Edoardo Cavirani

Modeling Phonologization

Vowel reduction and epenthesis in Lunigiana dialects

Within a linguistic *continuum*, the further from the irradiation centre, the later a language is affected by a change; the later a language is reached by a change, the milder the outcomes. Building upon these wave-theoretic assumptions, this dissertation provides a formal description of the relationship between diatopic/ diachronic micro-variation and phonologization.

In particular, an analysis is performed of the phonetic/phonological properties of unstressed vowel reduction and vowel insertion in two Northern Italian dialects: Carrarese and Pontremolese. These dialects are argued to represent two frozen stages of these processes' diffusion, Carrarese representing the diachronic stage Pontremolese has already gone through. Indeed, Pontremolese displays non-etymological vocoids that show the phonetic and phonological characteristics of epenthetic vowels and that, crucially, can be considered the phonologized correlates of Carrarese's intrusive vocoids. These, in turn, should be rather considered articulatory/perceptually driven vowel-like releases.

A formal account of this diatopic, diachronic and grammatical relationship is given that supports a modular grammar architecture, in which phonetics and phonology constitute, hence, two autonomous modules. Within such an architecture, the lateral forces (government and licensing) developed by standard Government Phonology are translated into violable constraints and inserted in a BiPhon grammar. In this optimality-theoretic grammar, the phonetics-phonology interface is managed by a set of cue constraints that map acoustic dimensions (formant structures) onto phonological primitives (elements). Furthermore, to integrate morphological information in the phonological forms, the Coloured Containment Theory is resorted to.

This dissertation is of relevance to anyone interested in diatopic/diachronic micro-variation, phonologization, phonological theory and Italian dialectology.

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