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Bonilla y Asociados
desde 1950



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Vowel harmony results from a set of restrictions that determine the possible and impossible sequences of vowels within a word. The study of syntax begins with the observation that the words of a sentence cannot go in just any order, and the study of phonology begins with the same observation for the consonants and vowels of a word. In this book, Andrew Nevins investigates long-distance relations between vowels in vowel harmony systems across a range of languages, with the aim of demonstrating that the locality conditions that regulate these relations can be attributed to the same principle that regulates long-distance syntactic dependencies. He argues that vowel harmony represents a manifestation of the Agree algorithm for feature-valuation (formulated by Chomsky in 2000), as part of an overarching effort to show that phonology can be described in terms of the principles of the Minimalist program. Nevins demonstrates that the principle of target-driven search, the phenomenon of defective intervention, and the principles regulating the size of the domain over which dependencies are computed apply to both phonological and syntactic phenomena. Locality in Vowel Harmony offers phonologists new evidence that viewing vowel harmony through the lens of relativized minimality has the potential to unify different levels of linguistic representation and different domains of empirical inquiry in a unified framework. Moreover, Nevins's specific implementation of the locality of dependencies represents a major advance in understanding constraints on possible harmonic languages. An online tool on the MIT Press Web site demonstrates the algorithm for calculating vowel harmony with the derivations exemplified in the book.