

Lexical stress position and word-final segments in Central Catalan

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ABSTRACT

The main claim of this work is that the word stress pattern in Central Catalan has a significant correlation degree with the type of word-final segments. This is at the same time a fundamental hypothesis (from now on, h_1) on the basis of which some other conjectures, which are consistent to some widely productive phonological processes of Central Catalan, can be formulated.

It has been pointed out that the stress pattern within a word may determine in some cases phenomena that affect some consonantal segments. For instance, the context in which flapping of the dental plosives /t, d/ occurs in American English depends on the position of the syllable of these two phonemes (placed at its onset) with respect to the stressed syllable (Hayes, 1995). So would be regarded h_1 in this work. An exploratory search has been done throughout the corpus of the normative Catalan dictionary (DIEC2; <https://dlc.iec.cat/>) by means of the searching tool Diccioniari RegEx (<https://www.visca.com/dr/>) with the results displayed in (1), where oxytone and proparoxytone contexts are compared.

(1)

Stress pattern	Word-final segment	Occurrences
Proparoxytone	[m], [n], [ɲ], [ŋ] ¹	68
Proparoxytone	[p], [t], [k]	5
Proparoxytone	[l], [ʎ]	None
Proparoxytone	[r]	3
Proparoxytone	[s]	303
Oxytone	[m], [n], [ɲ], [ŋ]	941
Oxytone	[p], [t], [k]	5518
Oxytone	[l]	1941
Oxytone	[ʎ]	712
Oxytone	[s]	1573

The number of occurrences displayed in (1) have to be scaled by some factor when comparing amounts between the proparoxytone and the oxytone contexts because in Catalan there are much more oxytone words than proparoxytone ones as proparoxytone is a marked context (see, for example, Oliva & Serra, 2002/2008, or Pons-Moll, 2021). Therefore, relevant comparisons must be done within each stress pattern. Bearing that in

¹ Just two out of the 66 occurrences end with [ŋ] in this context, *tràveling* and *màrqueting*, which are two English loans, by virtue of the word-final cluster simplification process active in Catalan (Bonet & Lloret, 1998).

mind², results show that, whereas for proparoxytone words nasal consonants are much frequent than plosives, the opposite situation occurs for oxytones. Lateral word-final consonants, for its part, seem to be banned from the proparoxytone context while suitable in oxytone words. In contrast, being also a liquid consonant, [r] shows however a different behaviour, especially in oxytone words, where few items hold a final [r] and do not delete it by virtue of Central Catalan's final /r/ deletion process (Bonet & Lloret, 1998; Wheeler, 2005)³. On the other hand, final [s] shows affinity for both stress patterns.

In the light of these results, the following regards can be done:

i) h_I holds.

ii) It seems that the described distribution cannot be explained through the sonority hierarchy (see, for instance, Wheeler, 2005).

iii) It seems that the more a consonant can be continuously lengthened and it does not interrupt much the air flow (nasals preserve the air flow through the nose) the more it fits a word-final position for proparoxytone words and the less it fits a word-final position for oxytone words. In other words, the more a consonant is plosive-like, the less it can be the ending of a proparoxytone and the more it can be it for an oxytone.

iv) The need for the interruption of the air flow by a word-final consonant is different for oxytones and proparoxytones.

v) This would lead to a new taxonomy of segments based on the degree of interruption of the air flow.

vi) This taxonomy would be consistent to some of the most productive phonological phenomena of Central Catalan, such as final /n/ and final /r/ deletion (active only for oxytones), and also consistent to the fact that final /l/ is a stressed mid vowel opening factor in oxytone words while final /r/ is not, and that geminations such as [bbl] in *poble* 'village' are not possible for the cases as *pobre* 'poor' (*[bbr]) as /l/ interrupts the air flow in a higher degree than /r/.

vii) Lexical stress is said to be assigned in Catalan by applying the moraic trochee pattern to the syllable structure (Oliva & Serra, 2002/2008); it would be interesting to check out whether the correlation found in this work would be actually a causality relation making word-final segments play a role in stress allocation together with prosody.

viii) A diachronic analysis as well as a wug test using novel words would be useful for figuring out to which extent the reported correlation could be explained by diachronic factors or not.

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² And also taking into account the limited capability of the used corpus for being representative (verbal inflected forms or clitic groups are not included within the counted cases, frequencies are not considered, etc.).

³ Information not included in (1) because final -r deletion has no orthographic depiction.

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