

Bracketing and Lexical Phonology in Romanian Stress

While the stress pattern of Spanish has been analyzed by many investigators within various frameworks (Den Os and Kager 1986, Otero 1986, Roca 1990, Dunlap 1991, Harris 1995, Bailey 1996, Lipski 1997, Rosenthal 1997, etc.), Romanian, its historical cousin, has rarely been given formal examination in this regard. Recent work by Chitoran (1996, 2002), Iscrulescu (2002), and Franzén and Horne (1997) has rectified this to some extent, mostly within an Optimality Theory framework (Prince and Smolensky 1993, McCarthy and Prince 1995). I offer an analysis of the Romanian stress pattern described by Chitoran (2002) and Iscrulescu (2002), within the bracketing framework developed by Idsardi (1992) and Halle and Idsardi (1995), a framework which has proved useful for the analysis of Spanish (cf. Harris 1995).

The facts for Romanian are similar to those for Spanish, though there are differences; for example, Romanian cannot be analyzed synchronically as quantity-sensitive. Romanian primary stress has four possible surface instantiations—final, penultimate, antepenultimate, and preantepenultimate. This pattern is similar to the “three-syllable window” suggested for Spanish (cf. Harris 1995). The unmarked pattern, which assigns stress to the penultimate syllable in nouns, is exhibited far more frequently than the marked pattern, antepenultimate stress. In keeping with Chitoran (2002), I analyze these surface patterns as representing two distinct patterns—stem-final stress and stem-penultimate stress. In order to derive these patterns, desinence vowels which mark gender in nouns, as well as verb inflections and case endings, are excluded from the domain of stress assignment, while thematic vowels in verbs are included. The two rarer surface patterns of final stress and of preantepenultimate stress will be explained in terms of the morphophonology of Romanian. Relevant examples are shown below.

Stem-final stress

With surface penultimate stress

[kɪnt-á]sə ‘she had sung’ [kə.már]ə ‘pantry’

With surface final stress

[kɪnt-á] ‘to sing’ [mə.sɛá] ‘tooth’

With surface antepenultimate stress

[kɪnt-á]se-rəm ‘we had sung’ [ma.gérn]its-ə ‘hovel’

Stem-penultimate stress

With surface antepenultimate stress

[rúps-e]rə-m ‘we tore’ [ká.mér]ə ‘room’

With surface penultimate stress

[rúp-e] ‘he tears’

With surface preantepenultimate stress

[vé.ver]its-ə ‘squirrel’

After presenting the Halle-Idsardi-based analysis of the facts, I will address particular points of interest. These include the decision of whether to exploit syllable boundary projection vs. edge-marking, the treatment of Romanian desinence vowels, the implication of, and justification for, having more than one stress-assignment algorithm within a language, the relevance of lexical phonology to the interaction between morphology and stress, particularly with regard to the behavior of numerals and other compounds, and finally secondary stress. The theoretical issues presented here may hopefully be extended to the analysis of other Romance languages and beyond.

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