

## Phonemic overlap in Canarian Spanish – the case of postvocalic voicing

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Spanish is notorious for its vast array of leniting sound changes – its consonants are not particularly stable and undergo a series of processes analysed jointly under the umbrella term 'weakening'. By the well-known process of aspiration, *s* is debuccalised and even elided in syllable-final position. Spirantisation forces *b d g* to become weaker spirants or approximants [β ð ɣ] with a variable degree of aperture (Harris 1969). Syllable-final fricatives tend to undergo voicing, while word-final consonants are devoiced, spirantised or lost. All of these changes have led to an uneven distribution of sounds: most Spanish dialects lack a contrast in fricatives, voiceless *f s x* being the only phonemic units. Voiced variants of these emerge only as context-dependent allophones. At the same time, spirantisation weakens the contrast between voiced and voiceless stops, which is maintained only phrase-initially (*dos* 'two' vs. *tos* 'cough') and word-medially after a homorganic sonorant (*manda* 'commands' vs. *manta* 'blanket'). All other instances of underlying *b d g* turn into [β ð ɣ]. Interestingly, the resultant distributional gap is 'filled' in at least one Spanish dialect.

In this paper, I present novel data from a dialect spoken in Galdar on Gran Canaria, which show postvocalic voicing of *p t k*. Most importantly, the data cannot be analysed as intervocalic or intersonorant voicing due to the asymmetry between the left-hand and the right-hand environments. It appears that a consonantal sonorant on the left (including glides) does not trigger voicing while the same context on the right does not inhibit the process as long as there is a vowel to the left.

a.	a[ <b>b</b> ]asionado	'enthusiastic'	b.	im[ <b>p</b> ]ortante	'important'
	fone[ <b>d</b> ]ica	'phonetics'		en[ <b>t</b> ]onces	'so / then'
	la fre[ <b>g</b> ]uencia	'the frequency'		en un ban[ <b>k</b> ]o	'in a bank'
	tengo una [b]rima	'I have a cousin'		un [p]ueblecito	'a small village'
	juntos y [d]al	'together and so on'		el [t]riple	'three times'
	otra [g]lase de	'other type of'		super [k]ómodo	'very convenient'

The process applies both inside words and across word boundaries, in the same token as spirantisation (except that the latter extends to post-[r l] contexts). Voicing is blocked after vowels which become adjacent to the stop as a result of elision (both *r* and *s* can be deleted word-finally). Thus: *e(s)tas son la(s) caracteri(s)tica(s)* 'these are the features' does not present voicing of the stop (in bold) after deleting coda *s*. Neither does the phrase *die(z) primo(s)* 'ten cousins' or *por pensa(r) tontería(s)* 'for thinking about silly things' after eliding *s* and *r*, respectively. Moreover, voicing is blocked if a voiceless segment stands to the right (*cara[k]terísticas* 'features'). Coda obstruents undergo other types of weakening in this position, e.g. spirantisation, lack of plosion or elision.

Interestingly, the process described here very much resembles historical changes. In French, lenition started with the spirantisation of voiced stops, followed by the voicing of obstruents, and the resultant sounds were then spirantised and lost completely (except [β] > [v]). The context for voicing was exactly the same as in modern Canarian: *aprilem* > *avril* 'April' *fratre* > *frère* 'brother' but *rumpere* > *rompre* 'to break' (Bichakjian 1972). In Spanish, voiced stops were spirantised and then lost (*credo* > *creo* 'I think'), while voiceless stops were voiced and then spirantised (*lupum* > modern Spanish *lo[β]o*, Lloyd 1987), and tend to be elided (*habla(d)o* 'spoken'). It seems, therefore, that we have come full circle with the lenition process, at least in some part of the Spanish-speaking world.

The treatment of lenition in generative phonology ranges from autosegmental feature spreading and underspecification, through positional markedness in OT, to articulatory-, effort- and perception-based analyses (e.g. Harris 1969; Mascaró 1987; Lubowicz 2002; Alber 2014; Gurevich 2014; Kirchner 2001; Piñeros 2002; Kaplan 2010). The main problem is how to incorporate various types of phonetic and functional grounding into a formal phonological framework. Looking at the whole of the apparent chain shifts observable as lenition patterns from the contrast-preserving perspective, I will discuss the systemic consequences of sound change in Canarian Spanish: phonemic overlap (Bloch 1941) and the narrowing of perceptual distinctness between sounds. My OT analysis of these facts presents articulatory, perceptual and functional factors consequentially, without incorporating them into the tableaux in the form of (non-categorical) constraints.