

## German Phonology

Drawing on an optimality-theoretic framework, this book provides a comprehensive overview of the phonology of German, with its idiosyncratic array of sound patterns. It starts with the consonants and vowels and the distinctive features they consist of, moving on to account for allophonic changes in detail, as well as syllables and their weight units. Phonological processes are then explored in depth, with chapter-length explorations of feet, prosodic words, prosodic phrases, and intonation phrases, showing that the prosodic hierarchy provides the domains of most phonological processes. It also includes discussions of the interfaces of morphology and syntax with phonology, as well as prosodic phrasing and intonation. The constraint-based approach allows a new holistic perspective, simultaneously encompassing all aspects of German phonology. Wide-ranging yet accessible, it is essential reading for advanced students of both linguistics and German, as well as individual scholars seeking a one-stop resource on the topic.

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# German Phonology

## *An Optimality-Theoretic Approach*

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## Preface

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This book is the result of decades of studying and teaching all topics related to phonology, especially in the framework of Optimality Theory, and especially on German. Not only have specialized classes on different topics of phonology – features, syllables, lexical stress and metrical phonology, autosegmental phonology, issues related to the prosodic word, the interface between prosody and syntax, information structure, intonation, etc. – been the stuff of my everyday life but also introductions to general phonology and the phonology of German. I have given many classes and talks in numerous places around the world, an exercise that imposes a deeper reflection on the topic at hand and that hopefully had a positive impact on the development of my work.

I am very grateful to the many colleagues and students who have worked with me or who have challenged me and asked questions and who were around with fantastic friendship and knowledge at various points in my life: Elena Agnostopoulou, Anja Arnhold, Julia Biskupek, Gösta Bruce, Sebastian Bredemann, Emilie Destruel, Sarah Duong Phu, Gisbert Fanselow, Ingo Feldhausen, Fatima Hamlaoui, Robin Hörnig, Güliz Güneş, Shin Ishihara, Gerrit Kentner, Manfred Krifka, Frank Kügler, Winnie Lechner, Cécile Meier, Beata Moskal, Pramod Pandey, Annie Rialland, Fabian Schubö, Arnim von Stechow, Stavros Skopeteas, Yranahan Traoré, Hubert Truckenbrodt, Ruben van de Vijver, Bei Wang, Ede Zimmermann, and many others with whom I have discussed and worked on many different topics of phonology. Gisbert Fanselow was a very special friend who was taken from his vibrant life much too early. I dedicate this book to him.

Many people deserve my deep gratitude for their help with this book. Anja Arnhold made an incredibly close reading of most parts of the book and spotted many shaky or wrong transcriptions and glosses. She also directed my attention to some incoherences or not completely thought-through (*durchtdácht*) arguments and made suggestions for how to reformulate some sentences, and altogether made the book better. Alina Gregori read an early draft of the book in four days and made many helpful comments and asked numerous questions. Lisa Wagner helped with the IPA transcriptions of the examples. Frank



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Kügler went through a previous version of Chapter 9 and made lots of pertinent comments. I would also like to thank Trudel Meisenburg, who helped with the examples from Occitan in Chapter 2; Kirsten Brock, my English corrector; five anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press, especially the one who wrote thirteen pages of incredibly helpful comments on one chapter; Helen Barton, who encouraged me to change the aim of the book and make it a research paper, and copy-editor Sue Browning, who went through the entire manuscript, asked many questions and made numerous corrections and suggestions. Thanks also to my speakers for Chapter 9, Gerrit Kentner and Ede Zimmermann. I cannot mention all the phonologists who influenced my thinking as the list would be ludicrously long; the first were John McCarthy and Lisa Selkirk.

All previous books on the phonology of German are couched in the framework of Lexical Phonology or some other purely derivational framework. Wiese (1996, revised in 2000) is the most comparable work to the present one. It is couched in the Lexical Phonology model that makes no mention of rankable and violable constraints. Since Wiese's book, there have been huge developments in research in nearly every domain of phonology. Other introductions to German phonology are written for beginners in linguistics or phonetics or for German teachers; see, for example, Ramers and Vater (1992), Ramers (1998) or Fuhrhop and Peters (2013). Several books on German phonology cover only specific aspects of the subject, such as segmental issues (Wurzel 1970, Kloeke 1982, Hall 1993, 2007, Moulton 1962), lexical stress (Giegerich 1985), intonation (Peters 2014/2021) or morphophonology (Neef 1996).

I thought that, after retirement, I would be able to merge all my handouts, scripts, presentations and the like and produce a book rapidly out of these diverse sources, in a few months, a year maybe. But this has not been the case. I realized that this muddle of teaching material could not be transformed into what I had in mind: a book that would give a coherent overview of all aspects of German phonology. In fact, nearly every sentence had to be discarded or rewritten and nearly all examples corrected or replaced or put into a different perspective, often several times. I hope that the result of this rewriting, remodeling and, most of all, considerable extending of the original material will be profitable to students and scholars. It is of course in the nature of this kind of exercise that some chapters are more elaborated than others, although I have done my best to achieve some balance.

The result is a research survey of the phonology of Standard German in the framework of Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky 1993/2004). It is written for all linguists interested in a fine-grained phonological analysis of a specific language. Graduate students in linguistics and German will be particularly interested, as will phonologists interested in both empirical research and

theoretical issues. The book provides detailed analyses of all domains of phonology and shows how these domains are interconnected by their constraints. The early chapters contain introductory material that may be used in classes at lower levels, and the later chapters include enough advanced material to be useful in graduate courses. The later chapters also inform grammatical modules that intersect with phonology, such as morphology, syntax and pragmatics.

## Abbreviations

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ACC	accusative
ART	article
COMP	comparative
DAT	dative
DIM	diminutive
FEM	feminine
GEN	genitive
IMP	imperative
INDEF	indefinite
INF	infinitive
INFL	inflected
MASC	masculine
NEUT	neuter
NOM	nominative
PL	plural
PRT	particle
PTCPL	participle
SG	singular
SUPERL	superlative