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Abstracts:

MALAGASY BACKWARD OBJECT CONTROL

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Backward control is an obligatory interpretational dependency between an overt controller and a nonovert controllee in which the controllee is structurally superior to the controller: *Meg persuaded Δ_i [Ron_i to give up]*. It contrasts with ordinary forward control, in which the controller is structurally higher: *Meg persuaded Ron_i [Δ_i to give up]*. Although backward control has been previously documented (Polinsky & Potsdam 2002a), clear cases are rare. This article presents an alternation between forward and backward object control in the Austronesian language Malagasy and argues for the backward-control structure. Backward control is thus a reality and needs to be incorporated into any comprehensive theory of control. The article argues against an analysis of backward control that identifies the controllee as the null pronominal *pro*.

Keywords: Malagasy, control, backward control, object control, *pro*

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A COARTICULATORY PATH TO SOUND CHANGE

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Although coarticulatory variation is largely systematic, and serves as useful information for listeners, such variation is nonetheless linked to sound change. This article explores the articulatory and perceptual interactions between a coarticulatory source and its effects, and how these interactions likely contribute to change. The focus is on the historical change VN (phonetically, $\tilde{V}N$) > \tilde{V} , but with more general attention to how a gesture associated with a source segment comes to be reinterpreted as distinctively, rather than coarticulatorily, associated with a nearby vowel or consonant. Two synchronic factors are hypothesized to contribute to reinterpretation: (i) articulatory covariation between the duration of the coarticulatory source (here, N) and the temporal extent of its effects (\tilde{V}), and (ii) perceived equivalence between source and effect. Experimental support for both hypotheses is provided. Additionally, the experimental data are linked to the historical situation by showing that the contextual conditions that trigger (i) and (ii) parallel the conditions that historically influence phonologization of vowel nasalization.

Keywords: sound change, coarticulation, nasalization, phonologization, speech perception, articulatory covariation

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NATURAL AND UNNATURAL CONSTRAINTS IN HUNGARIAN VOWEL HARMONY

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Phonological constraints can, in principle, be classified according to whether they are natural (founded in principles of universal grammar (UG)) or unnatural (arbitrary, learned inductively from the language data). Recent work has used this distinction as the basis for arguments about the role of UG in learning. Some languages have phonological patterns that arguably reflect unnatural constraints. With experimental testing, one can assess whether such patterns are actually learned by native speakers. Becker, Ketrez, and Nevins (2007), testing speakers of Turkish, suggest that they do indeed go unlearned. They interpret this result with a strong UG position: humans are unable to learn data patterns not backed by UG principles.

This article pursues the same research line, locating similarly unnatural data patterns in the vowel harmony system of Hungarian, such as the tendency (among certain stem types) for a final bilabial stop to favor front harmony. Our own test leads to the opposite conclusion of Becker and colleagues': Hungarians evidently do learn the unnatural patterns.

To conclude we consider a bias account—that speakers are able to learn unnatural environments, but devalue them relative to natural ones. We outline a method for testing the strength of constraints as learned by speakers against the strength of the corresponding patterns in the lexicon, and show that it offers tentative support for the hypothesis that unnatural constraints are disfavored by language learners.

Keywords: Hungarian, vowel harmony, naturalness, wug test, variation

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LEARNING HOW TO LICENSE NULL NOUN-CLASS PREFIXES IN SESOTHO

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Noun-class prefixes are obligatory in most Bantu languages. However, the Sotho languages (Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi) permit a subset of prefixes to be realized as null at the intersection of ‘unmarked’ phonological, syntactic, and discourse conditions. This raises the question of how and when the licensing of null prefixes is learned. Using longitudinal data from three Sesotho-speaking children, this article shows that the conditions needed to license null prefixes have been learned before the age of three, suggesting early abilities for grammatical generalization even at the intersection of different levels of linguistic structure. The implications for learnability theory and Bantu linguistic structure more generally are discussed.

Keywords: Sesotho, Bantu languages, noun-class prefixes, nominal agreement, language acquisition, learnability

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COLOR NAMING AND THE SHAPE OF COLOR SPACE

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Color naming in the world's languages has traditionally been viewed as reflecting either a universal set of focal colors, or linguistic relativity. Recently, a different view has gained support: color naming may be accounted for in terms of the overall shape of perceptual color space. Here, we show that the new shape-based perspective can clarify which languages have color-naming systems that deviate from what universal forces would predict. Specifically, we find that the color-naming systems of two languages that have been held to counterexemplify universals of color naming—Pirahã and Warlpiri—are in fact consistent with the structure of color space. In contrast, two other languages that have not yet been the focus of much attention—Karajá and Waorani—are apparently inconsistent with that structure in a substantial way. We propose that the notion of 'fit to the shape of color space' provides a useful and objective means of determining which languages have genuinely unusual color-naming systems.

Keywords: color terms, color categories, semantic universals, linguistic relativity, cognitive modeling

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