

From:

Certamen Phonologicum II

Papers from the 1990 Cortona Phonology Meeting
edited by Pier Marco Bertinetto, Michael Kenstowicz
and Michele Loporcaro

Adriana Andalò
Laura Bafile

ON SOME MORPHOPHONOLOGICAL ALTERNATIONS IN NEAPOLITAN DIALECT

1. The Neapolitan dialect shows, in word-initial position, an alternation between short and long consonants, due to the application of the rule of Raddoppiamento Sintattico. This rule causes the lengthening of initial consonants in words following certain lexical items and the formatives of neuter and plural feminine. We want to deal with some of these alternations which, together with lengthening, may show a stronger articulation of consonantal elements.

(1)

[-RS]	j	v	r	ʃ
[+RS]	ggj	bb	dd	ttʃ

In (1) we can observe the occurrence of the weak element in context [-RS] and the occurrence of the strong, geminate one in context [+RS]. We shall see that the occurrence of these elements does not always follow what we have seen in (1). This means that the weak element may occur in context [+RS] and the strong one in context [-RS]. We believe, however, that this scheme refers to an existing paradigm in spite of the limits we have mentioned¹.

2. The first alternation we are going to deal with, is that between the palatal glide and the palatal affricate in word-initial position. This is the only one that can be described in terms of allophonic variation. After words causing Raddoppiamento Sintattico and after a nasal consonant

the palatal glide undergoes a strengthening rule producing a non continuous phone:

(2)

##___	V#___V	[+RS]#___	N#___
'jammə 'we go'	tʃə 'jammə 'we go there'	e 'ggJammə 'and we go'	nun 'gJammə 'we do not go'

The fact that the palatal glide is a context for the application of the rule of Raddoppiamento Sintattico reveals the consonantal nature of this segment when occurring in initial position. The strengthening rule further stresses its consonantal nature.

In this case, as well as in those that are to follow, we notice a tendency to delete the strengthening rule, leading to the adaptation to the general pattern of the forms affected by Raddoppiamento Sintattico.

3. The complex relations that, in the Latin of the imperial age, already existed between labial consonants *b* and *v* are referred to by the generic term of betacism.

We shall not here turn our attention to the problem of a diachronic reconstruction. However it will be useful for the purpose of our analysis to refer to the phase in the past, proposed, for instance, by Weinrich (1958) and Tekavčić (1972), when the bilabial stop and the bilabial and then labiodental fricatives were allophones of the same phoneme. According to this authors, in intervocalic position, two phonemes, the labial stop and the labial glide, were both realized as a bilabial fricative, both within and across word boundaries. This produced two different solutions:

- the restitution, in word-initial position, of the original phonemes, as was the case in the majority of romance languages;
- the loss of the variation between stop and fricative, which became positional variants. This was the case in Sardinian dialects, in several central-southern Italian dialects and, later on, in Spanish.

Though the hypothesis of a phase of complementary distribution leaves a few open questions, it will be shown that the *v/b* alternation in today's Neapolitan is the result of further developments of such a phase. An allophonic variation between *v* and *b* has been suggested for central-southern dialects by Fanciullo, who regards it as still valid "at least as far as the most archaic part of the lexicon is concerned"

(Fanciullo 1986:71).

As far as present-day Neapolitan is concerned, it is no longer possible to talk about combinatory variants, and this is demonstrated first by the presence of a set of words beginning with *b*, like /bba'nnɛra/ 'flag' or /bba'nana/ 'banana', which never show alternation. We might regard some of these words as recently introduced items borrowed from Italian, and therefore alien to the traditional dialect. However we cannot certainly consider in such way words like /'bbwonə/ and /'bbɛllə/. Besides, the absence of alternation in these traditional words leads us to think that there has never been a phase of allophonic variation without exception.

Before going on with our description let us examine the synchronic distribution of initial *v* and *b*:

(3)

	##___	V#___V	[+RS]#___
a.	'vjentə 'wind'	o 'vjentə 'the wind'	'kkçu 'bbjentə 'kkçu 'vvjentə 'more wind'
b.	'varka ('bbarka) 'boat'	a 'varka (a 'bbarka) 'the boat'	'kkçu 'bbarkə 'kkçu 'vvarkə 'more boats'
c.	'bbwonə 'good, well'	va 'bbwonə 'it is OK'	'kkçu 'bbwonə 'better'

The paradigm shown in line a. refers to the lexical items that regularly present *v* both between vowels and in absolute initial position.

In line b. there is an example of words with *v* which have come to be paralleled by a form with *b*, because of a corresponding Italian form with *b*, otherwise omophonous.

