

The OCP is a pressure to keep words distinct: Evidence from Aymara, Dutch and Javanese

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In this paper we advance two claims about the nature of co-occurrence restrictions on consonants (OCP; Leben 1973). Based on studies of Aymara, Dutch and Javanese we show i) that belonging to the same perceptually salient natural class significantly decreases the likelihood of two consonants co-occurring, ii) that this penalty increases with the number of similar segments within a word evidencing cumulativeness of OCP effects. Generalizing from perceptual experiments, we hypothesize that the OCP functions as a lexical optimization constraint to reduce word confusability.