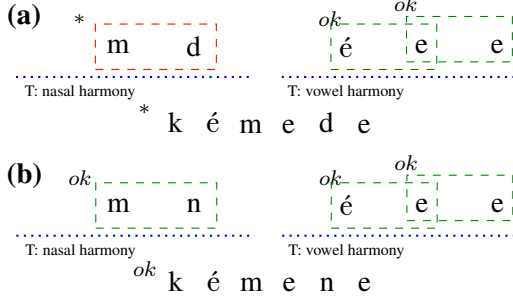


Figure 4: Example of a MITSL analysis of Yaka nasal and vowel harmony: (a) is ill-formed because there is a violation on the nasal harmony tier; (b) is well-formed since there are no violations on either tier.

local constraints over each tier. For a string to belong to the language, it needs to be well-formed on every tier. For instance, Fig. 4 shows a grammar projecting two separate tier: a tier of vowel, with constraints ensuring height harmony; and a tier enforcing nasal harmony as in the examples above.

Since intersection closure is a fundamentally desirable property from a linguistic perspective, McMullin et al. (2019) propose an algorithm that efficiently learns multiple tier-based strictly 2-local (i.e., where tier constraints are bigrams) dependencies, with no a-priori knowledge about the tier-segments or the number of tiers required. Given the typological importance of input-sensitive projection, in this paper we expand on McMullin et al. (2019) and present a grammatical inference algorithm able to learn MITSL grammars with 2-local contexts and 2-local tier constraints ( $k$ -MITSL<sub>2</sub><sup>2</sup>), only from positive examples and without a-priori knowledge about the content — or the number — of necessary tiers. Moreover, since MTSL languages are properly contained in MITSL, we also implicitly provide an implementation of McMullin et al. (2019)’s approach.

### 3 MITSL Inference Algorithm

The remainder of the paper discusses our learning algorithm for MITSL languages with projection contexts and tier constraints of size 2 (MITSL<sub>2</sub><sup>2</sup>). While the previous section presented an intuitive definition of MITSL languages, a more formal definition is necessary in order to understand the way the algorithm works. Thus, we first introduce some mathematical preliminaries and discuss how the definition of MITSL grammar presented

in (De Santo and Graf, 2019) grounds the intuition behind our generalization of McMullin et al. (2019)’s learning algorithm. We also discuss a generalization of the notion of 2-path as introduced by Jardine and Heinz (2016).

#### 3.1 Formal Preliminaries

We assume familiarity with set notation on the reader’s part. Given a finite alphabet  $\Sigma$ ,  $\Sigma^*$  is the set of all possible finite strings of symbols drawn from  $\Sigma$ . A language  $L$  is a subset of  $\Sigma^*$ . For every string  $w$  and every non-empty string  $u$ ,  $|w|$  denotes the length of the string,  $|w|_u$  denotes the number of occurrences of  $u$  in  $w$ , and  $\lambda$  is the unique empty string. Left and right word boundaries are marked by  $\bowtie$ ,  $\bowtie \notin \Sigma$  respectively.

A string  $u$  is a  $k$ -factor of a string  $w$  iff  $\exists x, y \in \Sigma^*$  such that  $w = xuy$  and  $|u| = k$ . The function  $\text{fac}_k$  maps words to the set of  $k$ -factors within them:  $\text{fac}_k(w) := \{u : u \text{ is a } k\text{-factor of } w \text{ if } |w| \geq k, \text{ else } u = w\}$ . For example,  $\text{fac}_2(aab) = \{aa, ab\}$ . The domain of  $\text{fac}_k$  is generalized to languages  $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$  in the usual way:  $\text{fac}_k(L) = \bigcup_{w \in L} \text{fac}_k(w)$ .

As usual, we allow standard Boolean connectives ( $\wedge$ ,  $\vee$ ,  $\neg$ ,  $\rightarrow$ ), and first-order quantification ( $\exists$ ,  $\forall$ ) over individuals. We let  $x \prec y$  denote *precedence*,  $x \approx y$  denote *identity*, and  $x, y$  denote variables ranging over positions in a finite string  $w \in \Sigma^*$ . Note that  $\prec$  is a strict total order. The remaining logical connectives are obtained from the given ones in the standard fashion, and brackets may be dropped where convenient. For example, *immediate precedence* is defined as  $x \triangleleft y \leftrightarrow x \prec y \wedge \neg \exists z [x \prec z \wedge z \prec y]$ .

