The Phonology of Postverbal Pronouns in Romance Languages[1]
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Romance languages vary in the way in which prominence is assigned in phrases involving an imperative verb + postverbal pronoun(s). We find the following patterns: the stressed syllable of the verb may remain the prominent syllable of the phrase (standard Italian, standard Spanish, standard Catalan, etc.), stress may be shifted to the penultimate syllable (southern Italian varieties, Sardinian varieties, Catalan varieties, Corsican varieties, etc.), stress may be shifted to the final syllable (Ligurian varieties, Gascon, Argentinian Spanish, Sardinian varieties, etc.), or the pattern may vary depending on various factors, such as the number of enclitic pronouns: stress stability with one enclitic and stress shift with two (Neapolitan and other southern Italian varieties, Sardinian varieties, etc.).

(1) imperative verb + postverbal pronoun(s):

|  | *cómpra + 1 enclitic* | *cómpra + 2 enclitics* |
|---:|:---:|:---:|
| *stress stability:* | có**mpra-lo | có**mpra-me-lo |
| *penultimate stress shift:* | comprá-lo | compra-**mé**-lo |
| *final stress shift:* | compra-l**ó** | compra-me-l**ó** |

A number of questions arise regarding these data.

(2) questions

> ***Why does the metrical structure of the phrase change?***
> *When does it change?*
> *What type of change is this? stress shift or something else?*
> *How can we identify the type of change?*
> *Is another stress added to the phrase?*
> *Where does the new stress appear?*
> *Which syllable receives primary stress? secondary stress?*
> *What happens to the stressed syllable of the verb?*

I argue that the surface prominence patterns are actually the result of different processes. One is purely phonological and has been discussed widely in the literature: the stress shifts to repair a suboptimal metrical structure. For example, /cómpra-me-lo/ is not acceptable in some varieties because the stressed syllable is too far from the end of the phrase, so stress is shifted to the penult /compra-mé-lo/ (Loporcaro 2000, Peperkamp 1997, Torres-Tamarit 2010, etc.). Another is morpho-syntactic: two different types of pronouns that are morpho-syntactically distinct are involved in these patterns: true clitics

and weak pronouns (Cardinaletti and Starke 1999). Morphological, syntactic, and phonological characteristics define weak pronouns vs. clitic pronouns, and some of the pronouns involved in stress shift can be considered 'weak', while those not involved in stress shift are true clitics (Ordóñez and Repetti 2006, 2008, 2012). Crucially, weak pronouns (but not clitics) consist of a foot, and therefore, can be stressed. A third is phonetic: the association of the pitch accent to the verb + pronoun phrase results in the perception of a stress shift, but various phonetic tests suggest that there is not a change in the word level stress (Kim and Repetti 2013).

In other words, different parts of the grammar are involved in processes that result in a similar surface form: stress shift.

(3) stress shift can be caused by…

| a morpho-syntactic structure: | weak pronouns consist of a foot and are, therefore, stressed (even if certain phonological constraints are not violated) |
|---|---|
| metrical violations: | clitics can also be involved in stress shift if certain high ranked metrical constraints are violated |
| phonetics: | some cases of so-called 'stress shift' are actually a change in pitch accent alignment, and not a 'shift' in stress |

Using a wide range of data gathered from field research and available on the *Clitics of Romance Languages* database (Repetti and Ordóñez 2011), I show that once we understand the nature of the postverbal pronouns, the metrical structure of the verb + pronoun phrase, and the role of intonation, we can successfully answer the phonological questions in (2).

References

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