

SOUNDS – MEANING – COMMUNICATION 4

Anna Bloch-Rozmej / Anna Bondaruk (eds.)

**Constraints on Structure
and Derivation
in Syntax, Phonology
and Morphology**



 PETER LANG
EDITION

SOUNDS – MEANING – COMMUNICATION 4

Anna Bloch-Rozmej / Anna Bondaruk (eds.)

Constraints on Structure and Derivation in Syntax, Phonology and Morphology

The papers collected in this volume explore and discuss the major mechanisms, that is derivations and constraints, claimed to be responsible for various aspects of the linguistic systems, their syntax, phonology and morphology. The contributors approach these issues through a detailed analysis of selected phenomena of Modern English, Old English, Polish, Russian, Hungarian and Icelandic, offering novel theoretical and descriptive insights into the working of human language.

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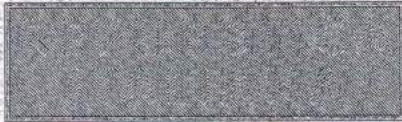


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Leonardo M. Savoia and Benedetta Baldi
Università di Firenze

Enhancing stressed /a/ low frequency components in the context of sonorants. Some proposals on phonological representations

Abstract: In this article two main topics are addressed: the treatment of vowel-sonorant interaction processes and, as a crucial theoretical point, the nature of phonological representations. As to the first point, data from some Italo-Romance and Romansh varieties are examined, which involve the relation between segmental phonological content and its prosodic manifestation. We examine the cavity and duration properties of stressed nuclei in contexts preceding a sonorant and in contexts involving the acoustic space associated with long nuclei. Nasal contexts favour the insertion of a cavity component triggering F1 lowering effects in the vowel. Liquid contexts favour the centralisation of the stressed nucleus by sharing of the [A] element. We conclude that the colour and length properties associated to the stressed nucleus license a second cavity component, manifesting its licenser role in the prosodic domain. We propose that in the assimilatory processes triggering the downward shift of F1 in vowels in nasal contexts, the element [Lf1], low-frequency F1, is involved. As to the phonological representations, a point recently discussed in the literature, we have concentrate on the relation between the prosodic structure and the melodic content of segments.

Key words: vowel-sonorant interaction, licensing, assimilation processes, phonological representations, element theory

1. Introduction

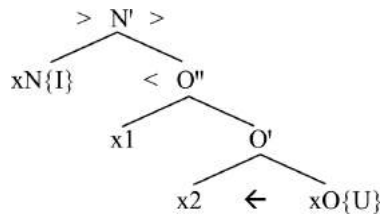
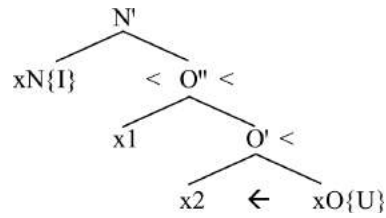
In this article two main topics are addressed: the treatment of vowel-sonorant interaction processes and, as a crucial point, the nature of phonological representations. As to the first point, data from some Italo-Romance and Romansh varieties will be examined. In particular the relation between segmental phonological content and its prosodic manifestation will be investigated by combining experimental observations with the documented phenomena. The second point has recently been discussed and the most debated points concern the explanatory role of structure and its relation to the melodic content of segments (Kaye 2014; Pöchtrager and Kaye 2013; Pöchtrager 2006; 2015; van Oostendorp 2013).

In what follows the fundamental tenets of Government Phonology (GP) will provide the starting point for analysis. In this light, prosodic organisation and licensing relations between positions will be analysed as a reflex of the phonological content of segments in the relevant domains. A fundamental requirement that will be adopted is the one concerning the phonetic interpretability of representations, assuming the *Projection principle* and *Non-arbitrariness* of processes (Kaye 1986/87; Kaye 1990; Kaye, Lowenstamm and Vergnaud 1990). The consequence of these constraints, preserved in successive versions of the theory, is that “all phonological representations are fully interpretable at any stage in a phonological derivation” (Kaye and Pöchtrager 2013).

2. Some theoretical and empirical questions

In the classical GP framework (Kaye 1990; Charette 1991; Harris 1994; Kaye, Lowenstamm and Vergnaud 1990), the acoustic potential of a segment depends on whether it is in a licensed position or is a licenser or a governor. A critical point is the relation between the phonological potential of the segments and the structural and prosodic organisation, insofar as some degree of redundancy is present in the autosegmental model. With the *Non-segmentalist Hypothesis* Jensen (1994) aims to reduce these redundancies, assuming that the acoustic differences of segments “are direct phonetic interpretations of particular positions within the constituent structure.” The structure is to be “understood weakly as the governing and licensing relations that obtain between points in a given domain” (Jensen 1994, 73). In particular, this type of approach has inspired the CV model proposed in Lowenstamm 1996. Recent discussion in GP has applied the idea that at least some of the traditional melodic properties can be treated as structural properties. Pöchtrager (2006; 2010), Pöchtrager and Kaye (2013), and Kaye (2014) support a revision of GP whereby processes concerning the melodic content of segments can be reduced to structural relations, a solution that has the undesirable effect of multiplying abstract positions.

For the sake of clarity, let us consider the proposal by Pöchtrager (2006) and Pöchtrager and Kaye (2013), whereby prosodic structure is a sort of recursive projection of the nucleus (cf. van Oostendorp 2013). In this approach, for example, strong consonants contrast with weak consonants in terms of the structural properties inherent in single segments, as in (1a,b), where xN and xO are possible heads.

(1) a. *rib*b. *rip*

So, the contrast between [rib] and [rip] is represented by the two structures in (1a,b) (Pöchtrager 2006, 71), projected on the basis of two types of relations, m-command (>, <), whereby “the interpretation of a terminal node A controls the interpretation of terminal node B” and control (←), a licensing “that does not contribute to length” (Pöchtrager and Kaye 2013, 57). In (1a), the nucleus licenses (m-commands) the first position inside the following consonants, as suggested by the > and <, which is realised as the weak variant [b]. In (1b), it is the consonant head that also licenses its highest position, giving rise to the strong outcome [p]. So, the number and interpretive power of the phonological distinctions can be re-interpreted in terms of structural positions and their relations.

