You're the pretender: OT-CC and DOT

Paweł Rydzewski (University of Warsaw)

This abstract argues against the status of Candidate Chains Theory (McCarthy 2007) as a viable theory of opacity, and proves that the subtheory only pretends to handle opaque generalizations. It is shown that the selected cases of allomorphic opacity drawn from the Polish data should be reanalyzed within Derivational Optimality Theory (Kiparsky 1997, 2000, Rubach 2000, 2005), proving that OT must admit level distinction.

Polish exhibits an alternation in the masculine nominative plural of nouns. Nouns are either formed by adding the suffix –*y* [ɨ] or –*e* [ɛ]. The suffixes are arbitrary and cannot be traced back to a single UR, as Polish does not have a rule deriving [ɨ] from //ɛ// or vice versa. Therefore, the two suffixes must be allomorphs of the masc. nom. pl. and have separate URs (Rubach 2007). Consider the examples in (1).

(1) but [t] "shoe" (nom.sg.) – but+y [tɨ] (pl.); nos [s] "nose" (nom.sg.) nos+y [sɨ] (pl.); ryś [ɕ] "lynx" (nom.sg.) – rysi+e [ɕɛ] (pl.); gość [tɕ] "guest" (nom.sg.) – gości+e [tɕɛ] (pl.)

As shown in (1), the plural of masc. nouns has different inflectional paradigms. The suffix - //ɨ// is added after hard stems (that end in a [+back] consonant) whereas - //ɛ// after soft stems (that end in a [-back] consonant). The agreement in backness is preserved by two constrains PAL-*i* and PAL-*e* (Rubach 2000). Hence, the two idiosyncratic allomorphs have predictable distribution. To account for the choice of the correct allomorph, we list both suffixes in the UR. During the OT evaluation, the allomorph that fares best on the constraint hierarchy is selected as the optimal one.

However, the case of the Polish nom.pl. suffix is more complex. Consider the examples in (2).

(2) kalo*sz* [š] "rubber boot" (nom.sg.) – kalosz+*e* [šɛ] (pl.); tłusz*cz* [č] "fat" (nom.sg.) – tłuszcz+*e* [čɛ] (pl.); kole*dż* [č] "college" (nom.sg.) – kole*dż*+*e* [džɛ] (pl.). The strident coronals /š ž č dž/ that are hard on the surface, against the expectations, take the suffix that is associated with soft stems - //ɛ//. The fact that they follow the morphological paradigm that is typical of the nouns in (1) may suggest that, underlyingly, they are soft and give preference to the [-back] suffix to satisfy the agreement in backness. If they are soft, their [+back] surface form is an effect of hardening. The generalization is captured by the constraint HARD that retains the [+back] feature of [š ž č dž] (Rubach 2007). The evaluation of *kalosze* is presented below.

(3) Tableau for //kalɔš'+ $\begin{bmatrix} ɨ \\ ɛ \end{bmatrix}$ //"rubber boot" (nom.pl.)

	PAL-*i*	PAL-*e*	ID-C$_{([-bk])}$	HARD	ID-V$_{([-bk])}$	ID-C$_{([+bk])}$
a. kalɔš'ɨ	*!			*		
b. kalɔšɨ			*!			
☞ c. kalɔš'ɛ				*		
☹ d. kalɔšɛ		*!	*			

The result of the evaluation is wrong. The standard version of OT cannot account for the opaque alternations. I will attempt to recast the evaluation in OT-CC (McCarthy 2007). However, I will show that this version of OT is erroneous and fails to achieve the attested output despite the fact that the UR had to be restructured to even proceed with the analysis. Then, I will contrast the results with DOT to prove that the parallel account is fallacious and that OT must admit level distinction.

References:

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Word count: 475 (excluding 156 words for references, linguistic examples and the title)