Philippe Ségéral
Tobias Scheer
Abstract Workshop on Linguistic Change in relation to Linguistic Theory
at Going Romance

# A unified account for the behaviour of Gallo-Romance glides in strong position

It is well known that Gallo-Romance glides in strong position (i.e. word-initially and after a heterosyllabic consonant) strengthen in their evolution to French (j>t͡ʃ, d͡ʒ (>ʃ,ʒ), w>g$^{w}$ (>g)) germ. werra > guerre, jocu > jeu, rabja > rage). In this presentation we look at the nitty-gritty detail of this process, which on the face of it suffers from a large number of exceptions where relevant input yod does not appear as a strengthened affricate. Following Ségéral & Scheer (2001), we reject the traditional scenario whereby the contrast between labial+yod (where affricate-strengthening is systematic) and dental/velar+yod (where affricate-strengthening is only sporadic) is explained by the inability for labials to be palatalized: on this account, yod "tries" to palatalize the preceding consonant (and succeeds with dentals and velars, which are more or less palatalizable), but fails with labials because they are not palatalizable. The surrogate solution, then, is affrication, which typically occurs in learned and liturgical vocabulary (lineu > linge, cereu > cierge) and is therefore held to be "late".

The alternative scenario proposed by Ségéral & Scheer takes the reverse point of view: the regular behaviour of post-coda yod after *all* consonants is affricate-strengthening. In case of non-affrication, independent processes have destroyed the required input configuration (i.e. a yod placed after an independent coda consonant). What we add to this analysis is a chronological interpretation: as was mentioned, grammars agree that affrication was a "late" process. This is also witnessed by the fact that Germanic vocabulary systematically undergoes affricate-strengthening (*sturio > esturgeon), while words of Latin origin sometimes do, but at other times don't (e.g. dj: *sedi(c)u > siège, cereu > cierge vs. modiolu > ofr moiel, paria > paire). It therefore appears safe to think of affricate-strengthening as a process that was absent from the phonology of the language until a certain point (around the time of the Germanic invasions), when it became an active item of the computational system.

Based on this timeline, a very simple and unifying scenario is that all yods which were still present in post-coda position at the time when affricate-strengthening was active have undergone this process. Yods that escaped affricate-strengthening were either no yods anymore at that time, or did not stand in strong position after an independent coda consonant anymore, due to other processes that have applied earlier and hence bled affricate-strengthening.

These are of two kinds: metathesis and (compensatory) gemination of yod due the disappearance of the preceding coda. Metathesis (which is said to be an early process in all sources) destroys the environment for affricate-strengthening (baasi<u>aa</u>re > baiser, rati<u>oo</u>ne > raison, the latter with additional palatalisation t > t͡s) as much as the gemination of yod (modiolu > ofr moiel). That is, geminate yod of course remains untouched by affrication (that the i in moiel is a geminate is witnessed by its persistence: Latin yod in intervocalic position is lost, e.g. jejunu > jeûn) (palatalizations such as in v<u>ii</u>nea > vigne, p<u>a</u>lea > paille, gl<u>a</u>cia > glace in fact are also cases of gemination of yod, with the additional effect that jj takes on the melodic material of the eliminated coda: ʎ is a lateralized yod, rather than a palatalized lateral, cf. Ségéral & Scheer 2001).

Conversely, certain yods have been "retarded" for independent reasons and thus escaped the early processes that they would have subject to, had they be present in time: the i of *sedi(c)u > siège and for<u>a</u>s[t]i(c)u > farouche must "wait" until the intervocalic c is eliminated before it becomes a glide in hiatus position.

This is how the contrast is explained between items that seem to bear the same input sequence: Vdj modiolu > moiel (Cj present before affrication was active) vs. *sedi(c)u (Cj present only "late", i.e. created when affrication was already active), Ctj cantioone > chanson vs. porti(c)u > porche (id.). We show that for those words that undergo affrication there is always an independent reason to believe that the formation of the Cj cluster is "late" (e.g. Vnj viinea > vigne vs. li<u>i</u>neu > linge, the latter belonging to the ecclesiastic vocabulary whose evolution was retarded.

In a second step, we show that the analysis discussed also covers word-initial yod and w. Consider the overall distribution of affrication.

| | yod | | | w | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | lat | germ | | lat | germ |
| #__ | yes | yes | #__ | yes/no | yes |
| C__ | yes/no | yes | C__ | no | (yes) |

As was mentioned, the first generalization to be made is that Germanic glides in strong position always strengthen (as far as we can see, the evidence for w in post-coda position boils down to only two words, *sparwâri > ofr. esparvier (> épervier) and *skârwahta > ofr. eschargaite (> échauguette), one undergoing strengthening, the other not). The contrast between Latin yod in word-initial and post-coda position is due to the fact that nothing disturbed the former: word-initial yod sailed through the early period without damage (no preceding coda could be lost, no metathesis could act) and was present when strengthening became active.

The situation of Latin w, and its contrast with respect to Latin yod, is due to another independent process that eliminated w before it could strengthen: lat. w became v by a spontaneous, hence context-free sound shift (valere > valoir, servire > servir). Grammars agree that there was a period where w was absent from the Gallo-Romance sound inventory for that reason. It is only later on when w was reintroduced by the Germanic vocabulary. The reason why the cell says yes/no for Latin w in word-initial position is the existence of a number of words of Latin origin that did undergo strengthening, e.g. vagina > gaine. Grammars offer non-grammatical explanations for this unexpected behaviour (e.g. lexical concurrence in cases such as *vespe (< lat vespa) and guêpe (< germ. *wabsa)), which needs to be dealt with anyway. All analysts agree, though, that the regular reflex of Latin word-initial w is v.

It thus appears that the scenario which was developed on the grounds of the analysis of Latin post-coda yod offers a unified and simple account of the overall behaviour of both Gallo-Romance glides (independently of their Latin or Germanic origin) in the evolution towards French: all glides that were present in strong position "late", i.e. when affricate-strengthening and w > $g^w$ (which of course are one and the same process, i.e. the creation of a contour segment) were active, underwent this process. Any glide in strong position that did not undergo affricate-strengthening or w > $g^w$ simply did not fulfil the contextual conditions: either its melodic status as a glide (w>v) or its positional status (metathesis, gemination) was altered by independent processes, which bled affricate-strengthening and w > $g^w$.

Reference

Ségéral, Philippe & Tobias Scheer 2001. Les séquences consonne + yod en gallo-roman. Recherches Linguistiques de Vincennes 30: 87-120.