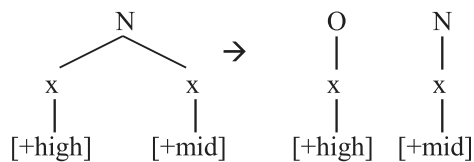
A different solution is, however, at hand, namely to deal with metrical structure as a reflex of deeper and elementary properties that group together the segments in the string. In other words, the melodic content can be understood as the basic property that creates the prosodic interpretation. Specifically, there are grounds for reconsidering the idea that an ordered constituent structure is the exhaustive way of representing relations between elements. Thus, pursuing a minimalist line of analysis, Chomsky (2013) proposes a revision of phrase structure grammar PSG assuming that the order of constituents depends on a third factor principle operating in the process of externalisation at the sensorimotor (SM) interface (Chomsky 2013; see discussion in Manzini and Savoia submitted). Specifically, the computational operation that forms the syntactic objects, namely *Merge*, yields non-ordered couples (sets) of the type {x, y}. According to Chomsky (1995), the operation *Merge* projects either x or y; the projected element is the head and the label of the syntactic object, as in {x{x, y}}. Therefore, two orders are equally possible, {the{the, book}} and {{the, book}the}.

In keeping with this perspective, we can assume that an operation of phonological *Merge* takes phonological objects (segments), x and y, and forms a new object, i.e. the set {x, y} – a melodic domain. The structural arrangements that emerge in phonological representations, as head-complement relations in syllable, foot, etc. can be interpreted “as reflexes of SM interface properties,” in the sense of Chomsky

(2013, 39). This means that the structural representation of relations traditionally assumed as basic, such as nuclear head-complement, $C_{\text{coda}}-C_{\text{onset}}$ and V-V, relations, can be understood as derivative properties introduced in the process of SM interpretation. Hence, the metrical constructs are projections from vowels or consonants which license the phonological objects they combine with. Concretely, phonological sequences are organised around segments endowed with resonance/intensity properties enabling them to regulate the concatenation of consonants and form domain. If we are on the right track, we can argue that the surface structural arrangement is not fixed once and for all by a rigid structural model and that syllable and foot can be understood as domains of prominence/licensing.

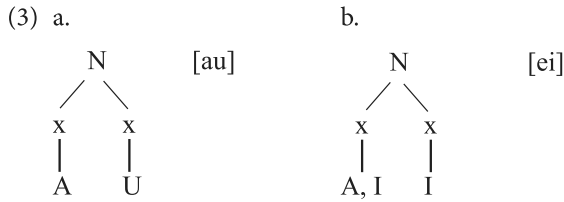
Consider, by way of an example, rising (light) diphthongs, like [jɛ wɔ], vs. falling (heavy) diphthongs, like [ai au]. Usually the literature based on metrical models and GP assigns different structures to rising diphthongs, treated as contour segments or syllabic sequences, compared to falling diphthongs, considered true complex nuclei. So, the head role is assigned to the first position inside the nucleus. This excludes the possibility of interpreting rising diphthongs as a realisation of a binary nucleus. Along these lines, Booij (1989), resuming a proposal of Anderson (1974), analyses the rising sequences of Frisian, like [fwotən] *fuotten* ‘feet’, as combinations where the first part is associated with the syllabic onset. According to Booij (1989, 326), the process of breaking removes the first part of the diphthongised mid vowels from the nucleus, associating it to the onset through the universal CV-rule that assigns a prevocalic segment to the onset (cf. Levin 1985), as in (1).

(2)



In GP, this asymmetry is expressed in terms of a universal constraint requiring left-right governing inside the constituents (Kaye 1986/1987; Kaye, Lowenstamm and Vergnaud 1995); this solution is substantiated in Harris (1990) on the basis of the requirement, whereby the head cannot be less complex than the governed position (Complexity Condition). Harris (1990, 276) considers only heavy diphthongs genuine ones, assuming that “in branching nuclei the governee can only ever be simplex;” so only nuclei like (3a,b) are true diphthongs.

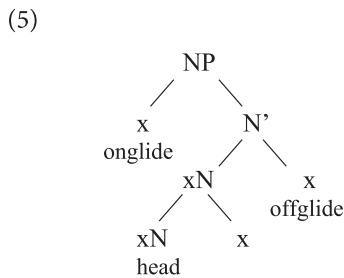
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The fallacies in this characterisation of diphthongs are highlighted in Pöchtrager (2015); in particular, he points out that the Complexity Condition does not exclude diphthongs like *ia*, i.e. typical light diphthongs. Nevertheless, in other approaches, complex nuclei including onglide sequences are admitted on the basis of general considerations concerning sonority prominence. For example, Harris (1985) analyses Spanish rising diphthongs, occurring both in open and closed syllables, cf. [ˈhjerro] *hierro* ‘iron’, [ˈpwerta] *puerta* ‘door’, assuming that the full vowel has the role of the head by virtue of its sonority degree. Actually in many languages the distribution of rising diphthongs is sensitive to the syllabic structure, connecting them to the open syllables exactly like falling diphthongs in other languages. This distribution characterises standard Italian (Marotta 1988), as in (4):

- (4) [ˈpjɛde] ‘foot’ vs. [ˈpetto] ‘chest’
 [ˈrwɔta] ‘wheel’ vs. [ˈpɔrta] ‘door’

A natural conclusion is that a clear-cut distinction between rising and falling diphthongs on the basis of their relation with syllabic contexts is not proved by the data. Pöchtrager (2015) and Kaye (2014) submit a treatment that gets over the impasse characterising the traditional analysis of diphthongs, by assigning a richer structure to the vocalic sequences shaped like the X-bar organisation of syntactic phrases. The difference between light and heavy diphthongs is accounted for by the different points of insertion of the onglide, in a spec position (further removed from the head), and the offglide (closer to the head) in an adjunct to the head position, as in (5).



