Take-Home Assignment 3

Riocontra, a jargon fruit of syllabic metathesis[1]

I. Abstract

This paper analyzes the mechanism Italian speakers use to create "Riocontra" terms, a

word, but inverted ($S_1|S_2$ - S_2S_1 // $S_1S_2|S_3S_4$ - $S_3S_4S_1S_2$)[2]. Furthermore, would there be a preference of inversion in trisyllable words? (i.e. giar.di.no — "garden") For example, would one cluster together S_1 and S_2 (no.giar.di) or S_2 and S_3 (di.no.giar)? For the purpose of this paper I will use the clustering seen in "riocontra" as the hypothesis, where the cluster formed is between S_1 and S_2.
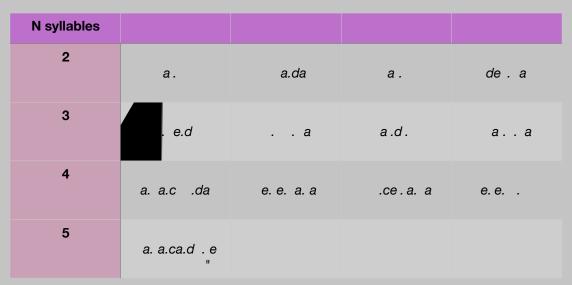
III. Methods

Participants A total of 28 participants were involved in this study. The participants were undergraduate students of the Milan area, randomly selected through social media and word of mouth. The subjects included 19 males and 9 females, ranging from 19 to 23 years of age.

Materials The survey was created using GoogleForms. The stimuli consisted of 13 Italian nouns: 4 bisyllabic, 4 trisyllabic, 4 tetra-syllabic, and a single 5 syllable term (Figure 1). The four-word sets included both C and V initial words, fricative-liquid-plosive onset

N syllables				
2	a .	a.da	a .	de . a
3	. e.d	. . a	a .d .	a . . a
4	a. a.c .da	e. e. a. a	.ce . a. a	e. e. .
5	a. a.ca.d . e "			

[Figure 1: "Stimuli divided by syllable length, syllable structure, English translations"]

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[2] S_x stands for "Syllable number x", and | is the break-point.

and/or coda syllables and at least a homogenous digraph case (a "double" split in the sylla-ble structure i.e. qua<u>t</u>.<u>tr</u>o - "four"). The words chosen were not of everyday use, to test the pure mechanism of the phenomenon with no biases (avoiding conformation to recurrent in-versions of everyday terms). Moreover, the participants were asked to express their opinion on the possibility of monosyllabic Riocontra (Yes/No to confirm that the underlying mecha-nism is indeed syllable dependant), an estimate of their sentence use of Riocontra (based on a 20% increment scale 0%-100%), and personal data for statistical purposes. The addition of the 5 syllable term was an attempt to define a syllable-length limit for the occurrence of the phenomenon based on the work of Casadei (2016). More specifically, based on the evidence that in the VDB of Italian (basic vocabulary) words with 5+ syllables are equal to only 10,1% of the total number of terms (710/6728 words) as seen in Tabella 4 on p. 69.

<u>Procedure</u> The first question asked was whether one used Riocontra on a day to day basis (Yes/No), followed by the stimuli with the Riocontra-related questions, and finally personal data. Only subjects who answered "Yes" to the first question were presented with the stimuli. The stimuli consisted of asking for the Riocontra equivalent of the displayed Italian word (13 in total). The subjects had to individually type their answers for each stimu-lus. After the stimuli, the subjects were asked the estimate amount of phrase-use and the monosyllabic possibility questions, followed by personal data (age, sex) and finally dis-missed.

<u>Compiling</u> Once the data was exported to an excel-like document, it was simplified by eliminating irrelevant answers that did not follow the survey's directions (i.e. blank answer).

IV. Results

Out of the 28 subjects 71% reported to use Riocontra (20/28), with an average frequency of sentence use of 27% (min= 20%, max= 80%); while only 3 of the 20 speakers reported the inversion of monosyllable terms as possible, confirming the shift as multi-syllabic only.

Bisyllabic In Figure 2 it is possible to see the results for the bisyllabic terms. For the words "alto" and "strada" subjects almost exclusively performed a pure syllable metathesis, yielding "toal" (16/20) and "dastra" (17/20). On the other hand, for the words "destra" and "quattro" some interesting phenomena took place. Only one subject applied a pure syllabic