

de Lacy, Paul (2004). Markedness conflation in Optimality Theory. *Phonology* 21: 1-55.

Markedness distinctions can be ignored. For example, in some languages stress avoids central vowels to fall on high peripheral vowels; yet in the Uralic language Nganasan central and high peripheral vowels are treated in the same way: stress avoids both types equally. Such ‘conflation’ of markedness categories is not only language-specific, but also phenomenon-specific. In contrast, dominance relations in markedness hierarchies are universal; e.g. stress never seeks out a central vowel when a high peripheral vowel is available. This article argues that both language-specific conflation and universal markedness relations can be expressed in Optimality Theory. Constraints referring to markedness hierarchies must be freely rankable and mention a contiguous range of the hierarchy, including the most marked element. The empirical focus is sonority-driven stress in Nganasan and Kiriwina. In addition, Prince & Smolensky’s (1993) fixed ranking theory of markedness hierarchies is shown to be unable to produce the full range of attested confluations.