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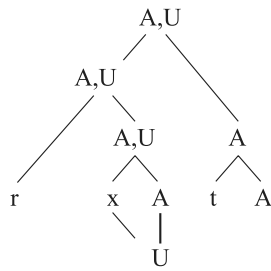
These structural solutions encounter the same difficulties as the cartographic treatment of syntax, in the sense that the sequencing of elements gives rise to rigid universal templates, with the effect of requiring more recourse to stipulation. Anyway, important insights are implied in the proposals of Pöchtrager and Kaye: particularly, the idea that some sort of embedding characterises phonological structures/categories, as shown in (1) and (5), and that the coda consonant is simply the consonant licensed by the nucleus, as in (1a).

A reduced notion of structure in phonological representations can be pursued, in which relational properties project from the qualitative properties (types of assimilation and harmonisation, strength prominence) of the segments. So, for instance, diphthongs can be represented as a set including two slots hosting cavity properties sufficient to license the stress domain. In the spirit of the minimalist approach, structural relations can be reduced to licensing of the melodic content in the domains that compose the sequence. We go a step further and assume that licensing/legitimation is nothing but the phonetic interpretation of the string organisation, specifically the (partial) melodic assimilation between a prominent phonological content (head) and the other segments in its domain. Also the partial melodic depletion of weak positions can be thought of as a type of phonological agreement, in the sense that the head subsumes part of the resonance properties of the string.

In the terms of this approach, an elementary representation that registers domains and licensing is obtained. The ability of a nucleus (or possibly a consonant) to license a phonological string i.e. its domain,¹ is implemented by the sharing of properties (harmony, propagation, assimilation) or simply by phonological fullness/prosodic strength. The prosodic strength refers to the nature of the melodic content associated to a position; this means that it will be the nuclei that generally define the domains, as suggested in (6). We will say that only consonant and vowel slots exist and that they realise the order established by licensing.

1 The idea that the rhyme is the projection of the nucleus is part of the set of basic concepts and principles inspiring GP (Kaye, Lowenstamm and Vergnaud 1985; 1990).

(6)



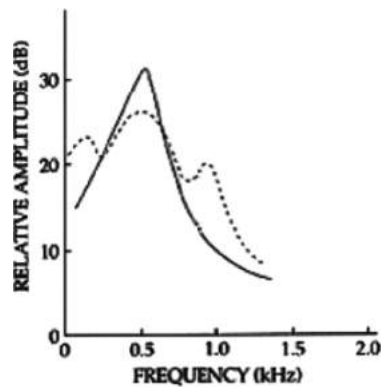
[rwota]

Then, there is no longer a need for a head as a category fixed by virtue of a particular structural constituent. All that is necessary is a sequence where a perceptually prominent melodic content interprets or affects the melodic properties in the other slots in its domain. In the representation in (6), the vocalic heads introduce the domains that organise the sequence. Thus, the projection reflects the vocalic domains, configuring the prosodic domain of the stressed nucleus. It is of note that in the following sections we could use lightly simplified representations.

3. Nasals and liquids

In the phonetic and descriptive literature the effects that nasals and liquids exert on the surrounding vowels are well known. Generally speaking, a nasal or liquid context involves a low first formant frequency in the spectrum, which can be connected with enhancing low frequency components in the adjacent vowels. Stevens (1997, 486) highlights the fact that the velopharyngeal port in the nasal consonants introduces two resonances, one around 250–300 Hz and the other around 800–1,000Hz. Nasalised vowels imply increasing the bandwidth of the first formant, enhancing low-frequency energy in the glottal spectrum and introducing an additional prominence in the spectrum over the first formant. On the whole, nasality causes flattening of the spectral structure in the vicinity of F1 due to the widening of F1, thus reducing the prominence of F1 as an “isolated peak” (Stevens 1997, 484–485), as in the graph in (7). In (7) the continuous line shows the spectral envelope for a non-nasal mid vowel in the F1 region. The dashed line illustrates the modified spectrum when the same vowel is nasalised. The overall result of nasalisation is a levelling of the spectrum in the region of F1.

(7) Stevens (1997, 486)



This characterisation of nasality allows us to connect both low-mid properties and nasality in the spectrum. For example, in many languages nasality effects show up in particular on the stressed /a/ favouring a low frequency component in the vocalic spectrum. Concerning liquids, Stevens (1997, 488) notes that “there are three general properties of liquids and glides...: a reduced low-frequency spectrum amplitude, an additional decrease in amplitude at high frequencies, and a reduced prominence of the second or third formant peak.” In fact, the empirical data register a specialised range of vocalic phenomena in liquid contexts, where the low frequency spectral region is exploited. A link between low frequency components and duration in vowels is highlighted in experimental research, e.g. see Maddieson (1997). We know that conditions being equal, lower vowels are longer. Moreover, vowels that precede voiced consonants are longer than those preceding unvoiced consonants; in high vowels F0 is on average higher than in low vowels. Finally, F0 is lower in voiced consonants.

Krakow et al. (1987) observe that the low-frequency component of nasals (FN) leads to two different effects according to the height of the adjacent vowel. If we consider the oral vowel F1 frequencies as “hypothetical target values,” the following picture emerges:

- In a high/mid vowel, nasalisation determines lowering by shifting the F1 frequency upwards. FN is higher than F1 determining the “lowering” effect.
- In low vowels the opposite result appears, i.e. raising. The low-frequency component of the nasal is lower than the vocalic F1 and a raising effect is determined when FN is prominent.

More to the point, enhancing the low frequency component of an original low vowel and its upward shift ($a > \varepsilon/\omega$) can be a manifestation of the syllabic duration as well.

