

Reading guide: Kirchner (2000)

Kirchner, Robert. 2000. Geminate inalterability and lenition. *Language* 76(1): 509-545.

Background

Kirchner (2000) proposes phonetically grounded constraints, as we have seen with Pater (1999) and Hayes (1999). However, Kirchner's proposal has some characteristics that open up the possibility of a very different conception of the phonology-phonetics interface.

Please note that our in-class discussion will **focus mostly on sections 5 and 6** (and their implications), because these are the sections that most directly address Kirchner's view of the phonology-phonetics interface in OT.

Questions to keep in mind while reading

Sections 1 and 2 — Universal patterns in geminate inalterability

- Be familiar with the following terms. (We will not explicitly go over them unless people have questions.)

▶ geminate inalterability	▶ partial geminate
▶ (consonant) lenition	▶ spirantization
- What are Kirchner's four generalizations about universals in geminate inalterability?
- Regarding the language data in these sections, we will not discuss these examples in detail unless people have specific questions or comments. Look them over and confirm for yourself that the data illustrate what Kirchner claims they do. If you do come up with criticisms or alternative analyses, we can discuss those.

Sections 3 and 4 — Previous approaches to geminate inalterability and to lenition

- Again, the plan is not to discuss these details explicitly in class except where people have questions. Read these sections carefully enough to be able to understand where and why Kirchner's proposal is different from preceding accounts, and to be able to follow (and evaluate) Kirchner's argumentation for why his approach is better than previous ones.

Sections 5 and 6 — The main focus of our discussion

- What is the general insight behind Kirchner's proposal?
- In sections 1 and 2, Kirchner very carefully distinguishes types of geminate lenition that never occur from cases of geminate-changing phenomena that resemble these but are (says Kirchner) crucially different. How motivated do you think Kirchner is in making these distinctions (a) in general, and (b) in the light of his LAZY-based formal account?
- Kirchner gives a somewhat informal definition of the constraint LAZY. Try to restate this constraint as explicitly as you can. Under what conditions is it violated? Does this constraint look only at outputs (like a typical markedness constraint), or does it need to compare outputs to inputs?

- Are there typological predictions of LAZY (either involving geminates, or not) that Kirchner doesn't consider? Are they useful, or problematic?

Some points for further thought and discussion

- LAZY is a phonetically grounded constraint, like Pater's (1999) *NC_o or the constraints that Hayes (1999) derives through Inductive Grounding. However, LAZY has some characteristics that are quite different from the proposals about markedness constraints developed by Hayes (1999).
 - ▶ How is LAZY different?
 - ▶ What are some of the implications of this difference for understanding the phonology-phonetics interface?
- One of the arguments in favor of maintaining the distinction between phonetics and phonology that Hayes (1999) emphasized most strongly was the fact that phonological patterns show formal symmetry. Is this a problem for Kirchner — does his system allow for formal symmetry, and why or why not?