WHEN ROMANS LOSE THEIR HEADS

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Introduction: In this paper, I examine a neglected aspect of Italian raddoppiamento fonosintattico, the overapplication of raddoppiamento in connection with stress retraction, and argue for an analysis framed in Optimality Theory (OT, Prince & Smolensky 1993, McCarthy & Prince 1995, 1999) that understands the pattern as the optimisation of a decapitated foot. Thus, headedness cannot be regarded as a universal property of prosodic feet.

Data: Word-internally, consonants contrast in length in Italian, unlike vowels. At word junctures consonant doubling occurs under three conditions. Lexical or idiosyncratic doubling is triggered in a word-initial consonant by a handful of function words when these precede the consonant (1a). Phonotactic doubling occurs when a consonant-final word with final stress is followed by a vowel-initial word (1b). Rhythmic doubling is the doubling of a word-initial consonant in the context of a preceding stressed open syllable (1c).

Problem: In recent OT analysis (Borrelli 2002, Saltarelli 2004), rhythmic doubling is attributed to the Stress-to-Weight constraint that demands stressed syllables to be heavy. A piece of data no account captures to date is the overapplication of gemination in constructions with stress retraction. Stress retraction is the shifting of stress to a preceding syllable if otherwise a stress clash would emerge (compare 2a with 2b and 1c with 2c) (Nespor & Vogel 1979, 1989). As Saltarelli (2004) shows, Roman speakers remove stress from the word-final syllable and still geminate the following consonant (2b,c). He notes that this is not “predicted by a conventional theory of stress-driven initial consonant lengthening” (p.65).

Solution: D’Imperio & Rosenthall (1999) show that full vowel lengthening occurs only in open penultimate syllables, while open antepenultimate syllables show less length. They conclude that lengthening in the penultima occurs as an optimisation strategy of foot structure rather than augmentation of the stressed syllable. Final syllables are not footed if unstressed and feet have to be at least bimoraic. Lengthening of antepenultimate stressed vowels is a phonetic correlate of stress, not the addition of a mora. Hence, the Italian foot is optimally bimoraic. Rhythmic doubling can thus be attributed to the size restriction on feet rather than Stress-to-Weight. This alone does not explain the overapplication of doubling under stress retraction. I assume that in these cases the original foot on the word-final syllable is retained but it loses its head (see Crowhurst 1996 for headless feet) to avoid stress clash. If the foot is there, without prominence, it still has to fulfil the bimoraicity requirement and does so by dragging the following consonant into its domain.

To account for the emergence of this headless foot in OT we split Output-Output faithfulness (Benincá 2000). Faithfulness to a foot in a base has to be important, while faithfulness to the head of a foot as well as foot headedness (Ft2HD, Crowhurst 1996) have to be less important than foot faithfulness and the constraint against clashes (3).

Conclusion: This paper shows that overapplication of rhythmic doubling under stress retraction is not as exotic as previously thought if raddoppiamento is understood as triggered by a two-moraic foot size requirement rather than as a Stress-to-Weight effect and if feet can lose their heads. In the context of OT the latter implies that the Generator (Gen) provides candidates with a variety of foot structures and the properties of feet such as binarity and headedness are determined by the Evaluation mechanism on a language-particular basis rather than by Gen. A foot, thus, is a grouping relationship rather than a dependency relationship.
Consonant doubling in Italian

1. a. Come và? [ˈkomevˈva] ‘How are you?’
   b. bar aperto [ˈbarraˌperto] ‘open bar’
   c. Gesù bambino [dʒɛˈzubbamˈbiːno] ‘Jesus the child’

Overapplication

2. a. [kaf.ˈfe] + [ˈluŋ.go] caffè lungo
   b. [ˌkaf.fel.ˈluŋ.go] ‘long (diluted) coffee’
   c. [ˌdʒezukˈkristo] ‘Jesus Christ’

Analysis sketch

3. | /kafˈfe/ + /ˈlungo/ | *CLASH | OO-FAITH-Ft | OO-MAX-FtHD | Ft2HD | Ft=\mu |
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References