We can observe that the innovation, that is the adoption of the Italian *b*, is significantly more widespread among younger speakers.

Line c. shows the above mentioned lexical items which have only the initial stop and do not alternate.

Let us remember that in Neapolitan, as in other southern dialects, there is a constraint on the occurrence of *b* which can be only geminate in initial and intervocalic position.

If we consider the position after words causing Raddoppiamento Sintattico, we notice that a new type in *vv-* has been introduced in

addition to the traditional type in *bb-*. These forms in *vv-* are to be considered innovative, even if early attestations to them exist².

The analysis of the data we have gathered referring to the present-day dialect, shows a variation between fricative and stop in the forms affected by Raddoppiamento Sintattico for all informants. The innovative *vv-* variant, generally the most frequent one, is clearly preferred by the younger informants, while the traditional type is found to have a more clearly dialectal character, even by the older informants.

The outline in (3) cannot be described in terms of allophonic variation, both because of the presence of lexicalized forms like /*bbwona*/, and of the rephonologization implied by the forms with long initial fricative.

Further, the hypothesis of a combinatory variation poses the problem of the occurrence of the weak element in absolute initial position.

A solution to this problem has been proposed by Fanciullo (1986).

In his opinion in central-southern dialects, unlike northern dialects and Tuscan, the initial position is a weak position. As far as Neapolitan is concerned this hypothesis clashes with the fact that absolute initial position is not a context for the application of the lenition process affecting unvoiced consonants. Exactly in the same way as in the Tuscan examples quoted by the author this context preserves the consonants from the weakening process known as "gorgia":

(4)

	##__	V#__V
Tuscan	['kasa]	[la 'hasa] 'the house'
Neapolitan	['kasa]	[a 'gasa]

Moreover it does not seem necessary to find that the absolute initial position is phonologically weak in southern dialects, in order to account for this alternation as an effect of a current phonological process. We must in any case resort to a morphological or lexical conditioning in order to account for the forms with the stop only, like /*bbwona*/ and /*bbella*/ and so on, and the forms with the long fricative which Fanciullo himself mentions.

We will now try to outline the stages through which the present alternation developed. We suggest that there was a loss of phonological motivation of the weakening rule:

(5)

$$b \longrightarrow v / V_V$$

and this is demonstrated by the occurrence of the weak element in a strong context. This laid down the premise for a lexical restructuring.

Presumably after a stage characterized by the coexistence of two alternating forms, there was a gradual restructuring affecting almost all the lexical items and substituting the initial stop by a fricative.

We suggest that we might consider, among the causes of such a change in the underlying forms, the low frequency of the postconsonantal context across word boundaries. In Neapolitan, words ending in consonant are rare.

There are two contexts in which a sequence *C+b* is possible:

- after the negative adverb /*nun*/ which has also an allomorph /*nu*/ ending in a vowel;
- after the preposition /*in*/.

The number of postconsonantal contexts is further reduced by the effects of an assimilation rule *Nb* \longrightarrow *mm*, which is no longer functioning but existed until recently. The effects of this assimilation are still recognizable in crystallized phrases like [m 'mokka] \leftarrow /*in* 'bokka/ 'in the mouth'.

Therefore we can suppose that when the above mentioned restructuring began, there were no instances of the surface sequence *C+b* across word boundaries.

Further, the position after words causing Raddoppiamento Sintattico - that in some respects might be regarded as similar to the postconsonantal position - is a position marked, at the phonological level, by the presence of a geminate, and, at morphological level, by the morphosyntactic information carried by Raddoppiamento Sintattico. Therefore, in no way could a form occurring after words causing Raddoppiamento Sintattico be considered the basic form.

On account of the situation thus far described, the paradigm of the involved items is made up of only two forms; the one occurring in absolute initial position and the other, much more frequent, occurring between vowels.

What we are suggesting is that these circumstances have favoured the lexical restructuring and have contributed to the reanalysis of the more frequent form as the basic one.

Therefore a morphophonological alternation emerges, in which the form with the stop becomes the marked member and occurs in the marked

position of Raddoppiamento Sintattico.

Now it is the form with the stop, the basic one in the phase of combinatory variation, which is derived from the form with the fricative.

We propose that the morphophonological rule governing this alternation has been remotivated in phonological terms as a strengthening rule.

4. The *r/d* alternation shows several analogies with the *v/b* alternation, even if the relation between the two elements is different.

