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

by

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Submitted to the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy
on May 17, 2017, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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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