A case of spurious metathesis in Lillooet

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In a number of Lillooet words, we find a transposition of vowels and consonants that appears to be straightforward metathesis. However, internal evidence shows that, rather than just being a switch in position of two segments, this transposition results from an underlying pattern of anaptyxis, stress-shift and vowel deletion. In this paper we investigate this phenomenon, in conjunction with a similar phenomenon in Old English. We also offer a tentative explanation of the underlying mechanics in terms of metrical phonology.

1 Introduction

Lass 1984:189-190 describes a case of apparent metathesis in Old English that in fact can be better analysed as a case of anaptyxis, stress-shift and vowel-deletion (CV́rC > CV́rVC > CVrV́C > CrV́C), as discussed in section 2 below. Lillooet has an almost exact parallel to this type of spurious metathesis, which we will discuss in section 3. In section 4, a tentative analysis will also be given of the mechanics underlying the stress-shift in the Lillooet cases.

2 Spurious metathesis in Old English

A number of Old English words show an apparent metathesis of r and x (the latter traditionally written as *h* in the original sources). Thus, besides older *be(o)rht* 'bright,' *fyrhto* 'fright' and *forhtiga* 'frighten' we find later *breht*, *fryht* and *frohtiga*. However, as Lass (1984:190) points out, we find certain 'compromise' spellings that show a vowel both before and after the *r*. The examples given by Lass, and arranged in his manner are:

berht	—	*breht*	'bright'
—	*geberehtniga*	*gebrehtniga*	'brighten'
fyrhto	*fyrihto*	*fryht*	'fright'
forhtiga	*forohtiga*	*frohtiga*	'frighten'

As Lass points out, the *Vrh* forms are historically older, having exact formal parallels in Gothic. Also, we are justified in setting up **bereht* and **geberhtniga* as possible forms that would fill in the blanks in the above chart.

Although we have no evidence for a stress-shift from the vowel before *r* to the vowel after *r* (since stress was not marked in Old English), positing such a stress-shift is by all means reasonable. (We do know that the stress originally fell on the vowel before *r*, this being the general Germanic pattern.) Lass then summarizes the likely course of events as follows:

CV́rxC > CV́rVxC > CVrV́xC > CrV́xC

Thus, the apparent metathesis that we have in Old English can be shown to be an entirely different process, involving anaptyxis, stress-shift and deletion of the originally stressed vowel.

3 The Lillooet facts

Lillooet has a number of stems CəCC and CɛCC (collectively symbolized CECC). When these stems combine with the resultative prefix ka- (which indicates that a state or action is achieved suddenly, or after some trying, and which always requires the 'reinforcing' enclitic ‿a), these stems show apparent metathesis by becoming CCEC. Examples are: x̌əlq̓ 'to roll down' > ka-x̌lə́q̓‿a 'to roll down suddenly,' ɬɛ̓mk 'broken, not usable any more' > ka-ɬmɛ́k‿a 'to break (like an old rope when pulled), to come apart (rotting hide on a carcass),' x̌ətq 'hole' > ka-x̌tə́q‿a 'hole is created suddenly.' Like the Old English cases above, however, it seems analytically more acurate to assume an intermediate stage CECEC with stress-shift to the second E, and deletion of the first E, giving us, for example, ka-x̌ə́lq̓‿a > ka-x̌ə́ləq̓‿a > ka-x̌ələ́q̓‿a > ka-x̌lə́q̓‿a. (Alternatively, we could also subsume that CECEC underlies all its surface derivations, with stress assigned to the first E in forms without ka-, and stress shifted to the second E in the ka- forms, and deletion of the unstressed E's.)

Evidence for the correctness of the non-metathesis analysis comes from another stress-rule involving ka-: reduplicative stems C_1ÉC_2-C_1(E)C_2 (with the stress regularly on the first E, see also below), shift the stress to the second E when such forms are combined with ka-. Unfortunately, I have only two such cases in my corpus, but both obey this rule. Thus we have mə́t-əmt-əp (from underlying *mə́t-mət-p)[1] 'paralyzed' > ka-mət-mə́t‿a 'to get paralyzed.' The second example is ka-x^{w}əp-x^{w}ə́p‿a ta‿n-q^{w}al̓út-tn‿a 'my (n-) language (n-q^{w}al̓út-tən) has come back to me,' with a reduplicated form based on x^{w}əp- 'to

1. The change of -mət-p to -əmt-əp in this word (and in many structurally similar words) is also a case of spurious metathesis, this time outside the stress: we have insertion of ə in t—p, in order to alleviate the final cluster, the dropping of ə from m—t, and finally insertion of ə before m, all within well-established patterns of Lillooet morphophonemics (for details see Van Eijk 1997:18-25).

lift up, put on one's feet.' (The reduplicated form was recorded from Martina LaRochelle of Lillooet, and in its formal and semantic aspects it may be more typical of the northern dialect than of the southern dialect, according to comments from some Mount Currie speakers.) The pattern shown by ka-mət-mét‿a and ka-xʷəp-xʷép‿a suggests that forms like ka-x̌léq'‿a are also derived from underlying forms with two E's, the second of which then attracts the stress when ka- is affixed.

