

## **Sonorant obstruents revisited**

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In earlier work, a ‘fuzzy’ class of sounds was recognized, called sonorant obstruents (Rice 1993, following Rice and Avery 1989). These are voiced obstruents that pattern as sonorants in a language. In order to account for the patterning of these sounds, a feature [Sonorant Voicing], or [SV], was proposed; see, for instance, Avery 1996, Frigeni 2009, Piggott 1992, Rice 1993, 2005, Rice and Avery 1989 (see Botma 2011 for a recent overview and review.) This feature was proposed in order to capture the fact that, given a language with voiceless obstruents, voiced obstruents, and sonorants, the voiced obstruents pattern together with the voiceless obstruents in some languages, and with the sonorants in other languages. More generally, based on patterning, this work proposes that obstruent voicing can be represented in two different ways. In some languages, obstruents have the standard laryngeal voicing, and voiced obstruents and sonorants do not interact; in other languages, there is interaction between voiced obstruents and sonorants, and the voicing in obstruents is best captured by the feature SV – these are the sonorant obstruents.

I have two goals in this paper. The first goal is to summarize the types of evidence for the feature SV as opposed to [voice]. Such evidence has been adduced from a large variety of languages, and I classify these with respect to the nature of the evidence. The second goal is to evaluate the need for SV to capture the obstruent-sonorant interactions, and consider an alternative account based in the Contrastive Hierarchy (e.g., Drescher 2009).

Under a Contrastive Hierarchy account, it might be argued that no feature SV is required. Rather the laryngeal voicing effects could arise when voicing has scope only over obstruents. In this case, the feature [voice] is not activated for sonorants, and voiced and voiceless obstruents might interact with one another. The sonorant voicing effects could arise when voicing has scope over all consonants; in this case voicing is contrastive for sonorants as well as obstruents. This alternative account has much success, with the theoretical complexities arising due to the Contrastive Hierarchy rather than to the presence of an additional feature.

One prediction of a Contrastive Hierarchy account without the feature SV is that in any particular language, voiced stops will either pattern together with sonorants or they will not. Rendaku in Japanese poses a challenge for this claim, given that sonorants are both transparent with respect to voicing and, for nasals, triggers for voicing, patterning that is difficult to account for under a Contrastive Hierarchy account if only a single feature.

I conclude that there remains evidence for the feature SV, given that a single language can reference both types of voicing. I end with a discussion of voicing with respect to theories in which features are argued to be emergent rather than universal (e.g., Mielke 2008, Iosad 2012).

## References

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