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The Multiple Phonologies of English

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Background

THE LITERATURE

- Analyses of Norwegian (Dresher 2013) or Japanese (Itô & Mester 1999) have shown that the lexicon could be analysed as being subdivided into subsystems, which are often based on etymology.
- In analyses of English, some have used the Native vs. Latinate distinction (Chomsky & Halle 1968) while others, like Hammond (1999: 284), claim that “in some languages, borrowed words exhibit rather different phonological patterns from those of native words, but this does not appear to be the case in the stress system of English”.
- However, borrowings are often cited as examples to illustrate the stress rules of English, e.g. *Ticonderoga*, *Monongahela*. The foreign character of these words and how it could affect their pronunciation is often not discussed.
- Studies in graphophonology such as Carney’s (1994) or Ryan (2017) have used more detailed subsystems (e.g. § Basic, § French or § Italian). Carney’s (1994: 98) says that “we should expect these orthographic subsystems to be connected with other aspects of English structure, particularly with phonology and word-formation”.

AIM

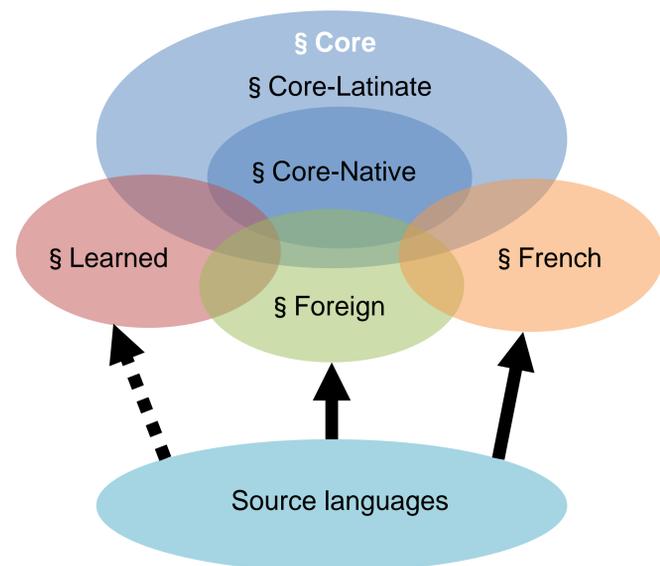
Following Carney’s insight, we will explore how we can identify different subsystems in the English lexicon and how they can be defined using phonological, graphophonological, morphological, semantic and segmental criteria.

METHODS

- Our analysis is drawing from a number of existing studies, mostly empirical ones:
- Stress (e.g. J.-M. Fournier 2010; Guierre 1979; Trevian 2015)
 - Graphophonology (e.g. Carney 1994; Deschamps 1994; Trevian 1993)
 - Morphology (e.g. Bauer *et al.* 2013; Guierre 1988; Tournier 1985)
 - Semantics (e.g. Chadelat 2000; Tadmor 2009)
 - Segmental structure (e.g. Plag 1999; Trevian 2003)

The model

SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE SUBSYSTEMS WE ASSUME



Note that:

- The two components of § Core are strongly intertwined.
- All the subsystems are partly merged into § Core as not all words or not all characteristics diverge from those of § Core.
- Subsystems overlap because they share characteristics.
- The characteristics of the subsystems are related to, but relatively autonomous from, the corresponding source languages.

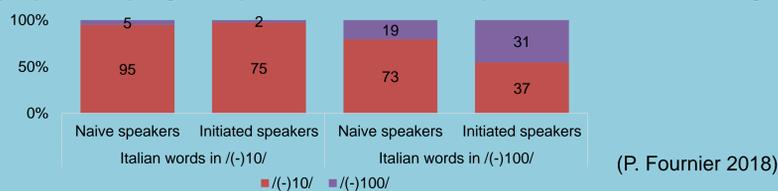
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIFFERENT SUBSYSTEMS

