Abstract

This paper examines two types of metathesis in the Austronesian language Leti. The first is motivated by a requirement that all phrases end in a vowel, and the second, by syllable well-formedness conditions: syllables have onsets and tautosyllabic consonant clusters are avoided.

The analyses in this paper are cast within the framework of Correspondence Theory (CT), and bear directly upon the constraint \textsc{Linearity}, which penalizes the reversal of precedence relations among segments in a string. Through the interaction of \textsc{Linearity} with syllable structure and phrasal alignment constraints, a unified account of the Leti facts is provided. Further, it is argued that violations of \textsc{Linearity} are evaluated in a gradient manner. Constraints on metathesis are also shown to be needed to account for the observation that it is consistently the final vowel and consonant of a given morpheme that metathesize, even though metathesis involving other segments would result in equally well-formed Leti words.
This study is of significance not only with respect to the theoretical implications it has for Correspondence Theory and, in particular, the constraint L<sub>INEARITY</sub>, but in addition, for further advancing our understanding of metathesis which is not only poorly understood, but perhaps misperceived as a marginal or even nonexisting process. This view is contradicted by Leti metathesis which is not only regular and productive, but may be driven by purely phonological considerations.

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