Overwriting Does Not Optimize in Nonconcatenative Word Formation

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Overwriting Does Not Optimize in Nonconcatenative Morphology

Andrew Ira Nevins

Overwriting is modeled in Optimality Theory as a competition for a position within the derivational base (Alderete et al. 1999, Ussishkin 1997). Faithfulness constraints that are evaluated on the basis of segment counting predict a typology of languages in which (a) optimization dictates that the relative size of the affixal material determines whether it will win out and “overwrite” the base, and (b) optimization ensures that if both the affix and base material can surface without incurring phonotactic violations, this should be optimal. Both predictions are wrong. Hebrew denominal verb formation and Hindi echo reduplication demonstrate cases of nonconcatenative derivation in which overwriting is better understood as rule-induced change.

Keywords: Melodic Overwriting, Hindi echo reduplication, shm-reduplication, Fixed-Segment Reduplication, Hebrew denominal verb formation

1 Introduction

In nonderivational theories of phonology, fixed-segment reduplication and templatic vowel-consonant intercalation are two nonconcatenative word-formation processes that must be analyzed as the result of two input morphemes mapping onto one output morpheme. Fixed-segment reduplication (FSR) in English, Hindi, and Turkish (among others) is a process in which a phrase is uttered and followed by a copy with a different initial consonant (šm-, v-, and m-, respectively), yielding a meaning of associative plurality or derision. Alderete et al. (1999) have characterized the phonology of FSR as the result of constraints that do not allow both the base and the fixed segment to fully surface in the reduplicant. The templatic process of Hebrew denominal verb formation (DVF) is one in which the consonants of the input morpheme are intercalated with the characteristic vocalism of a verbal binyan. Ussishkin (1997), pursuing a word-based Semitic morphology, has

I effusively acknowledge Michael Wagner, my collaborator in our joint work on fixed-segment reduplication presented at the LOT-Utrecht Conference in July 2001. Thanks are due to participants there, as well as at the 30th North American Conference on Afroasiatic Linguistics. I am particularly grateful to Morris Halle, Justin Fitzpatrick, Eric Raimy, and Bert Vaux, who inspired many of the points made here.

1 Here and henceforth, this term refers to cases of fixed segmentism with total reduplication. The problems to be discussed remain largely similar for FSR with partial reduplication, as in Turkish cip-ciliz (Kelepir 2000).

2 FSR is not limited to single words; as Lidz (2001) shows for Kannada, and Nevins and Vaux (2003a) have found for English, it can freely apply to verb phrases that include the object (e.g., try it) and conjoined noun phrases (e.g., cats and dogs).

3 In Turkish and Hindi, echo reduplication of X yields a meaning of ‘X and the like’; for a semantic characterization of representative plurality in other morphological contexts, see Den Besten 1996 on Afrikaans and Nakanishi and Tomioka 2004 on Japanese.
analyzed the phonology of DVF as the result of constraint interaction that prevents the output from containing both the vowels of the related noun and the vowels of the binyan.

Constraint-based input-output mappings that explicitly reject the notion of morphophonological processes must characterize the mismatch between the base (to FSR or DVF) and the output (the reduplicant, with fixed segment(s), or the denominal verb, with binyan vowels), which includes nonconcatenative affixal material, through the mechanism of (Melodic) Overwriting. In the Optimality Theory (OT) implementation of Overwriting, the base and affixal material “compete” for realization in the same position, with constraint evaluation, in the form of violation counting, arbitrating in favor of outputs that are fully faithful to the affixal material.

I will profile the logic of Overwriting and demonstrate that the analyses face two problems. The first is based on their implementation in terms of violation counting. Section 2 shows that variation in the relative size of the base and affixal material leads to incorrect predictions for Šm-reduplication, given existing and reordered constraint rankings. Section 3 demonstrates the second problem, which is based on the formulation of constraints that impose competition of affixal and base segments and cannot enforce “all-or-nothing” realization of the affix, and thus turn out to be empirically inadequate. As they stand, Alderete et al.’s analyses cannot account for Hindi FSR and Ussishkin’s analysis cannot account for Hebrew DVF when the monosyllabic noun’s vowel is nonhigh. Section 4 contains an alternative account for Hindi FSR, and section 5 concludes that operation-based formulations of these processes face neither of these problems.