The acoustic properties of nasals and liquids can account for the quality adjustment observable in the adjacent vowels, by manipulating their F1. We will concentrate on the acoustic effects of nasal or liquid contexts on the low vowel [a]; specifically, a low-frequency F1 is favoured which creates the configuration of a low-mid vowel [-high, -ATR]. According to the vocalic prototypes in the UPSID (UCLA Phonological Segment Inventory Database) corpus, in [+back] low-mid vowel [ɔ] F1 is around 561 Hz and in [-back] low-mid [ɛ] F1 is about 536 Hz, i.e. values which are much lower than the F1 of [a], typically about 742 Hz. In the systems we will examine, acoustic effects of nasality induce a peripheral cavity configuration realised as [ɔ]/[ɛ] or as a diphthong, which increases the low resonance properties.

3.1. Vowels in nasal contexts: velarisation²

Consider the vocalism of the Romansh Surselva (*Vattiz*) and Engadine (*Müstair*) varieties, where stressed [ɔ] corresponds to an etymological /a/ in contexts where it is followed by a nasal in coda, $__NC$, including original geminate nasal, as in [ɔn] ‘anno,’ as in (8a)–(9a). In a subset of dialects, a following liquid, in turn, selects a velarised outcome, as we will see below. Before a velar nasal in the word final position or in an intervocalic position [au]/[eu] occur, according to different varieties, as in (8b)–(9b). As suggested by transcription, in these contexts word final or onset nasal in (8b) is realised as velar or pre-velarised [ʷn]. Labials and palatals imply a geminate structure, which closes the rhyme, as suggested by [ɔ] in (8c)–(9c). The data in (8d)–(9d) illustrate the occurrence of stressed [a] in all other contexts, independently of the nature of the following consonant and syllabic structure. In the *Müstair* variety, the outcome [au] also occurs in some contexts of closed rhyme. More precisely, the diphthong precedes $__N [C, -voiced]$ contexts, in (9a), whereas [ɔ] occurs in $__N [C, +voiced]$ contexts, in (9a’).

(8)

a. $__ NC$

[jau ‘kɔntəl]/[nus kan’tain] ‘I sing/we sing,’
[‘kɔmba] ‘leg’, [ɔn(s)] ‘year/s’

2 It is of note that velarisation of the original/underlying *a* systematically includes rounding.

- b. ___N(V)
 [mɛuŋ] ‘hand’, [tʃɛuŋ] ‘dog’, [pɛuŋ] ‘bread’,
 [sɛuŋ]/[ˈsɛuŋna] ‘healthy.m/f’, [ˈlɛuŋna] ‘wool’
- c. [ju ˈklɔməl] ‘I call’, [fɔm] ‘hunger’, [bɔŋ] ‘bath’
- d. [na:s] ‘nose’, [sa:l] ‘salt’, [ˈka:za] ‘house’, [ˈvaka] ‘cow’
 [fra:(rs)] ‘brother/s’, [bratʃ]/[ˈbratʃa] ‘arm/s’

Vattiz

(9)

- a. ___ NC
 [jau ˈtʃaunt]/[nu tʃaunˈtaɪn] ‘I sing / we sing’
- a. [grɔnd]/[ˈgrɔnda] ‘big.m/f’
- b. ___N(V)
 [mauŋ] ‘hand’, [tʃauŋ] ‘dog’, [graʊŋ] ‘corn’,
 [duˈmaʊŋ] ‘tomorrow’, [ˈlaʊŋa] ‘wool’, [saʊŋ]/[ˈsaʊŋa]
 ‘healthy.m/f’, [ɛ:s ˈfaʊŋ] ‘they make’
- c. [i ˈklɔmən] ‘SCL call’, [fɔm] ‘hunger’, [ˈjɔma] ‘leg’,
 [tʃɔmp] ‘field’, [ɔŋ(s)] ‘year/s’
- d. [na:s] ‘nose’, [ba:p] ‘father’, [sa:l] ‘salt’, [ˈa:la] ‘wing’,
 [tʃarn] ‘meat’, [bratʃ]/[ˈbratʃa] ‘arm/s’, [ˈvatʃa] ‘cow’

Müstair

Descriptively, these outcomes can be dealt with by assuming that nasals spread a velar resonance component that can be realised as [U]. Stressed nuclei in the contexts where the nasal is not in the domain of a following consonant, subsume the resonance properties of the nasal it licenses. The association of element [U] with the velar configurations is motivated in the literature (Bacley 2011) on the basis of the empirical evidence highlighting both the link between round back vowels and velar consonants, and between labial and velar consonants (see Savoia and Baldi in press). This is particularly clear in the contexts where the diphthong is realised in the presence of a velar or (pre)velarised quality of the final or intervocalic nasal, as in (8b)–(9b). The spectrogram of [ˈlɛuŋna] in (10) illustrates this realisation.

(10)



[l̥ ε u ʱn̥ a]

'moon'

Vattiz

In the intervocalic context a clearly perceptible velar appendix is realised, which combines with the coronal segment of the nasal.

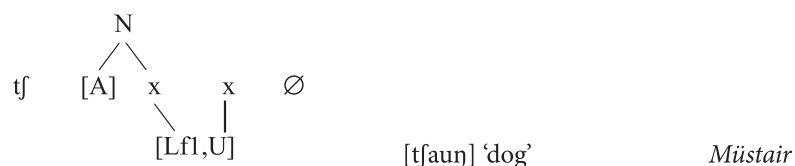
Now, the question is how this assimilation can be analysed in a coherent theoretical framework. As has been seen, licensing operations concerning a stressed nucleus and its immediate domain are represented assuming a simpler notion of structure, as discussed in connection with (6). The present proposal is that positions and licensing (prominence) relations derive from the phonological potential of segments, which triggers licensing, i.e. properties sharing, as in (6), or other types of properties concord. Licensing corresponds to the ability of a nucleus or another phonological element to authorise a phonological string, i.e. to subsume (some of) its prosodic/melodic properties. As to the content of nasals, according to Harris and Lindsey (1995), and Backley (2011), it includes an inherent acoustic low frequency configuration expressed by [L]. In our varieties this low frequency property is interpreted by [U] in the vowels. The difficulty is evident: Element Theory does not provide any way for connecting this acoustic component with the cavity content of vowels. We can tentatively assume that a low-frequency formant [Lf1] is involved in the harmonising process; more precisely, suppose that [L] can be identified with [Lf1]. [Lf1] will have slightly different sensorimotor interface level interpretations according to its role in the string. Vowels will be associated to acoustic values different from those required by nasals. The [Lf1] element implements licensing of the formantic composition of a nasal in the domain of a stressed vowel. Its sharing gives rise to a high back vowel. Tentatively, we propose that the stressed vowel including [A] licenses a low frequency component, as in (11), so interpreting the crucial acoustic property of the nasal in its domain:

for evaluation purposes only

- (11) a. the stressed nucleus [A] licenses the phonological content in its domain
 b. the low-frequency [Lf1] element is shared by the stressed nucleus and the nasal
 c. [Lf1] combines with [U]/[I], i.e. a vowel characterised by a low Lf1