As discussed, TSL languages have  $k$ -local constraints only apply to elements of a tier  $T \subseteq \Sigma$ . In order to do so, a projection function (also called-erasing function) is introduced to delete (or mask) all symbols that are not in  $T$ . In order to extend the notion of tier in TSL languages to consider local properties of the segments in the input string, De Santo and Graf (2019) take inspiration from (Chandlee and Heinz, 2018) and define ITSL projection function in terms of local contexts.

**Definition 1** (Contexts). A  $k$ -context  $c$  over alphabet  $\Sigma$  is a triple  $\langle \sigma, u, v \rangle$  such that  $\sigma \in \Sigma$ ,  $u, v \in \Sigma^*$  and  $|u| + |v| \leq k$ . A  $k$ -context set is a finite set of  $k$ -contexts.



**Definition 2** (ISL Projection). Let  $C$  be a  $k$ -context set over  $\Sigma$  (where  $\Sigma$  is an arbitrary alphabet also containing edge-markers). Then the input strictly  $k$ -local (ISL- $k$ ) tier projection  $\pi_C$  maps every  $s \in \Sigma^*$  to  $\pi'_C(\bowtie^{k-1}, s\bowtie^{k-1})$ , where  $\pi'_C(u, \sigma v)$  is defined as follows, given  $\sigma \in \Sigma \cup \{\varepsilon\}$  and  $u, v \in \Sigma^*$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \varepsilon & \quad \text{if } \sigma av = \varepsilon, \\ \sigma \pi'_C(u\sigma, v) & \quad \text{if } \langle \sigma, u, v \rangle \in C, \\ \pi'_C(u\sigma, v) & \quad \text{otherwise.} \end{aligned}$$

Note that an ISL-1 tier projection only determines projection of  $\sigma$  based on  $\sigma$  itself, showing that this projection function is really just an extension of what happens for TSL languages. The definition of ITSL languages then is as follows.

**Definition 3** (ITSL). A language  $L$  is  $m$ -input local  $k$ -TSL ( $m$ -ITSL $_k$ ) iff there exists an  $m$ -context set  $C$  and a finite set  $R \subseteq \Sigma^k$  such that

$$L = \{w \in \Sigma^* : \text{fac}_k(\bowtie^{k-1}\pi_C(w)\bowtie^{k-1}) \cap R = \emptyset\}.$$

A language is input-local TSL (ITSL) iff it is  $m$ -ITSL $_k$  for some  $k, m \geq 0$ . We call  $\langle C, R \rangle$  an ITSL grammar.

Note that the notion of tier is here expressed by the set of contexts  $C$ , which is the set of tier segments with the locality conditions necessary for them to be relevant to the tier constraints. Finally, a  $k$ -MITSL language is defined as the intersection of  $k$  ISTL languages. The MITSL class has been shown to properly extend TSL, while remaining a proper subclass of star-free languages — and thus subregular in its expressivity (De Santo and Graf, 2019).

As mentioned, in what follows we focus on learning MITSL languages with an arbitrary number of tiers, but with the locality of the contexts and of the tier-constraints fixed to 2. The intuition behind this paper's proposal is that, from a learning perspective, having to consider 2-local constraints (thus a segment plus its left or right context) is equivalent to treating bigrams as unitary elements of the language, and explore dependencies over them.

To do so, the algorithm incorporates the notion of a 2-path (Jardine and Heinz, 2016), generalized over bigrams. A 2-path is a 3-tuple  $\langle \rho_1, X, \rho_2 \rangle$ , where  $\rho_1, \rho_2$  are elements in  $\Sigma_{\bowtie, \bowtie}$  and  $X$  is a subset of  $\Sigma$ . The 2-paths of a strong  $w = \sigma_1\sigma_2 \dots \sigma_n$  are denoted  $\text{paths}_2(w)$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{paths}_2 = \{ \langle \sigma_i, X, \sigma_j \rangle \mid & i < j \text{ and} \\ & X = \{ \sigma_z \mid i < z < j \} \} \end{aligned}$$

