

## Corsican lenition and fortition. Tracing a mental grammar from variation

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Corsica is linguistically considered part of the Italo-Romance space. However, the consonantal organization is complex, particularly with regard to the lenition/fortition process, depending on the geo-linguistic area as well as on diachronic factors phonologized in the synchronic variation. Considering the relation between Tuscan and Corsica, one would not expect the phonological Western lenition process to take place, since modern Italo-Tuscan (Eastern Romance) does not phonologically lenite obstruents in weak intervocalic positions vCv (but see Russo 2015)<sup>1</sup>. However, at the same time, Corsican language shares geminates with Italo-Romance (with Tuscany and Southern Italy), both in initial position {# / C}\_\_ (triggered by Syntactic Doubling), as well as in lexical vCCv position (intervocalic geminates also resulted from Latin). On the contrary, Western Romance lost diachronically inherent geminates; furthermore, gemination at word boundaries can only be residual. In the Northern Corsican area, we find alternations such as (see Stefanaggi 2001; NALC vol. I, 2007):

| Syntactic Doubling   | Lenition             |                                    |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| C [ <sub>σ</sub> C V | V [ <sub>σ</sub> C V |                                    |
| [trɛ p' pãni]        | [u 'bãɛ]             | ‘three breads/the bread’           |
| [ɛ g' grãnu]         | [u rãnu]             | ‘(this) is wheat/ the wheat’       |
| [sɔ f' fɔlɛ]         | ['parɛnu 'vɔlɛ]      | ‘are fairy tales /seem fairy tale’ |

The above alternations involve all types of obstruents, including the Latin confusion b/w in /β/. This consonant alternation is typical of the Western Romance (Ibero-Romance, Occitan) and it is found in some areas of Sardinian. The positional realization of /β/, weak and strong (/β/ → [v/b/w]), depends on the geographical area. It produces [w] in vCv, for instance in the Northern and Southern area (/β/ → [w]: ['uwa]), whereas in Northern Corsica [binu] ‘wine’ occurs in initial strong position {# / C}\_\_ or in øCv (ø is the empty nucleus before the onset according to the Strict-CV representation of the Coda Mirror/strong position, Scheer and Zikova 2010). In this talk we raise the following phonological issues around the concepts of consonant weakening and strengthening in Corsican language, discussed within government (templatic and non-templatic) phonologies, as well as in elements theories. We use data from NALC-BDLC (the *Corsican Language Database* sound archive, <https://bdlc.univ-corse.fr/bdlc/corse.php>) and NALC 1 (*Aréologie phonétique*, 115 localities, 200 maps and 70 synthetic maps). First, we identify how initial strength is conceived (both in initial and post-consonantal gemination): our data show that an initial CV (before W<sub>2</sub>) in a sequence of W<sub>1</sub>W<sub>2</sub> triggers gemination. However, this final CV of W<sub>1</sub> is not only anchored to a lexical latent consonant of W<sub>1</sub> (see Sheer 2012); Corsican shows two ways leading to gemination, one is lexical (with an initial parametric CV realization under syntactic conditions), the other is prosodic, driven by W<sub>1</sub> stress which also inserts an initial CV. We will also investigate how the Western phonology of the strong/weak alternation ([β/w/v]), interfered with Eastern phonology, since Corsica shows a lenition/fortition pattern by mixing features from both Romance areas. Secondly, treating all type of Corsican lenition, we will focus on the Western/Eastern Romance phonological decomposition factors. Going through theory specific definition models, we will identify the phonological lenition scales on which it is possible to make predictions about consonant phonological strong/weak behaviour, the sub-segmental make-up underlying trajectories both in strong and weak phonological environments. The aim is to sketch the abstract phonological properties in order to define the positional and segmental

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<sup>1</sup> As it is well-known the phonological weakening of Latin intervocalic stops (with voicing and/or deletion) subdivided the Romance-speaking area of Europe into two major typological domains, the Western and the Eastern Romance. We do not take under consideration here the intervocalic lenition process known as Tuscan *Gorgia* (Marotta 2004; Dalcher 2008; Russo 2015) which does not fall within this typological Western/Eastern lenition.

contrasts through the lenition/fortition scale. The purpose is also to set up the lenition trajectories and strength hierarchies of the Corsican ‘multilingual’ phonology. This will help placing Corsica in the Romance area among native features, features shared both with Western and Eastern Romance, and features shared with micro-areas attached to different Italo-Romance languages, such as the Genoese, Tuscan, Pisan, as well as Sardinian sphere.

### References

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