4 A possible explanation of the Lillooet facts

So far, the Lillooet facts are clear. As to *why* we have the stress-shift after ka-, an explanation is much harder to obtain. A possible solution is suggested, however, by another peculiar stress-rule involving ka-: in general, vowels ə ə̓ (E) are 'weak' in that they yield the stress to any of the other Lillooet vowels (a a̓ i i̓ u u̓, collectively symbolized A) when they are combined with these in a word, as in ʕəl-ílx 'to exert oneself' (√ʕəl 'strong,' -ilx 'body, self'), məc-xál 'to write (məc-), intransitive (-xal),' pq-us 'bald eagle (from *pəq-ús; pəq 'white,' -us 'face, head'). When a word has vowels E only, the stress usually falls on the first of these, as in ʕél-ʕəl 'strong,' mét-əmt-əp 'paralyzed' (see above), or méc-ən 'to write it, transitive (-ən).'[2]

However, after ka-, stems with vowels E have E 'strengthened,' so it now attracts the stress even where it is combined with one or more vowels A. Examples are ka-ʕʷél-s-kan‿a 'I managed to get it lit (after some trying), I lit it by accident' (cf. ʕʷəl-ən-ɬkán 'I lit it'), and ka-téq-s-kan‿a 'I caught it' (cf. təq-ən-ɬkán 'I touched it').[3]

The two stress-rules involving ka- (putting the stress on the second of two vowels E, and strengthening a single E) are probably at some point interconnected and may go back to one underlying rule. Evidence for this comes from so-called CVC-reduplication (the same type that we have in ʕél-ʕəl, mét-əmt-əp above) when it is applied to stems C_1AC_2. In these cases the stress falls on the second vowel, and the first vowel is reduced to E, as in cək-cák 'cool (of weather),' nəqʷ-núqʷ 'warm (of weather),' məkʷ-mákʷ 'dull (of edge; Fountain dialect),' cʼə̓ɬʼ-cʼú̓ɬʼ 'tart, bitter,' cəqʷ-cíqʷ 'red' (via *cak-cák, *nuqʷ-núqʷ, etc.).[4] Since vowels A are 'strong' (in that they take stress-

2. There are a number of cases where stress unexpectedly falls on a later ə, as in kʷət-kʷét 'hollow spot on top of breastbone.' Also, the ə in the passive marker -əm is strong in that it attracts the stress after stems with E, e.g., ʕʷəln-ém 'it was lit.'

3. The suffixes -s and -ən are transitivizers, -s generally indicating lack of control, while -ən signals that the subject largely is in control of the action. For details see Van Eijk 1997:107-128.

4. This stress-pattern is not without exceptions, but most of these fall into well-defined

precedence over E), we may presume that the underlying stress-structure of forms like *cak-cak is S-S. Now, under general rules of metrical phonology, such combinations (i.e., of two strong vowels under the same node) are not allowed (see Van der Hulst and Smith 1982:31), and apparently the second vowel remains strong, while the first vowel is demoted to weak status, hence *cak-cak (S-S) > *cak-cak (W-S) >*cak-cák > cək-cák.[5] Where we have reduplications of stems CEC, the resulting structure is W-W, which is not allowed either, but since the second vowel cannot take stress the first one takes stress by default, hence ʕél-ʕəl, etc. (The fact that the first E is strong only by default is proven by the fact that it shifts the stress to a following A, as in ʕəl-ʕəl-ɬkán 'I am strong.'). The effect of ka- is apparently to strengthen all vowels in the stem, thus converting a single E to strong status (which means it attracts the stress even over the competition of vowels A, see ka-ʕʷél-s-kan‿a above), and converting stems E-E to S-S status, with then regular demotion of the first S vowel to W status (so that, for example, ka-mət-mét‿a now parallels cək-cák).

The above solution is, of course, only tentative in that it is based on what are in essence theoretical constructs (viz., weak or strong status of vowels). On the other hand, these constructs are strongly suggested by the observable facts of Lillooet stress. A full assessment of metrical phonology (or any other theory) as it relates to the stress in Lillooet falls outside the scope of this article, but students of Salish (and of stress-theories) are of course invited to explore these issues further. For a general account of Lillooet stress in metrical terms I refer to Giles 1988. This study, in turn, builds on Bates 1983, to which I do not have access. A surface analysis of Lillooet stress patterns is given in Van Eijk 1997:14-17. This analysis supplants my earlier attempts, viz., Van Eijk 1981 and Van Eijk 1985:20-24.

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semantic categories or show formal peculiarities that may account for their unusual stress status. Examples of unexpected stress are lík-lik 'unidentified swamp bird, probably Common Snipe' (and other names for animals showing the same type of reduplication), or c'áx-c'x-ət 'shameful' (via *c'áx-c'əx-t) and other cases with the aspectual suffix -t.

5. Strong vowels within the root-contour (i.e., the root with or without reduplicative extensions) take precedence over strong vowels in suffixes, as in x̌'íq-kan 'I arrive (here),' cíq-in' 'to stab (ciq-) somebody, transitive (-in'),' cəq-cíq-in' 'to stab over and over.' Given enough extensions, the stress may move from the root-contour by two vowels, as long as it does not fall on the last vowel in the root-suffix string, e.g., cəq-ciq-in'-ítas 'they (-itas) stabbed him over and over.'

The fact that the stress-rule for an S-S sequence within the root-contour (cək-cák < *cak-cak) is different from an S-S sequence in a root-suffix contour (as in x̌'íq-kan) is, in my view, an argument for classing reduplication as a process quite different from affixation. In this respect I agree with Uhlenbeck 1992, to whom I refer the interested reader. Morphological arguments for treating reduplication as different from affixation are given in Van Eijk 1998.

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