

Geminate Inventories

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Short and long consonants contrast in many of the world's languages. The inventory of long consonants or geminates is often smaller than the inventory of non-geminates, with recurrent gaps across languages. And, in languages with very small geminate inventories, there are also recurrent patterns of segment types. In this talk, I argue that common phonetically-based sound change can account for many of the recurrent properties of geminate inventories. Common sound changes creating gaps in geminate inventories include sibilant degemination, glide degemination, and geminate devoicing. Common sound changes giving rise to limited geminate inventories include manner assimilation between sonorants, and nasal place-assimilation. And common sound changes giving rise to geminate inventories which match singletons in full include vowel syncope between identical consonants and post-tonic gemination. In contrast to markedness accounts (e.g. Podesva 2000), where constraints against geminate sub-classes are posited as primitive components of synchronic grammars, this account provides sound phonetic explanations for recurrent aspects of geminate inventories, is neither too strong nor too weak, and, following Blevins (to appear), supports a general view of sound patterns as emergent properties of phonological systems.

Blevins, Juliette. To appear. *Evolutionary Phonology*. Cambridge University Press.

Podesva, Robert J. 2000. Constraints on geminates in Buginese and Selayarese. *WCCFL* 19:343-55.