Local Harmony in Lango

Vowel harmony typically targets an unbounded sequence of vowels in some domain (e.g. Finnish). But in Lango, [ATR] harmony holds only between suffixes and root-final vowels: /bɔ̀ŋɔ́ + nɪ́/ → *bɔ̀ŋɔ́nɪ́* 'your dress' (**bɔ̀ŋɔ́nɪ́*). Common analyses of vowel harmony (based on AGREE or ALIGN constraints, e.g.) are built for Finnish-style whole-word harmony, so the Lango facts seem to require a radical departure from this sort of constraint. However, an analysis in which Licensing (Zoll 1998, Crosswhite 2000) drives harmony is available. With Licensing constraints requiring [ATR] features to be linked to root vowels, minimal spreading becomes optimal: As long as the root-final vowel and suffix vowel have the same [ATR] feature, Licensing is satisfied, regardless of the root-initial vowel's [ATR] feature. Potential alternatives fail: The [ATR] feature of the root-initial vowel cannot be preferentially preserved by positional faithfulness because it harmonizes in monosyllabic roots: /jɔ̀-wú/ → *jòwú* 'your people.' There is also little independent evidence for a word-final disyllabic foot, so a foot-based analysis is not well supported. Although Lango's harmony seems to require a mechanism for spreading features by exactly one syllable, the Licensing analysis shows that this is not necessary.