Phonological theory and poetic practice
syllabic and accentual constraints in Romance versification

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0   Introduction

–   Received view:
     Typologically relevant rhythmic differences between Romance and Germanic.

–   Romance type: "syllable-timed" (Pike 1945 [Spanish], Abercrombie 1967 [French]).

–   No (clear) evidence for type-specific isochrony tendency (Roach 1982).

–   'Syllable-timing' as a phonological conspiracy (Dauer 1983, Auer & Uhmann 1988).

–   "Syllable language" type as an abstraction from the original rhythmic intuition
     (Auer 1993, 1994).

–   Alternative phonetic correlates: $\langle \%V, \Delta C \rangle$, PVI, . . .
     (Ramus, Nespor & Mehler 1999, Grabe & Low 2002) .

     But: Correlates designed to match pre-established rhythm types (Kohler 2009).

–   Syllable-timing and stress-timing as orthogonal dimensions (Nolan & Asu 2009).

–   **This talk:**

   1. Phonological rhythm typologies and metrical typologies.

   2. 'Syllable-timing' as a metrical type?

   3. Rhythm and meter in French and Spanish.

   4. Conclusion: Verseform as independent evidence for prosodic typology
      and prosodic change.

1   Phonological rhythm typologies and metrical typologies

–   **Rhythm typologies**: Clusters of phonological properties as 'conspiracies'

(Dauer 1983, 1987, Auer & Uhmann 1988, Auer 1993, 1994, 2001, Laver 1994, Reich 2002, Nübling & Schrambke 2004, Szczepaniak 2007).

(1)   Some properties typically assumed for rhythmic prototypes:

	syllabic rhythm *syllable languages*	*accentual rhythm* *word languages*
syllable structures	simple	complex
ambisyllabicity	no	yes
geminates	yes	no
distinctive prominence	no	yes
vowel reduction	no	yes
segmental quantity	yes	limited
tone	yes	no
sandhi	external = internal	external ≠ internal

–   Open issues (Dufter 2003):
  –   Moraic rhythm?
  –   Contribution of melody to rhythmic phrasing?
  –   Properties tolerated by ≠ properties enhancing syllable/word rhythm.
–   History of research:
  –   Syllable-timing in "non-English languages" (Pike [1945] 1967: 34).
  –   (Earlier) research dominated by researchers of stress-timing languages (Smith 1976).
  –   Stress-timing as only rhythm prototype (Dauer 1987, Bertinetto 1988).

–   **Metrical typologies**:
(2)   Lotz (1960):
  1.   pure syllabic meters
  2.   complex meters: syllabo-prosodic
      2.1   dynamic type: heavy vs. light syllables
      2.2   quantitative type: long vs. short syllables
      2.3   tonal type: contour vs. flat tones on syllables
–   Underlying assumptions:
  –   Dominant prosodic category determines metrical type.
  –   If there is no dominant category, then pure syllabic meter.

(3)   Levý (1971):

    1.   accentuating verse: fixed number of beats

    2.   accentual-syllabic verse = foot verse: fixed number of accents and syllables

    3.   syllabic verse: fixed number of syllables

–   Based on isochrony types of Pike (1945). Isochrony of lines metrical target.

(4)   Tsur (1998): Metrical types in the western tradition

    1.   syllabic: fixed number of syllables per line

    2.   accentual: fixed number of accents per line

    3.   quantitative: fixed number of feet and fixed arrangement of long and short syllables within feet

    4.   syllabotonic: fixed number of syllables and accents

(5)   Hanson & Kiparsky (1996):

Parametric theory of meter: μ, σ, Σ or ω maximal size of metrical positions.

Claim: Universality of metrical feet. (Cf. also Fabb & Halle 2008.)

→   No pure syllable- or mora-counting meters.

(6)   Golston (1998), Golston & Riad (2000), Hayes (2000): OT metrics:

Binarity constraints, faithfulness between metrical positions and syllables.

(7)   Aroui (2009):

    1.   tonal meters:

        –   patterning frame: Chinese

        –   tone counting frame: ?

    2.   moraic meters:

        –   patterning frame: Classical Greek, Classical Arabic...

        –   mora counting frame: Japanese...

    3.   accentual meters:

        –   syllabo-tonic counting frame: English, Russian, Italian...

        –   stress counting frame: Old English, Icelandic...

    4.   syllabic meters:

        –   counting frame: French, Spanish, Hungarian folk verse...

