

Optional Partial Metathesis in Kwara'ae

Words in Kwara'ae (Austronesian, Southeast Solomonic) have two known allomorphs, which occur in different speech registers, Citation and Normal. These two allomorphs are related by CV metathesis: $C_1V_1C_2V_2$ sequences in the Citation form become $C_1V_1V_2C_2$ in the Normal form (1).

Why and how CV metathesis occurs has been a puzzle to researchers. Blevins and Garrett (1998) suggest that unstressed vowels are targeted for CV metathesis and Norquest (2001) suggests that Normal forms obey the Stress to Weight Principle (SWP). In other words, these researchers maintain that the stress pattern determines the locations of metathesis.

I present a third allomorph in Normal discourse, revealed in recent work with a native speaker, which supports the hypotheses that CV metathesis is conditioned by the stress pattern. No morpheme is responsible for this allomorph; rather, it is licensed by its syntactic position, the last word of a focused phrase. Kwara'ae has SVO word order (2), and focused phrases are clefted (3)-(4).

The third allomorph has an exceptional stress pattern word finally – the same place where metathesis is expected to occur but does not (5). This is evidence that the stress pattern conditions the locations of CV metathesis in Kwara'ae because changing the stress pattern also changes the metathesis pattern. Interestingly, partial metathesis is optionally available in this form as well (6). I suggest that the copying of the final vowel may occur because of an optional constraint requiring the third allomorph to be similar to its Normal form counterpart.

The proposed Optimality-theoretic analysis works as follows. FOCUS-STRESS, activated by the rightward focus boundary, requires the final mora of a focused phrase be stressed. NOWEAKMORA prohibits stress from falling on the weak mora of a syllable. These undominated constraints force a violation of SWP and block deletion of the final vowel; thus, $[\text{k}\check{\text{e}}\text{a}.\text{'ta}]$ and $[\text{ke}.\text{'ta}] \succ [\text{k}\check{\text{e}}\text{at}]$.

Because the last two vowels are predictable from each other in the variant with partial metathesis, I assume they are duplicates of the same underlying vowel, in violation of INTEGRITY. If the underlying form is $/\text{k}\check{\text{e}}\text{at}/$, then ranking INTEGRITY below FOCUS-STRESS, NOWEAKMORA, and SWP would ensure the final CV syllable in this variant. However, the principle of a rich base and evidence from loans and morphological alternations forces one to acknowledge the possibility that $/\text{keta}/$ is an underlying form. In this case, although $[\text{ke}.\text{'ta}]$ violates SWP in both syllables and $[\text{k}\check{\text{e}}\text{a}.\text{'ta}]$ violates SWP only once, SWP cannot outrank INTEGRITY because copying without deletion is not a solution to SWP elsewhere: Normal $[\text{'ba}.\text{,l}\check{\text{e}}\text{o}ʔ]$, not $*[\text{'ba}\check{\text{e}}.\text{,l}\check{\text{e}}\text{o}ʔ]$. Consequently, for either underlying form, $[\text{ke}.\text{'ta}] \succ [\text{k}\check{\text{e}}\text{a}.\text{'ta}]$ because $[\text{ke}.\text{'ta}]$ does not violate high ranked INTEGRITY, but $[\text{k}\check{\text{e}}\text{a}.\text{'ta}]$ does. Therefore, an account of the variant with partial metathesis must derive it in part from the surface Normal form. This derivational dependence can be captured by ranking an output-to-output correspondance constraint for vowel-to-vowel contiguity, OO V-V CONTIGUITY, between words of Normal discourse and their focused counterparts above INTEGRITY. This guarantees that the final vowel in underlying forms like $/\text{keta}/$ copies into the preceding nucleus.

Examples

(1)	Citation	Normal	
	'ŋe.la	'ŋeal	'child'
	'ke.ta.la.ku	'kɛat.laʊk	'my height'
	da.'ro.ʔa.ni.da	'daoɾ.ʔa.niɛd	'to share them'
	'ra.ʔe.ra.ʔe.na.ʔa	'raeʔ.raeʔ.naʔ	'incline, slope'

(2) kɿɾ so.ŋeiʔ leaʔ na ʔi'h.teiʔ.
 they make well the bed
 They skillfully built the bed.

(3) [na ʔi'h.tei.'ʔi]_{focus} neʔ kɿɾ so.ŋeiʔ leaʔ an.
 the bed that they make well P
 It is the bed that they skillfully built.

(4) [na ʔi'h.teiʔ ,ke.a.'ta]_{focus} neʔ kɿɾ so.ŋeiʔ leaʔ an.
 the bed tall that they make well P
 It is the high bed that they skillfully built.

(5)	Citation	Normal	Normal] _{focus}	
	'ke.ta	'keat	ke.'ta	'tall'
	ba.'le.ʔo	'ba.lɛoʔ	ba.,le.'ʔo	'breadfruit'
	'ʔi.hi.,te.ʔi	'ʔi'h.,teŋʔ	ʔi'h.,te.'ʔi	'bed'

(6)	Citation	Normal	Normal] _{focus}	
	'ke.ta	'kɛat	ke.a.'ta	'tall'
	ba.'le.ʔo	'ba.lɛoʔ	ba.,le.'ʔo	'breadfruit'
	'ʔi.hi.,te.ʔi	'ʔi'h.,teŋʔ	ʔi'h.,teŋ.'ʔi	'bed'

References

- Blevins, Juliett and Andrew Garrett. 1998. The Origins of Consonant-Vowel Metathesis. *Language* 74(3):508–556.
- Norquest, Peter. 2001. The Collapse of the Foot in Oceanic. In *Proceedings of the Western Conference of Linguistics (WECOL) 2001*.