

# Towards an Articulatory Understanding of Historical Phonology

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# What I want to convince you of

- It is important to be able to explain sound change
- This is best and most easily done with theories that make explicit reference to the mouth, such as Articulatory Phonology (AP)
- AP and OT combined are a powerful tool for describing and explaining sound change

# Roadmap

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Icelandic
- 3 Articulatory Phonology
- 4 AP/OT
- 5 Conclusion

# Historical phonology

What is historical phonology?

- Study of sound change over time
- Reconstruction of historical forms from current languages
- Not very concerned with the “how”s of sound change

# Icelandic

- West Scandinavian language, North Germanic branch, Indo-European family
- Spoken by about 310,000 people, mostly in Iceland
- Little dialectal variation. We're going to talk about Northern Icelandic — less allophony
- Very popular in syntax: true quirky subjects
  - Less popular in phonology
  - Mostly, people care about preaspiration

# Preaspiration

“Preaspiration” is a misnomer. Phonetic studies show existence of real [h], longer than [h̥].

(1) *hvít-ur* [k<sup>h</sup>vit<sup>h</sup>ʏr] ‘white-MASC.SING.NOM’

(2) *hvít-t* [k<sup>h</sup>viht] ‘white-NEUT.SING.NOM’

Synchronically, /p<sup>h</sup>p<sup>h</sup>/, /t<sup>h</sup>t<sup>h</sup>/, /k<sup>h</sup>k<sup>h</sup>/ > [hp], [ht], [hk]

How do you get a pattern like that? Where did it come from?

# Historical records

- The cultural literature of Icelandic is huge, we have over 1000 years worth of sagas, essays, and poems
- Changes in spelling provide clues to changes in pronunciation from Old Norse (ON)
- Other resource: the *First Grammatical Treatise* (FGT)
  - Written some time between 1125 and 1175 by unknown author
  - Recommendation on how to standardize Icelandic orthography
  - Methodology strikingly similar to that of modern linguistics
  - Describes pronunciation explicitly

# Sound changes

Because of the FGT, we know where we started from. We can collect data on where we are now. We know of two major chain shifts in the oral stops:

- Voiced geminates devoiced ( $*gg > kk$ )
- Voiceless geminates preaspirated ( $*kk > hk$ )
- Voiced singletons devoiced ( $*g > k$ )
- Voiceless singletons aspirated ( $*k > k^h$ )

So preaspiration is historically motivated, but how did this change happen?

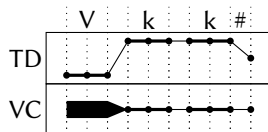


# Articulatory Phonology

Articulatory Phonology (AP; Browman and Goldstein 1986, 1990, 1992) is a formal theory of representational phonology wherein *gestures*, movements of the articulators of the mouth, and their relative positions in time, are construed as the most basic units of phonological analysis. These gestures are depicted on diagrams known as *gestural scores*.

# Example score: variables

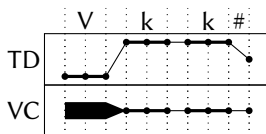
(3)



- X-axis represents time
- Boxes for *vocal tract variables*
  - *Variables come in two flavors: locations and degrees*

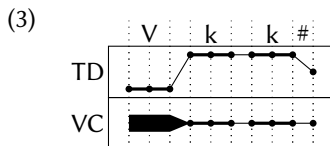
## Example score: t-units

(3)



- Vertical dotted lines mark *t-units* – each t-unit is an important unit of time as considered by current analysis
  - Length of time each t-unit represents is left purposefully vague
  - Some may be shorter than others, approach having no length
  - The extension of dotted line into transcription row indicates which t-units are part of a segment
  - In (3), the [V] is two t-units long. Following the [V] is a single transition t-unit to a [k]; the [k] is also two t-units long.

