

Theoretical Implications of Voice Assimilation in Polish

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This paper addresses the celebrated problem of Voice Assimilation in Polish. The issue of special interest is the resolution of the problem of whether Voice Assimilation is conditioned by syllable structure. This debate is conducted in the framework of Optimality Theory. The particular fragment of this theory that is relevant for Voice Assimilation in Polish is the theory of positional faithfulness which was marketed in OT in the work of Beckman and Casali. The leading idea of this work is that the syllable onset is a position of privilege, as indeed proposed in the work of Trubetzkoy culminating in his *Grundzüge der Phonologie* (1939).

The investigation of Voice Assimilation in Polish leads to the conclusion that onset faithfulness is unable to deliver the correct result. Worse, it makes predictions that are wrong from the empirical point of view. The correct analysis is based on linear rather than syllable-driven faithfulness, which raises the question of whether onset faithfulness is at all necessary. The answer to this question is a matter of further research.

The linear implementation of faithfulness carries an implication for the general model of Optimality Theory. The implication is that evaluation should proceed in steps rather than in parallel. The relevant derivational distinction is that between the word phonology and the sentence phonology, a time-honoured distinction which, unfortunately, has not yet been incorporated into the basic model and the basic architecture of Optimality Theory.