2 Incorrect Winners Based on Relative Sizes

The constraint-based implementation of Overwriting can be schematized as follows:

- **A**: The segmental material of the affix.
- **B**: The segmental material of the base.
- **P**: The position into which both A and B are competing to surface.
- **C**: A set of markedness constraints that prohibit both A and B from fully surfacing.
- **F**: A faithfulness ranking that, given interaction with C, results in A surfacing rather than B.

The logic of Overwriting is supposed to guarantee that A always surfaces, at the expense of B. Alderete et al.’s characterization of English Šm-reduplication (pp. 355ff.) for *table-Šmable* is that “[t]he [fixed segment] is an affix that is realized simultaneously with the reduplicative copy, overwriting part of it” (p. 328). The constraint interaction is depicted in tableau (2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/table-RED-Šm/</th>
<th>MAX_{IO}</th>
<th>MAX_{BR}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. table-Šmable</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. table-table</td>
<td>Šm!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Šmable-table</td>
<td>t!</td>
<td>Šm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Šmable-Šmable</td>
<td>t!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The competition for reduplicant-initial position is thus between /sˇm-/ and [t] of the base. The instantiation of the general schema in (1) for FSR is shown in (3).

\[(3) A = \text{the fixed segment /sˇm/}
\quad B = \text{base onset /t/}
\quad P = \text{the onset of the first } \sigma \text{ of the reduplicant}
\quad C = \text{high-ranked PHON-CON and DEP}
\quad F = \text{MAXIO } \gg \text{ MAXBR}\]

Though Alderete et al. do not provide PHON-CON, it is safe to assume that it is a family of constraints on phonotactically ill-formed onsets such as [sˇmt] and that DEP legislates against epenthesis that would enable accommodation of both A and B (e.g., ˇsmitable).

Though the analysis in terms of two interacting constraints appears relatively simple, it immediately incurs a typological misprediction. The reader need only flip the columns in tableau (2) and inspect candidate (d) to verify that the reranking MAXBR \(\gg\) MAXIO will yield ˇsmable-ˇsmable as the optimal output in ‘‘English-Prime,’’ in which the fixed segment ‘‘backcopies’’ into the base. Such a case is reminiscent of the ‘‘Kager-Hamilton problem’’ discussed by McCarthy and Prince (1999) for Diyari prosodic size requirements, in which ranking FAITHBR over FAITHIO pathologically shrinks the base. To my knowledge, there is no language of the English-Prime sort. This errant FSR pattern is the result of the violability of optimality-theoretic constraints, in this case MAXIO. The full realization of the base in the first copy and the full realization of the fixed segment in the second copy are inviolable properties of ˇsm-reduplication.

Proponents of factorial typology, who maintain that all possible OT rankings yield possible languages, even if they are not attested, may possibly object that English-Prime is a possible language, but that extralinguistic constraints on recoverability of the input in the lexicon lead to nonexistence of languages that obliterate the identity of the input. However, recoverability will not be compromised in English-Prime for the input string. Because candidates are evaluated with respect to MAXBR by means of segment counting, when the base has more onset consonants than the reduplicant, ˇsm-reduplication of string in such a language would actually produce string-string, as shown in tableau (4).

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4 The status of ˇsm- as a prefix is guaranteed by Alderete et al.’s ALIGN-L(Prefix, PrWd) (p. 356); although I assume that the same proposal will extend to Urdu-Hindi in section 3, I must point out that it is insufficient for the English data, as many speakers overwrite the onset of the stressed syllable, regardless of initiality, as in obsčéne-obsˇméne (Nevins and Vaux 2003a).

