



Simultaneous Structure in Phonology

D. Robert Ladd

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In this book, D. Robert Ladd focuses on problems with the one-dimensional idealization of language on which much linguistic theory is based. Strings of sequentially-ordered elements play an important role as theoretical abstractions in both phonology and syntax. Yet many well-known phonological phenomena (such as vowel harmony, ablaut morphology, and pitch features) are problematic for this one-dimensional idealization, and many attempts (such as autosegmental phonology) have been made to allow for these troublesome characteristics in our theories. The book deals with diverse aspects of these problematical non-sequential phenomena.

The five main chapters cover distinctive features and autosegments, systematic phonetics, the definition of 'prosody', aspects of vocal paralinguistic communication and 'gradience', and duality of patterning. Each chapter reviews a wide range of relevant literature, generally going back to the beginnings of modern linguistics in the early twentieth century, and all of them can usefully be read as free-standing synthetic overviews of the issues they discuss. The final chapter suggests that phonological structure, sequential or otherwise, can be seen as a special case of the segmentation of continuous action into discrete events, and that research on this general topic within cognitive psychology is relevant to phonological theory.

Professor Ladd's unique work makes a fundamental contribution to phonology and phonetics and to linguistic theory more generally. His book will interest all theoretical linguists and cognitive scientists concerned with understanding the relation between phonological representations and the speech signal.

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