

Icy Targets

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When a feature [F] is realized over multiple segments, phonological theory offers two mechanisms to contain the spreading of [F]: (i) reaching the edge of some prosodic/morphological domain; (ii) a blocking segment. In this talk, I focus on a third mechanism--icy targets. An icy target undergoes spreading from [F], while blocking any further spreading. In Icelandic, for instance, two vowels are [front] and [round], but only [Y] shows (further) spreading of these two features, while [oe] does not. No previous OT analysis predicts icy targets. Binary Domains Theory (BDT) is presented here to account for the pattern. BDT incorporates headedness and binarity into Autosegmental Phonology. When linked to the same autosegment, each pair of adjacent feature nodes forms a binary head-dependent constituent. The distribution of heads in a string of adjacent feature nodes is predictable.

When features spread, a head is formed on the trigger; [Y] can be a head of [front] and [round] in Icelandic, but not [oe]. Markedness constraints penalize heads of [F] that are also associated with [G]. The constraint active in Icelandic prohibits heads of [front] and [round] to be [low] vowels, and thus penalizes spreading from [oe] but not from [Y]. Two other cases of icy targets are also analyzed: consonant harmony in Sanskrit, and nasal harmony in Ikwere.