5 The dialect of Pig Latin that produces woven-way for the input oven (Nevins and Vaux 2003b) should not be considered as an example of fixed-segment backcopying, as the glide is epenthetic for vowel-initial words and does not constitute a separate morpheme.
Since the onset consonants of $B$ outnumber those of $A$, $\text{MAXBR}$ will favor the candidate that totally fails to realize the fixed segments.\textsuperscript{6} Since Alderete et al.’s analysis is designed around cases where $|B| \leq |A|$, and implemented as a competition that the string with more segments should always win, this result is unavoidable.

Recall the profile of Overwriting: $A$ and $B$ compete for position $P$, and $A$ is favored. Subsequently, apparent “Overwriting” of $A$ where $B$ should otherwise surface ensues. Of course, the preferential surfacing of $A$ will be trivially victorious when $B$ is null. Since the mechanism of Overwriting relies on base-reduplicant correspondence, it will be helpful to introduce another element, $P'$, into the Overwriting schema.

(5) $P$: A position into which both $A$ and $B$ are competing to surface. (Given $F$ and $C$, $A$ should win in $P$ when $P$ is the onset of the reduplicant and $|A| > |B|$.)

$P'$: Another position, in correspondence with $P$, into which both $A$ and $B$ are competing to surface. (Given $F$ and $C$, $A$ should win in $P'$ when $P'$ is the onset of the base and $|A| > |B|$.)

In the case where $B$ is $\emptyset$, $F$ ensures that $A$ will win in $P$—there is simply no competition. The unexpected (and unwanted) result is that $A$ can win in $P'$ as well. A concrete example occurs when the base lacks an initial onset. Tableau (6) illustrates that Alderete et al.’s rankings will select not only the optimal $\text{eel-šmeel}$, but $\text{šmeel-šmeel}$ as well (mispredicted winners are indicated by $\Box$).

(6) Erroneous prediction when $B = \emptyset$ in $\text{eel-šmeel}$

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
/eel-RED-šm/ & $\text{MAXIO}$ & $\text{MAXBR}$ \\
\hline
a. eel-šmeel & & \checkmark \\
\hline
b. eel-eel & $\text{šm!}$ & \\
\hline
c. šmeel-eel & & $\text{šm!}$ \\
\hline
d. šmeel-šmeel & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

In this scenario, multiple winners emerge; since there is no onset in $P'$, there is no competition with base material, and $A$ can surface there in addition to $P$. Of course, there are imaginable

\textsuperscript{6} I have omitted further possibilities, such as $\text{šring-string}$, in which base and affix consonants are mixed, by granting English-Prime a high-ranking $\text{CONTIGUITYBR}$ for present purposes.
“fixes” to the mispredictions above, but the general methodology of having to add constraints post hoc for V-initial words, a quite ordinary example, points to the fact that Overwriting makes it easy to overlook many possibilities that correspondence theory generates (see Walther 2001 for extended discussion). The fact remains that although there are many relative sizes of $A$ and $B$, this variation never plays a role in the outcome. Though any particular Overwriting analysis can be made to require the correct winner, it remains unexplained why the output is so limited compared to what is made available. It could be the case that languages determined the output of FSR as in (7), but it’s not.

\begin{align*}
(7) & |A| > |B|; \text{ input } eel \rightarrow \text{sˇmeel-sˇmeel} \\
& |A| = |B|; \text{ input } plate \rightarrow \text{plate-sˇmate} \\
& |A| < |B|; \text{ input } string \rightarrow \text{string-string}
\end{align*}

In summary, the generalization that in FSR, the fixed segment replaces the first consonant of the second copy cannot be captured by a single statement of an Overwriting grammar; instead, it must be the conspiratorial result of many violable constraints within a (perhaps fixed) ranking.

Before proceeding, I note that the notion of $P$ as a “position of competition” does not exist in many alternatives to Overwriting. For instance, in an analysis whereby fixed segmentism is the result of a morphophonological modification of an input string, there is not competition; there is change. There are many process-based formulations of FSR that avoid the operations above; it is not important to choose among them here, though in section 4 I will indicate one feasible approach.

