

Lexical Classes in Phonology

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Lexical class distinctions, such as Germanic vs. Latinate in English, occur in virtually all languages. The synchronic status of such lexical strata is controversial in linguistics, and Japanese plays a prominent role in the discussion, partially because lexical class distinctions are so clearly visible, even in the writing system. With the shift in phonology from a rule-based derivational framework to a system of ranked and violable constraints that came with Optimality Theory, a new perspective on this topic has developed. This paper takes up some of the conceptual issues connected with the theoretical shift, and its empirical predictions and problems.