THE PHONOLOGY OF CONSONANTS

The most comprehensive work on dissimilation (the avoidance or repair of combinations of similar sounds) to date, this book proposes a novel analysis that handles dissimilation as the avoidance of surface correspondence relationships. It draws on recent work in Agreement By Correspondence to show that dissimilation is a natural outcome predicted by the same theory of Surface Correspondence. The theory is developed in more detail than ever before, and its predictions are tested and evaluated through ten in-depth analyses of diverse languages from Quechua to Kinyarwanda, together with a typological survey of over 150 dissimilation patterns drawn from over 130 languages, from Acehnese to Zulu. The book redefines the core of Surface Correspondence theory to a level of formal specificity and theoretical precision surpassing previous work. The book’s findings are made more accessible by numerous examples featuring data from 47 languages from around the world.

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THE PHONOLOGY OF CONSONANTS

HARMONY, DISSIMILATION, AND CORRESPONDENCE

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For Akin, and Alan, and Bruce, and Sharon
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Preface

This book has its origins in my 2013 dissertation ‘Dissimilation, Consonant Harmony, and Surface Correspondence’. The core theory has not really changed from then, and the core body of data is mostly the same, as is the organizational structure of the work. What has changed to a large degree is the prose and exposition, which was previously full of errors, loose ends, and other various unclarities that impeded understanding of the main points and proposals. The appendix with a database of dissimilation patterns has been changed into an online supplement, which can be found on the book’s website in searchable form.
I want to thank first and foremost the dissertation committee that oversaw the creation and development of the work from the start. I am deeply indebted to Akin Akinlabi for his support from the very beginning when I was a first-year PhD student at Rutgers. Without Akin’s guidance and help, I would not be the same person, and the work would not be nearly of the same quality it is now. He also showed extraordinary patience as I dabbled in various projects, taking time away from the work on Defaka & Nkọrọ that I was supposed to be assisting him with. I owe an unspeakably large debt of gratitude to Alan Prince, who provided extremely valuable guidance throughout the development of the work, and shared a lot of wisdom during the process of turning the roughly hewn thesis into the book it was always meant to be. Bruce Tesar provided invaluable help, especially during the early formalization of the theory, and was a supportive presence throughout the process. Sharon Rose was astoundingly patient in reviewing draft after draft of chapter upon chapter, going far above and beyond the call of an external dissertation committee member.

For help collecting and handling and understanding data from various languages, I want to thank: Evi Tanjunk (Sundanese), and Daniel Kaufman for putting me in touch with her; Nqobile Msomi and Freedom Makhathini (Zulu); Peter Fabian (Quechua); Sharon Rose (Ethiopian Semitic lgs); Ümit Atlamaz (Turkish and Kurdish); Sylvia Reed (Latin); Hope McManus (for Australian languages), and Paula Houghton (for sharing her book on Yuwalaaray that turned out to be much more interesting to me than to her); José Camacho, Carlo Linares, and Teresa Torres Bustamante (Colombian Spanish) and Vera Gor (for help translating Mingrelian glosses from Russian). I am grateful also to Seunghun Lee, Bonny Sands, Bill Foley, and Petr Staroverov for sharing rather large quantities of resources with me, including a lot of the sources where data in the work comes from.

I also want to thank many of my colleagues from Rutgers and elsewhere. Discussions with Paul de Lacy spurred the early stages of the work in very
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helpful directions. Nick Danis, Hope McManus, and Paula Houghton were especially supportive colleagues and co-workers during the key writing stages of the dissertation; Aaron Braver, Jeremy Perkins, Seunghun Lee, and Sylvia Schreiner were valuable friends who offered support throughout the process. Discussions with Luca Iacoponi were also very useful, and I appreciate his ongoing help in exploring the typological ramifications of surface correspondence theory.

The early versions of the manuscript were quite rough, and polishing them has involved the help of some students at Rhodes, including: Maxine Diemer, Morgan Jander, Justine Kerford, Mikhaela Köhlo, Hazel Mitchley, Tracy Probert, and Siân Rees. I thank Ralph Adendorff too: first for hiring me at Rhodes, and then for being an important encouraging voice in a new and unfamiliar setting where the thesis-to-book metamorphosis took place.

Finally, my wife, Alyson, I thank for keeping me grounded and putting things in perspective, and being a source of great encouragement and support in all ways. The next book will be dedicated to her.

The data and core analysis of Sundanese in Chapter 4, and some portions of the description of surface correspondence in Chapter 2, also appear as part of an article in NLLT:


Portions of the analysis of Obolo in Chapter 5 appear in an article in SPiL-plus: