

Relational Correspondence in Tone Sandhi

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes that the constraint component of OT grammars should be expanded to include a family of faithfulness constraints that evaluate input-output/output-output mappings for the preservation of gross F_0 contours (rising, falling, level) across two or more segments. Following Steriade (2006), I refer to constraints in this family as Relational Correspondence constraints. The central tenet of Relational Correspondence is that phonological processes are shaped by pressure to maintain perceptual similarity between correspondent relations between successive elements, or syntagmatic contrast preservation in the auditory domain F_0 , as opposed to paradigmatic contrast preservation according to which the well-formedness of an entity is evaluated with reference to the set of entities it contrasts with.

Two types of Relational Correspondence are distinguished in this work: Contour and Slope Correspondence. Contour Correspondence, formulated as RELCORR constraints, assesses correspondence of the phonological height (F_0 scaling) relation between successive tones. Four height relations are proposed for the tonal contour: “greater than” ($x > y$), “less than” ($x < y$), “equal to” ($x = y$), and “non-equal to” ($x \neq y$). Preservation of the four scaling relations is contextualized with respect to different degrees of cohesiveness: nucleus-internal, word-internal and across words. Slope Correspondence, formulated as MATCH-SLOPE constraints, requires preservation of the steepness of the F_0 contour across successive tones.

Relational correspondence provides a unifying account for a number of seemingly unrelated tone sandhi phenomena in genetically diverse languages, while explaining empirical facts that cannot be adequately expressed within the standard Correspondence Theory of faithfulness plus markedness constraints.

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