–   **Relationship between rhythm type and metrical type:**

    –   Poetic meter as "artistic reranking of the natural order of constraints" (Golston & Riad 2000: 107).

    –   Natural Versification (Sapir 1921, Vennemann 1995).

– But: Foreign metrical influences in art verse (Brogan 1993: 779).

– But: Degrees of freedom in the mapping of phonological units to metrical positions (Küper 1988: 254).

Cf. different phonological instantiations of unmarked eight-position verse scheme in childlore (Burling 1966, Noel, Lindner & Dufter 2002, Dufter & Noel 2009).

→ Assumptions of Golston & Riad (2000) questionable.

2 'Syllable-timing' as a metrical type?

– Metricians:
Since there are languages with syllable-based rhythm, pure syllabic meters are to be expected.

– Phoneticians and phonologists:
Since there are pure syllabic meters, syllable-based rhythm is to be expected:

"Even if it found no other support, the fundamental justification of this dichotomy [stress- vs. syllable-timing, AD] might rest on the opposition of the two main systems of versification, respectively based on 'stress-counting' and 'syllable-counting'." (Bertinetto 1988: 60)

– Alternative reasoning: Pure syllabic meters exist because the uniform number of syllables is a metrical *gestalt*.

– Our claim: In longer lines, syllabic count *alone* is never sufficient for meter.

– Comparative poetological evidence:
Purported instances of pure syllabic meters turn out to not to be so:

  – Mordvinian (only example in Lotz 1960): additional metrical groupings (Jakobson & Lotz 1979)

  – Polish (Levý 1971): fixed obligatory caesurae (Stankiewicz & Brogan 1993)

  – Welsh *englyn penfyr*: obligatory caesura (Dunn & Brogan 1993)

  – Ganda (Bantu): moraic organization (Katamba & Cooke 1987)

  – Haussa: moraic (Schuh 1989)

  – Classical Somali: moraic (Johnson 1979)

  – Yoruba (syllable-timing according to Abercrombie 1967): tonal regularities, syntactic parallelism (Ọlabimtan 1977)

  – Tamil: moraic (Balasubramanian 1980)

  – Dyirbal *gama* poetry: accentual regularities (Dixon & Koch 1996)

  – Ponapean [Micronesian]: moraic (Fischer 1959)

→   So-called 'pure syllabic meters' are either moraic (Ganda, Haussa, Somali, Tamil, Ponapean), accentual-syllabic (Dyirbal), or regulated by tone (Yoruba) or fixed caesurae (Mordvinian, Polish, Welsh).

–   Cf. comparative poetics: pure syllable-counting meters "esoteric"
    (Brogan 1993: 770).

–   Lines of more than 9 syllables have internal groupings. These groupings are recognized as such by the members of the respective literary traditions
    (Küper 1988: 88).

3   Rhythm and meter in French and Spanish

–   **French:** considerable pre-boundary lengthening, stable across speakers and speaking style (Fletcher 1991).

–   Phrase-based rhythm, rather than syllable-based rhythm, as a prosodic type
    (Kleinhenz 1996).

–   Cf. marked pre-boundary lengthening in babbling of French infants
    (Levitt & Wang 1991).

–   Phonological status of durational marking of phrase endings is reflected in metrics:

    "Unlike the English caesura, the French is neither pause nor break, nor an event which takes place *after* the caesural syllable; it is a feature *of* the caesural syllable [...]." (Scott 1998: 47, his emphasis)

–   While syllable count is indeed fixed in French metrical verse, there is some room left for variable metrical syllable count:
    –   Diphthong vs. hiatus in words like *lion* and (in post-Classical times) *V.V* word boundaries.
    –   Metrical licences: *avec* alongside *avecques*.
    –   Non-realization of (underlying) schwa (in post-Classical times).
    –   Variable apocope (in popular genres).

(8)   Caesura constraint:
      (Octosyllabic), decasyllabic and *alexandrin* verse in French needs to have a caesura.

(9)   *N'offrez rien au lecteur que ce qui peut lui plaire.*
      Ayez pour la cadence une oreille sévère :
      Que toujours, dans vos vers, le sens, coupant les mots,
      Suspende l'hémistiche, en marque le repos.
      (Boileau, *L'Art poétique* (1669) I, 103–106)

'Do not offer anything to the reader than that which cam please him.// Do have a strict ear for the cadence.// That always, in your verses, the half-line, which cuts the words,// Suspend the sense, and mark its rest.' (my transl.)

