Dissimilation in syntax
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Abstract
Most research takes for granted the idea that an irreduceable feature of syntax is the existence of essentially ornamental alternations that reflect arbitrary lexical choice. Examples include clause size, voice, and double-object alternations. Although accounts differ, arbitrary lexical choice lies at the heart of most approaches to such phenomena: did we choose finite or non-finite T? an active or passive flavor of v? this adposition or that one? Though these theories do aim to attribute as much as possible to general principles (of course), an element of construction-specific stipulation remains. Can we do better? This class will suggest what a maximally sparse theory of these alternations might look like — with the notion of *local dissimilation* at its core. A basic knowledge of generative syntax will be assumed, but we will take care to provide enough background to make the discussion understandable to MA-level students and beyond from a variety of backgrounds.