## Example score: degrees



- Articulators that create constrictions: y-axis location of articulator relative to top of mouth
  - Gesture line is dark when part of segment, light during transition t-units. Dots are placed at beginnings and endings of gestures, as well as midway between those points.
- Articulators with states: shown in visually appropriate manner
  - Voicing is depicted as thick section and lack of voicing as regular gesture line. Transition shown as a triangle

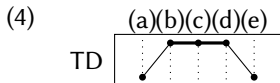
# Mapping from feature bundles

- Constriction gestures in AP are said to have five contrastive degrees: [closed], [critical], [mid], [narrow], and [wide].
- In actual production, there are theoretically infinite realizable degrees, although the idea is that there would be just five *contrastive* degrees.

# Mapping from feature bundles

- Constriction gestures in AP are said to have five contrastive degrees: [closed], [critical], [mid], [narrow], and [wide].
- In actual production, there are theoretically infinite realizable degrees, although the idea is that there would be just five *contrastive* degrees.
- These distinctions correspond to the general categories of sounds: [closed] refers to stops, [critical] to fricatives, and [mid], [narrow], and [wide] to approximants and vowels, with all approximants being [mid] and vowels being any of the three, depending on vowel height.

# Why t-units?



- Gestures have five *gestural landmarks*, shown in (4) (Gafos 2002)
- In the middle of the gesture is the *perceptual plateau*, what listeners identify as a particular sound
  - The plateau includes three landmarks, the target (b), the center (c), and the release (d).
- On both sides of the plateau are transitions
  - (a) is the onset, from no specified gesture to target
  - (e) is the offset, from release to either unspecified or to following target.
- t-units formalize parts of gesture into countable objects (→ OT)

# The data

We know explicitly from the FGT which how sounds were pronounced in the past, so we know:

(\*gg,\*kk,\*g,\*k) > (kk,hk,k,k<sup>h</sup>)

Out of consideration for time, I will only go over the analysis for the velar geminates here – the same analysis holds for the other oral geminates, but with just slightly different constraints.




# Motivations I

To explain the lack of merger, I use \*MERGE:

(5) \*MERGE

No word of the output has multiple correspondents in the input.  
Mark one violation for instance where two inputs map onto the same output. (Padgett, 2003)

$$\begin{bmatrix} g_1 & gg_2 \\ k_3 & kk_4 \end{bmatrix} > \begin{bmatrix} g_1 & \\ k_3 & kk_{2,4} \end{bmatrix}$$

	$g_1 \quad gg_2 \quad k_3 \quad kk_4$	*MERGE
a.	 $g_1 \quad gg_2 \quad k_3 \quad kk_4$	
b.	$g_1 \quad k_3 \quad kk_{2,4}$	*!

# Motivations II

To explain the direction of the chain shift, I use \*VVO:

(6) \*VOICEDVELAROBSTRUENT (\*VVO)

There is no voiced constriction at the velum of any degree [critical] or higher. Mark one violation for each t-unit that contains any amount of voicing as well as a tongue dorsum gesture with a constriction degree of [critical] or [closed].

Motivated by tendency for velar obstruents to devoice and the double tendency for geminate velar obstruents to devoice. (Ohalá, 1983; Westbury and Keating, 1986; Napoli et al., 2014)

# Motivations II

Note that geminates do not change length in any way. This is a consequence of \*MERGE interacting with MAX.

(7) MAX

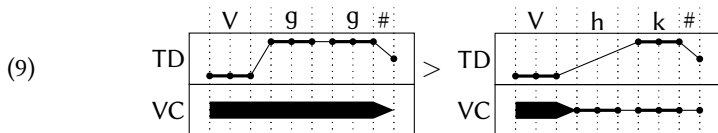
Do not delete any segments. Mark one violation for each segment present in an input not present in an output. (based on Prince and Smolensky, 1993/2004)

Essentially, keeps timing units consistent.

