The perceptual dimensions of sonority-driven epenthesis

Michelle A. Fullwood

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Abstract

Vowel epenthesis often appears to preferentially target consonant clusters with rising sonority. One explanation for this is perceptual faithfulness ([Fleischhacker(2002)], [Steriade(2006)]): rising sonority clusters are more susceptible to epenthesis because the perceptual distance between the underlying /C_1C_2/ sequence and its correspondent output sequence [C_1VC_2] is small, thus incurring a smaller faithfulness cost. This raises the question of how to compute the perceptual distance between two sonority contours /C_1C_2/ and [C_1VC_2] in terms of the sonority of C_1, C_2 and V. In this paper, I propose that the appropriate metric is SONORITY ANGLE, the angle formed by the contours C_1C_2 and C_1V, and apply it in analyzing two case studies of sonority-driven epenthesis, Chaha and Irish. A comparison is made to another possible metric, SONORITY RISE ([Flemming(2008)]), the ratio of the gradients of the two contours, as well as to Syllable Contact, which represents an alternative, markedness-based approach to the problem of sonority-driven epenthesis.

Contents

1 Introduction

References

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