### 3 The Wrong Winner: Licit Combinations of $A$ and $B$

In the previous section, we considered cases in which $B$ was either null or larger than $A$, resulting in unwanted predictions. In this section, we will examine cases in which $C$, the constraints prohibiting both $A$ and $B$ from surfacing in $P$, go wholly unviolated, thus skirting the logic of Overwriting as all-or-nothing competition. First, consider the role of $C$ in English sˇm-reduplication: PHON-CON disallows onsets such as [sˇmt], as /sˇm/ cannot form a licit onset cluster with any other segment. However, to find a contrasting case, we need only turn to Urdu-Hindi (8), in which the prefixing fixed segment /v-/ can occur in onset clusters, even in reduplicants.

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7 However, in cases reported by Nevins and Vaux (2003a), as well as the movie *Mall Rats*, some speakers have been found to produce *breakfast-sˇmbreakfast*. The discussion of Hindi entirely parallels these dialects.

8 Data elicited in my own studies and confirmed by Rajesh Bhatt, Pritha Chandra, and Utpal Lahiri. Interestingly, Alderete et al. cite Hindi fixed segmentism in their article: “[A] single language can have more than one overwriting string with no phonological conditioning of the choice. For instance, Hindi (Singh 1969) overwrites with w-, s-, and rarely m-’ (p. 355). In fact, the choice between $v$ and $\vec{s}$ is entirely phonological; the fixed segment is always $v$, unless the base begins with $v$, in which case the fixed segment is $\vec{s}$. The report of an $m$- allomorph does not describe the dialect of any speaker I have met, though the forms I’ve elicited have all come from Mumbai- and Delhi-born consultants.
paanii-vaani ‘water and the like’
mez-vez ‘tables and the like’
aam-vaam ‘mangoes and the like’
tras-vras ‘grief and the like’
vakil-šakil ‘lawyers and the like’
roti-voti ‘bread and the like’
yaar-vaar ‘friends and the like’

The form tras-vras illustrates that [vr] is a licit onset cluster in the reduplicant. Thus, no reduplicant-specific *COMPLEX constraint-interaction can be employed to ban such sequences from the onset of the second copy. The phonology of Urdu-Hindi is such that the constraint interaction $C$ allows strings that comprise both $A$ and $B$ to surface together in $P$; this should be the ideal state of affairs for Overwriting, as shown in tableau (9).

(9) Erroneous prediction when PHON-CON allows roti-vroti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/roti-RED-v/</th>
<th>MAXIO</th>
<th>MAXBR</th>
<th>DEP(Base)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. ☞ roti-vroti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. roti-roti</td>
<td>v!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. roti-voti</td>
<td></td>
<td>r!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. voti-voti</td>
<td>r!</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. vroti-vroti</td>
<td></td>
<td>v!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, as (8) illustrates, the actual form is roti-voti. The reason that Overwriting makes the wrong prediction here is that the actual state of affairs is one in which $A$ and $B$ are not in competition. On the contrary, the examples seem to indicate that $A$ and $B$ are in a relationship of mutual exclusivity determined by the morphological process of FSR, which replaces the first member of the first onset of the second copy with the fixed segment. The statement of the facts is extremely simple, but there is no modification to Alderete et al.’s analysis that can get the facts right, because Overwriting analyses are always predicated on the assumption that $C$ will ban surfacing of both $A$ and $B$, and no phonotactic constraint $C$ can be chosen that disallows *vroti while allowing tras. In the next section, I will present a simple account of the Hindi phenomena that is formulated in terms of specific points of affixation.

The problem for Hindi FSR, which pivots upon a surprisingly licit combination of $A$ and $B$ that the Overwriting constraint cannot prevent, arises in Ussishkin’s (1997, 2000) account of DVF in Modern Hebrew in a similar manner, where $C$ is the templatic restriction of the pi’el binyan. Ussishkin proposes that denominal verb formation in this binyan (10) is word-based (all examples to be discussed have monosyllabic nouns).

