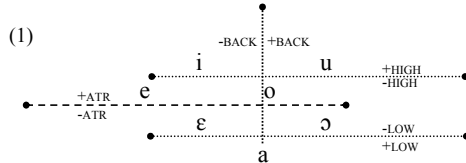


Wk 8 Monday – Conspiracies and Constraints

Q: What is the conspiracy problem?

- Two kinds of things you know when you know a language:
 - i) dynamic phonology – observable changes (example ?)
 - ii) static phonology – patterns that are just there (example ?)

Ngbaka vowel cooccurrence:



- Wescott (1965) observes the following cooccurrence restrictions on vowels in Ngbaka.

“If a disyllabic word contains /i/, it does not also contain /u/; if /e/, it does not also contain /o/, /E/, or /o/; if /u/ it does not also contain /i/; if /o/ it does not also contain /e/, /E/, or /O/; and if /O/ it does not also contain /E/, /e/, or /o/.”

*Note here that /E/ and /O/ refer to what I have given as /ε/ and /ɔ/ respectively.

- Mester (1986) distills this observations above to the following:

“Elements from the two classes [+high] and [-high] do not cooccur with a different element from the same class.” (Mester 1986: 35)

The vowels that compose what Mester refers to as the class [-high] are the MID vowels /o, e, ε, ɔ/ and not simply all vowels specified [-high], so [a] may cooccur with other vowels in the system.

(2) Vowels can cooccur with themselves.

[liki]	‘chauffer’
[tulu]	‘champignon’
[ʔele]	‘oublier’
[zoko]	‘beau’
[beŋɛ]	‘coller une pièce’
[bɔŋɔ]	‘cervelle’
[kama]	‘frère ou soeur’

(3) The low vowel is unrestricted

[zimba]	‘chercher’
[kema]	‘singe’
[dale]	‘Acacia silvicola’
[duka]	‘épaule’
[kola]	‘dette’
[kɔla]	‘tante paternelle’

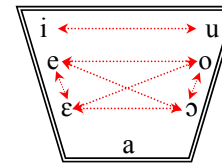
(4) High and mid vowels freely cooccur.

[pɛpu]	‘vent’
[niŋɛ]	‘amusement’
[seti]	‘couché’
[kɔpu]	‘goblete’

(5) Vowels in the same class don’t cooccur.

* liku	* beno
* luki	* beno
* beno	* bene
* beno	* bono

- We can represent the cooccurrence restrictions as follows:



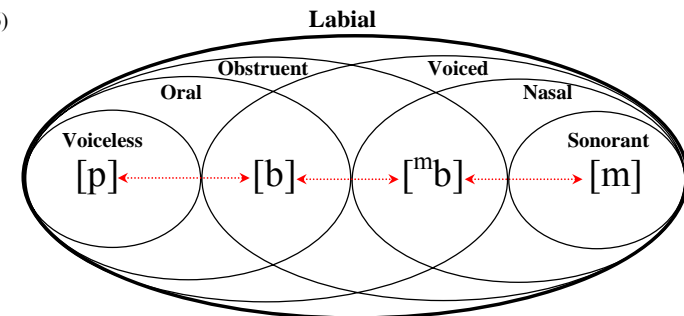
The dotted arrows here connect pairs of vowels which may not cooccur.

- We also see cooccurrence restrictions with Ngbaka consonants –homorganic consonants cannot differ solely on the feature [VOI], [SON], or [NAS].

“... if a disyllabic word contains a voiceless consonant, it does not also contain the voiced counterpart of that consonant (that is, /p/ excludes /b/, /s/ excludes /z/ etc.). Similarly, if a disyllabic word contains a voiced obstruent, it does not also contain the prenasalized counterpart of that obstruent (that is, /b/ excludes /mb/, /z/ excludes /nz/ etc.); if such a word contains a prenasalized obstruent, it does not also contain the corresponding nasal (that is, [mb] excludes [m], [nz] excludes [n] etc.)...” (Wescott 1965 as reported in Mester 1983: 40-41)

- Broe (1995) notes that we can state the cooccurrence in terms of natural classes and that the banned pairs correspond to Trubetzkoy’s (1977) notion of a bilateral opposition in that they differ on exactly one feature which exhaustively constitute a natural class.

(6)



(7) This graph indicates that:

- nonidentical homorganic **oral consonants** may not cooccur.
- nonidentical homorganic **voiced obstruents** may not cooccur.

Q: Where in the grammar do the static patterns go?

- Morpheme structure constraints – what are they good for?

- What about using underspecification instead?

Q: So, what do we do with the bad words? (ideas for: slɔl, fnæk, ʃmæŋ)

