

Sufficient and insufficient contrast and nonuniformity

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Morphophonological nonuniformity, may have various sources. In this paper we focus on nonuniformity (allomorphy) motivated by the requirement to maintain paradigmatic contrast (antisyncretism). Beside categorical cases of homophony avoidance elsewhere in the Hungarian verbal paradigm [1], past tense forms of *t/d*-final stems show that some contrast-driven nonuniformity requirements can refer to a context-sensitive threshold of difference (a required minimum) rather than prescribe absolute nonidentity [2].

The past tense suffix is generally *-t* or *-Vtt* in Hungarian. Suffixation with *-t* could potentially result in the neutralisation of paradigmatic contrast between present and past indicative forms. There are two relevant phonological constraints: (i) regressive voicing assimilation, (ii) postconsonantal degemination. Degemination would lead to homophony with Ct-final stems, (2a), both word finally and prevocally. This is avoided by selecting the *-Vtt* allomorph, (1a). The past forms of Vd-final stems suffixed with *-t* contain a voiceless geminate as opposed to the voiced singleton of the present tense, which is deemed a sufficient contrast by the grammar: *-t* is selected in both cases, cf. (2d). In (2b) the past form only contrasts by a geminate *tt* vs. the singleton *t* of the present, in (2c) by a voiceless *t* vs. the voiced *d* of the present. These intermediate degrees of contrast provide sufficient cues *prevocally* (before another suffix), so *-t* is selected, but not *word finally*, hence here we find *-Vtt*, a phonetically plausible difference, (1b,c), [3].

Thus, phonology can specify a context-specific nonzero *threshold* for paradigmatic contrast, furthermore, a dominant contrast constraint can reference this threshold to produce nonuniformity (allomorphy). The maintenance of contrast must be *conservative*: only affix allomorphs available elsewhere in the paradigm can be utilised [4].

References

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(1) t/d-final past tense forms

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| a. | <i>érint-ett</i> 'touch-PST.NDF.3SG' | <i>érint-ett-ünk</i> '-PST-NDF.1PL' |
| b. | <i>seret-ett</i> 'love-' | <i>seret-t-ünk</i> |
| c. | <i>örvend-ett</i> 'rejoice-' | <i>örvend-t-ünk</i> [-nt-] |
| d. | <i>ijed-t</i> [-t:] 'get frightened-' | <i>ijed-t-ünk</i> [-t:-] |

(2) Sufficient and insufficient contrast in t-suffixed past tense forms

stem	contrast	word-finally (base) (PRES vs. PST, NDF.3SG)		prevocally (suffixed) (PRES vs. PST, NDF.1PL)		cue
a. -Ct	none	<i>érint</i> Ct#	= Ct#	<i>érint-ünk</i> CtV	= CtV	^
		<i>*érint-t</i>		<i>*érint-t-ünk</i>		
b. -Vt	length (t↔t:)	<i>seret</i> Vt#	≅ Vt:#	<i>seret-ünk</i> VtV	≅ Vt:V	^
		<i>*seret-t</i>		<i>seret-t-ünk</i>		
c. -Cd	voice (d↔t)	<i>örvend</i> Cd#	≅ Ct#	<i>örvend-ünk</i> CdV	≅ CtV	^
		<i>*örvend-t</i>		<i>örvend-t-ünk</i>		
d. -Vd	both (d↔t:)	<i>ijed</i> Vd#	≠ Vt:#	<i>ijed-ünk</i> VdV	≠ Vt:V	^
		<i>ijed-t</i>		<i>ijed-t-ünk</i>		
cue		<				