

Clusters and complex onsets in *Romagnolo*. A cross-linguistic syllabification algorithm?

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In Italian dialects, we have heterogeneous consonant clusters that appear to be branching onsets of (a) increasing sonority /TR/, (b) decreasing /RT/, and (c) equal sonority (TT), what Scheer (2004) defines as a ‘plateau’ of sonority (see Repetti 1995, Passino 2013, Russo 2016 for the Emilia-Romagna). Particularly, *Romagnolo* is characterised by the deletion of unstressed vowels and the consequent formation of secondary clusters and complex onsets (branching onsets: OL groups Obstruents-Liquids / tɫ dl zɫ /).

Analysing the Italian-Swiss maps Atlas from NavigAIS on the Romagna (Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena and Rimini) and Baiolini & Guidetti (2008) for Ferrara (Emilia), we find several secondary branching onsets OL (derived from syncope) with increasing sonority /tɫ dl zɫ km tn zn.../ and word-initial complex groups with decreasing RT:

-Branching onsets with increasing sonority – Linear layout TR -

C₀L : **jātɫa** lat. médiév. SANCT(Ū)LUS [AIS 36 *madrina/godmother*] - **kondɫa** Vulg. Lat. CŪN(Ū)LA [AIS 61 *culla/cradle*] - **zɫowʃ** [AIS 66 *g(e)loso/jealous*] - **nuvɫa** [AIS 111 *l’ug(o)la/uvula*] - **ʃɫer** et **ɫɫer** [AIS 266 *il sellaio/saddler* 1512 *telaio/loom*]

C₀M : **kmer** [AIS 36 *c(o)mare/godmother*]

C₀N : **tnaj** [AIS 224 *t(e)naglie/pincers*] - **ʃnura** [AIS 49 *s(i)gnora/lady*] - **znoʃ** [AIS 162 *g(i)nocchio/knee*]

Complex groups with decreasing sonority (heterosyllabic ?) - Linear layout RC –

N₀C : (a)**nvut** AIS 18 *n(i)pote/nephew* - **mʃtir** AIS 199 *m(e)stiere/craft job*

In the linear layout, I have also included above the branching onsets that are a product of syncope with increasing sonority /tɫ dl / (like *ɫɫer* it. *telaio* ‘frame’). These are termed Bogus Clusters by Harris (1994: 182, and ss. for English *choc(o)late*, *fact(o)ry*, *myst(e)ry*) and interpreted by Scheer (2004, § 2.6.1), in the framework of the CV strict, as two independent onsets, separated by an empty nucleus.

One argument in favour of a difference between bogus clusters with increasing sonority and branching onsets is distributional. Bogus clusters with a lateral C₂ cannot be found in initial position (*tɫ, *dl, *gl), for example either in English or Standard Italian. However, this is not the case in *Romagnolo* dialects: type **ʃɫer**, **ɫɫer** vs. **ɫlar**, **ɫlarina** it. *telarina*, **tnaia** it. *tenaglia* in Ferrara, etc.. We also find word initial bogus clusters in other Romance languages: in Dolomitic Ladin (*Livinallongo*) and in the dialects of French (see Repetti and Tuttle 1987: 12)

Moreover, (unlike Tuscan Italian), in these dialects lenition applies to those groups identified as bogus clusters /G(U)L/ →/vɫ/ (**nuvɫa**), contrary to what is advocated by the theory GP CVCV, according to which bogus clusters don’t undergo lenition, since they always have an empty nucleus to their right. Conversely, in these dialects bogus clusters do lenite. The lenition shows a similarity between the bogus clusters of rising sonority and branching onsets to which phonological lenition also applies in the dialects of Northern Italy. This makes the phonological distinction between bogus clusters and branching onsets non-existent for these dialects.

Furthermore, primary groups with rising sonority can also be split by epenthesis, that is a process of syllabic optimization: in the sequences like /vr dr./ a *svarabhakti* vowel breaks the complex onset /VvRv/.

This phonological process contradicts what is advocated by the theory of the CV strict to the extent that monopositional branching onsets (Lowenstamm 2003; Scheer & Ségéral 2003) may be subject to lenition (Scheer & Brun-Trigaud 2012), but not to epenthesis.

This talk debates the conditions that determine the structuring of clusters and complex onsets:

- i. the notion of a syllabic constituent, on which there is no consensus
- ii. the principle of sonority: the tendency of segments with more voicing to be heads or ranked by their inclination to dependency
- iii. the derived status (non-lexical) of syllabicity

Branching onsets are complex objects that require mechanisms of construction and integration. What is the algorithm that structure phonological branching onsets? Do sonorants have a syllabic role (Sauzet & Brun-Trigaud 2012)?

If one assumes that more voiced segments are intended to be head, one could propose an analysis in which the syllabicity of consonants is a direct possibility and engage in assuming that complex onsets are small CV syllables (Sauzet & Brun-Trigaud 2012), degenerate syllables, not attached to a nucleus (like onsets) : ((CV) (V)). In this sense, a branching onset with increasing sonority reiterates the structure of a syllable. The obstruents + sonorants + /V/ sequence would therefore result from a more abstract pattern: an obstruent + a syllabic sonorant. The dialects of Romagna would then behave like Tashelhit, which does not exclude any segment as the head of a syllable (Dell & Elmedlaoui 1985). This situation does not exclude any sonorant: in the onset /km, tn, mr.../.

This approach develops Kaye & Lowenstamm (1984)'s idea that syllabicity is a status. According to this logic, the syllable is a constituent potentially recursive (Sauzet & Brown-Trigaud 2012; Hulst 2010; 2015) : when segments are small degenerate syllables.

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