(10) dam ‘blood’; dimem ‘he bled’
tik ‘file’; tijek ‘he filed’

Ussishkin proposes that the mapping to the inflected and tensed verbal output proceeds from two
inputs: a base—the semantically related noun; and an affix—the binyan vocalism /i e/. Rather than pursuing the traditional root-and-pattern analysis of Hebrew word formation, Ussishkin argues that the word-based analysis (and its concomitant Overwriting implementation) captures phonological regularities of glide insertion in DVF, stating that ‘‘[a]n [output-output-based analysis] is the only possible analysis of Denominal Verb Formation’’ (2000:102). This can be illustrated as in tableau (11) for DVF from a noun base with a low vowel: the constraints determine that when [dam] and /i e/ combine, the vowel of the base noun is lost to the affixal vowels.

(11) Ussishkin’s (1997) (45): Denominal verb formation of biconsonantal roots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/dam/ + /i e/</th>
<th>MINWd</th>
<th>MAX-V-A</th>
<th>MAX-V-S</th>
<th>INTEGRITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. damem</td>
<td></td>
<td>*!</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. dimam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*!</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. damime</td>
<td></td>
<td>*!</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. dimem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While MAX-V-S requires faithfulness to base vowels (S is for Stem), MAX-V-A requires faithfulness to affixal vowels. The role of C is played by MINWd, a cover term for the templatic constraints of minimal bisyllabicity and a closed second syllable. The instantiation of (1) for Ussishkin’s analysis of denominal verbs is given in (12).

(12) $A = \text{the binyan vocalism segment } /i\ e/ $  
$B = \text{the base vowel } /a/ $  
$P = \text{the available vowel positions } $  
$C = \text{MINWd} $  
$F = \text{MAX-V-A} \gg \text{MAX-V-S} $  

Because of the templatic restrictions on this binyan, only two syllabic nuclei can surface, and since F favors A, the binyan vocalism wins.

Having observed the constraint interaction that enforces competition between A and B, we turn to denominal verbs formed from nouns with the vowel [i]. Ussishkin suggests that since [i] and [j] are featurally equivalent, differing only in syllabic position, the base vowel B can surface...
as a consonant, thereby avoiding position \( P \), while respecting \( F \) and allowing all of \( A \) to surface, as shown in tableau (13).

(13) Ussishkin’s (1997) (52): Denominal verb formation of glide-medial roots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/tik/ + /i e/</th>
<th>MinWD</th>
<th>Max-V-A</th>
<th>Max-V-S</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. tikek</td>
<td>!*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. tikek</td>
<td></td>
<td>!*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. tijek</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the base vowel is preserved in the output (in the form of a glide), there is no violation of Max-V-S. MinWD is respected as well, as the glide does not constitute a syllabic nucleus. Thus, Ussishkin’s Overwriting implementation allows all three vowels from the input morphemes to successfully surface when an input high vowel has a glide correspondent.\(^{12}\)

However, an unexpectedly licit combination arises because of the formulation of \( C \) that allows all three vowels to surface in the case of non-high-vowel bases, contrary to fact. Given Ussishkin’s characterization of [i] and [j] as segmentally equivalent, and the apparent ability of an input /i/ to surface as [j] in tijek, the possibility of an /i/ surfacing as [j] in the denominal verb for /dam/ + /i e/ should obtain as well. The binyan /i/ becomes a medial glide, and such a state of affairs allows optimal negotiation for both \( A \) and \( B \) to surface. The constraint interaction is illustrated in tableau (14), which includes the constraints exactly as evaluated in tableau (13).

(14) Erroneous prediction when glide formation yields dajem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/dam/ + /i e/</th>
<th>MinWD</th>
<th>Max-V-A</th>
<th>Max-V-S</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. daiem</td>
<td>!*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. dimem</td>
<td></td>
<td>!*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. damime</td>
<td>!*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. damem</td>
<td></td>
<td>!*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. dajem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While such a state of affairs should be ideal from the correspondence theory standpoint, the predicted form isn’t the actual form; as we know from tableau (11), it should be dimem. Overwrit-

\(^{12}\) Though the issues are in principle distinct, the Overwriting analysis is the consequence of assuming a word-based morphology. An operation-based account could derive DVs from words, if it were based on three separate processes, as shown in (i).