(10) Caesura-accent alignment constraint:
A metrical caesura position in French must correspond to a phrase-final accent/a word boundary.

(11) Caesura-*sandhi constraint:
No *liaison* and *enchaînement* across caesura boundaries. (Cf. Coenen 1998.)

(12) Caesura-syntax constraint in Classical French verse (violable):
The caesura boundary must correspond to the most important syntactic boundary.

– Violations do occur, but for a reason:

(13) *Mourons. De tant d'horreurs qu'un trépas me délivre.*
Est-ce un malheur si grand que de cesser de vivre? (Racine, *Phèdre* (1677) III,3)
'Death only can remove //This weight of horror. Is it such misfortune //To cease to live?' (transl. Boswell)

– Besides *alexandrins* with mid-caesura (6+6), there are also 4+4+4 *alexandrins*:

(14) *Je veux, sans que la mort ose me secourir*
Toujours aimer, toujours souffrir, toujours mourir
(Corneille, *Suréna* (1674) 267–268)
'I want to – without death daring to aid me – always love, always suffer, always die.' (my transl.)

– Different caesura types are associated with different poetic traditions (cf. *césure épique*, *césure lyrique*).

→ Caesura placement as a semiotic ressource! (Cf. also Verluyten 1982.)

– Metalinguistic evidence for phrase-based rhythm since 16th c.:

"[…] *ma tante a disné* se prononce *ma tanta disné*; *mon père et ma mère ont soupé* se prononce *monperetmamerontsoupé*. Toutefois, en faisant une légère pause on peut dire: *mon père, et ma mère ont soupé*. Mais si l'on s'habitue à cette prononciation on comprendra les livres, mais bien peu la conversation des Français. (Sainliens 1580, *apud* Livet 1859: 502)

'*Ma tante a disné* is pronounced *ma tanta disné*; *mon père et ma mère ont soupé* is pronounced *monperetmamerontsoupé*. In fact, one can also say, making a small pause: *mon père, et ma mère ont soupé*. But if one gets acustomed to that pronunciation, one will understand books, but hardly the conversation of Frenchmen.'

→   Pre-boundary lengthening and intonational marking of left phrasal edges (Hualde 2003) do not disturb but rather establish rhythm.

→   Phrase-based rhythm of Modern French since 16th c.(Dufter 2003) .
      Cf. strict observation of caesura from *Pleiade* times (mid 16th c.).

–   Old and Middle French: higher prosodic relevance of stresses/accents.

–   **Spanish:** Phonetic characterizations of rhythm range from "segment-timed" (Pointon 1980) to predominantly stress-timed (Kimura 1999).

      Rhythmically relevant phonological characteristics include lexically contrastive stresses and pragmatically contrastive pitch accents. (Hualde 2003).

–   In Medieval Spanish, accentual verse of varying number of syllables is much more frequent than in other medieval varieties of Romance, especially so in the *arte de juglaría* designed for oral recitation
      (Henríquez Ureña 1933, Baehr 1996: 453).

–   Conversely, syllable count is characteristic of learned genres (e.g. *mester de clerecía*).

→   Less prosodic change from Old to Modern Spanish than from Old to Modern French.

–   Whence the ubiquituous assumption of pure syllabic Romance verse?
      –   Fixed syllable count in epic poetry of medieval Romance
            –   as imitation of Christian Latin meters (Lote 1949: xxix) and/or
            –   as an intentional deviation from Classical Latin meters. (Baehr 1996)
      –   Beda's *De arte metrica* makes syllable count the defining criterion of metricality.

–   Metricians pay much attention to accent distribution:
      Cf. systematic genre-related tendencies of trochaic, dactylic and mixed accent patterning in Spanish octosyllabic verse. (Navarro Tomás 1973).

–   Predominance of trochaic octosyllabic verse in Spanish from 1300 to Romanticism (Baehr 1964: 64).

–   Caesurae less important in Spanish metrics.

3.1 Old French and Old Spanish octosyllabic verse

–   Within the isosyllabic meters, octosyllabic verse is by far the most popular in French and Spanish.

–   In Medieval French octosyllabic verse, accentual regularity decreases over time (Noyer 2002).

(15) Iambicity/Trochaicity: (Noyer 2002)
% perfectly iambic/trochaic lines of all lines

– Assumption for Old Spanish: monosyllables may be either weak or strong.

(16) Examples of octosyllabic lines with perfect mapping of accents and metrically strong positions (metrically strong syllables underlined):

    a. OFr *Cist <u>ont</u> grant <u>joie</u> <u>fait</u> de <u>lui</u>* [iambic] (*Troie* 2113)

    b. OSp *<u>por</u>que <u>se</u> a<u>ma</u>ron <u>mu</u>cho* [trochaic] (*Hist-Troy*)

(17) Examples of imperfect mapping of accents and metrically strong positions:

    a. OFr *Et <u>que</u> sa <u>honte</u> ne li <u>vengent</u>* (*Troie* 2122)

    b. OSp *en <u>tierras</u> d'es<u>trañas</u> <u>gentes</u>* (*Hist-Troy*)

(18) Complexity of a line (Kiparsky 1977: 195, Noyer 2002: 129)
The complexity of a line is measured by the number of mismatches in it.

(19) Metrical evaluation of samples of OFr *matière de Rome* verse (Noyer 2002)

	Work	Date	Iambicity	Complexity
	Roman de Thèbes	1150	71.4	.3226
	Piramus et Tisbé	1150	75.0	.2646
	Eneas	1160	67.6	.3606
	Lai de Narcisus	1160	73.2	.3346
→	*Roman de Troie*	1165	65.8	.4126
	Eracle	1165	73.6	.2926
	Philomena	1172	57.0	.5246
	Prose		41.9	.6636

– These *romans d'antiquité* are significantly less metrically complex than other OFr genres (Noyer 2002).

– Comparing the OFr *Roman de Troie* and the OSp *Historia troyana polimétrica*:

– OSp text is a (free) translation of OFr text, with adaptation to rhythmical (and metrical) character of Spanish:
"[…] la originalidad métrica de la *Historia Troyana* se aprecia por el hecho de que […] sólo uno de los once trozos conservados de la *Troyana*, el último, se halla en pareados, y esos son octosílabos, es decir, están adoptados a la índole rítmica de la lengua española." (*Hist-Troy*: xix [Menéndez Pidal])

'The metrical originality of the *Historia Troyana* is manifested by the fact that only one of the eleven extant pieces of the *Troyana*, the last one, is in couplets, and these are octosyllabic, that is, adapted to the rhythmic character of the Spanish language.' (my transl.)

(20)   Metrical evaluation of 120 line sample of OSp *Historia Troyana*

Work	Date	Trochaicity	Complexity
→ *Hist-troy*	c1270	59.2	.550

→   The trochaic mapping of accents to metrical positions is almost as good in the trochaic OSp translation than in the OFr iambic original.

Most deviations in the OSp text occur line-initially. No deviations at the end of lines.

–   No diachronic loosening of accentual regularity in Spanish octosyllabic verse (Cano 1931, Suchier 1956, Myers 1967).

3.2   Renaissance French *alexandrins* and Renaissance Spanish *endecasílabo*

–   Fr *alexandrins* and Sp *endécasílabos* have 12 metrical syllabic positions (and allow for posttonic syllables at the end of lines and of half-lines).

–   For the history of verseform, the use of the longer meters by Du Bellay in France and by Juan de Mena in Spain has come to be regarded as canonical.

(21)   Metrical evaluation of 160 line sample of Du Bellay, *Antiquitez* (1558), II–

5+5	5+6	5+7	6+5	6+6	7+5	others
0	2	0	1	156	0	1

(22)   Metrical evaluation of 160 line sample of Juan de Mena, *Fortuna* (1444)

5+5	5+6	6+5	6+6	7+5
3	56	7	93	1

(23)   *Como no creo // que fuessen menores* (5+6)
que los de Africano // los fechos del Çid, (6+5)
nin que feroçes // menos en la lid (5+5)
(Juan de Mena, *Laberinto de Fortuna* (1444), c. 4)
'Since I do not believe that that deeds of the Çid would be minor than those of Africanus, nor less brave in the battle...' (my transl.)

→   Less variability in caesura placement in Renaissance French than in Renaissance Spanish.

4   Conclusion: Verseform as independent evidence

→   The emergence of a phrase-based phonological rhythm in Modern French is mirrored by the growing importance of caesurae as an integral part of metrical form.

→   By contrast, accentual alternation continues to be of significant importance in Modern Spanish verse.

→   The diverging phonological evolution of French as compared to Spanish is reflected by different metrical constraints.

→   Both at the level of individual languages and in typology, metrics offers a window into rhythmic organization.

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