PHONETIC CHANGE, PHONEMIC STATUS AND MORPHOPHONOCLOGICAL ALTERNATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper sources of morphophonological alternations are discussed. It is argued that, as attestable from Hungarian, co-occurrences of several types of reduction phenomena in casual speech and in their phonemic representations result in morphophonemic variants of the language.

The main aim of this research is to shed light on how parallel autonomous lexicem variants, such as Hungarian aztán and azútán 'then' or mondta and mondta 'he/she/it said', come into being in the language.

Changes in the morphophonemic structure of a lexeme may lead back, in a number of cases at least, to the fact that allegro rules/processes in the language cause historically determined idiomorphic, i.e. primary, phonemic representations (original or first variant = v₁) to take the form of a phonetic representation that happens to correspond with a possible distinct phonemic structure (subderivative or second variant = v₂). This is sometimes the case even if allegro rules result in morphemic homonymy, see, for example, Hungarian vállat 'enterprise' (derived from vállalat 'id.' by [syllabic] deletion) as opposed to vállat 'shoulder + Acc.', whereby 'iconicity' and '(morphological) naturalness (cf. Dressler 1981) will apparently be damaged. (As for such a type of changes in view of goal conflict of better perception and better articulation—cf., for example, Lindblom 1983—, the hearer can only draw some poor consolation from Kiparsky's (1974) words: "language practises 'therapy' rather than prophylaxis".)

When seeking to reach a better understanding of the way of how and why subderivative, secondary variants (v₂) in (lexemic) morphology can, and in many cases also will, emerge, we are in essence faced with problems surrounding the correspondence of 'phonemic units' the morphemes are built up of, i.e. abstracta, with what is called the 'elementary speech events', i.e. pragnata. Some aspects of this relation turn out to be crucial in the explanation of the phenomenon discussed herein. In this line of thought the most important facts to be taken into consideration are as follows.

(i) The correspondence of 'phonemic units', on the one hand, and 'elementary speech events', on the other, does not always cover a one-to-one relation existing hypothetically between one phoneme size unit and one single articulatory or acoustic unit, cf. Stampe's (1980) divinity → [dɪvɪˈniːt] and the problems of 'biuniqueness', see also Hungarian bántság → [ˈbɒːntʃd̪]/ 'hurt (Acc.) him/her/it'.

(ii) Not only in casual but also in formal speech certain elements of phonetic representations corresponding to the respective elements in distinct underlying phonemic representations may coincide such as in [ŋ] in the phonetic representations of the Hungarian lexemes hőmves 'bloomy; downy' [ˈhɒmveʃ] and honvéd 'Hungarian soldier' /honveːd/. What is more, some constituents of an underlying phonemic representation may occasionally remain undetermined even for the native speaker (cf., again, Hungarian kaːmfor] possibly derivable from, either, /kaːmfor/ or, else, /kaːmfor/ on the basis of the rules:

\[
\text{mf} \rightarrow \text{ŋ} / V\text{V} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{mf} \rightarrow \text{ŋ} / V\text{V}.
\]

(iii) Also relatively homogenous articulatory/acoustic segments—having no direct reference to a phonemic constituent in the original underlying

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representation—may occur in speech, e.g., for example, French négatif-final akous or -epithesis in German 
 euphonism (→ signum + limus). Although it is quite a 
 rare thing in Hunagian that 
 -type variants come about by means of phonematisation of non-phonological 
 segments occurring in between two phonemes realization, individual cases of 
 lezhouphonology may be found, viz. -ephonemisation (→ signum),
→ signum + limus.
(iv) In what follows I shall give an overview of 
 allegro phonemes which play an important part in 
 bringing about new morphophonemic variants. 
 With regard to their main categories, i.e., 'leual' 
 and 'fotion' (cf., among others, Greener 1994), 
 special attention should be paid to the types of 
 leualion. As a matter of fact, there is no need 
 of considering instances of fotion in this context, 
 either, as the morphophonemic variations can be 
 detected, at least in Hunagian, with the exception 
 of occasional hypercorrect allomorfs of roots 
 occurring under specific communicative circumstances, 
 such as 
 → signum + limus. So, on the basis of a collection of 
 allegro phenomena taken from Hunagian casual 
 speech, I here give an outline of a typology of what I call 
 'reduction'. (As for this typology, it is to be 
 remarked here that, first, it does not cover all 
 the allegro phenomena that occur in spontaneous 
 speech and, secondly, individual items of the typology in 
 question are not superseded on each other in the 
 hierarchy of an ordered set but, rather, they occupy 
 alternative points on a gradual scale.)

(iv) 'Weakening', generally speaking, means the 
 leual-production of a segment instead of its 
 productive articulation as in leual. Weakening is 
 carried out by means of deleting at least one, but 
 not all, of the primary distinctive features the 
 segment consists of, such as, for example, the 
 distinctive feature [rounded] in [i] which latter 
 will in this way be made to be [e] or [o] in 
 instances like bogus 'bogus'. Secondary distinctive 
 features may either be replaced by other consistant 
 features or else deleted completely. A second 
 characteristic of weakening and a criterion of its 
 delineation from 'loss', at the same time, is that the 
 syllabic structure of the word remains always 
 the same as determined in the underlying phonemic representation.