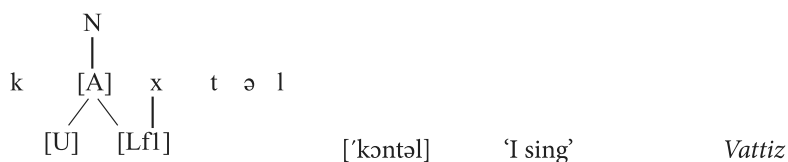
The different possibilities implied in (11) depend on the different prosodic domains where the stressed nucleus acts as a licenser. Firstly, consider the case of diphthongs in (8b)-(9b), where the licensing mechanism is implemented by the sharing of the [U] element. In (12) the stressed nucleus takes on the [U] element, licensing it. Since the final nucleus is devoid of phonetic instantiation, the head vowel [ɛ] is the sole licenser of the velar nasal in its domain, as indicated by the arrow between the two braces. The nucleus subsumes the low-frequency properties of the nasal in the form of the colour element [U]. Seen in this light, metrical structure is nothing more than the arrangement determined by the content properties of the vowel.

(12)



In the contexts where the nasal is an intermediate onset, as in (12), a long nucleus is admitted which in turn realises the [U] element as its complement position, licensing it through sharing of the [U] in the following nasal. Alternatively, if the selection of a second position is excluded, licensing is implemented by realising the [U] element inside the vowel, as in (13). Besides, we are induced to conclude that [Lf1] combines with the other vocalic elements, [I], [U], [A], as in (13), specifying the low-frequency content. The difference between low-mid and high-mid vowels can be interpreted in terms of a privative element [Lf1], and we could put aside the notion of head element.

(13)



The head vowel [ɔ] includes the low-frequency component in its domain, subsuming this property. If the nasal is followed by a consonant (in traditional terms, it

is a coda), the short nucleus [ɔ] occurs, as in (13). In this case the low frequency element [Lf1] is directly associated with the vowel content, which implies a back outcome. This solution seems to be insensitive to the cavity configuration of the nasal, whereby the velarisation of /a/ emerges in labial, coronal and palatal contexts as well. So, the stressed nucleus includes the head [A] combined with the element [Lf1], low-frequency configuration, and [U]. In these varieties, nasals enhance their intrinsic acoustic configuration [L]/[Lf1] selecting the component [U]; in other words, the stressed vowel interprets the low frequency configuration by requiring [U], as in (8a,c)–(9a,c).

(13) characterises a sequence in which the two consonants share a part of their content, namely [U]. Phonological content sharing corresponds to the traditional coda-onset context, in which the following consonant is normally assumed to govern the preceding one. In our terms we will say that the first consonant is in the immediate domain of the vowel, as indicated by the braces in (13).

3.2. Micro-variation in nasal contexts

A phenomenon connected with formant lowering discussed in the preceding paragraph is the colouring of /a/ in contexts where a long outcome is realised. An example is provided by the system of *Garbagna* (Piedmont), where [ɔ:] realises a long stressed /a/, (14d), including nasal and liquid contexts, (14a,a',b). The diphthong [au] is triggered by an intervocalic nasal, (14c). Nasals are (pre)velarised in the intervocalic/final position, in (14b,c). A short [a] occurs, (14d,e).

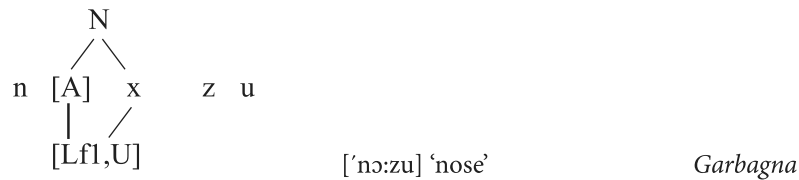
(14)

- a. __NC
[a 'kɔ:ŋtu] 'I sing', [a 'mɔ:ŋdʒu] 'I eat', ['kɔ:mpu] 'field'
- a'. ['lɔ:rgu] 'large', ['sɔ:rʒu] 'willow'
- b. __N#
[mɔ:ŋ] 'hand', [kɔ:ŋ] 'dog', [sɔ:ŋ] 'healthy'
- c. __NV
['saʊŋa] 'healty.f', ['raʊŋa] 'frog', ['laʊŋa] 'wool'
- d. ['nɔ:zu] 'nose', [a 'lɔ:vu]/[a la'vuma] 'I wash / we wash',
[sɔ:] 'salt'
- e. ['vaka] 'cow', ['gatu] 'cat' *Garbagna*

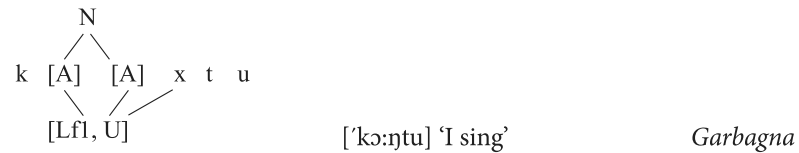
The data in (14) show that nasals and liquids in the coda combine with the long [A] stressed vowel. As in the case of velarisation, lengthening combines with more complex content including [Lf1, U], as in (15)–(16). In (16) also the velar

nasal shares this content with the preceding stressed nucleus, which interprets all spectral properties in its immediate domain.