Intuitively, a 2-path can be thought of as a precedence relation  $(\rho_1 \dots \rho_2)$  accompanied by the set  $X$  of symbols that intervene between  $\rho_1$  and  $\rho_2$ . Formally, each 2-path is therefore a 3-tuple of the form  $\langle \rho_1, X, \rho_2 \rangle$ . For example, the string  $\bowtie abcc\bowtie$  includes the following 2-paths:  $\langle a, \{\emptyset\}, b \rangle$ ,  $\langle a, \{b\}, c \rangle$ ,  $\langle a, \{b, c\}, c \rangle$ ,  $\langle b, \{\emptyset\}, c \rangle$ ,  $\langle b, \{c\}, c \rangle$ ,  $\langle \bowtie, \{\emptyset\}, a \rangle$ ,  $\langle \bowtie, \{a\}, b \rangle$ ,  $\langle \bowtie, \{a, b\}, c \rangle$ ,  $\langle \bowtie, \{a, b, c\}, c \rangle$ ,  $\langle \bowtie, \{a, b, c\}, \bowtie \rangle$ ,  $\langle a, \{b, c\}, \bowtie \rangle$ ,  $\langle b, \{c\}, \bowtie \rangle$ ,  $\langle c, \{c\}, \bowtie \rangle$ ,  $\langle c, \{\emptyset\}, \bowtie \rangle$ . We can extend  $\text{paths}_2(\cdot)$  from strings to languages as  $\text{paths}_2(L) = \bigcup_{w \in L} \text{paths}_2(w)$ .

In order to have 2-paths capture the notion of context, we have  $\rho_1, \rho_2$  be elements in  $\text{fac}_2(\Sigma_{\bowtie, \bowtie}^*)$  and  $X$  is a subset of  $\text{fac}_2(\Sigma)$  instead of  $\Sigma$  proper. The definition of  $\text{paths}_2(\cdot)$  stays as above, considering  $\sigma_i, \sigma_j, \sigma_z$  to be 2-factors in  $w$ . As this is the only notion of paths relevant for this paper, from now on we use paths, 2-paths, or  $\text{paths}_2$  interchangeably to refer this extended notion of paths over 2-factors. Consider once more the string  $\bowtie abcc\bowtie$ , the set of 2-paths is now the following:  $\langle \bowtie a, \{ab\}, bc \rangle$ ,  $\langle \bowtie a, \{ab, bc\}, cc \rangle$ ,  $\langle \bowtie a, \{ab, bc, cc\}, c\bowtie \rangle$ ,  $\langle ab, \{bc\}, cc \rangle$ ,  $\langle ab, \{bc\}, c\bowtie \rangle$ ,  $\langle bc, \{cc\}, c\bowtie \rangle$ .

Note that Jardine and Heinz (2016) show that the paths of a string  $w$  can be calculated in time at most quadratic in the size of  $w$ . This results is unaffected, once we factor the cost of generating the set of 2-factors for  $\Sigma$ .

### 3.2 The Algorithm

This paper's algorithm takes as input a set  $I$  of strings over an alphabet  $\Sigma$ , and returns an MITSL $_2^2$  grammar  $G = G_1 \wedge G_2 \wedge \dots \wedge G_n$  such that  $G_i = \langle C_i, R_i \rangle$  — where each  $C_i$  is a set of contexts in bigram formats, and each  $R_i$  is a set of 2-local constraints over contexts, represented as 4-factors.

As mentioned before, we adopt an approach rooted in grammatical inference, following the identification in the limit learning paradigm (Gold, 1967), with polynomial bounds on time and data (De la Higuera, 2010). Because of this, we make the fundamental assumption that the sample data in input to the learning algorithm is a *characteristic sample* for the targetted MITSL language — that is,

it contains all the information necessary to distinguish a specific learning target (i.e., the phonological MITSL phenomenon) from any other potential targets present in the input. In other words, we assume that the input is fully descriptive of the target pattern.

**Data:** A finite input sample  $I \subset \Sigma^*$

**Result:** MITSL<sub>2</sub><sup>2</sup> grammar of the form

$$G = \bigwedge \langle C_i, R_i \rangle$$

Initialize  $F = \text{fac}_4(\Sigma^*) - \text{fac}_4(I)$ ;

Initialize  $B = \text{fac}_2(\Sigma^*)$ ;

**foreach**  $f \in F$  **do**

    Initialize  $R_i = f$ ,  $C_i = B$ ; (with

$1 \leq i \leq |F|$ )

    Initialize  $\rho_1 = f[1:2]$ ;  $\rho_2 = f[2:]$ ;

