

HIGH ON FIVE SEMINAR

Challenging Sonority Theory: Evidence from neurogenic disorders of communication

TIME: 16th May, 2 pm

PLACE: LingLab, Building 22, 5th floor, INSS, Emil Holms Kanal 2, KU Søndre Campusa

Speaker: Prof. Martin J. Ball, DLitt, PhD, Hon FRCSLT, FLSW

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Sonority can be thought of as the perceived loudness, or clarity, of a specific speech sound. This is correlated with the degree of obstruction within the supralaryngeal vocal tract. So, for example, a low vowel (with the least amount of obstruction) has a very high degree of sonority, as compared to a plosive (the greatest amount of obstruction) which has a very low degree of sonority. Researchers have proposed that syllable shape in natural language is governed by the Sonority Sequencing Principle, and that consonant clusters types are predicted by the Sonority Dispersion Principle (see Clements, 1990).

The topic of sonority has become popular again within recent years (for example, Parker, 2012). Part of the controversy surrounds the question whether sonority (and in particular the sonority sequencing principle and the sonority dispersion principle) is hard-wired into the brain, or is simply emergent, reflecting articulatory and/or perceptual constraints. If it is hard-wired, is sonority a part of the phonology, the phonetic planning component, or the phonetic implementation component?

In this talk I present some of the arguments put forward in contributions to Ball and Müller (2016). In particular, evidence from the speech of adults with acquired neurogenic speech disorders is discussed in order to investigate these claims. If time allows, evidence will also be presented from initial consonant mutation in the Celtic languages.

References

- Ball, M. J. & Müller, N. (Eds.) (2016). *Challenging Sonority: Cross-linguistic evidence*. Sheffield, UK: Equinox.
- Clements, G. N. (1990). The role of the sonority cycle in core syllabification. In Beckman, M. & Kingston, J. (Eds.), *Papers in Laboratory Phonology I: Between the Grammar and Physics of Speech* (pp. 283-333). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parker, S. (Ed.) (2012). *The Sonority Controversy*. Berlin: De Gruyter.