

Stress in Romance verbs

Statement and motivation of the question. Generative accounts to stress in Romance verbs have made use of a variety of formal mechanisms to explain the data: morpheme-specific rules/constraints, extrametricality, ad-hoc post-lexical rules. Such heterogeneity appears to indicate that stress in Romance verbs is lexical (Loporcaro 2011: 90). In other words, the stress patterns displayed by each variety of Romance (except French) cannot be captured by one generalization valid at a single level of analysis (phonological, morphological, or syntactic). A major divide exists between paradigms displaying fixed stress patterns, i.e. stress on the same morpheme throughout the paradigm (conditional, past indicative, future, and imperfect indicative in some languages), and paradigms displaying the alternation between rhizotonic (1sg-3sg, 3pl) vs. arhizotonic (1pl and 2pl) forms (present indicative and present subjunctive). Formal analyses have attempted to encode the whole complexity of this picture at a certain level of analysis: is the distinction in stress assignment made in the lexical entries, in the application of rules/constraints, or at the surface level? Or do we need to refer to a combination of these? Facts point to an analysis enforcing both morphology-prosody alignment and lexical specification.

A perspective. Within Strict CV (Scheer 2004), alignment between stress and morphological structure may be enforced through empty CVs realizing stress (Szigetvári & Scheer 2005). Affixes bear lexical information about their accentedness (similarly to what Yates 2016, 2020 proposes for Hittite and Proto-Indo-European): lexically-accented affixes trigger spell-out of an empty [CV_{stress}], those that are unaccented, do not. Roots are lexically-marked with stress in a fixed position. In Italian, for instance, roots come with an empty [CV_{stress}] inserted at the right of either the last vowel (/a[CV]m/ ‘to love’), or the second-last vowel (/ka[CV]rik/ ‘to charge’¹). Following Larsen (1998) and Ulfsbjorninn (2014), [CV_{stress}] is activated –and thus lengthening occurs– exclusively when licensed by a V-position appearing word-finally as in PresInd 1sg [‘a:mo] ‘I love’ (stress falls on root [CV_{stress}], 1sg /o/ being lexically-unaccented) and PresInd 2pl [a‘ma:te] ‘you love’ (stress falls on [CV_{stress}] bore by lexically-accented affix 2pl /ate/). In PresInd 3pl [‘amano] ‘they love’, suffix 3pl /ano/ does not bear stress, yet the final V-position cannot license [CV_{stress}] of the root: therefore, lengthening does not occur, and stress is enforced on the lexically-marked V-position in the root (unaccented inflected forms do not exist). Some TAM markers are lexically accented: for instance, the Fut morpheme is stressed, thus it triggers the spell-out of [CV_{stress}].

B perspective. OT analyses of stress in Romance verbs can be divided into two main approaches: those who advocate for paradigm uniformity (Meinschaefer 2011) and those who make exclusive use of alignment constraints that favor the location of stress at specific edges of morphological categories (Roca 2020, see also Oltra-Massuet and Arregi 2005 and Doner 2017 for analyses not embedded in OT). I will argue in favor of an OT analysis of stress in Romance verbs that makes use of a single alignment constraint requiring stress to be final within the stem (Bakovic 2016 for Spanish, based on Hyde 2016), and underlying metrical structure for Fut and Cond TAM morphemes. The constraint FINALSTRESS is responsible for stressing the last root vowel in the absence of a theme vowel, or on the theme vowel, as it belongs to the stem. Faithfulness to underlying metrical structure and FINALSTRESS dominate NONFINALITY (=no final stress in the stem). The basic idea of this analysis is that regular

¹ These roots instantiate inflected forms in which stress falls on the third vowel from the right as in PresInd 1pl [‘kariko] ‘I charge’, but they also create forms that violate the three-syllable window constraint: PresInd 3pl [‘karikano] ‘they charge’. In both cases mentioned here, stressed vowels do not lengthen.

phonological principles of stress assignment, underlying metrical structure, and the specific morphological arrangement of inputs impact the location of stress, and that a single grammar is enough to account for non-verbal and verbal stress in Romance.

Relevance of the question for linguistic theory. This topic is relevant for linguistic theory for two main reasons. First, it concerns stress and its interaction with morphological structure. Metrical theories and syllabic theories are built to account for stress patterns; this contrasts with lateral theories like Strict CV in which stress is not a relational property but reduces to syllabic space (Scheer & Cyran 2018 a.o.) Opposing these two perspectives can therefore contribute to a better understanding of stress in general, and its relationship with morphological structure. Second, stress assignment rules are phonological optimizing in Latin (position of stress is predictable), but this is not always the case in Romance, yet stress is realized on the same vowel originally stressed in Latin. The interaction of lexical and phonological principles in stress assignment in Romance verbs may be seen as the continuation of that fact.

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