

## Coronal assimilation and underspecification in Zurich German<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

It has been repeatedly shown in the recent literature that coronals are "special" in a number of languages (Avery and Rice 1989; Rice and Avery 1991; Paradis and Prunet 1991; Cho 1991; Davis 1991; Yip 1991; McCarthy and Taub 1992; Hall 1992). The present paper focuses on assimilation phenomena and the status of coronals in Zurich German, a dialect of Swiss German spoken in the canton of Zurich in Switzerland. We show that both coronal stops and coronal nasals are best analyzed as underspecified for place, and coronal fricatives require (partial) specification. Thus coronals do not behave homogeneously with respect to underspecification. We begin by showing in section 1 the widespread process of assimilation in Zurich German, and in section 2 we discuss underspecification.

Zurich German contrasts the consonants shown in (1) below (Winteler 1876; Dieth 1950; Weber 1964). Stops have three underlying forms: lenis, fortis,<sup>2</sup> and aspirated, all voiceless. Lenes are plain stops, and fortes are realized with a high degree of articulatory effort and a heightened

### (1) Consonants

		labial	coronal		velar	laryngeal
			alveolar	alveo- palatal		
Stops	lenis (plain)	p	t		k	
	fortis	p <sup>ʔ</sup>	t <sup>ʔ</sup>		k <sup>ʔ</sup>	
	(glottalized)					
	aspirated	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>		k <sup>h</sup>	
Fricatives	lenis (short)	f	s	ʃ	x	h
	fortis (long)	f:	s:	ʃ:	x:	
Affricates		pf	ts	tʃ	kx	
Nasals		m	n		ŋ	
Liquids			r, l			
Glides		w		j		