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Vowel transparency in a structural account to openness

Transparent vowels, i.e. vowels that seem invisible to vowel harmony, pose a challenge for feature-based and phonetically grounded accounts alike: For example, Finnish i/e are classified as [-back]/articulatorily front, yet do not (fully) pattern as such. In this talk I argue that their transparency follows from their internal structure, in combination with the location of the harmonic property within that structure: Non-transparent front vowels involve more complex structures with the element responsible for harmony high up, while transparent vowels have that same element in a lower position (in a sense to be made precise), which results in their being transparent to harmony. Finnish transparent vowels can nevertheless participate in harmony if they "gang up", a phenomenon that will also be given due attention. To round things off, I will also look at the implications for other languages (Turkish, Hungarian).