(i) **Derivational steps in word-based DVF**

1. If the input noun has three (or more) consonants, delete all of the vowels.
   
   \( \text{If the input noun has two consonants,} \)

2. Associate the resulting consonants and the binyan vowels to the template.

In a root-based account, on the other hand, step 1 is unnecessary. If the glide is assumed to be part of the root, then there is no need for the word-based procedure of converting the noun into a triconsonantal sequence that happens to be identical to the putative root prior to DVF.
ing again makes the wrong prediction because of *the assumption that A and B are in competition*
In a morphophonological theory that acknowledges a consonantal root, the fact that only root
consonants can surface as glides in a bisyllabic template and that binyan vowels always surface
as binyan vowels is straightforwardly captured. While a ‘‘fix’’ to Ussishkin’s analysis might
constrain only nonaffixal vowels to surface as glides, such a move would essentially recapitulate
the very root/affix distinction Ussishkin is attempting to deny.

Again, the problem arises because of the encoding of a competition relation between stem
and affix vowels for nuclear positions. There is no way to rule out *dajem* while allowing *tijek*
in an Overwriting schema that attempts to optimize both Max-V-A and Max-V-S. The glide-
surfacing problem for a combination of inputs with a high vowel becomes compounded with the
counting problem of section 2 when we consider a case in which |B| > 1. When B has more than
one element that can occupy P, with no constraint favoring one element of B over another, more
than one ‘‘optimal’’ output may be selected, contrary to fact. Tableau (15) illustrates that the
Hebrew noun *bima* ‘stage’ (Ussishkin’s (1997) example (33)), which has the actual denominal
verb form *bijem* ‘to stage’, can surface as *bajem* as well in an Overwriting scenario.13

\[ (15) \text{Erroneous prediction when } |B| > 1 \text{ in } bijam \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/bi1ma2/ + /i3 e4/</th>
<th>MINWD</th>
<th>Max-V-A</th>
<th>Max-V-S</th>
<th>INTEGRITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. bi1j3a2m</td>
<td></td>
<td>e4!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ba2j3e4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>i1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. bi1j3e4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. bi3j1e4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. be4j1a2m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>i3!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mispredicted optionality arises for a now-familiar reason, the nature of constraint evaluation
as counting. For Max-V-S, all violations are treated equally; the fact is that 1 = 1 is all that
matters when no constraint favors one element of B against another. On the other hand, the
acknowledgment of √BJM as the consonantal root straightforwardly averts this problem.

4 Specific Points of Affixation Determine Hindi Fixed-Segment Reduplication

In fact, if FSR is viewed as a form of affixation that accompanies reduplication, it can be quite
simply analyzed as follows. For concreteness, I will provide an implementation in the
multiprecedence and Linearization family of models (Rainy 2000, Fitzpatrick and Nevins, to appear),
although a large class of other analyses of reduplication (none of which include the notion of
competition for a position) would suffice as well.

Suppose the learner’s first encounter with Hindi FSR is the output *paani-vaani* in a semantic
context where she can deduce that it is an operation on the input *paani*. She may posit the rule

13 Note that only Linearity-respecting candidates in which index 1 precedes 2 and index 3 precedes 4 are illustrated,
for the sake of brevity.
in (16), which views the process with a level of specificity to represent that the first segment’s consonantal ity is part of the structural description. Note that first( ) and last( ) are binary predicates true only of the segments immediately-preceded by or immediately-preceding nothing, respectively.

(16) Structural description

∃x, consonant(x), first(x)
∃y, x immediately-precedes y
∃z, last(z)

Structural change

Add the relation: z immediately-precedes /v/
Add the relation: /v/ immediately-precedes y

The operation of (16) will create a set of immediate-precedence relations that can be graphically represented as in (17), where # and % represent the null-predecessor and the null-successor. Note that (17) only shows immediate-precedence relations; of course, additional information such as metrical, prosodic, and subsegmental structure is present at this level of representation as well.

(17) # → p → a → a → n → i → i → %

Linearization of (17) into a set of precedence relations where no segments are in symmetric or reflexive transitive-precedence relations will yield (18).