\*gg > kk, hk

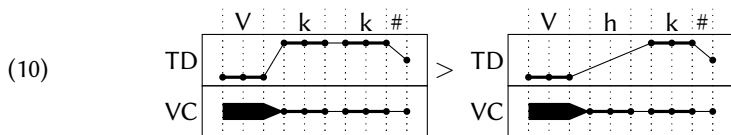
(8) MAX-GESTURE (MAX-G)

Do not delete any gestures from segments. Mark one violation for each gesture present in an input not present in an output segment.



	Vgg	MAX-G
a.	Vgg	
b.	Vkk	**
c.	Vhk	***

\*kk > hk





	Vkk	MAX-G
a.	Vkk	
b.	Vhk	*

Huh. We have a problem.

# Paradox

(11)

	(gg, kk)	*MERGE	MAX-G
a.	 (kk, hk)		* * *
b.	 (hk, kk)		* * *

- /gg/ > [kk] incurs two violations for the deletion of the voicing gestures
- /gg/ > [hk] incurs three violations for the deletion of the voicing gestures + dorsal gesture
- /gg/ > [kk] forces /kk/ > [hk], incurs one violation for the deletion of the dorsal gestures

Both outcomes are equally bad, and have three total violations.

# A solution

MAX-G is not important as a constraint by itself; we need to self-conjoin:  
MAX<sup>2</sup>-G.

(12) MAX<sup>2</sup>-GESTURE (MAX<sup>2</sup>-G)

Do not delete two or more gestures. Mark one violation for each gesture present in an input not present in an output, as long as two or more gestures are not present.

# Constraint conjunction

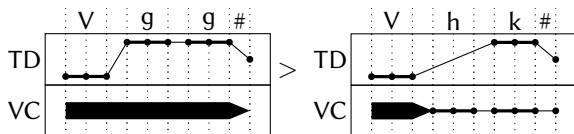
Can we make constraints like  $\text{MAX}^2\text{-G}$ ?

- Conjunction is a way of being more selective about violations
  - Local multiple constraint violations are categorically worse than the same violations in a nonlocal context (Prince and Smolensky, 1993/2004)
- Self-conjunction is a special type of conjunction where violations are only counted if the same constraint is locally violated multiple times (Alderete, 1997)
- Conjoined constraints prevent outputs from changing too radically from their inputs in a specific feature while still allowing change
- Obviously relevant in chain shifts: inputs must be prevented from skipping the line



MAX<sup>2</sup>-G

(13)




	Vgg	MAX <sup>2</sup> -G	MAX-G
a.	Vgg		
b.	Vhk	*!*	* * *

Crucially, /gg/ > [hk] violates MAX<sup>2</sup>-G, and we know MAX<sup>2</sup>-G outranks MAX-G!

# The geminates, solved I

(14)


	(gg, kk)	*MERGE	MAX <sup>2</sup> -G	MAX-G
a.	 (kk, hk)		*	* * *
b.	(hk, kk)		* *!	* * *

MAX<sup>2</sup>-G is crucial to describing ON > Icelandic. Actually, MAX<sup>2</sup>-G outranking MAX-G is unimportant; it's enough for MAX<sup>2</sup>-G to be ranked under \*MERGE to get Icelandic from ON.

# The geminates, solved II

Even limiting  $\text{MAX}^2\text{-G}$ 's scope to a segment instead of a number of segments works:

(15)

	(gg, kk)	*MERGE	$\text{MAX}^2\text{-G}$	$\text{MAX-G}$
a.	 (kk, hk)			* * *
b.	(hk, kk)		*!	* * *

The exact formulation is unimportant; the concept suffices.

# Summary

- The use of AP makes clear the necessity of particular constraints
- By using gestures and t-units, it is extremely apparent what constraints might be violated, allowing us to immediately see which violations are permissible, and thus ranked lowly, and which violations are not, and thus ranked highly
- This sort of comparison is best done when both inputs and outputs are known, such as in historical phonology

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# References IV

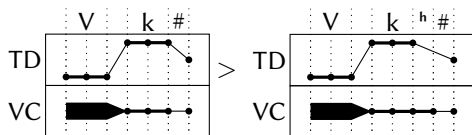
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# The singletons

## (16) DEP-GESTURE (DEP-G)

Do not add any gestures. Mark one violation for each gesture present in an input not present in an output.

