What is Phonological Typology?
Larry M. Hyman
University of California, Berkeley

UC Berkeley PHORUM, September 9, 2013

ABSTRACT

In this talk I am concerned with the following questions:

1. What is phonological typology?
2. How are phonological typology and phonetic typology the same/different?
3. How are phonological typology and general phonology the same/different?
4. How are phonological typology and general typology the same/different?

Despite earlier work by Trubetzkoy, Jakobson, Martinet, Greenberg and others, and its inclusion in even earlier efforts towards “holistic” typology (see Plank 1998), phonological typology is often underrepresented or even excluded in typology textbooks (see Hyman 2007). At the same time, many, if not most phonologists do not see a difference between phonological typology and cross-linguistic (formal and descriptive) phonology. As a result, they often address issues of comparison without awareness of the field of typology and its concern with distributions, e.g. Bickel’s (2007) “What, where, why?” and with little involvement in the foundational and methodological questions or controversies peppering the pages of Linguistic Typology, e.g. whether pre-established categories exist (Haspelmath 2007 vs. Newmeyer 2007). To address the above (and other) questions, Frans Plank, Aditi Lahiri and I co-organized the following workshop in Oxford on August 11-13, 2013:

http://www.ling-phil.ox.ac.uk/files/research/Phon-Typ-Schedule.pdf

In this talk, presented first at Oxford, I provide a number of reasons why (phonological) typology should not be about assigning languages to “types”, nor can it be limited to examining the sameness vs. differences of surface inventories. Instead, like phonology in general, the attention of phonological typology must be on STRUCTURE, i.e. with input-output relations between the different levels and domains required to account for phonological properties across languages.

PS This talk will also give people an idea of some of what we will discuss in my Linguistics 211b/290e.

Cited references:
