

The lives of Latin laterals: reconstructing a three-way surface specification

CLEAR AND DARK L

- Feature? Privative? Equipollent? Gestures?
- [-back] vs. [+back]?
- [coronal] vs. [dorsal]?
- Palatal TB gesture vs. velar TB gesture?
- DOES A THREE-WAY SURFACE SPECIFICATION CONSTITUTE EVIDENCE FOR EQUIPOLLENT FEATURES?

LATIN CLEAR AND DARK L

- Non-contrastive clear/dark reconstructed by:
- Grammarians' statements
- Sound change = colouring of preceding vowel (archaic Latin – 7th to 3rd cents. BC)
- Three surface categories:
 - dark /l/ in codas
 - clear /l/ in geminate /ll/
 - /l/ with variable tongue body position in onsets
- Surface specifications?

WHAT ARE DERIVED SPECIFICATIONS OF /l/?

- UR of /l/: presumably not specified for [back]
- Surface alternation: clear, dark, contextually darkened
- Ternary contrast in [back]: + - Ø
- Equipollent feature? Vaux (2010) summary of evidence for ternary features:
- Brussels Flemish height inversion, Turkish: voicing alternations, Phonetic interpolation effects, Permanent underspecification, Phonetic vacillation
- On ternary [back], see Turkish back harmony (see Kim 2002)

GESTURES

- Sproat & Fujimura (1993): bigestural /l/
- Apical and dorsal gestures
- TB gesture with approximant-level Constriction Degree with differing Constriction Locations:
- Dark in coda: velar
- Clear in geminate: palatal
- Onset: remains underspecified

EVIDENCE I: GRAMMARIANS

Pliny the Elder 1st cent AD

- plēnus* 'full' = dark /l/
- word- and syllable-final position
- exilis* 'thin' = clear /l/
- in geminate /ll/
- medius* 'middle, ambiguous' = non-dark /l/
- Elsewhere
- /l/ was contextually clear/dark in a gradient fashion in onsets – evidence from V-colouring...

EVIDENCE VI: NO COLOURING BEFORE GEMINATE /ll/

Geminate /ll/: no signs of dark resonance

- agellus* 'little field; farm', *velle* 'to want' vs. *volō*
- No effect on initial syllables: *fallō* 'I deceive'
- Regular closed syllable reduction /a/ to /e/ in internal syllables: *fefelli* 'I deceived (perf.)'
- NO fronting: *ampulla* 'flask', *pullus* 'young chicken'

N.B. Ladefoged & Maddieson (1996: 360-364): velarisation anchored at beginning of primary articulation, palatalisation at release

CONCLUSION: Similar behaviour to /ll/ indicates /ll/ also palatalised, not contextually, but specified as clear

FURTHER EVIDENCE

- Latin simplified superheavy V:CC to V:C
- But Latin permitted /Vll/
- However, simplification to /Vl/ occurred only in one context: when followed by /i/
- mille* 'thousand', but *milia* 'thousands (pl.)', and *villa* 'rural house', but *villicus* 'farm manager'
- Misinterpretation of palatal quality by listener

EVIDENCE II: COLOURING BEFORE CODA /l/

Short V > /u/ before coda /l/

- Word-internally
- /e/: **seplitos* > *seplitos* > *seplutus* 'buried'
 - /a/: **ensalsos* > *insulsus* 'unsalted, dull'
 - /o/: **obkaltōd* > *occulōd* 'in secret'
- Word-finally: **konsel* > *cōnsul* 'consul'
- Even in initial syllables – stressed in archaic Latin: unusual for Latin
- *weltes* > *vultis* 'you (pl.) want'
 - *elkos* > *ulcus* 'ulcer'
 - /i/ resisted backing: *silva* 'wood'
- Not contextual: /l/ was equally dark before any C
- CONCLUSION: Coda /l/ was consistently (v) dark

EVIDENCE V: NO COLOURING BEFORE ONSET /l/ PRECEDING /l/

- /l/ before /i/: no colouring
- V retained its quality in initial syllables
 - Reduced to /i/ internally, regular in internal open syllables in archaic Latin
 - /i/ *facilis* 'easy'; /e/ **dehēlis* > *dehēlis* 'weak', *gelidus* 'frozen'; /a/ *alius* 'other'; /o/ *folium* 'leaf'; /u/ *mulier* 'woman'
- CONCLUSION: /l/ before /ll/ was not dark
- Plausibly palatalised before /i/, [l'] = 'clear'

