

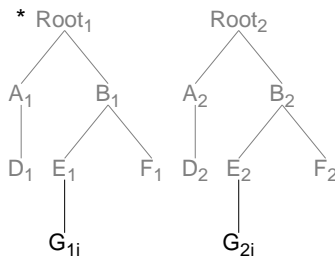
ACTL phonology tutorial 3

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1 The OCP

- (1) Obligatory Contour Principle (McCarthy, 1986): *Adjacent identical elements are forbidden*



2 If there really is an OCP, what is it for?

The OCP has been invoked to deal with a great number of phenomena that involve some form of element *repetition*, but there is no general agreement as to what range of phenomena it covers. For example McCarthy (1986) seems to conceive of the OCP mostly as a principle that *blocks certain rules from applying*, whereas Yip (1988) argues that (repair) rules can also be *triggered* by OCP violations.

In order to establish whether the (widest range of) phenomena ascribed to the OCP indeed represent the operation of one and the same mechanism, it may be useful to investigate why language would prefer to avoid the repetition of (adjacent) elements:

- *Parsing* OCP effects arise where phonological contrast needs to be maintained/enhanced:
 1. *Syntagmatically*: across morphosyntactic boundaries (segmentation)
 2. *Paradigmatically*: Among lexical items
- Repetition of items within a certain (short) timespan causes processing problems (articulation, monitoring)

3 The OCP as a rule blocker

One of the ways in which the OCP has been claimed to operate is as a *rule blocker*: rules that apply elsewhere fail to apply where they would derive a sequence of two identical elements:

- (2) Malayalam casual speech antigemination (Mohan, 1986):

Formal	Casual	Gloss
[wa:kate]	[wa:kte]	'type of tree'
[kaʃate]	[kaʃate], *kaʃte	'shop's'

- (3) English syllabic nasals (compare other varieties of West Germanic):

[lisŋ]	'listen'
[mædŋ]	'madden'
[flætŋ]	'flatten'
[hæpŋ], [hæpŋ]	'happen'
[lɪŋŋ], ?*[lɪŋŋ]	'linnen'

4 The OCP as a rule trigger

Languages resolve the OCP in a host of different ways:

- Gemination: replace the two offending elements by a single one whilst retaining the timing of the input
- Degemination: remove the one of the segments/syllables that carry the offending item(s)
- Epenthesis: insert a sound between the offending items so they are no longer adjacent
- Dissimilation: change one of the offending items

- (4) English past tense formation: epenthesis

[nɒt]	[nɒtəd]	'knotted'
[nɒd]	[nɒdəd]	'noddled'

- (5) Dutch past tense formation: degemination

/xrap/	[xrap̥tə]	'joked'
/krab/	[krab̥də]	'scratched'
/ba:t/	[ba:tə]	'benefited'
/ba:d/	[ba:tə]	'bathed'

5 Another example of OCP-driven epenthesis

- (6) Geleen Limburgian (Dutch: Boersma 1998)

[pɒp]	[pɒpkə]	'doll'
[bɛt]	[bɛcjə]	'bed'
[jɑs]	[jæskə]	'coat'
[kɛs]	[kɛskə]	'chest'
[blɔk]	[blɔkskə]	'hedge'
[fɛk]	[fɛkskə]	'block'

6 The OCP as a rule trigger: long distance dissimilation

A range of (long distance) dissimilatory processes has been brought under the scope of the OCP, but of some it is hard to see how they would maintain or improve parsability:

(7) Latin liquid dissimilation as inherited by English:

- a. Roots without liquids take -al(is):
dual naval
basal papal
final
- b. Roots with a single /r/ take -al(is):
aural marital
coronal moral
guttural mural
- c. Roots with a single /l/ take -ar(is):
velar singular
angular lunar
solar militar(y)
- d. Rightmost /r/ triggers -al(is):
lateral litoral
plural sepulchral
floral
- e. Rightmost /l/ triggers -ar(is):
circular
perpendicular
vernacular

References

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