Weakening may also spread over a longue segment of segments with an identical effect and content of 
 modifying various distinct members of the series. In 
 other words: due to weakening, every single unit will show 
 alterations of the same kind like, for example, 
 loosening the closure in other stops occurring with 
 in the word boundaries.

(ivb) 'Deletion' in a qualified sense is meant to 
 be the dropping of a segment from the sequence as 
 a way as leaving behind traces in the articulation 
 of the neighboring segments; both left and right. 
 Deletion, by definition, eliminates all the features 
 that characterize the segment in question. As a 
 sequence of deletion, syllabic structure of the word 
 changes to the extent that the number of segments 
 the syllable is built up of changes to be less than 
 the number of the segments in the v, i.e. leual. 
 This means that crossed syllables may be 
 converted into open ones. However, the number 
 of syllables in the word remains unchanged.

As for the phonetic traces left behind after 
 deletion, a normative, i.e., leual type—and often 
 also hypercorrect-articulation of the two adjacent 
 segments is to be observed as, for instance, in 
 [e] → [e] and 'first'-in context with weakening, deletion affects one unit within 
 the sequence only. Wherever deletion happens has 
 been carried out, the remnants of the original unit 
 of the word will undergo no further reduction. 
 Accordingly, we find that tahal 'hence' [tal] 
 changes to be [tal] as a result of [tal]-deletion. 
 Notwithstanding, [tal] coincides with the leual 
 realization of the non-homonymous leual 'tal', i.e. 
 [tal] → [tal]. (Note that duration of 
 [tal] may in this place vary between the grade 
 2, and 3, without neutralizing the short/gap 
 opposition of [a] and [a]). In spite of the phonetic 
 identity of [tal] → [tal] and 'dielion' 
 of [tal] of the former will forever be 
 replaced by another extentive with an 
 intrusive [i]. So, we find that:

phonemic representation: [tal] / [tal] 
leual: [tal] etc.

(v) 'Truncation' is the reduction of a 
 sequence, i.e. the deletion of the magnitude of re 
 sequence size units. In this type of reduction a word 
 is reduced to the realization of at least one but 
 not more than 2 segments the sequence is built 
 up of in terms of a phonemic representation. The 
 original syllabic structure becomes essentially destroyed 
 due to the fact that more than one elementary 
 constituents are eliminated. Accordingly, also phonetic 
 traces can be found only occasionally in the remnants 
 of the original sequence, apparently because of a 
 serial interaction of the constituents lost crossing 
 over each other's effect. Instead, also seemingly 
 arbitrary articulatory/acoustic units may occur in the 
 sequence which cannot be directly traced back to the 
 underlying phonemic representation of the truncated

word, see [3] in [sil] as 'sulul' 'then, here'.

In case one conceives of weakening, deletion, 
 loss, and truncation as allegro processes 
 rules functioning under specific conditions in casual 
 speech, the question of rule ordering is brought up. 
 I can here give some glimpses of the problem only. 
 I should point out that in certain instances rule or 
 dering may not be stated at all—such as in cases of 
 co-occurrence of 'developing' and 'lengthening'—where 
 as in some others it may. For example, truncation in 
 the strict sense may, and also often is, followed by 
 reduction, i.e. change in the original state in terms 
 of vowel harmony, see [30], [0], [3] → [a], [3], [3] 
 derived from [sil] in two respective steps.

(vi) With the present considerations, also one of the 
 allegro phenomena of the next 
 larger size unit of speech should be taken into account. 
 Nouns, or even complexes of morphemes, outside 
 of focus position, and particularly when put in a 
 phrase-initial or phrase-final position and, furthermore, 
 when endowed with the communicative role of 
 expressing the speaker's attitude towards the 
 subject, the partner or himself (allegro 'well', 'humble', 
 'nearly', 'quickly' is 'actually', etc.) are ex 
 posed to becoming a greater extent than those 
 parts of the organic structure of the segment of the 
 text.

(vii) Finally, mention should be made of a trend 
 of probability according to which the greater the 
 number of the segments in the morpheme r-lining under 
 the above mentioned condition (see point(v)) the 
 more likely reduction phenomena—as briefly discussed 
 under point (iv)—will be carried out.

With all this types (processes, rules or tendency) of 
 allegro phenomena in mind one can conclude 
 that new 
 type morphemic variants come about at 
 the reduced form may enter into the cycle of 
 reduction, de capo al fine, as an independent unit, 
 see next → next 'towards' which for taking 
 the form [at] of [at] as 'tch'.

Co-occurrences of (i), (ivc-d) and (v), or 
 (ii) and (iii), or (ii) and (v) in the language use 
 facilitated by (vi)—result in morphemic alterna-
tion and eventually changes in the mophophonological system of the language as attestable in Hungarian, see mié and mér ← miért, aztán ← azután, etc.

References


