Two kinds of vowel epenthesis in Alguerese Catalan

Jesús Jiménez and Maria-Rosa Lloret
U de València (jesus.jimenez@uv.es) and U de Barcelona (mrosa.lloret@ub.edu)

It is a well-accepted fact that vowel epenthesis is motivated by prosodic constraints. According to this view, sequences that violate certain prosodic constraints (such as the Sonority Sequencing principle or F\textsuperscript{INAL}-C) are repaired by the insertion of a default or unspecified vowel. Catalan manifests instances of edge epenthesis (in initial and final word position) (1a) as well as instances of non-edge epenthesis (between morphs, between a host and its clitic, and between clitics) (1b). (In (1) the forms are given orthographically: e is the epenthetic vowel.) In all cases the inserted vowel is interpreted as the ‘unmarked’ vowel of the unstressed vocalic system of each dialect: [e] in Western Catalan, with an unstressed system [i], [u], [e], [o], [a]; and [a] in Eastern Catalan, with an unstressed system [i], [u], [e], except in the Alguerese variety, which has epenthetic [a] and an unstressed system [i], [u], [a]. This phenomenon has been extensively analyzed in the OT literature along the aforementioned prosodic view with the addition of Alignment constraints to hold for the shape of certain clitic sequences. However, no OT work addresses the issue that Alguerese Catalan shows two kinds of vowel epenthesis: the ‘expected’ [a] epenthesis (2a), but also [i] epenthesis between words to avoid certain consonantal contacts (2b). These data have been outlined by some authors to allege the inadequacy of prosodic monostratal accounts of epenthesis (cf. Loporcaro 1997). In the present paper we provide a unified parallel account of vowel epenthesis in Alguerese Catalan and demonstrate that vowel selection is only partially done on phonetic grounds.

The paper focuses on two facts: the prosodic conditions that justify vowel insertion between words and the non-arbitrariness of vowel selection. (The issue of epenthesis at word level will only be briefly addressed because it has been lengthy studied in the OT literature. In short, it has the function of avoiding consonantal clusters that do not respect the Sonority Sequencing principle or specific sonority-related constraints related to the Minimum Sonority Distance principle and the Syllable Contact law; epenthesis underapplies in some verbal forms due to certain paradigmatic effects.)

Epenthesis between words has the function of avoiding consonantal clusters that do not occur word-internally, between stops, affricates or [f] and a following consonant (2b), (3a) or between a consonantal cluster and another consonant (3b). We will analyze these cases invoking more specific Syllable Contact laws and looking at their interaction with Alignment and Faithfulness constraints, which are responsible for preferring epenthesis to deletion in order to repair the bad contacts. As for the choice of the epenthetic vowel, our claim is that one has to take into account the phonological system of the language as a whole as well as perceptually based facts (in line with Steriade’s 2001 work) in order to deal with otherwise controversial ‘unnatural’ vowel selection.

(1)

\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{ventr-e} & \text{‘belly’} & \quad \text{e-studiar} & \text{‘to study’} \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{ventr-e-s} & \text{‘bellies’} & \quad \text{coneix-e-ré} & \text{‘I will know’}
\end{align*}

(2)

\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{ventr[a], [a]studiar, ventr[a]s, coneix[a]rè} \\
\text{b.} & \quad [\text{arip i talt}] & \text{‘I arrive late’} & \quad (\text{cf.} /\text{arib}/: [\text{arip}] ‘I arrive’) \\
(3)
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad [\text{daziǐ} i \text{feu}] & \text{‘bad desire’} & \quad (\text{cf.} /\text{daziǐ}/: [\text{daziǐ}] ‘desire’) \\
\text{b.} & \quad [\text{vif i be}] & \text{‘I live well’} & \quad (\text{cf.} /\text{viv}/: [\text{vif}] ‘I live’) \\
\text{b.} & \quad [\text{teŋ i fret}] & \text{‘I feel cold’} & \quad (\text{cf.} /\text{teŋ}/: [\text{teŋ}] ‘I have/feel’)
\end{align*}
References