(18) # → p → a → a → n → i → i → v → a → a → n → i → i → %

Thus, the rule in (16) will generate the attested output paani-vaani, and in fact, tras-vras and roti-voti as well, as the reader can verify. However, the rule postulated by the learner in (16) is specific to consonant-initial segments. Upon encountering aam-vaam in a context in which it is clear that it reflects a computation on aam, the learner, having postulated (16) already, will leave (16) intact and posit a second rule, (19).

(19) Structural description

∃x, first(x)
∃y, last(y)

Structural change

Add the relation: y immediately-precedes /v/
Add the relation: /v/ immediately-precedes x

Linearization of the subsequent set of immediate-precedence relations will yield aam-vaam. In short, there are two rules, (16) and (19), which are in fact disjunctively ordered by the Elsewhere Condition, since the set of inputs to which (19) applies is a proper subset of the set of inputs to which (16) applies. Thus, in the case of consonant-initial inputs, (16) will always apply instead of (19), whereas in the case of vowel-initial inputs, only (19) can apply.
The analysis offered here does not depend on the ordering of inputs. Suppose that instead, the learner hears *aam-vaam* first, then *paami-vaani*. By the principle of positing more restrictive rules first, (20) and (21) will be the pair of rules.\(^{14}\)

(20) **Structural description**

\[\exists x, \text{vowel}(x), \text{first}(x)\]
\[\exists y, \text{last}(y)\]

**Structural change**

Add the relation: \(y\) immediately-precedes /\(v\)/
Add the relation: /\(v\)/ immediately-precedes \(x\)

(21) **Structural description**

\[\exists x, \text{first}(x)\]
\[\exists y, \text{x immediately-precedes y}\]
\[\exists z, \text{last}(z)\]

**Structural change**

Add the relation: \(z\) immediately-precedes /\(v\)/
Add the relation: /\(v\)/ immediately-precedes \(y\)

Again, the rules stand in an elsewhere relation; hence, vowel-initial inputs will always trigger rule (20), while consonant-initial inputs will always trigger rule (21). The attested output forms in section 2 will all be correctly derived.

The learner needs no special constraint-demotion algorithm, no typological oddities predicted by the addition of parochial constraints that must be universal and violable, and no generation and evaluation of \(2^n\) inputs. The learner only needs predicates identifying consonants and vowels and operations on immediate-precedence relations. Again, see Raimy 2000 and Fitzpatrick and Nevins, to appear, for detailed explication of the formalism, with applications to allomorphy, overapplication, and multiple reduplication.

To conclude, I will reemphasize that the particular formulation given here in terms of immediate-precedence, rules, and the Elsewhere Condition is but one of many alternatives. What these share is that they view FSR as a process of affixation of segmental material to a particular landmark in the word, accompanied by the repetition of segmental material within the word. The grammar need not refer to spurious optimization of ‘‘well-formedness’’ between the fixed segment and the nonreduplicated portion of the base.

\(^{14}\) Philip Spaelti (pers. comm., October 2003) has raised the concern that there are two rules here, for what is apparently one process. However, any formulation of a rule or set of constraints for Hindi FSR must say something of the form ‘‘If consonant-initial, do this; otherwise, if vowel-initial, do that,’’ which, the form of English conditional clauses notwithstanding, represent two distinct processes.
5 Conclusion

The twin problems of built-in sensitivity of Overwriting to the relative sizes of \( A \) and \( B \) and the impossibility of formulating constraints so as to guarantee complete exclusion of \( B \) when \( A \) surfaces suggest that the phonological material of affixes does not ‘‘compete’’ in a simple \( A \)-versus-\( B \) manner. The actual output form in the cases above is always one where \( B \) wins. But given the architectural assumptions of Melodic Overwriting as optimization of \( F \) (i.e., satisfaction of two different Max constraints), this result cannot be guaranteed without a host of auxiliary assumptions. A model of FSR as the simple replacement of the first consonant by the fixed segment and a model of DVF that associates consonantal roots and binyan vowels to a template are to be preferred to implementations in which these affixes are in a constraint-governed monostratal competitive relationship vying to surface in the output, determined by segment counting. Apparently, there are some things in phonology better left understood as rules.

References


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