THE /S/-ANOMALY: A RE-ANALYSIS OF LATIN RHOTICISM

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This paper presents a re-analysis of well-known Latin rhoticism data. The process of Latin rhoticism transpired over three stages. The data in (1) and (2) exemplify the changes as they apply (or fail to apply) to the /s/ in the nominative and accusative forms of the Latin words for *honor* and *time*.

(1) *Stage 1*: *honō**s** ~ *honō**s**em
Stage 2: honō**s** ~ honō**r**em
Stage 3: hono**r** ~ honō**r**em

(2) *Stage 1*: *tempu**s** ~ *tempo**s**em
Stage 2: tempu**s** ~ tempo**r**em
Stage 3: tempu**s** ~ tempo**r**em

At stage 2, the intervocalic /s/ from stage 1 is realized as [r]. Thus, stage 2 is characterized by alternations like *honō**s*** ~ *honō**r**em* and *tempu**s*** ~ *tempo**r**em* (where the second, accusative form shows intervocalic rhoticism). At stage three, rhoticism overapplies in words like *honor* (where the final rhotic is not contextually motivated). Because rhoticism does not overapply in words like *tempus*, however, some researchers (e.g. Albright (2005), etc.) have argued that a paradigm uniformity account of these data is inadequate. In addition, the second vowel of *hon**ō**s* at stage 2 shortens to *hon**o**r* at stage 3. Thus, a paradigm uniformity account appears unable to predict why there is uniformity with respect to rhoticism but not with respect to vowel length.

In my analysis, I argue that these two issues are only apparent problems. Previous accounts of these data have categorically overlooked an important generalization about /s/ in Latin: unlike all other coda consonants, coda /s/ was non-moraic. By taking this generalization into account the two problems mentioned above can be captured. The failure of overapplied rhoticism to occur in words like *tempus* as well as the innovated vocalic alternation in words that do undergo overapplication (e.g. vowel shortening in words like *hon**o**r* < **hon**ō**s***), reflect the tendency in Latin to prevent output forms from having additional morae than are present in the input. That is, a highly ranked faithfulness constraint against adding morae to the output blocks rhoticism after short vowels. This constraint is also responsible for the o: ~ o alternation that emerges at stage 3.

Overapplication is sometimes problematic for the base-identity approach to paradigm uniformity, because this model relies on a "privileged" base. Overapplication motivated by base-identity predicts that historical changes should first effect a base and subsequently overapply throughout a paradigm. The Latin data run counter to this expectation. Latin rhoticism was not a base-initial change. In order to adopt a base-identity approach to Latin rhoticism, one must therefore answer the following question: how does the base at stage 2, [honōs], develop into the base [honor] at stage 3? The problem in answering this question is that the stage 2 data are insufficient to motivate the base [honor], while the stage 3 data crucially depend on [honor] as a base in order to explain the overapplication effect. I refer to this as the *Privileged Base Problem*.

As a possible solution to the Privileged Base Problem, I propose a base-identity approach that relies on an intermediate stage between stage 2 and stage 3 in which input restructuring took place. Prior to this intermediate stage of Latin, the bases of all allomorphs are underlyingly identical. During the intermediate stage, however, input restructuring terminated the allophonic relationship between [s] and [r]. Because of this restructuring, the allomorphs had to be stored separately as /honōs/ and /honōr/. I argue that there were two bases for the paradigm during the intermediate stage. This base splitting resulted in variable output between stages 2 and 3. With the latter, rhotic-final base eventually winning out at stage 3, a uniform paradigm ensued.

Reference:

Albright, Adam (2005). The Morphological Basis of Paradigm Leveling. In L. Downing, et.al. (eds.), *Paradigms in Phonological Theory* 17-43. Oxford: Oxford University Press.