

Progressive and regressive metaphony in an Upper-Southern dialect of Italy: some implications for phonological theory.

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Metaphony is one of the many assimilatory processes that concern vowels in the Italo-Romance dialects (see Sánchez-Miret 1999 for an exhaustive outlook on these processes). Of these assimilatory processes, regressive metaphony is doubtlessly the more pervasive and the one to which the literature has dedicated more attention (Rohlf's 1966, Maiden 1991, Calabrese 1985, 1998, 2011, Walker 2005, Russo 2007 among others). As is well known, in regressive metaphony, word-final unstressed high vowels, which in some dialects have eventually disappeared, influence the stressed word-internal vowels causing raising or diphthongisation, as exemplified in (1) with data from the Abruzzese dialect of Colonnella (Maiden 1991: 206):

- (1) *Colonnella* NOVA(M) > 'nɔ:və 'new' (fem.)
NOVU(M) > 'nu:və 'new' (masc.)

Progressive metaphony has so far received less attention, perhaps because it concerns a much more restricted area, in the Abruzzi and Molise, while regressive metaphony regards almost all the Italian peninsula, with the well known exception of the Tuscan area.

In progressive metaphony it is word-internal unstressed high vowels that cause raising of a following stressed /æ/, before undergoing reduction in some dialects (Rohlf's 1966 § 25, Giammarco 1979:29, Sánchez Miret 1999), as exemplified in (2):

- (2) a) *Bellante* FILARE > fə'li 'to spin' *Teramo* FATI(C)ARE > fatə'ji 'to work'
SUDARE > sə'di 'to sweat' RAUBARE > rʊb'bi 'to steal'

Generalized vertical adjustments in vowel height, according to Maiden (1991:136), are the graveyard of binary features analyses. According to Clements (1991), on the other hand, vowel raising is a phenomenon that seems to call for an analysis in terms of features, since height cannot be expressed as such in element theory, where subsegmental primes enjoy autonomous interpretation and are thus fully pronounceable. Harmonic processes involving raising have been expressed in terms of I addition (Colman & Anderson 1983 among others) or A demotion (Maiden 1991, Harris and Lindsay 1995) in element theory and as spreading of [+high] in feature theory (Calabrese 1985 et seq.). Therefore, progressive metaphony, which has never been analysed in formal terms to the best of my knowledge, can provide a testing ground for competing theories regarding the representation of the internal structure of segments and analyses of harmonic processes. Since an account in terms of I addition must be excluded for progressive metaphony, which is also triggered by /u/, lacking the element I, this contribution compares an element-based analysis of this process in terms of A demotion to a feature-based analysis in terms of height assimilation. The analysis is based on the dialect of Teramo in the Abruzzi (Upper-Southern), for which a vocalic inventory is proposed to refine previous descriptions that I show to be incomplete. Most relevant to the discussion on progressive metaphony, this inventory includes two series of high vowels, tense and lax, and also opposes tense and lax low central vowels.

This contribution shows that both an analysis in terms of spreading of [+high] and one in terms of A demotion may account for the data on progressive metaphony in the dialect of Teramo. However, despite the linearity of a feature-based analysis, an element-based account in terms of A demotion may clarify some diachronic and synchronic aspects of the phenomenon, which I show as having originated as breaking and being reanalysed as raising. An analysis in terms of A demotion, it is shown in addition, can help clarify why only one segment of the inventory, namely [æ], is targeted by the process. A raising process in terms of spreading of [+high] would predict the mid-vowels to raise as well, while the analysis proposed interprets regressive metaphony as a demotion of A only in the case this element is the head of a phonological expression. This account also opens a path of research that connects A demotion to breaking, since it has been suggested that A has a structural more than an elemental identity (Pöchtrager 2006, Carvalho & Russo) so its demotion can hinge on structural space.

This contribution also suggests a representation for tense vowels in the dialect of Teramo that is grounded in diachrony and is synchronically consistent with respect to the phonological inventory and phonological processes of progressive as well as regressive metaphony. The analysis of progressive metaphony in terms of demotion of A from the role of head is then tested on regressive metaphony in the same dialect and in the dialect of Casalincontrada, which arguably coincides with an earlier stage of the dialect of Teramo, prior to monophthongisation (De Lollis 1890-92). On the one hand, these data support the previous findings about the relationship between A demotion from the role of head and the creation of structural space leading to diphthongisation and argue against an analysis in terms of [+high] spreading, since metaphony also target /u/ in this dialect; on the other, they show that metaphony in the dialects of Italy does not always consist uniquely of A demotion, as maintained by Maiden (1991). The data of Casalincontrada are best analysed as I addition (cf. Anderson & Durand 1986, Colman & Anderson 1983 for the analysis of I-umlaut in Old English), with a component of A demotion, as shown in (3) where I addition, A demotion from the role of head and diphthongisation are shown:

(3)

Latin vowel	Proto-Romance outcome	Casalincontrada outcome in context of final A, E, O, U (non metaphonic)	Casalincontrada outcome in context of final I (metaphonic)
Ā, Ā travem 'beam'	Open syllable : a	travə A	treivə A I

In the final part of the work, the new elements surfaced from the analysis of progressive and regressive metaphony in different stages of the dialect of Teramo, namely the importance of A-headedness in triggering its demotion and diphthongisation and the possibility of analysing some processes of metaphony also in terms of I addition, are exploited to sketch a tentative analysis of the essence of the general process of metaphony as it took place in late Latin and early Romance, and its spreading and evolution in a series of different processes in (Italo-)Romance.

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