

Clements’ motivation for his ‘feature geometry’ approach was to figure out a way to account for phonological phenomena, such as ‘long-distance effects’ and assimilation rules, that are not easy to accommodate using the non-hierarchical feature-matrix approach of Chomsky and Halle. Throughout the paper, Clements uses a number of examples of assimilation to develop and support his theory, since (as he tells us) the “study of assimilation rules provides prime evidence for the nature of simultaneous feature groupings.” (Clements: 226) Through several examples, he points out the limitations of the non-hierarchical feature-matrix model: that “phonological features are simultaneous and unstructured at the phonological level” and that “all instances of surface-level feature overlap must be analysed as an effect of phonetic implementations.” This fundamental underlying notion (and difference with respect to Clements’ feature geometry’s approach) is captured in (14), so when Clements writes that “(14) is not just a renotation of (12); as is usually the case, the different notation implies an entirely different set of theoretical assumptions,” he’s highlighting the facts presented thus far in the paper using an contrasting example from American English phonology regarding the (partial) assimilation coronal obstruents when followed by another coronal consonant, that is, that coronal obstruents [t, d, n] assimilate to the place “of articulation of a following coronal consonant, so that [t, d, n] are interdental before [θ], post-alveolar before [ʃ, ʒ], and retroflex before [r]” (Clements: 236)

Contrasting the statement of (some of this rule) in (14) is Clements’ approach in (12), which functions using two important basic assumptions (specific to this example, given his theory):

- Laryngeal features may operate as a unit independently of supralaryngeal features (and I believe the converse is also true?)
- Place tier and manner tier also operate independently of each other (although later in the paper, Clements suggests that “there is very little evidence to suggest that the manner tier itself functions as a unit” (Clements: 238)

In short, the depiction of the rule of assimilation is more robust in (12) than in (14), conveying as it does multiple threads of information concurrently in a single view. We see the notion of *de-linking* and the active conceptual ‘movement’ of assimilation (the dashed line) that connects the second segment node to the dominating root tier (supralaryngeal tier). On the other hand, figure (14) shows us merely lists of features. Each rendering (12) and (14) is premised on an

underlying theory of 'how phonology works,' and the theories are indeed different, although feature geometry leverages the basic inventory of features, but organizes them in a very interesting conceptual way, modeled (as a the starting point of the speech production mechanisms themselves, the gist of the paper in the first section is very interesting in this regard, but I cannot coalesce the information into this brief review).

In short, Clements' pointing out the contrast between (12) and (14) in the course of his paper really helped solidify the differences between his theory and the 'standard' feature matrix approach by means of a tangible example.