(17)





	Vk	DEP-G
a.	Vk <sup>h</sup>	
b.	Vg	*

Note that I assume a change in voicing is a deletion of a gesture followed by reinsertion of another gesture. I have also analyzed it without this assumption, and the principle still holds.



\*g > k, k<sup>h</sup>

(18)

	Vg	DEP-G
a.	 Vk	*
b.	 Vk <sup>h</sup>	*

# Paradox, again

(19)

	(g, k)	DEP-G
a.	 (k, k <sup>h</sup> )	*
b.	 (k <sup>h</sup> , k)	*

- /g/ > [k] incurs two violations for the deletion of the voicing gestures
- /g/ > [k<sup>h</sup>] incurs three violations for the deletion of the voicing gestures + dorsal gesture
- /k/ > [k] or [k<sup>h</sup>] do not have any violations

Both outcomes are equally bad, again!

# A solution, again

DEP-G is not important as a constraint by itself; we need a modified version:  $\text{MAX}^2\text{-LG}$ .

(20)  $\text{DEP-LONGGESTURE}$  ( $\text{DEP-LG}$ )

Do not add any long gestures. Mark one violation for each gesture longer than a segment present in an input not present in an output.

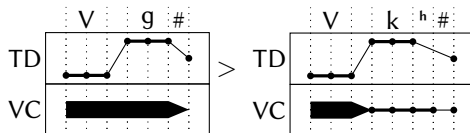
# Why DEP-LG?


The formulation of DEP-LG is slightly unclear because, the notion of a segment is slightly unclear. Here, I mean that adding gestures that are longer than the segments they “belong” to is a violation of DEP-LG: the extended voicelessness of [Vk<sup>h</sup>] counts as a long segment because it extends past the [k].

- I am assume that aspiration is not its own segment, as that would be an [h], but is also not a transition
- I am assume that changing the length of a pre-existing gesture does not require deletion and reinsertion

## DEP-LG

(21)




	Vg	DEP-LG	DEP-G
a.	 Vk		*
b.	Vk <sup>h</sup>	*!	*

Crucially, /g/ > [k<sup>h</sup>] violates DEP-LG.

# The singletons, solved

(22)


	(g, k)	*MERGE	DEP-LG	DEP-G
a.	 (k, k <sup>h</sup> )			*
b.	(k <sup>h</sup> , k)		*!	*

DEP-LG is crucial to describing ON > Icelandic. DEP-LG does not need to be ranked with respect to DEP-G; it's enough for DEP-LG to be ranked under \*MERGE to get Icelandic from ON.



# The totality

(23)

	(gg, g, kk, k)	*MERGE	MAX <sup>2</sup> -G	DEP-LG
a.	 (kk, k, hk, k <sup>h</sup> )		*	
b.	(kk, k <sup>h</sup> , hk, k)		*	*!
c.	(hk, k, kk, k <sup>h</sup> )		**!	
d.	(hk, k <sup>h</sup> , kk, k)		**!	*!

With high-ranking \*MERGE, \*VVO and MAX, MAX<sup>2</sup>-G/S and DEP-LG are sufficient to produce the attested Icelandic oral stop subsystem.

In fact, the winning, attested candidate harmonically bounds all of the other candidate outcomes!

MAX<sup>2</sup>-L/G and DEP-LG are the only truly necessary constraints, and do not have to be ranked with respect to each other.

# Further questions

- What does it mean to delete the constriction gesture of a segment but leave the voicing gesture? Are there intermediate steps that should be considered?
- What other types of seemingly weird phenomenon can AP/OT explain?
- How should aspiration be depicted in terms of gestures?