In the Neapolitan dialect there is a process weakening the dental stop /d/ in intervocalic position. The outcome of this process is a variety of articulations ranging from a (lax) stop to the alveolar fricative. For instance:

(6)

[tə'nevə 'dudə] 'annə] 'I was twelve years old'
[fammə və'ðe] 'let me see'

But the most frequent realization is an alveolar flap, perceptively very similar to a trill, which is also sometimes found. We will deal here only with the vibrant realizations. In the examples reported here we adopted a simplified notation reporting only the trilled consonants.

This weakening rule is optional and a stop in intervocalic position is normal, even if not frequently found.

Let us now take into consideration a variation presenting both [d] and [r] in the utterances of one speaker, as in (7).

(7)

[kçudə ll 'wokkçə] 'close your eyes'
[kçurə ll 'wokkçə]

Our data were not gathered with the view of performing a sociolinguistic analysis. They enable us, however, to say that a correlation between this variability and sociocultural parameters is very difficult.

It is necessary to point out that this aspect of the Neapolitan phonology is undergoing a change, with the model of Italian language playing a very important role.

This model, of course, favours the non-application of the rule *d* → *r*, conferring a very strong dialectal character to the weakened forms. In

this respect an adequate analysis, should not leave out of consideration stylistic parameters and the interaction of the Italian language and the dialect.

Leaving aside the problems caused by variation, we notice that there are structural facts limiting the possibility of considering the phenomenon always as the result of a phonological process.

An important element is the perceptual similarity of the flap and the realizations of the phoneme /r/.

That means that a surface form, presenting an intervocalic vibrant, might not be recognized as the output of the weakening rule *d* → *r*, and this causes a restructuring of the underlying form. Such restructuring, removing inputs to the weakening rule, is typical for those lexical items of the dialect which do not have a corresponding Italian homophone.

Let us now turn our attention to the word-initial position. We believe that also in this context we are facing a lexical restructuring in progress. In this case, however, the alternation, due to the different position of the word in the different syntactic contexts, helps keep a tighter link between the flap and the stop.

The case is analogous to the above-mentioned *v/b* alternation, but it is a more complex phenomenon because of the changing circumstances.

In (8) we show the paradigmatic possibilities available to each speaker. These represent, at the same time, different stages of a route starting from the optional application of a phonological rule (see a., b., c.) and leading to a lexical restructuring.

(8)

	##__	V#__V	[+RS]#__
a.	'dɛntə 'tooth'	o 'dɛntə 'the tooth'	'tre 'ddjɛntə 'three teeth'
b.	'dɛntə	o 'rɛntə	'tre 'ddjɛntə
c.	'rɛntə	o 'rɛntə	'tre 'ddjɛntə
d.	'rɛntə	o 'rɛntə	'tre 'rrjɛntə

It is our aim to stress that this scheme reflects the actual linguistic behaviour of the speakers as directly observed.

Let us now consider the paradigm in (8c).

As we have already discussed for the *v/b* alternation, the occurrence of the vibrant in absolute initial position cannot be considered to be the effect of a phonological process.

The form 'rɛntə occurring after silence, must then be regarded as the

result of a restructuring of the underlying form. The form occurring in intervocalic position becomes the basic form and from this is derived the form with the stop occurring after words causing Raddoppiamento Sintattico.

The morphophonological alternation may well be reanalyzed as the effect of a strengthening rule. However we cannot go so far as to speak of an accomplished restructuring; it is rather a tendency.

It is an early stage of change, with the two underlying forms, the one with the stop and the one with the fricative, still coexisting. But for particular classes of words the restructuring is in a further stage or is already accomplished. It is the case of the prepositions DI 'of' and DA 'from', whose prevocalic morphs have almost always the vibrant in all positions, excluding the position after words causing Raddoppiamento Sintattico:

(9)

##__	V#__V	[+RS]#__
ra 'kasa 'of the house'	a 'pɔɾta ra 'kasa 'the house door'	'ɛ dda 'kasa 'it is of the house'
ra 'kasa 'from the house'	'vɛnɔ ra 'kasa 'he comes from the house'	'ɛ dda 'kasa 'it is from the house (that he is coming)'

It is also the case of the adverb /a'ro/ 'where', 'whence', where the constant presence of the vibrant is a sign of lexicalization³.

Let us lastly examine the forms in (8d.). Here we have the analogical levelling -with the extension of the weak element to the form following words causing Raddoppiamento Sintattico.

The paradigm, clearly innovative, is much less frequent than the one presenting alternation shown in (8c.).

If, on the other hand, we bear in mind that the occurrence of the weak element in absolute initial position is high, the outline turns out to be very similar to that examined for *v/b*. In both cases, the extension of the weak element to the forms affected by Raddoppiamento Sintattico is more recent and less frequent than its extension to absolute initial position.