(15)

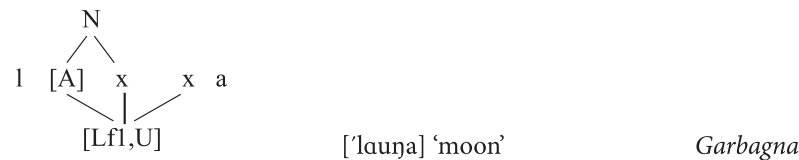


(16)



Lengthening in the head position of the foot enhances the downward shift of Lf1, selecting colour resonances that can be shared with the nasal. In [ˈlaʊŋa] in (14c) lengthening and velarisation combine. The nasal is independently licensed by its following nucleus; the diphthong [Au] licenses the domain entirely subsuming the back low-frequency configuration, as in (17).

(17)



In the variety of S. Nazzaro Sesia (Novara) in (18), the outcome [ø] occurs before a nasal in the coda or a word final nasal, as in (18a,b). In the other contexts in (18a',d,e), including the intervocalic position in (18c), the realisation [a] appears. [ø] is present in the system, corresponding to stressed original /e/ in the closed syllable, as in (18a').

(18)

- a. ___ NC
 [ˈgømba] 'leg', [grønt]/[ˈgrønda] 'big.m/f', [kømp] 'field',
 [i ˈkønt]/[i kanˈtuma] 'I sing / we sing'

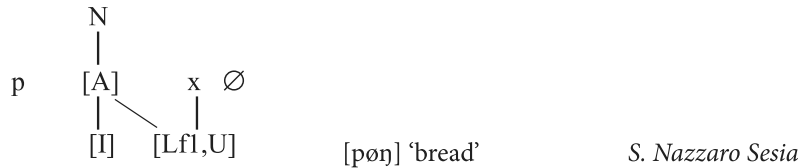
for evaluation purposes only

- a. [frøtʃ]/[ˈfrøtʃa] ‘cold.m/f’, [søk]/[ˈsøka] ‘dry.m/f’, [ˈføndra] ‘ash’
 b. ___N#
 [møŋ] ‘hand’, [pøŋ] ‘bread’, [køŋ] ‘dog’
 b’. [fa:m] ‘hunger’
 c. ___NV
 [ˈlaŋa] ‘wool’
 d. [na:s] ‘nose’, [sa:l] ‘salt’
 d’. [kaˈdɛŋa] ‘chain’, [ˈsɛda] ‘silk’, [ˈstɛla] ‘star’
 e. [ga:t] ‘cat’, [ˈvaka] ‘cow’

S. Nazzaro Sesia

The occurrence of [ø] is connected to contexts in which the nasal is in the coda or is followed by an empty vocalic position, like in (18b). In both contexts the nucleus is the only available licenser for the nasal. In these contexts the realisation [ø] interprets its prominence by introducing the low frequency components [Lf1,U]; an especially rich content is externalised as in (19).

(19)



The velarisation and rounding of a stressed /a/ adjacent to a nasal characterise many Central-Southern Italian varieties. The system of *Gallo* (Caserta) shows [ɔ], variably nasalised, in all contexts with a nasal, both preceding and following, independently of the syllabic position of the nasal, as illustrated in (20a-e). So, the velarisation emerges when the nasal is in the coda, in (20a), in the following onset, in (20b), and in the preceding onset, in (20c). [ɔ] also occurs in a stressed final position, as in (20d), where it includes a nasal resonance. The examples in (20e) document the occurrence of [a] in the other contexts. Surface the alternations [ɔ] vs. [a] are present, as the data in (20b,c’) show.

(20)

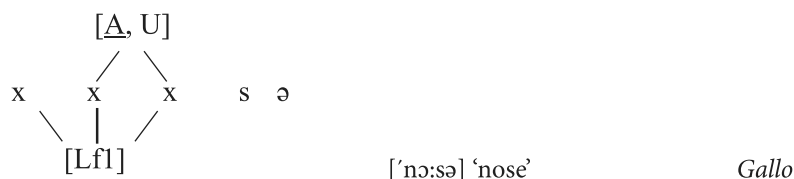
- a. [ˈkɔntə] ‘I sing’, [ˈpɔnnə] ‘cloth’
 b. [ˈkɔ:nə] ‘dog’, [ˈfɔ:mə] ‘hunger’, [ˈcɔ:mə]/[caˈmɔ:tə] ‘I call / you call’
 c. [ˈnɔ:sə] ‘nose’, [ˈnɔ:tə] ‘born’, [ˈmɔ:lə] ‘ill’
 c’. [ˈnɔ:ku]/[ˈlɔ:ku] ‘a needle / the needle’

- d. [kan'tɔ] 'to sing', [llɔ̃] 'there'
 e. [a'la:və] 'I wash', [ˈsa:lə] 'salt', [ˈvakkə] 'cow'

Gallo

We can derive the velarisation of /a/ in *Gallo* variety from the analysis we have adopted for the preceding varieties. An interesting difference is that in (20) the preceding nasal is operating as well, selecting [ɔ̃] in the stressed vowel, as in (21); the phonosyntactic contexts are included, as illustrated in (20c')

(21)



The fact that there are grammars, like that of *Gallo* in (20), in which velarisation also applies in contexts where the nasal precedes the stressed nucleus, confirms the idea that traditional intra-syllabic relations are not sufficient to account for the assimilatory processes. Indeed, we could expect that the relation between the onset and the nucleus is not so strong as to induce a left-right assimilation. Generally, the nucleus subsumes properties in its rhyme domain or in the vowels in its foot domain. In the case in (20), it is sensitive to the acoustic properties of the onset, normally left out by the metrical models in prosodic computation. This point has already emerged in cases like (12) and (19), where a following nasal in a position identifiable with the onset of an empty nucleus is suitable for phonetic interpretation (licensing) by the preceding stressed nucleus, as in (21). Again, this context is not a canonical licensing context for the vowel. These facts lead us to conclude that many aspects of the traditional syllabic and foot structural implementation are too restrictive, cutting off possible relations between the segments in the string. Naturally, GP structural principles capture important assimilatory phenomena in terms of government or licensing, but many phenomena escape the relations defined by the theory suggesting a treatment based on a different notion of structure.