**foreach**  $\sigma \in B - \{\rho_1, \rho_2\}$  **do**

**if**  $\forall \langle \rho_1, X, \rho_2 \rangle \in \text{paths}_2(I)$  s.t.  $\sigma \in$

$X, \langle \rho_1, X - \{\sigma\}, \rho_2 \rangle \in \text{paths}_2(I)$

**then**  $C_i = C_i - \{\sigma\}$  (i.e., remove  $\sigma$  from  $C_i$ );

**end**

$G_i = \langle C_i, R_i \rangle$

**end**

**Return**  $G = G_1 \wedge G_2 \wedge \dots \wedge G_{|F|}$

**Algorithm 1:** Pseudocode for the MITSL<sub>2</sub><sup>2</sup> Inference Algorithm introduced in this paper.

Recall once again that 2-factors (bigrams) are unary symbols for the algorithm, and thus 2-local tier constraints are in fact 4-grams. The learner exploits the fact that if a 4-gram  $\rho_1\rho_2$  is banned on some tier, then it will never appear in string-adjacent contexts. Thus, it establishes a canonical form for an MITSL grammar by associating a tier to each individual constraint. It then explores the specific set of contexts relevant to each specific constraint, one tier at the time, starting from the assumption that each tier projects the full set of symbols in the input string. That is, we want to explore which symbols can act as blockers for a specific constraint. For each factor  $\rho_1\rho_2$  absent from the training data, the goal is therefore to determine which symbols can be safely removed from the associated tier. The algorithm does this by determining which bigrams are freely distributed with respect to the 4-gram whose tier it is currently constructing. Recall now the notion of 2-paths, which denote precedence relations between two symbols in the language, augmented with sets of all intervening symbols. Thus, by examining the set of 2-paths present in the training data, we

can determine which bigrams are freely distributed with respect to the 4-gram  $\rho_1\rho_2$  that is known to be banned on some tier. Specifically, if all of the attested  $\langle \rho_1, X, \rho_2 \rangle$  2-paths that include an intervening  $\sigma \in \text{fac}_2(\Sigma^*)$  are likewise attested *without* an intervening  $\sigma$ , the algorithm removes that bigram from the tier, since the presence of  $\rho_1 \dots \rho_2$  is not dependent on that intervening bigram. Therefore, given a tier associated to the in-out-sensitive constraint  $\rho_1\rho_2$ , only those elements that are not freely distributed with respect to  $\rho_1\rho_2$  will remain on the tier. As the algorithm will instantiate a tier for each unattested  $\rho_1\rho_2$  in the input sample — and with the assumption that the input is a characteristic sample — this elimination procedure guarantees that the algorithms will converge to the full set of constraints and blockers for the target language. The crucial difference from McMullin et al. (2019)’s MTSL algorithm is that here the input sample needs to be representative of alternations between bigrams in the language, instead of elements in  $\Sigma$ . Note however that this complication is implicit within the definition of ITSL constraints, since they tie the distribution of segments in a language to their local and non-local contexts simultaneously.

A peculiarity of our specific implementation is that the MITSL grammar returned is in its a specific canonical form. That is, by assigning each tier to a single constraint, it redundantly ties even constraints that could co-exist on the same tier to distinct tiers. Additionally, as a consequence of treating bigrams as unary symbols, when a segment is freely distributed with respect to its contexts — i.e., it gets projected on a tier independently on the context — the algorithm will still treat each bigram as a distinct element. For instance, consider  $\Sigma = \{a, e, o\}$  and assume  $e$  a tier element independently of context. What our algorithm will infer is that any bigram containing  $e$  will be a tier element, so that  $C = \{ae, ea, eo, oe, ee\}$ .

In practice, it is trivially possible to add a unification step to the tier and context selection, in order to have a representation closer to the grammar a human phonologist would write. However note that, while redundant, these two aspects of the representation learned by the algorithm are in line with our assumptions about the nature of MITSL dependencies and do not affects the “naturalness” of the generalization.

The following section discusses the performance of

the algorithm on an initial set of test data. We also discuss how the way the algorithm instantiates tiers does have consequences for the class of learnable patterns.

## 4 Evaluation<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1 Unlearnable Patterns

However, we note that the algorithm relies on the assumption that each bigram restriction is enforced on at most one tier. A small portion of logically-possible MTSL patterns therefore remains out of reach at present, but the problematic cases are among those which ? claim to be unattested (those with overlapping tiers, such that  $T_1 \not\subseteq T_2$  and  $T_1 \cap T_2 \neq \emptyset$ ). Specifically, the MTSL2IA fails if these overlapping tiers are associated with a single  $*\rho_1\rho_2$  restriction (i.e., when it is blocked by a different symbol on each tier), but it will succeed when they are associated with different restrictions.

## 5 Conclusion

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<sup>1</sup>A Python implementation of the learning algorithm and testing tools is available at [ADD LINK TO ANONYMOUS NOTEBOOK](#)

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