This parallel lends support to the hypothesis that both *v/b* and *r/d* alternations may be described as the result of the same morphophonological strengthening rule.

5. Now we briefly discuss the alternation between the palatoalveolar fricative and affricate phonemes.

(10)

##__	V#__V	[+RS]#__
a. 'ʃora 'flower'	o 'ʃora 'the flower'	'tre 'ʃʃura 'three flowers'
b. tʃə'rasa 'cherry'	a ʃə'rasa 'the cherry'	'tre ttʃə'rasa 'three cherries'
c. 'tʃora	o 'ʃora	'tre 'ttʃura
d. 'ʃora	o 'ʃora	'tre 'ttʃura

The fricative occurs rather frequently as a geminate, whereas as a short consonant it is only found in initial position, in a limited set of items which in Latin had an initial FL cluster. For instance:

FLOREM>	'ʃora	'flower'
FLUMEN>	'ʃumma	'river'
FLATUM>	'ʃata	'breath'

The affricate is very often produced as a fricative in intervocalic position, both within and across word boundaries. This weak variant is gradually becoming the only possible one in this context (10b.).

Such overlapping in intervocalic position causes a tendency to rephonologization, so that the fricative and the affricate become two combinatory variants of the same phoneme. The fricative is selected in intervocalic context, the affricate elsewhere (10c.).

In addition to the paradigm in (10 c.), there is the one in (10 d.). Despite the limited attestations, we can observe that this paradigm is more frequent.

Of particular interest to us is the fact that the persistence of the fricative in absolute initial position, as opposed to the affricate in forms affected by Raddoppiamento Sintattico, can only be explained in terms of an adaptation to the general pattern of alternation between strong and weak elements.

6. In this paper, we have seen that the pattern of alternation is due to the application and non-application of a strengthening rule. We have proposed that already existing phonological alternations were, in some cases, reanalyzed as effects of a strengthening rule. It is a well known mechanism belonging to the theoretical framework of Rule Inversion.

To conclude, we would like to draw attention to the fact that the maintenance of the paradigm of alternation functionally contributes to make the contexts where Raddoppiamento Sintattico takes place more easily recognizable. And we have seen that Raddoppiamento Sintattico is often the only mark identifying the morphological classes of plural feminine and neuter.

Footnotes

- 1 This paper is based on data gathered in a series of interviews performed in Naples in 1986 and 1987, which provided a corpus of spontaneous dialectal speech. Then, a number of check interviews, based on a questionnaire, allowed us to improve and extend the data set.
- 2 See, for instance, what Galiani wrote in 1779: "Si deve dire *una vota, doje vote, cinco vote* ecc.; né si può dire altrimenti; ma sul numero tre si dice ugualmente bene *tre bote e tre vote*". (Galiani 1970:45).
- 3 Besides the adverb /a'ro/ (DA+DOVE) there exist also the adverb /ad'do/ (A+DOVE) where, because of the presence of a preposition causing RS, the consonant is long and does not undergo weakening. At present, the only semantic difference between the adverbs is that *addo* is not used in the meaning 'whence'.

References

- Fanciullo, F. (1986), "Syntactic reduplication and the Italian dialects of the Centre-south", *Journal of Italian Linguistics* 8, 1: 67-103.
- Galiani, F. (1970), "Del dialetto napoletano", in E. Malato (ed.), *Del dialetto napoletano*, Roma: Bulzoni: 1-205.
- Rohlf, G. (1966), *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti. Vol. 1: Fonetica*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Tekavčić, P. (1972), *Grammatica storica dell'italiano. Vol. 1: Fonematica*, Bologna: Il Mulino.

- Tulleners Bloemen, M. (1983), "Il betacismo nell'Italia meridionale: analisi sincronica sulla base dei dati AIS", *Rivista Italiana di Dialettologia* 8: 97-117.
- Tulleners Bloemen, M. (1985), "L'analisi diacronica del betacismo: alcune conseguenze per la teoria generativa del cambiamento linguistico", in L. Agostiniani, P. Maffei Bellucci, M. Paoli (eds.), *Linguistica storica e cambiamento linguistico*, Atti del XVI Congresso Internazionale di Studi della Società di Linguistica Italiana, Roma: Bulzoni: 363-393.
- Vennemann, T. (1972), "Rule Inversion", *Lingua* 29: 209-242.
- Vennemann, T. (1974), "Restructuring", *Lingua* 33: 137-156.
- Weinrich, H. (1958), *Phonologischen Studien zur Romanischen Sprachgeschichte*, Münster-Westfalen: Aschendorff.