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Repairing hiatus in Sanskrit

A frequently cited conspiracy is the avoidance of vowel hiatus, using strategies such as glide formation and vowel coalescence. In Sanskrit, hiatus is regularly resolved within words, and frequently across words as well (/rājā indra/ → *rājendra* ‘king Indra’). Some instances of hiatus at word boundaries are not resolved (/vana+i#iti/ → *vana iti* ‘in the forest thus’). Calabrese (2005) analyzes the coalescence of /ai/ → [e] in terms of a constraint NOHIATUS, which triggers repairs within a derivational framework. One repair turns /i/ into a glide in the coda. Another constraint prohibits glides from the coda, disallowing the output [ay], leaving [e] as the outcome via other repairs. However, the existence of glide-final diphthongs in Sanskrit calls Calabrese’s analysis into question. Calabrese’s system makes no provision for retaining the hiatus in *vana iti*. In an approach with ordered rules, the derivation from /vana+i#iti/ proceeds to a stage /vana#yiti/ with the locative suffix /+i/ resyllabified as an onset. A rule of *y*-Deletion deletes initial /y/ after a low vowel and before another vowel. This rule is ordered after the coalescence rule taking /ai/ to [e], a counterfeeding order (essentially Pāṇini’s solution). Calabrese allows some interaction between rules and constraints: in Icelandic a constraint against unsyllabified segments is stipulated not to check outputs until after *u*-Umlaut, counterfeeding *u*-Umlaut in examples like *dalur* ← /dal+ɾ/ ‘valley’ (dative plural *döllum*). But for Sanskrit no such solution is possible: it would be necessary to block NOHIATUS from checking the output of *y*-Deletion.

Reference

Calabrese, Andrea (2005). *Markedness and Economy in a Derivational Model of Phonology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.