

Depression, Dependency and hearing Voices

Nancy C. Kula, LUCL, Leiden

Analyses of tone lowering in depressor consonant contexts have questioned equating voicing and low tone in so called one-source analyses that treat depressor effects of voicing and low tone as owing to the same feature. By contrast, voice and low tone are considered as distinct features that are only related via phonetically grounded effects/constraints. The latter analysis argues that this better explains why High tone spreading and shifting are not blocked by depressors in all instances. Furthermore, there are also some register effects that affect depressor contexts on a phonetic level resulting in both High and Low tones being “depressed” or more accurately being produced at a lower register. This paper argues in favour of an enriched representational approach that while on the one hand favours a one-source analysis with reference to element [L] for the representation of both voicing and low tone in Element Theory, it also captures the distinct levels at which this same element occurs through layered dependency relations and thereby allowing for a merger of the merits of the two approaches otherwise treated as distinct. Linking diachronic change in the voicing systems of mainly Nguni languages it will be argued that the trajectory of voicing change has led to enriched representations at the phonological level of otherwise phonetically voiceless sounds which as a result are also triggers of depression, thereby widening the set of depressor consonants to also include plain and aspirated voiceless sounds. The enriched dependency representations also allow us to explain why nasals which are also bearers of element [L] as never depressors. The treatment of tone (as standardly assumed e.g. in Bradshaw 1999 for depressors) as represented on a separate melodic tier accounts for the independence of tonal spreading processes and consonantal triggering [L], while register is at an even higher level also shared with intonational effects.