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Word minimality, weight and sensitivity to onsets in French hypocoristics

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1. Truncation, prosodic weight

-Truncation is the process by which the shape of the input is reduced to a certain size that obeys a minimality condition, defined in terms of the authentic units of prosody (μ , σ , Ft, ω).

-The minimum size corresponds to a bisyllabic or bimoraic foot (viz. the **Minimal Word**, McCarthy & Prince 1995: 321).

-Bisyllabic and bimoraic hypocoristics are by far the most attested type across languages (see Mester 1990 on *Japanese*, Plénat 1982, 1999 and Nelson 1998 on *French*, Colina 1996, Piñeros 2000, Plénat 2003 and Torres-Tamarit 2021 on *Spanish*, and Lahrouchi 2022 on *Berber and French*),

-Monomoraic and trisyllabic forms are found in *Portuguese* (e.g. Barnab. > Bé, Ana > Ná, see Grau Sempere 2006: 125), *Sardinian* (e.g. Salvatore > Vatore, Margherita > Gherita, see Cabré et al. 2021), and *Spanish* (e.g. Jose María > Joséma, Catalina > Catina, see Martínez-Patricio & Torres-Tamarit 2019), among other languages.

-French hypocoristics are largely bisyllabic or bimoraic in type, using truncation either alone or with reduplication in order to meet the minimum size requirement.

-Like Portuguese, French has also monomoraic hypocoristics.

A Strict CV account for word minimality:

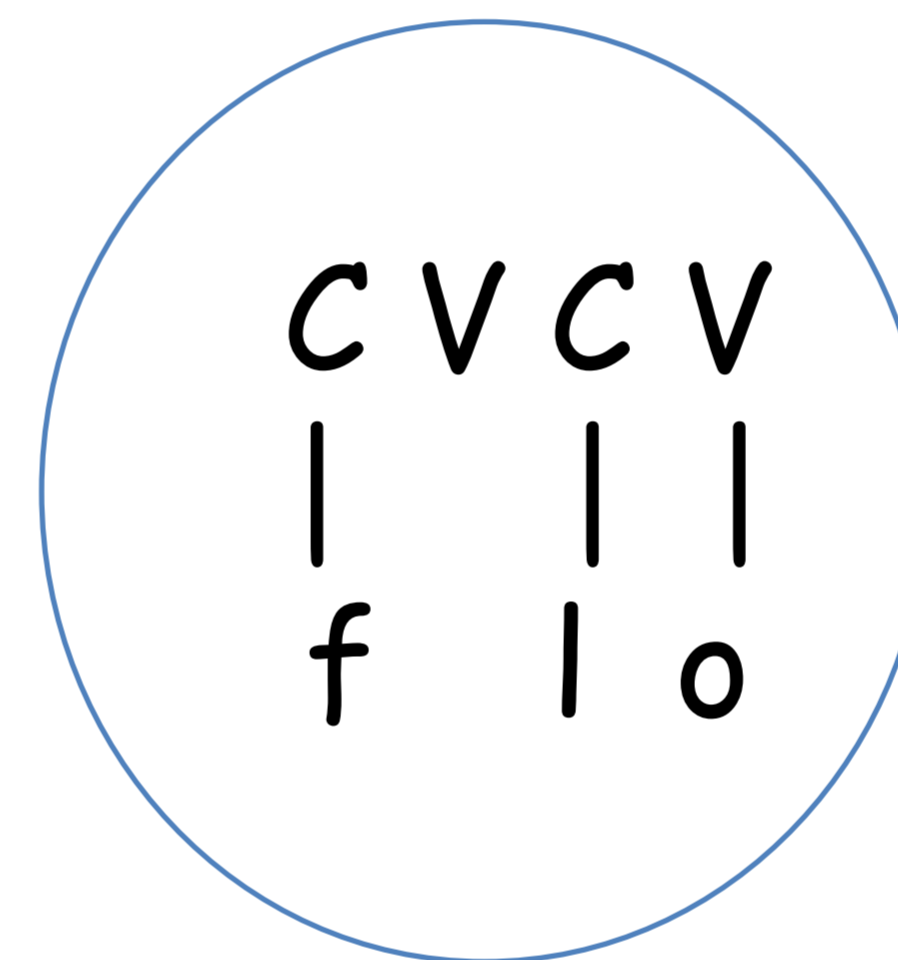
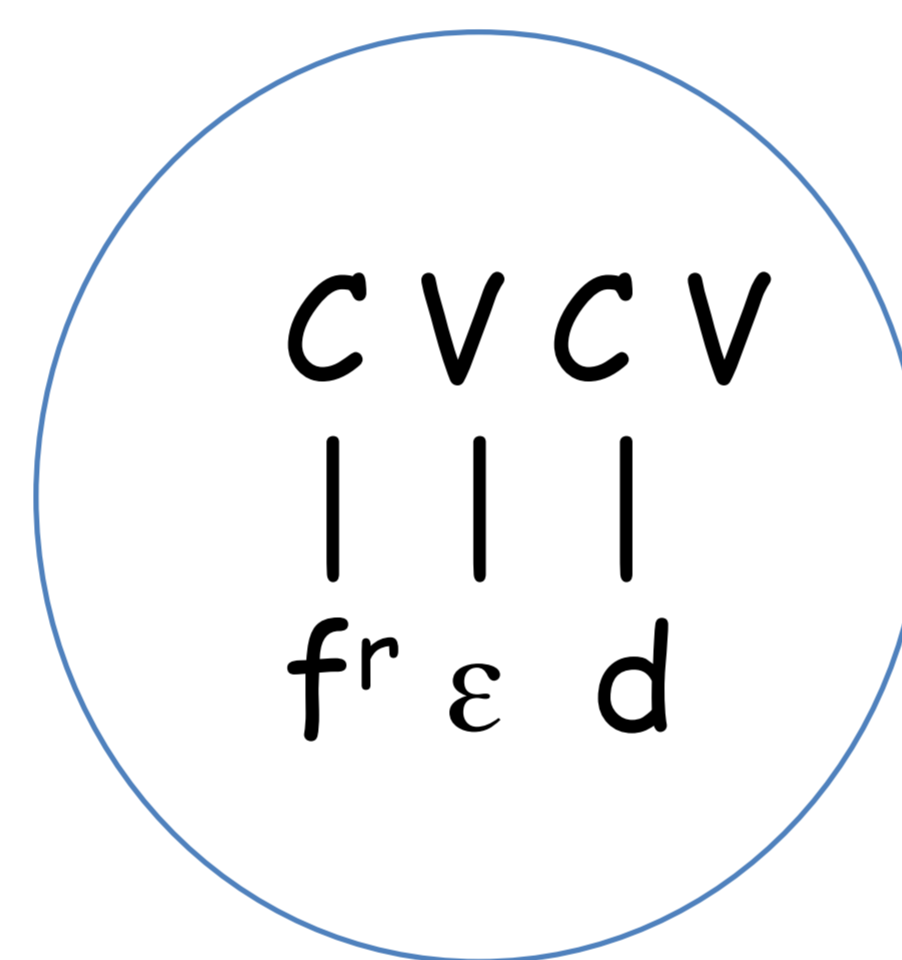
- i. No appeal to prosodic hierarchy : "Nuclei and only nuclei" can contribute to weight, whether contentful or empty (see Scheer & Szigetvári 2005, Faust & Ulfsbjorninn 2018, and Lahrouchi 2022).
- ii. The template that French hypocoristics use minimally consists of 2 CV units.
- iii. Complex onsets with an empty vocalic position contribute to weight.

