Thoughts inspired by Hansson, Bakovic & Rose, and Bennett & Pulleyblank

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Overarching questions

- Unified phenomenon?
- Productivity?
- Similarity?
- Empirical domain?
- Origins?
A unified typology?

- MSCs are mostly bidirectional cooccurrence restrictions
  - exception: Yaka & Kikongo d...m *m...d, paired with alternation
  - exception: Aymara tʃ...t but *t...tʃ, no alternations
- Alternations may be progressive or regressive
  - Many patterns of stem-control alternations affect one or two affixes, e.g., nasal harmony → morpheme specific alternations?
  - Others affect many affixes and stems, e.g., Chumash sibilant harmony → classic “phonological” pattern
- All languages with alternations also have MSCs (Rose & Walker 2004) – is this an accident?
  - Maybe not – having a phonotactic generalization over roots could aid in learning a morphological alternation
  - Even if root phonotactics and alternations are not represented in the grammar in the same way
Productivity?

• Are all aspects of the described patterns productive generalization in speakers’ grammars?
  • Some patterns may go underlearned (Hayes et al. 2009; Becker et al. 2011)
  • Some patterns may be learned as morpheme specific alternations (Pater 2009; Gouskova 2012)
• Aymara unidirectional MSC tʃ...t but *t...tʃ (Hansson 2001)
  • Other combinations of dentals and palatoalveolars are subject to bidirectional MSC, e.g., *t’...tʃʰ, *tʃʰ....t’
  • Is unidirectional MSC represented as such?
• Are alternations represented as general phonological patterns, or morpheme specific alternations?
  • How many affixes need to show an alternation before it will be generalized to nonce affixes?
Similarity effects?

- Is there an a-phonological metric of similarity that can predict phonological similarity effects?
  - or is “similarity” phonologically defined – the grammar specifies what natural classes interact (Hansson)
- Often, the participating segments are those that contrast for a given feature
  - sibilants or coronals contrast for minor place
  - stops contrast for laryngeal features
- What would non-similarity sensitive harmony look like?
Empirical domain?

• Nice result of ABC literature: agreement vs. spreading have different clusters of properties (Rose & Walker 2004, Hansson 2001).

• Yet many cases are ambiguous, e.g., vowel harmony (Bakovic and Rose): might be handled by either spreading or agreement.
  • Hard to discern without phonetic studies.
  • So what are the typological responsibilities of each theory?

• Knowing whether a pattern is spreading or agreement bears on the typology of each phenomenon.
  • How safe are our typological assumptions for ABC?
Origins?

• Possible bases of long-distance agreement in perception, production, or cognition.
  • Perception: e.g., Gallagher (2010)
  • Production: e.g., Hansson (2001), Walker (2007)
  • Learning/analytic bias (Moreton 2008) – subsequences (Hansson) are natural classes
• Likewise, historical pathway matters.
  • E.g., Hansson (2007)
  • E.g., suppose long-distance agreement originates as spreading, perhaps within roots, followed by generalization to ABC-like system? Could this explain why it features that agree look like those that spread (e.g., never major C-Place).
• How much work does the formal theory need to do to constrain predictions?
  • E.g., the role of targeted constraints in avoiding pathologies is clear (Bakovic and Rose).
    • But suppose instead there are no historical/functional pathways to the pathologies?
  • How tight a fit to the typologies should we strive for?