

Proseminar: Vowel Harmony

Instructor: Bruce Hayes
2101G Campbell Hall
Phone: W (82)5-9507,
H 310 557-1927
bhayes@humnet.ucla.edu

Office hours: MW 2-3 and
by appt. Drop-ins
for quick questions
usually ok.

Class schedule

- Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-4, Rolfe 3118
- I will be out of town giving talks on April 29 and May 13 and there will be no class those days.

Course Description

Quite a bit of recent literature in phonology has addressed the problem of vowel harmony. The purpose of this course is go through this literature and ponder the data and the issues. The course will cover typology, formal theory, phonetics, and psycholinguistic work.

1) *Typology*

What harmony systems are out there and how can we compile this information systematically? Work of Kaun, L. Anderson.

2) *Theory*

Finding a formal phonological theory that matches the typology has proven difficult. Particularly hard issues include the following

- a) How should theory deal with **transparent vowels**, those which are “skipped over” by harmony? The problem is made harder by the discovery (in Finnish and Hungarian) of “translucent” vowels, which only permit the harmonizing feature to skip over them in a subset of words. Work of Ringen, Hayes, Zuraw, Londe, Siptár.
- b) How to get the appropriate kinds of **directionality**? Languages demonstrate stem control, dominant-feature-value control, left-to-right harmony, and right-to-left harmony; it’s hard to get just these without others as well. Work of Clements, Lombardi, Baković, McCarthy, Kisseberth, Jenn Fischer.
- c) The notorious **Vowel Harmony Monsters**—impossible harmony systems predicted by classical OT (e.g. majority rule, long-distance blocking). How to avoid them? Work of Lombardi, Wilson, Finley, Baković.

- d) Opaque vowel harmony, e.g. in Yawelmani.

3) Phonetics

- Evidence that neutral segments are really undergoers at the allophonic level (Boyce on Turkish, Benus and Gafos on Hungarian, Gick et al. on Kinande, Walker et al. on Kinyarwanda).
- To what extent can this fact be used to simplify the phonological analysis?

4) Psycholinguistic study

- Are certain vowel harmony systems preferred under UG? Sara Finley's program of artificial language experiments.
- Other cute stuff involving productivity: Lehiste's Finnish language game; Kaun and Harrison's work on non-initial harmonizing vowels.

Lesson plan:

I would like to include a “vowel harmony system of the day” for Socratic inspection each class, perhaps two. Then we'll have something of a database in our heads for future reference.

Otherwise, I'll lecture about the readings, trying to put them in perspective and highlight what I think is important about them.

Course Requirements:

- For four-unit students:
 - A **term paper**, on a topic in metrics of your own choosing. This is due Friday of finals week.
 - Various **readings**. I will post these on the course web site, <http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/hayes/251vowelharmony/>.
 - For copyright-sensitive material, there is a password, which I will put on the first handout. Email me (bhayes@humnet.ucla.edu) if you lose it.
- For two-unit students:
 - This is pretty casual (i.e. for two units it's up to you how much you want to get out of the course)
 - I recommend keeping up with the readings.