

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE PHONOTACTICS AND PHONOLOGY OF  
OBSTRUENT CLUSTERS IN OPTIMALITY  
THEORY

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In this dissertation, I present a typology of obstruent clusters and argue that the systematic patterns of occurrence of these clusters must be explained in sonority-independent terms. I argue that there are two dimensions along which generalizations can be made; one is the dimension where the feature [continuant] is relevant and the other is the place dimension.

On the continuancy dimension, I claim that markedness relationships exist among the four types of obstruent clusters, i.e. fricative+stop, fricative+fricative, stop+fricative and stop+stop. In particular, I argue that fricative+stop clusters are the unmarked type of obstruent clusters. Their unmarkedness is assessed against a system of constraints on segment sequencing on the basis of a strategy of analysis that derives universal markedness relationships without fixed rankings. I call this

strategy the *Subset Strategy*. Modern Greek and Nisqually provide evidence for my proposal, as does a cross-linguistic survey of obstruent cluster patterns.

On the place dimension, I show that the typology observed can best be understood via a system of constraints that favors faithfulness to place in release positions. Relevant data from English, German, Dakota and Takelma are presented and analyzed.

Finally, I argue that, s+STOP clusters are the best-formed of all the obstruent clusters because they are unmarked along both dimensions. I show that the special phonological behavior often associated with these clusters follows from the fact that they are unmarked within the dimension of obstruent clusters, and not because they are marked within the dimension of core clusters.

THE PHONOTACTICS AND PHONOLOGY OF OBSTRUENT CLUSTERS IN  
OPTIMALITY THEORY

by

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## DEDICATION

To my mother, Mirella, and my late father, Antonio.

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