ω
|
Ft
|
 σ
|
 μ

Cf Selkirk 1980, 1984, McCarthy & Prince 1986, Nespor & Vogel 1986, among others.

4. Data and analysis

a.	ʃablɔt mikaɛl gabrijɛl	ʃafa mika gabi	Charlotte Michael Gabriel	2 σ , 2 μ
b.	viktwaʁ kxistjã fxɛdɛrik	vik kxis fxɛd	Victoire Christian Frédérique	1 σ , 2 μ
c.	florãs joana klod	flo dʒo klo	Florence Joanna Claude	1 σ , 1 μ



2. Onsets

- Weight-by-Position (Hayes 1989: 258): "Prevoicalic consonants must be parsed as non-moraic onset elements and thus can never receive weight by position). » (see also Hyman 1985: 8).

- Several studies have challenged this idea (see Topinzi 2010, 2011, Ryan 2014):

- In Arrernte, C-initial words stress the 1st syllable, V-initial words stress the 2nd syllable.
- (Initial) geminates can be moraic in Turkese and Pattani Malay.

- French hypocoristics provide another piece of evidence in support of this hypothesis.

3. Previous analyses

- Plénat (1982, 1984) proposed that truncated forms like *Toto*, *Fanfa* and *Guiguite* use a disyllabic template of the form ONO(R).

- Plénat & Huerta (2006) argued for an emergent template, which results from the interaction of a set of constraints (FOOT BINARITY, ANCHORING, CONTIGUITY, LINEARITY).

- Nelson (1998: 186) argued that the French "hypocoristic maps to a bisyllabic foot", viewed as "an Emergence of the Unmarked". Her OT analysis further discussed the constraints (ANCHOR LEFT, ANCHOR RIGHT) underlying the mapping of the left or right edge of the base into the hypocoristic form.

- The hypocoristics of the type in (4a,b) consist of two light syllables or one heavy syllable.
- Moraic theory assigns them 2 moras, under the assumption that nuclei and coda consonants project weight.
- The forms of the type in (4c) challenge the Word Minimality hypothesis, since they contain only one light syllable (equivalent to one mora), according to standard analyses.

I. The minimal template

The template that French hypocoristics use corresponds to the minimal domain where a Proper Government relation holds: CVCV.

II. Two types of 'complex' onsets

- French hypocoristics require their onsets to be weighted in order to meet the minimum size.
- Complex onsets that contain an empty V position may contribute to weight.
- Two types of *Obstruent-Liquid* clusters:
 - Obstruent-Rhotic are monopositional (see Lowenstamm 2003, and references therein).
 - Obstruent-Lateral are bipositional, they contain an empty V which contributes to weight.
 - The closure element [ʔ] present in /l/ but not in /r/ requires the consonant to be associated to its own C-slot.
 - [ʔ] also plays an important role in Spanish hypocoristics : e.g. *fransisko* > *panʔfo*, *alfonso* > *ponʔfo*, *alisja* > *litʔa* (see Piñeros 2000: 75, and Plénat 2003: 83).

5. Concluding remarks

- Prosodic weight is calculated based on the number of the vocalic positions a form contains.
- Contentful vocalic positions always contribute to weight, while their empty counterparts may or may not contribute (parametric setting).

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