A second point concerns the fact that nasality does not necessarily involve velarisation and rounding. In the Lombard-Alpine variety of *Villa di Chiavenna* in (22), [ɛ] realises the original /a/ before a nasal in the coda (22a), in the onset (22b), in the final position (22c). In the other contexts, [a] occurs independently of duration.

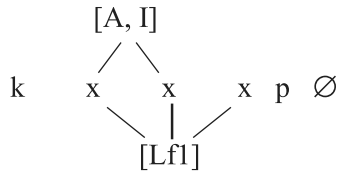
(22)

- a. [kɛ:nti] 'I sing', [kɛ:mp] 'field'
 a'. ['gambe] 'leg', [gra:nd]/['grandɛ] 'big.m/f'
 b. ['sɛ:nɛ] 'healthy.f', ['lɛ:nɛ] 'wool', ['rɛ:nɛ] 'frog'
 c. [mɛ:n] 'hand', [sɛ:n] 'healthy.m', [kɛ:n] 'dog',
 d. ['kɑŋɲɛ] 'bitch', ['kanne] 'reed'
 d'. [al me 'tʃamme] 'he calls me'
 e. [a me 'la:vi] 'I wash up', [tʃa:f] 'key', [na:s] 'nose'
 f. [al 'parlɛ] 'he talks', ['vake] 'cow', [gat] 'cat'

Villa di Chiavenna

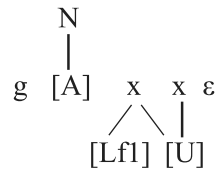
The lowering of F1 in the stressed nucleus exploits the nasal low frequency subsuming it, in the rhyme domain or in its foot, as in (23). The colour element [I] is not shared by the nasal; it concurs to realise the low frequency properties of the following nasal. [ɛ] is excluded in contexts where a nasal precedes a voiced obstruent in (22a'), which preserve [a].

(23)

[kɛ:mp] 'field' *Villa di Chiavenna*

If we relate the realisation of [ɛ] to a wider phonological space in the nucleus, we must conclude that a voiced obstruent is computed in the domain of the nucleus, without making its lengthening possible, as in (24). More precisely, the resonance properties of a voiced obstruent are able to contribute to the acoustic interpretation of the domain.

(24)

['gambe] 'leg' *Villa di Chiavenna*

(24) recalls the proposal of Jensen (1994), followed in Pöchtrager (2006; 2012), whereby only unvoiced obstruents govern the coda, while a voiced obstruent is unable to license the preceding nasal. Actually, (20) only suggests that a voiced obstruent can be interpreted in the domain of a nucleus without requiring a specialised implementation of it. More precisely, in (24) the nasal shares the articulation place with the following obstruent; this seems to be sufficient to license the sequence.

Palatalisation to [ɛ] characterises the realisation of /a/, both stressed and unstressed, in the variety of *Molfetta* (Apulia) in (25). In this system all of the nasal contexts, including phonosyntactic ones, trigger fronting, as illustrated in (25a) for word-internal contexts and (25b) for syntactic contexts, giving rise to alternations like those in (25b').

- (25) a. [ˈnɛ:sə] 'nose', [ˈmɛ:nə] 'hand', [mɛˈraitə] 'husband', [ˈkɛmbə] 'field'
 b. [lɛ ˈmɛ:nə] 'the hand', [kɛr altɛː ˈmɛ:nə] 'the other hand'
 b'. [ɔn ɛˈpɛrtə] 'they.have open' vs. [aˈpɛrtə] 'open' *Molfetta*

In conclusion, we can expect that nasality can be realised through palatalised outcomes including, in turn, a lower value of F1. Naturally, the process that brings about the particular realisations is instantiated at the SM interface level.

4. Stressed vowels preceding liquids

In many varieties, velarisation and rounding emerge in context lateral C. In the case of *Vattiz*, [au] corresponds to an original stressed /a/, in (26). This diphthong occurs in contexts where the lateral precedes a coronal [t d] or a palato-alveolar [tʃ] in the onset, in (26a). Elsewhere, [a] is realised, as in (26b). Analogously, in the dialect of *Villa di Chivenna*, the outcome [o] occurs in contexts where a lateral precedes a coronal, like in (27a); elsewhere we find [a], as in (27b).

- (26) a. [kaulʰ]/[ˈkaulda] 'warm.m/f', [ault]/[ˈaulta] 'tall.m/f', [faultʃ] 'scythe'
 b. [ˈpalma] 'palm' *Vattiz*
- (27) a. [o:lt]/[ˈoltɛ] 'high/a', [ko:lt]/[ˈkolde] 'caldo/a',
 [fo:ltʃ] 'falce', [ˈoltɛ] 'altra', [ko:lts] 'calzini'
 b. [ˈmalge] 'malga', *Villa di Chivenna*

The spectrogram in (28) shows the acoustic configuration of the lateral in [ˈkaulda]. In particular the lateral has a 216Hz F1 and a 1320Hz F2. These values coincide with those given in Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996, 193) for the velarised lateral. So, the adjacent lateral determines the downward shift of F1 towards the

An interesting problem is manifested by the distribution in (26)-(27): the labial and velar consonants following a lateral block velarisation and rounding in spite of the fact that they include the element [U] (Backley 2011), corresponding to velarisation and rounding. A possible explanation is that velarisation/rounding is a mechanism that contributes an accessory vocalic content to the adjacent vowel implementing its prominence. Our idea is that [U] appears in contexts where it is autonomously realised, i.e. licensed by the preceding nucleus. This prevents the consonants intrinsically endowed with [U] from sharing this property with the prominent vowel in the domain.

