Metrical microvariation and catalexis in Romance

Introduction

Stress assignment in Romance languages has been a controversial topic throughout the last decades, and few generally accepted results have been reached until now. For individual Romance languages like Spanish and Italian, differing analyses have been proposed, with few attempts at considering Romance stress systems under a comparative perspective (cf. Roca 1999 for a notable exception).

The present study sets out to consider more in detail the metrical microvariation found in three Romance languages (Italian, Spanish and French), trying to explain how this variation has come about in the evolution of these languages and how it can be integrated into a broader view of Romance stress within a restrictive theory of metrical structure along the lines of Hayes (1994), into which we integrate the concept of catalexis proposed by Kiparsky (1993). The analysis is cast in an optimality theoretic framework. The hypothesis put forward is that while in all three languages, feet are left-headed and assigned from right to left, with prominence on the rightmost foot, they differ with regard to the kind of mismatches attested between segmental and metrical structure: Extrametricality is regular in Italian (like in Latin), but exceptional in Spanish and unattested in French, while catalexis is unattested in Latin, exceptional in Italian, but has become regular in Spanish and French, though applying to different domains. Furthermore, while in Italian feet are, like in Latin, moraic, Spanish and French footing is based on the syllable.

Previous studies

The term catalexis has been borrowed from poetic meter and applied to (linguistic) metrical theory by Kiparsky (1993) and Kager (1995). According to Kiparsky (1993), metrical structures may contain elements which are visible to the computation of prosody, but which are not filled segmentally. These are termed catalectic elements. Catalectic elements thus constitute the logical counterpart of extrametrical elements, which are filled segmentally, but invisible to the computation of prosody. That catalexis plays a role in Romance stress assignment has been argued for by Nouveau (1993) for Spanish, but rejected by Jacobs (1994) and Marotta (2000) for Italian. Analyses of Spanish stress assuming a catalexis-like mismatch between metrical and segmental structure, but which do not explicitly mention the term catalexis, have been proposed previously by Foley (1967) and Harris (1995).

The literature on stress assignment in individual Romance languages is comprehensive, to say the least. As to Italian, some studies assume that stress is free and must be lexically represented (e.g., Burzio & DiFabio 1994, Bullock 2001). Of those who assume that stress is assigned by a rule or constraint system, some take it that the Italian system shares the basic properties of the Latin system (Jacobs 1994, Sluyters 1990, D'Imperio & Rosenthall 1999, Morén 2001, Krämer 2009), a hypothesis that we adopt here. The literature on Spanish stress is certainly more comprehensive than that on Italian stress, having explored more or less every logically possible analysis (cf. the numerous studies by James W. Harris and by Iggy Roca). As most recent and comprehensive analyses, it may suffice to cite Oltra-Massuet & Arregi (2005) and Roca (2005, 2006). As to French, a language with regular rhythmic stress falling on the rightmost syllable, that is, with a stress pattern that on the surface bears little resemblance to Italian and Spanish, it is to date controversial whether stress is at all assigned to the word (e.g., Delattre 1939, 1966, Rietveld 1980, Di Cristo 2000), or whether it is assigned only to the phrase (Fouché 1959, Pulgram 1965, Klausenburger 1970, Dell 1984 and much subsequent work), and whether stress assignment is at all based on metrical structure.

New proposal

The goal of the present study is to put forward an optimality-theoretic analysis of the stress system of each of the three languages Italian, Spanish and French takes into account the fact

that all have developed from the same ancestor, i.e., Latin, by means of gradual evolutionary steps, consisting in subtle changes in parameter settings for stress assignment. We take it that in all three languages, feet are left-headed (FTTYPE=TROCHEE) and prominence is on the rightmost foot in the word (ALIGN-HEAD-R). Italian, in contrast to Spanish and French, has preserved Latin extrametricality of the final syllable (NONFINALITY). A second feature serves as a dividing line between Italian on the one hand and Spanish and French on the other: While in Italian, feet are moraic, they are syllabic in Spanish and French. Exceptional extrametricality is found in Spanish, resulting in penultimate or antepenultimate stress, cf. (4), but not in French, where stress is always on the ultima, see (5) [assuming that a word-final schwa in lexical words is never underlying; for lack of space, this assumption cannot be justified here]. Likewise, exceptional catalexis is found in Italian, resulting in final stress, cf. (2a, b). Catalexis is regular in Spanish and French, but it relates to different domains (words or stem), yielding the differing patterns of final stress observed in the two languages, cf. (3a, b) as opposed to (5). While the representation of extrametricality effects is well studied in optimality-theoretic approaches to stress assignment, to our knowledge no proposal has been made to date to integrate the notion of catalexis into an optimality-theoretic analysis. Following proposals by Hyde (2003, 2007), we will sketch an approach filling this gap based on splitting the constraints NONFINALITY and ALIGN-HEAD-R.

Data

(1)   ITALIAN: Regular patterns
        a.   Stress on penultima in words with a heavy penultima
                fi.'nes.tra 'window'   e.le.'gan.te 'elegant'
                a.'mi:.co 'friend'   ma.'tu:.ro 'mature'
        b.   Stress on antepenultima in words with a light penultima
                'e.si.to 'success'   've.do.vo 'widower'

(2)   ITALIAN: Exceptional patterns
        a.   Stress on ultima
                caf.'fè 'coffee'   ca.na.'pè 'canape'
        b.   Stress on pre-antepenultima (only 3pl of certain verbs; not considered here)
                'ca.ri.ca.no 'load, 3PL''mor.si.ca.no 'bite, 3PL'

(3)   SPANISH: Regular patterns
        a.   Stress on penultima in words ending in inflectional affix
                ma.ri.'po.s-a 'butterfly'   a.ma.'ri.ll-o 'yellow'
                co.ra.'zo.nes 'heart, PL'   hol.ga.'za.nes 'lazy, PL'
        b.   Final stress in words without inflectional affix
                co.ra.'zón 'heart'   hol.ga.'zán 'lazy'
                menú 'menu'   israelí 'Israeli'

(4)   SPANISH: Exceptional patterns
        a.   Stress on penultima in words without inflectional affix
                re.'su.men 'summary' 'há.bil 'skilled'
                bi.'ki.ni 'bikini'   'yan.qui 'yanquee'
        b.   Stress on antepenultima in words with or without inflectional affix
                pen.'ín.su.l-a 'peninsula'   'tóm.bo.l-a 'tombola'
                'bró.co.li 'broccoli'   es.'pí.ri.tu 'spirit'

(5)   FRENCH: Stress is on the final syllable in the word
                ba.'lise 'beacon'
                ba.li.'verne 'nonsense'
                ba.ra.ti.'neur 'smooth talker'

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