

• Featural specifications of non-voiced sonorants

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Cross-linguistically, non-voiced sonorants are very rare, as illustrated by Maddieson's (1984) UCLA Phonological Segment Inventory Database (UPSID), constituting under 5% of the world's sonorants. This paper investigates the feature specifications of non-voiced sonorants (e.g. m̥ n̥ w̥ , etc.) in a number of genetically and geographically diverse languages. Within the theoretical literature pertaining to this issue, such non-voiced sonorants are said to contrast with a voiced counterpart *via* a number of formal designations, including [\pm VOICE], [\pm ASP(IRATED)] or [\pm S(PREAD)G(LOTTIS)], or a [FORTIS]/[LENIS] distinction. This paper argues that the featural specifications of a non-voiced sonorant are dependent upon its patterning and activity within the linguistic system in which it interacts, and argues against any universal feature ordering or feature specification (Dresher 2009).

This paper has a number of goals which will be laid out in this presentation. The first goal (1) is developing and adopting diagnostics to properly assess the phonemic or phonetic status of a given non-voiced sonorant phone, i.e. / n̥ / vs. [n̥] (Sommerfelt 1964, Claesson 1994, Palmer 1999). Those languages which unambiguously contain phonemic non-voiced sonorants are presented and illustrated in full. Further, the second goal of this paper (2) is to argue against the proposition laid out in Lombardi 1994 and Mester & Ito 1989 that all non-voiced sonorants are universally marked as [+ASP]. Their claim falls out from the assumption that the feature [VOICE] is phonologically incompatible with the feature [SONORANT]. This paper rather promotes an analysis in which the featural specification of a non-voiced sonorant is derived most often from the featural contrasts already present in the segmental inventory, and dependent upon the phonological patterning. Thus, if in the obstruent series, there is a distinction with respect to [VOICE] or to [ASP], then this distinction carries over into the sonorant series as well. This approach derives from Clements' 2003 concept of Feature Economy, which argues that languages tend to increase their segmental inventory from combinations of already occurring features, though this paper does not adopt any Universal Feature Hierarchy. In particular, the languages Kokota [Oceanic: Solomon Islands], Iaa'i [Oceanic: New Caledonia], and Yup'ik [Eskimo-Aleut: Alaska] provide the best counter-examples to the universal [+ASP] claim, as they arguably lack an [ASP] feature entirely in both the obstruent and sonorant series, phonologically and phonetically (see references).

This approach dovetails with a growing body of literature against *a priori* cross-linguistic categorization and language universals (Blevins 2004, 2009; Haspelmath 2007; Evans & Levinson 2009; Pulleyblank 2003). Ultimately, this paper provides crucial evidence for an Emergentist view, in which features emerge from the patterning of a language, and are not innate (Mielke 2005, 2008). This therefore entails that universal features (e.g. [VOICE], [ASP], [SONORANT], [CORONAL], etc.) are not possible constructs to appeal to within linguistic theory, and not provided or constrained phonologically by a universal genetic endowment.

Word Count: 466

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