

METATHESIS IN ROTUMAN AS A SPECIAL CASE OF COMPENSATORY
LENGTHENING*

ABSTRACT

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This paper represents an attempt to capture the insights of both OT and derivational theories within a constraints and repair model (roughly following Calabrese 2005), Raimy's Precedence Theory (Raimy 2000), and Metrical Theory (as in Halle and Idsardi). I argue that an amalgamation of elements of these theories provides new insights into the type of compensatory lengthening (CL; cf. Hayes 1987) that lengthens a vowel when the vowel in the following syllable is deleted (1). I argue that Rotuman metathesis, which superficially appears exotic, is in fact a special case of CL.

CL is the result of the final vowel being marked as extrametrical (2) and a constraint prohibiting nonmetrified vowels (3). This constraint, which is active in those languages which have this kind of CL, triggers a repair (4) that deletes the precedence relations governing the final consonant and the unmetrified vowel. New precedence relations are introduced by means of an optimization procedure, depicted here by means of (vaguely) OT-like tableaux (5). This results in the final consonant and (unmetrified) vowel appearing to have switched places. Resyllabification takes place, but new syllables may not be introduced because no change takes place on the metrical tier and every syllabic nucleus must be aligned with a mark on Line 0. If the unmetrified vowel has no melody, it will appear as the second half of the vowel to its left (1). If it does have melody, it will appear as a diphthong, as is the case in Rotuman.

All lexical items in Rotuman may appear in one of two forms, which have been referred to as "phases" (6) since Churchward 1940; these are the "complete" (COM) and "incomplete" (INC). (This notion of "phase" is quite different from Chomsky's) The COM appears only at the right edge of NPs which have an abstract clitic that is the marker of definiteness (den Dikken 2003). This clitic preserves the underlying form of the word. The INC form, which does not bear any morphosyntactic marker, is phonologically derived; under certain phonological conditions, this derivation involves apparent metathesis.

The phonological manifestation of the "definiteness" clitic is the addition of a bracket on the right edge of Line 0 of the metrical plane. When this bracket is not present, in the INC forms, the final vowel is extrametrical, triggering the repairs alluded to above. Rotuman allows glides as the second element of the onset, but not within a complex coda because of a constraint against more than two elements appearing in the rime (7). Resyllabification therefore allows [karpyos] for (6i), but not *[mawh] for (6ii). No repair of the constraint against unmetrified vowels yields a licit form for (6ii), so the derivation crashes and (6ii) is pronounced with no final vowel: EVM is inviolable, as are all constraints in this theory.

*Many thanks to Shalom Tua'toko, who served as an informant for Rotuman.

(1) /talə/ → [ta:l]

(2) Line 0 *
 # → X → X → X → X → %
 | | | |
 t a l ə

(3) Constraint: EVM (Every Vowel must be Metrified)

(4) REPAIR: delete → to left of unmetrified vowel, yielding #→t→a→{l,ə}→%

| (5) INPUT: Line 0 * (t → a) → {l, ə} → # | | EVM |
|---|---------------------------------|-----|
| a. | Line 0 * (t → a) → l → ə → # | *! |
| b. | Line 0 * (t → a → ə → l) → # | OK |

(6) Two “phases” in Rotuman

| | COMPLETE | INCOMPLETE | GLOSS |
|-----|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| i. | kar.pí.so | kar.pyós | kind of plant |
| ii. | má.ho | máh (*máwh) | to cool (of tea) |

(7) M2R: Maximum two elements in the Rime.

| (8) INPUT: Line 0 * %→(k→a→r)→(p→i→{s→o})→# | EVM | M2R |
|--|-----|-----|
| Line 0 * * %→(k→a→r)→(p→y→o→s)→# | | |
| Line 0 * * %→(k→a→r)→(p→i)→s→o→# | *! | |
| Line 0 * * %→(k→a→r)→(p→i→w→s)→# | | *! |

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