	Stress	Graphophonology	Morphology	Semantics	Segmental structure
§ Core	§ Native	Basic correspondences	Affixation by juxtaposition	Basic vocabulary	Short words
	§ Latinate		Compounding		
§ French	Normal Stress Rule Neutral suffixes?	No Velar Softening	Conversion	Common vocabulary	Polysyllabic words
			Some stress-affecting suffixes (e.g. -ette, -aire, -eur)		
§ Foreign	Normal Compound Stress Stress-affecting or mixed suffixes?	Velar Softening	Some selectional restrictions for affixes	« Prestige »	Distribution of /ʒ/
			Regular secondary stress rules		
§ Learned	/ -10/ (especially “Italian” words)	Specific correspondences e.g. <oi> - /wa:/, <ch> - /ʃ/, <g> - /ʒ/	Base truncation in -able derivatives ← -ate bases	Foreign culture (food, clothing, etc.)	Polysyllabic words
			Polysyllabic words		
§ Learned	/ -10/ if closed penult Otherwise /10/ or /-100/?	<a> - /a:/ <e> - /e:/ <i> - /i:/	Specific suffixes (e.g. -ette, -aire)	Technical, scientific or learned vocabulary	Polysyllabic words
			Specificities for secondary stress placement in suffixed neoclassical compounds?		
§ Learned	/ -10/ if closed penult Otherwise /10/ or /-100/?	<a> - /a:/ (marginal) <ae, oe> - /i:/ <eu> - /ju:/ <ph> - /f/ <ch> - /k/	Silent final consonants	Neoclassical compounding	CVC Structure for B roots in neoclassical compounds
			Specific stress rules for neoclassical compounds		

Independent evidence

Speakers and the lexicon

- Data from dictionary sources (language) and data from oral productions (speech) are complementary.
- English native speakers have intuitions concerning the way loanwords should be pronounced. Whenever words are felt to be foreign, speakers massively use penultimate stress (Fitt 1996).
- However, proficiency in the source language may lead to divergences from this “default” (§ Foreign) pattern by higher reproduction rates of the patterns of the source language:



Relationship with source languages

- Some target languages may use the general rules which account for the whole lexicon while some others may apply rules which are specific to loanwords (Davis *et al.* 2012).
- The phonological systems of source languages have an impact on the pronunciation of loanwords in English: in pronouncing dictionaries, there is a close-to-perfect stress match rate between Italian loanwords and the corresponding Italian words whatever the original stress patterns (P. Fournier 2021) (e.g. *affetuóso* → *affettuóso*, *bróccolo* → *bróccoli*, *tiramisú* → *tiramisu*).
- Non-preservation of the patterns of the source language often results in the default pattern of the subsystem the words can be associated to (e.g. *incógnito* → /2010/ ~ /0100/; *pérgola* → /100/ ~ /010/).

Perspectives

Predictions

- If speakers are presented with words with identifiable characteristics from one of the subsystems, they will tend to use the generalisations from that subsystem. In relevant cases, these may differ from those of § Core.
- Speakers with a higher proficiency in language related to one of the subsystems (e.g. Italian and § Foreign) is more likely to diverge from the default patterns of that subsystem, and speakers with a lower proficiency will be more likely to conform to the generalisations of the subsystem.
- As we can assume that a subsystem may emerge only if speakers have been exposed to a sufficiently large number of word of that subsystem, we can expect speakers with a large vocabulary size to conform to the generalisations of these subsystems, even when they contradict those of § Core, whereas speakers with a smaller vocabulary will tend to conform to § Core.
- Mismatches between the pronunciation of a borrowing in English and its pronunciation in its source language are more likely to arise when there is a conflict between the patterns of the borrowing and the generalisations of the associated subsystem (and not simply those of § Core).

Future work

- There is still considerable work to be done to refine the model presented here.
 - The predictions will have to be tested empirically.
 - When the empirical foundations have been consolidated further and the predictions tested, it will have to be modelled theoretically (e.g. with co-phonologies or indexed constraints).
- More generally, it seems to us that any experimental design involving reading tasks might want to consider the model presented here and its implication. For example, if one wants to study how English speakers will pronounce words which end in /i/, it will be crucial to control spelling, as <y> will be associated to § Core while <i> will be associated to § Foreign.

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