EVIDENCE III: COLOURING BEFORE ONSET /l/ PRECEDING /a, o, u/

Short V > /u/ before internal /la, lo, lu/

- /a/: Gk. *epistolā* → Lat. *epistula* 'letter'
 - /o/: **amb'ik'alos* > *anculus* 'manservant'
 - /u/: **konseluerunt* > *cōnsuluerunt* 'they took counsel' (CONSOLVERVNT 186 BC)
- BUT > /o/ (not /u/) after [w, j]
- filiolus* 'little son', *parvulus* 'tiny'
- Initial syllables: backing only to /o/
- *welo:* > *volō* 'I want', **elaiwa* > *oliva* 'olive'
 - /i/ resisted backing: *pila* 'ball'
- No colouring when dorsal consonant preceding: *celōx* 'cutter', *scelus* 'crime'
 - Blocking: fronting of the preceding velar plosive provides robust perceptual cues for following front V: [kɛ] and [gɛ]
- CONCLUSION: Onset /l/ before /a, o, u/ was dark, but not as dark as coda /l/

EVIDENCE IV: COLOURING BEFORE ONSET /l/ PRECEDING /e/

Short internal V > /o, u/ before /le/

- > /u/ before /le/, but more conditions restricting backing to /o/
 - opulentus*, *corpulentus*, *fraudentus*
 - violentus*, *vinolentus*, *sanguinolentus*
 - V dissimilated in height from /w/ in the preceding syllable: Broader condition than before /la, lo, lu/
 - > /o/ before /le/, but > /u/ by analogy, etc.
 - abolēscō*, *adolēscō*, *exolēscō*, *inolēscō* < **-alēsk-*
 - abolēre*, *indolēs*, *subolēs*, *prōlēs* < **-alē-*
 - Herculēs* (very short epenthetic V in origin)
 - adulēscentēs* 'young man, girl' (cf. *adultus*)
 - Counter-e.g.s: *sterilēscō*, *privilēgium*, *pestilentia*, *sacrilēgus*
 - Analogy, morphology, later formations
- Initial syllables: no evidence for backing; could simply be an accidental gap (*celox* 'swift')
- /i/ resisted backing: *silentus* 'silent'
- CONCLUSION: /l/ was not as dark before /e/ than before /a, o, u, C/ but still triggered backing

SUMMARY

BEFORE:	Coda /l/	/la, lo, lu/	/le/	/le:/	/li/	Geminate /ll/
Internal σ	> /u/	> /u/	> /u/	> /o/	No change	No change
Exceptions	None	> /o/ when w, j directly preceding	> /o/ when w/ in preceding syllable	sometimes > /u/, but easily explained	N/A	N/A
Initial σ	> /u/	> /o/	No change	No change	No change	No change
Exceptions	/i/ remains	(1) /i/ remains; (2) dorsal C blocking	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

SPECIFICATIONS

PRIVATIVE ANALYSIS?

- Privative [back] alone does not capture three-way surface contrast
- Privative [back] and [front] might, but fails to capture logical mutual exclusivity:
 - Dark = [back]
 - Clear = [front]
- Underspecified = neither feature
- [CORONAL] versus [DORSAL]? N.B. /l/ is always coronal
- Clear [l] would be [CORONAL] alone
- Dark [l] would be [CORONAL]-[DORSAL]
- BUT what captures 'clear' versus 'underspecified'? Simple privative analysis fails (possible use of [high])

Pliny's term	<i>exilis</i>	<i>medius</i>	<i>plēnus</i>
Categorical specification	[-back]	Underspecified for [back]	
Gradient Phonetic realisation	Clear/ Palatalised	Dark	Darker
	Geminate [ll]		Coda [l]
	[li]	[le:]	[lu]
		[le]	[lo:]
		[la]	

Gradience in onsets suggests surface underspecification

- Latin /l/: dark in coda, clear in geminate, underspecified for darkness in onset, with surface gradience
- [-BACK] - [FRONT] Privative features inelegant (but possible) or render analysis tricky, even using feature combinations
- [CORONAL] - [DORSAL]
- Equipollent feature is a good starting-point with parallels
- Bigestural account might have problem if onset /l/ deemed to have no TB gesture (why does it colour at all?)
- Gestural analysis with TB gesture unspecified for CL a possible approach
- Parallels in modern languages? How should phonetic/psycho-/neurolinguistic evidence be used to ascertain derived feature settings?

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