

Unfolding the phonological history of Galician-Portuguese Diminutives

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- **Broad Transcription** = /between slashes/
Phonemes are transcribed, which contrast words → /sɪn/'sin' ≠ /sɪŋ/ 'sing'
- **Narrow Transcription** = [between square brackets]
Allophones are transcribed, which are the particular realizations of the phonemes and do not contrast words → [hɔ:s] = [hɔ:ɪs] = [hɔ:rs] 'horse'
- *= reconstructed form, not attested.
- ~ = nasalized vowel.
- **Coarticulation:** articulatory modification of a sound because of gestural overlap with the neighboring sounds.

1. Galician-Portuguese?

Language spoken in the northwest area of the Iberian Peninsula between the VIII and XIII centuries CE.

2. From Latin to Galician-Portuguese.

Lat. /i:num/ (1) > LLat. /ino/ (3)(4) > Gal-Port. /ĩo/ (5) > /iɲo/ (7)

Lat. [ĩ:nũ] (1)(2) > LLat. [ĩno] (3)(4) > Gal-Port. [ĩo] (5)(6) > [iɲo]

(1) Romance words come from the Latin accusative forms.

(2) The vowels before the nasals were non-phonemically nasalized (nasalization because of coarticulation).

(3) Final /m/ was no longer pronounced in 1st CE.

(4) Vowel quantity was lost in Late Latin (1st-3rd CE).

Long vowels retained their quality (/i:/ > /i/), but short vowels (except for /a/) were lowered.

(5) Intervocalic /n/ disappeared.

Without the conditioning (nasalizing) context, the previous nasal vowel became phonemic (word-contrastive).

(6) Pronunciation of /o/ as [o], which lies midway between [u] and [o].

The hesitation in the writing of <o> and <u> in the singular and the different outcomes in Galician (/o/) and Portuguese (/u/) support this pronunciation.

(7) Denasalization of the vowels.

The vowel lost its nasal feature. In this case, the denasalization process took place by inserting a nasal. The nasal is palatal [ɲ] because of features (height and frontness) of the stressed vowel /i/.

3. From Indo-European to Latin.

Several sources for /i:/, but mainly:

- *-ih₂-/-ih₂- for adjectives with the meaning 'belonging to, appertaining to'.
- *-ih₂-/-jéh₂- for collective, abstract and feminine nouns.
- *-ej- from the locative or dative singular.

Depending on the word, we may find etymologically one source or another. However, all of them converged in /i:/ after sound change, so /i:/ comes from all of them.

¡! This is an attempt of phonetic transcription. Indo-European is unattested, so we cannot know how the sounds were actually pronounced. The margin of error is considerable.

Ie. */ihnom/ (1) > It. */i:nom/ (2) > VOLat. /i:nom/ > Lat. /i:num/ (3)

(1) Uncertain pronunciation of the laryngeals.

(2) Laryngeals disappeared in early Proto-Italic

Before a vowel and before a consonant, laryngeals were deleted and lengthened the previous vowel.

(3) [o] was lowered to [u] because of its final unaccented position.

Ie. */ejnom/ > It. */ejnom/ > VOLat. /ejnom/ > OLat. /e:nom/ (1) > Lat. /i:num/(2)(3)

(1) Monophthongization of the Ie. diphthong in 3rd BCE.

(2) Raising of [e:] to [i:].

(3) [o] was lowered to [u] because of its final unaccented position.

4. Phonetics. Why lies behind these changes?

Common instances of sound change (cross-linguistically) are phonetically natural, phonetically motivated, because they depend on articulatory, perceptual or aerodynamic properties of speech. For example:

- Unstressed vowels may be deleted.
- [ki] is often misheard as [fi] because their phonetic cues are similar.

Listeners normalize or correct the variation in the speech. When they fail to do so, sound change happens because they misunderstood what the speaker pronounced.

- Neutralization of the quality of unstressed vowels is phonetically motivated.

Unstressed vowels are pronounced in a laxer and weaker way than stressed vowels. As they are pronounced weaker, it is more difficult to distinguish all the vowel qualities, so they get neutralized.

- The confusion of [VÑ] with [Ṽ] is phonetically motivated.

The nasal cue may be shorter than usual because it is between vowels or the nasal overlaps too much with the first vowel, so /VN/ ([VÑ]) was understood as /ṼN/

- Denasalization should also be phonetically motivated. But is it?

The insertion of a nasal in intervocalic position for a denasalizing process is cross-linguistically rare.

5. Selected bibliography

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