

Center for Cognitive Science

University at Buffalo, State University of New York

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

280 Park Hall
North Campus
2:00 pm -4:00 pm

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"The phonetics-phonology interface ... again."

In 1990 I argued against the notion that there is phonetics-phonology interface ("There is no interface between phonetics and phonology: a personal view" *J. Phonetics* 18.153-171). I return to this argument and give added evidence that phonology can do its best job of explaining sound patterns in language by incorporating phonetics. Among the examples treated are: (a) There are asymmetries in the direction of change and alternation between certain sounds, e.g., palatalized velars and apicals and palatalized labials and apicals. The explanation lies in the acoustics of these sounds and their perception. (b) Vowel nasalization occasionally arises when the conditioning environment is not a nasal, e.g., near [h] and other voiceless fricatives. The explanation lies in the acoustic effects these sounds have on adjacent vowels. (c) What have been called "epenthetic" stops are found in a variety of contexts, e.g., *nasal C ___ fricative*: warm[p]th, and *lateral ___ fricative*: el[t]se. A somewhat rare instance involves the context *labial nasal ___ apical nasal*: Old English *nemna* ~ *nempne* "name. Physiological phonetics can give a unified account of these cases. Phonology without phonetics (and without sociological and psychological causal factors) reduces to simple description no matter how much arcane formalism is added to it.

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