Constraints on the Distribution of Nasal-Stop Sequences:
An Argument for Contrast
by
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Abstract

It has been argued that certain typological generalizations regarding the distribution of nasal-stop sequences can be explained by explicitly referencing contrast (e.g. Herbert 1977, 1986; Jones 2000). This thesis explores the hypothesis that all generalizations regarding the distribution of nasal-stop sequences can be explained by explicitly referencing contrast, and presents the results of multiple cross-linguistic studies designed to test that hypothesis. I show first that taking into consideration cues to the contrasts between nasal-stop sequences and their component parts (nasals and stops) allows us to accurately predict generalizations regarding the distribution of phonemic nasal-stop sequences (i.e. those that are phonemically contrastive with other segment types). Following this I show that taking into consideration cues to the contrast between oral and nasal vowels allows us to accurately predict generalizations regarding the distribution of allophonic nasal-stop sequences (i.e. those not phonemically contrastive with other segment types), as well as generalizations regarding the distribution of phonemic nasal-stop sequences in the context of phonemically nasal and allophonically nasalized vowels. Broadly, the results presented here contribute to a larger body of evidence that constraints on contrast are a necessary component of the synchronic phonological grammar (following e.g. Lindblom 1986; Flemming 2002, 2008b; Padgett 2009).

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