4.1. Introducing [A] in contexts of liquid

Stevens (1997, 488) characterises the acoustic properties of liquids as ‘a reduced low-frequency spectrum amplitude, an additional decrease in amplitude at high frequencies, and a reduced prominence of the second or third formant peak’. This configuration, expressed by means of the [A] element, may give rise to a tendential centralisation in the spectrum of an adjacent vowel. A lowering of the low-mid front vowels to [a] before coronal trills characterises Corsican (*Munacia*) and Gallurese (*S. Teresa di Gallura*) varieties. In Corsican, the original front low-mid vowel opens to [a] in contexts where [r] closes the stressed rhyme, as in (30a) where [r] is followed by an obstruent, and in (30b) in the contexts of geminate consonants. The back low-mid vowel is preserved, as in (30c).

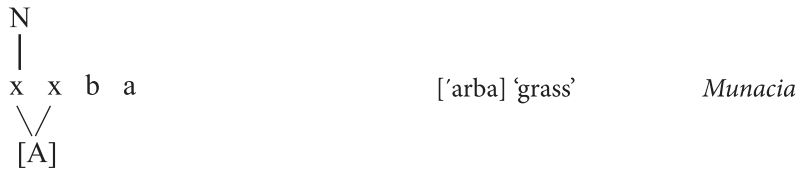
- (30) a. [ku'parta] ‘blanket’, [a'partu] ‘open’, [‘arba] ‘grass’
 b. [‘tarra] ‘earth’, [‘sarru]/[sar'rɛmu] ‘I lock / we lock’
 c. [‘pɔrta] ‘door’, [‘dɔrmu] ‘I sleep’ *Munacia*

In the Gallurese varieties in (31), [r] is preserved in the contexts of geminates, in (31b), while in preconsonantal contexts a lateral [l] occurs.

- (31) a. [ku'pal'ta] ‘blanket’, [‘pal'du]/[pal'dimu] ‘I.lose / we.lose’
 [‘sal'pi] ‘snake’, [tʃal'beɖɖu] ‘brain’
 b. [‘tarra] ‘earth’, [‘farru] ‘iron’ *S.Teresa di Gallura*

The [A] resonance component is licensed in the nucleus which realises it, as in (32). [a] in the contexts in (30)–(31) can be viewed as the result of the stressed nucleus interpreting the frequency components of the following sonorant that it licenses. In other words, licensing is satisfied by including [A] in the prominent part.

(32)



Finally, let us consider the lowering phenomenon that characterises the Romagna varieties. In these dialects, stressed nuclei followed by a liquid in their immediate domain (in the coda) have the same outcome, as in (33a), that occurs in an open syllable as well, as in (33b). The diphthongs [ɛv]/[ɔv] occur respectively from original /a/ and /ɔ/.

- (33) a. [kɛɛlt]/[ˈkɛɛldɜ] ‘warm.m/f’
 [lɛɛrg]/[ˈlɛɛrgɜ] ‘large.m/f’
 [pɔɛrk] ‘pig’
 b. [ˈɛɛvɜ] ‘bee’
 [ˈroɛdɜ] ‘wheel’

Alfonsine

Pöchtrager (2006; 2010) and Pöchtrager and Kaye (2013) highlight the relation between [A] and structural properties, such as duration and the height of the nucleus. In particular, Pöchtrager (2006; 2010; 2012) examines the distribution of long or diphthongised nuclei in English in the contexts of the *coronal nasal-C* and *r-C*, as in [tɔ:nt] *taunt*, [bɔ:rd] *board* which show a systematic relation between the intrinsic properties of the nucleus and the sonority degree of the consonant sequence. The presence of [A] in the vowel relates to the sonority properties of the consonant. So, *nd* can follow both vowels when devoid of [A] and including only [A], *rd* can follow vowels with the head [A], *nt* can follow any expression with [A]. There is a number of phenomena where [A] interacts with non-melodic properties, i.e. length and laryngeal mechanisms, in different languages. For example, in French, the nasalised nuclei are long and long nuclei must contain [A]. A relation exists that involves length, nasality and the melodic properties of [A].

The conclusion of Pöchtrager (2010) and Pöchtrager and Kaye (2013) is that [A] can be treated as a structural property, corresponding to an adjunction, whereby [A] introduces a sort of reduplication. Naturally a question arises: why does this solution concern only [A]? In fact we have seen that [U] and [I] are also involved in contexts where sonorants favour the lengthening of the stressed nucleus. If so, all elements could or should be translatable into distinctive structural configurations, with the paradoxical result of assigning the structure a complete descriptive power.

The preceding discussion has highlighted the fact that if we aim at expressing the downward shift of F1 in vowels adjacent to nasals, we lack any adequate descriptive tool for capturing the connection between the properties of nasals and the ones of the vowels. The only contact is manifested by the intrinsic properties of [I] and [U], that is the vocalic elements involved in the assimilation process. In order to surmount this obstacle, we have proposed that in the assimilatory processes triggering the downward shift of F1 in vowels in nasal contexts, the element [Lf1], low-frequency F1, is involved. As shown in (12), this element has been assigned also to the nasals, where it specifies the low frequency formant characterising nasality.

Another important issue examined in this article concerns the nature of phonological representations. We have pursued a model based on a “merge” mechanism which creates domains in which the prominent melodic content licenses the other segments. In particular, we assume that the structure is derived by projecting from the licensing element, step by step. This perspective aims to reduce the strong explanatory capacity that many authors assign to structural relations, and to capture the role of the melodic content as the true device which gives rise to the prosodic organisation of the string.

As regards the status of phonological procedures in the grammar, we note that phonology is strictly intertwined with the interpretive content of lexical items and the sentence, that it expresses. In the light of the proposals of Berwick and Chomsky (2011, 15) phonology and morphology are “the linguistic processes that convert internal syntactic objects to the entities accessible to the sensorimotor system.” This is compatible with the hypothesis that processes such as metaphony, propagation, assimilation and dissimilation are not insensitive to morpho-syntactic information. Phonological mechanisms are involved in enhancing the perceptibility of phonological features associated to lexical and morpho-syntactic information, as shown in phenomena we have explored in this research.

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