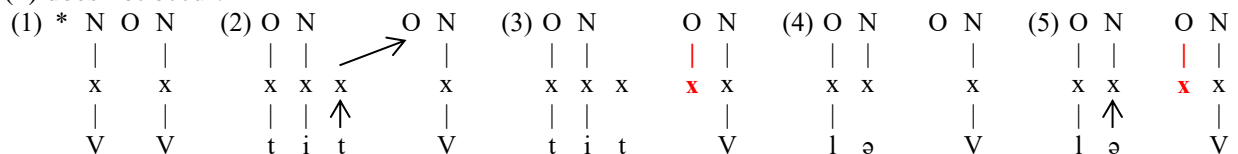


Hiatus in French: a unified analysis of liaison and elision

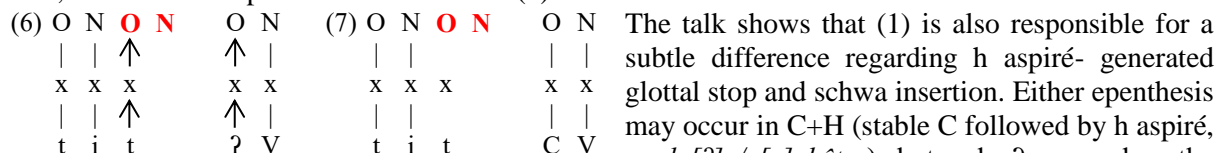
In the regular autosegmental analysis of French liaison, the reason why the floating liaison consonant associates to the empty onset of following V-initial words is that floaters "want" to associate: association is automatic. There is evidence that this association is non-automatic, though. It is argued that its driving force is hiatus avoidance (nothing new, overview in Morin 2005: 8), and that the same anti-hiatus constraint is also responsible for elision in French. This unification makes the added value of the talk.

Workings. Hiatus is defined at the syllabic, rather than at the melodic level, as under (1): a structure where an onset that is not associated to an x-slot occurs between two nuclei that are associated to x-slots is ill-formed. (1) occurs in the lexical makeup of liaison as in *petit [t] évier* (2) and is repaired by the association of the floating t to its own skeletal slot and the empty onset (arrows). It is crucial that this onset comes without a skeletal slot since otherwise (1) would not be violated. The difference between regular V-initial and h aspiré words (which are also V-initial but refuse liaison and elision) is that the latter do come with an associated x-slot (3) (in red, Encrevé 1988). As a result, there is no liaison (*petit *[t] hublot*) because nothing needs to be repaired: under (3) the floating C does not associate since (1) does not occur.



The other major sandhi phenomenon of the language, elision, concerns monosyllabic function words like the def. art. *le / la* whose vowel is present when followed by a C-initial word (*le café*), but absent when followed by a V (*l'arbre*). Authors have concluded that, being like liaison Cs unstable, vowels subject to elision are also lexically floating (Tranel 1987, Encrevé 1988). Thus in elision context (4), the floating V does not associate (*l'arbre*) because this would create a violation of (1). As before, a following h aspiré word (5) escapes such a violation since its onset comes with an associated x-slot (in red): the floating vowel can happily associate (*le hublot*) just as, of course, with a C-initial word where the onset is filled (*le café*). Thus (1) is responsible for both liaison and elision: liaison is a repair when the lexical situation violates (1), while it prevents the association of the floater in elision. Note that unlike liaison Cs which do not appear sentence-finally (*il est petit *[t]*), elision Vs do (*regarde-[lə]*): this, it seems, is because the floating elision V comes with its own constituent, while liaison Cs need an onset of the following word to parachute. Do both floating items thus "associate whenever they can"?

Benefits. The answer is no when considering liaison without enchaînement (LWE), a type of (optional) liaison that is typical of formal registers where the liaison C is not pronounced in the onset of the following word, but rather in its own word. Its locus is evidenced by the existence of a pause and glottal stop following it (Encrevé 1988): *j'avais [zʔ] un rêve* (against [z] in regular liaison). There must thus be an onset at the right edge of the word (red under (6)) that in case of LWE receives the liaison C (while the glottal stop sits in the onset of the following word). The option to link to a position in its own word raises the question why this does not happen when the following word is C-initial (7): there is no LWE in *petit *[t] café*. The answer is that (1) is not violated under (7) and hence nothing needs to be repaired (unlike under (6) where it is violated). Thus association of liaison Cs is not automatic "whenever they can", but rather a response to a violation of (1).



The talk shows that (1) is also responsible for a subtle difference regarding h aspiré- generated glottal stop and schwa insertion. Either epenthesis may occur in C+H (stable C followed by h aspiré, *quel [ʔ] / [ə] hêtre*), but only ? may when the preceding C is a liaison C that remains unpronounced LC+H (*un gros [ʔ] / *[ə] hêtre*). Of all four configurations, only the insertion of schwa in LC+H produces a violation of (1) and is therefore ruled out. The same goes for LWE where a glottal stop may be inserted (6), but the insertion of a schwa (into the red N, in absence of the glottal stop) is impossible (*j'avais *[zə] un rêve*). Here as well, insertion of schwa produces a violation of (1), but insertion of ? does not.

Finally, note that (1) only rules over floating material: the prohibited configuration occurs without any

repair with lexically associated segments (V+V *un joli arbre*). The complete pattern can thus be described by the interaction of violable constraints.