

Yes theme vowels, no conjugation classes: Phi-feature exponence in Fiuman

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I challenge the traditional notion that Romance theme vowels (henceforth, TVs) universally identify conjugation classes and argue for a unified analysis of phi-feature exponence in Fiuman, an endangered Venetian variety spoken in Rijeka/Fiume, Croatia, and in Fiuman diaspora. All phi-feature exponents traditionally analyzed as allomorphs conditioned by the TV are shown to have the same vocabulary item. The surface forms result from a post-insertion phonological interaction between the vocabulary items of the phi-features, underspecified phonological structures inserted independently from the TVs, and the exponents of theme vowels. A representative sample from the targeted dataset is provided in (1) (data from Depoli 1913 + my fieldnotes). Faithful exponents of TVs are in blue, whereas modified exponents are in red.

(1) TV exponence in Fiuman

gloss	INF	IPFV.2SG	PRES.1SG	PRES.2SG	PRES.3SG	PRES.2PL
‘call’	tʃam-a-r	tʃam-a-v-i	tʃam-o	tʃam-i	tʃam-a	tʃam-e
‘leave’	part-i-r	part-i-v-i	part-o	part-i	part-e	part-i
‘be silent’	taz-e-r	taz-e-v-i	taz-o	taz-i	taz-e	taz-e

The verbal forms in (1) showcase the three distinct constellations that can arise in the exponence of TVs. (i) In the first two forms (INF and IPFV.2SG), all TVs are realised faithfully. (ii) In the second two forms (PRES.1SG and PRES.2SG), all TVs are deleted. (iii) In the remaining two forms (PRES.3SG and PRES.2PL), some TVs are realised faithfully, while some are modified. These three constellations correspond to three shapes of morphemes following the TV. Specifically, (1) If the morpheme following the TV is consonant-initial (in the illustrated forms /-r/ and /-v-/), TVs are realised faithfully. (2) If the morpheme following the TV is vowel-initial (/o/ and /i/ in the illustrated forms), TVs get deleted. (3) If the following morpheme is featural, some TVs are modified, while others are realised faithfully. The proposed vocabulary items for the illustrated featural morphemes are given in (2).

- (2) DM-style vocabulary items for [3] and [PL]
- a. [3] ⇔ [-high] [+low]
 - b. [PL] ⇔ [+high] [-back]

The proposed featural morphemes VIs as full vowels in other contexts in Fiuman, where they receive a dedicated vowel slot, as shown in the gray slots in Table 1. In such a context, featural exponents are indistinguishable from underlyingly vocalic exponents.

Table 1: Imperfect tense of *eser* ‘to be’

		eser ‘be’	
	SG	PL	
1	(j)er- o	(j)er- i	-mo
2	(j)er- i	(j)er- i	
3	(j)er- a		

When there is no dedicated vocalic slot, the realisation of the featural morphemes on the TV is enforced by the constraint REALIZEMORPHEME, which requires morphemes to be visibly realised in the output. This constraint (family) has a long tradition in OT, starting from Samek-Lodovici (1992), whose constraint requires the properties of the morpheme to be realised in an “overt and detectable manner”. In subsequent work (Kurusu 2001; Van Oostendorp

2006), REALIZE-MORPHEME has been implemented in various ways, also assuming different architectures. For instance, Van Oostendorp’s influential implementation assumes that multiple candidates can have the same phonetic form, but different morpheme affiliations. I show that Fiuman data can be analysed without giving EVAL access to morphological affiliations of features, and propose a more *gullible* and arguably more parsimonious version of REALIZE-MORPHEME, which is satisfied if *any* feature is of the target morpheme can be found in the target output segment. In other words, my constraint *UNREALISED-MORPHEME is only violated when the morpheme is **clearly left unrealised** on the output segment.

- (3) *UNREALISED-MORPHEME: Assign a violation mark for every vocabulary item whose all features are absent from the output.

*UNREALISED-MORPHEME is ranked below DEP, which blocks candidates in which the featural morpheme sponsors its own vowel. Below *UNREALISED-MORPHEME is IDENT, which ensures maximal featural compatibility of the winner with the underlying TV. The tableau in (4) shows an evaluation in which the TV is compatible with the featural specification of the PL morpheme and the TV can surface faithfully. On the other hand, the tableau in (5) shows an example where a vowel change is enforced by *UNREALISED-MORPHEME.

(4) OT tableau for taz-e ‘be silent.PRS.2PL’

taz + e + [-back][+ high]	DEP	*UNREALISED-MORPHEME	IDENT
a. tazei	*!		
☞ b. taze			
c. tazi			*!
d. taza		*!	**

(5) OT tableau for tʃam-e ‘call.PRS.2PL’

tʃam+a + [-back][+ high]	DEP	*UNREALISED-MORPHEME	IDENT
a. tʃamai	*!		
b. tʃama		*!	
☞ c. tʃame			**
d. tʃami			***!

The proposed exponents arguably play a role beyond the verbal domain. E.g., the PL morpheme, is compatible the plural morphology of adjectives and nouns (which is restricted to the [-back] segments *-e* and *-i*). The insensitivity of any additional morphology to the TV indicates that the TV in Fiuman closes off a phase, and most probably corresponds to the *v* head. I discuss the architectural consequences of *UNREALISED-MORPHEME and the possibilities of rendering it more modular.

References

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