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**Presentation Title:** Acquisition of Vowel Harmony: a theoretical implication

**Abstract:** How does the child come to comprehend and speak language? This is one of the most intricate puzzles in current linguistics. From the beginning of modern linguistics, not a few attempts to solve this puzzle have been made in various disciplines including phonology. In Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky 1993), it is assumed that inputs and constraints are the same for children and adults. Thus, language development in OT is represented as changes of the constraint rankings (Fikkert 2007).

Vowel harmony is a phenomenon which requires any vowels in a domain (usually a prosodic word) to have the same value of some harmonic feature (e.g. [ $\pm$ high], [ $\pm$ back], [ $\pm$ round], and [ $\pm$ ATR]). In comparison to the research on acquisition of vowels, there is still little research on acquisition of vowel harmony. This presentation shows, in the framework of OT, how vowel harmony can be analyzed in the light of its acquisition, and which developmental process of vowel harmony can be theoretically predictable.

This presentation is in preparation for the research in Mongolia to be conducted in March 2012. The goal of the presentation, therefore, is to formulate testable hypotheses based on previous OT studies on vowel harmony and phonological acquisition.

## References

- Fikkert, Paula (2007). "Acquiring phonology," *The Cambridge Handbook of Phonology*, ed. by Paul de Lacy, 537-554, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Prince, Alan and Paul Smolensky (1993) "Optimality Theory: Constraint Interaction in Generative Grammar," Technical Report #2, Rutgers Center for Cognitive Science, Rutgers University. [Published by Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2004. Available on Rutgers Optimality Archive, ROA-537]