

Sommerstein 1974 study questions¹

To be turned in Wed., Oct. 31 in class

Notes

p. 71: ‘morpheme structure conditions’ \approx morpheme structure constraints \approx morpheme structure rules. ‘phonotactics’ = description of permissible segment sequences

p. 71: ‘autonomous phonemic level’: another of those ideas that, as Sommerstein notes, doesn’t exist in generative phonology—don’t worry about it. Anywhere you see ‘morphophoneme’, think ‘phoneme’, and anywhere you see ‘morphophonemic rule,’ think ‘phonological rule’.

p. 72: ‘categorical phonetic level’ \approx what we usually think about as the end of the derivation (the surface form)

p. 73: ‘biuniqueness condition’: requirement that every underlying form correspond to a unique surface form (true if all rules and orderings are obligatory—no optionality), and every surface form corresponds to a unique underlying form (not in general true, because of neutralization).

p. 76: $0 < V_{M',C} < V_{M,C}$: I think this should read $0 < V_{M',C} < V_{M,C}$. I.e., the degree of violations after the operation has been applied is less than the degree of violation before. (If we got rid of the >0 condition, I don’t think there would be a problem: ‘eliminating’ violations would just be a special case of ‘alleviating’ them.)

p. 78: (11) and the other things with vertical arrows are not rules. (11) doesn’t ‘fill in’ features on the first and third matrices. Rather, it’s an ‘if-then’ statement that can be true or false of any string. If false, it can trigger a rule.

If you’re in a hurry, you can kind of skim pp. 78-86, referring back to constraints where necessary as you read about the rules on pp. 87 and below.

p. 91, (55), (56), (57), (58): These things with vertical arrows are rules. I think the arrows got messed up, though, in direction and placement (I think they should all point downward, from the middle row to the bottom row). This seems to be a variant of transformational notation. The labels on the middle row serve as indices, and the bottom row tells us what each numbered item should turn into (itself, as in $4 \rightarrow 4$; itself but with a feature change, as in $1 \rightarrow [1, +tense]$; or zero (deletion), as in $3 \rightarrow 0$).

The discussion at the very end suggests that Sommerstein is not claiming that all rules are phonotactically motivated (otherwise, how would we get opaque effects?).

¹ Sommerstein, Alan H. (1974). On Phonotactically Motivated Rules. *Journal of Linguistics* 10: 71-94.

Questions

1. What's Sommerstein's argument for why we need to have a surface phonotactics in order to judge the well-formedness of new words?

2. Pick one Latin word from the article and show what you think Sommerstein's derivation for it would be. Show the constraint(s) that the underlying form violates and all the rules that are potentially motivated by that constraint, along with any preference conditions you need (see (2) and (3) for how this should look). (Don't pick a word whose underlying form doesn't violate any constraint! That would be boring.) Then show a step-by-step derivation, noting which rules apply because of which constraint. Note that Sommerstein puts things between slashes that are not underlying forms, so you'll have to divine the underlying form from related forms of the same root and the discussion in the text.