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Vowel epenthesis in Vimeu Picard: A preliminary investigation

Vowel Epenthesis in Vimeu Picard: A Preliminary Investigation¹

Julie Auger and Jeffrey Steele

1 Introduction

One of the most striking phonological features of Picard, a Gallo-Romance language spoken in Northern France, is the apparent inversion of an unstressed vowel with the consonant that precedes it. This phenomenon is illustrated in (1) with several French words and phrases and their Picard equivalents in the Vimeu variety²:

- | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) | French | Vimeu Picard | |
| a. | <i>grenouille</i> | <i>guérnouille</i> | 'frog' |
| b. | <i>comme des harengs</i> | <i>comme édz hérins</i> | 'like herrings' |
| c. | <i>Je n'ai pas le temps</i> | <i>Éj n'ai point l'temps</i> | 'I don't have time' |

While this phenomenon is attested in many varieties of colloquial French (e.g., Picard 1991 for Québécois, Poirier 1928 for Acadian, Lyche 1995 for Cajun, and Morin 1987 for Parisian) as well as in other Gallo-Romance dialects (e.g., Francard 1981 for Walloon and Spence 1990 for Norman), it is, to our knowledge, nowhere as common or regular as in Picard. Indeed, while metathesis is restricted to a few segments in other Gallo-Romance varieties, in Picard,

¹ The research for this paper was supported in part by an FCAR grant no. NC-1648, a research grant from the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University, and a Summer Faculty Fellowship from Indiana University to the first author. We would like to thank the following people for answering our numerous questions on epenthesis and syllable structure: Stuart Davis, Ken de Jong, Dan Dinnsen, Heather Goad, Glyne Piggott, and Yvan Rose. We would also like to thank Jean-Pierre Calais and Jean-Luc Vigneux for their help with the Picard data. Finally, we thank Rea Janezich, Angela Markley, and Kelly Sax for their help in gathering data and their efforts in finding relevant examples for testing our hypotheses. As usual, none of these people should be held responsible for any shortcomings in this paper.

² Vimeu is located in the westernmost area of the Somme department; it is delimited by the Somme river to the north, the Bresle river (and Normandy) to the south, the English Channel to the west, and departmental road 901 to the east.

/e/ may appear before any consonant (e.g., /d/ in (1)b and /ʒ/ in (1)c); as we will see, this movement is obligatory in many contexts.

The present paper constitutes a preliminary investigation of the complex interplay of linguistic factors which govern this phenomenon in Vimeu Picard (VP). First, we will examine the data in (1) above in order to see whether they are the manifestation of the same phonological phenomenon or whether they result from different phonological processes. Our conclusion will be that undervived word-internal epenthesis must be distinguished from the word-boundary and monosyllabic word phenomena. We will then focus on the word-boundary and monosyllabic-word data, arguing that the apparent reversal of consonant and vowel is best described as epenthesis rather than metathesis (cf. Picard 1991 and Lyche 1995 for similar analyses of *re-* in Québécois and in Cajun). Finally, we will examine the syllable structure of VP and show that epenthetic vowels are inserted when they are required in order to save consonants that could not otherwise be syllabified.

2 Word-internal vs. Boundary Inversion: One Phenomenon?

Many pairs of French-Picard words similar to the pair in (1)a can be found:

| (2) | French | Vimeu Picard | Picard | Gloss Picard word |
|-----|----------------|------------------|----------|-------------------|
| a. | <i>grenier</i> | <i>guérnier</i> | [gɛrnje] | 'attic' |
| b. | <i>brebis</i> | <i>bérbis</i> | [berbi] | 'sheep' |
| c. | <i>crêpe</i> | <i>quérpette</i> | [kerpɛt] | 'pancake' |

Knowing, for example, that the etymon for *grenier/guérnier* is the Latin *granarium*, it is tempting to posit a general metathesis rule which derives the Picard forms from a French-like underlying form /grenje/. However, this analysis does not account for all of the forms above. One problem is *bérbis*: in this case, it is the French word which has undergone metathesis, at least historically, since the etymon for this word is the Proto-Romance form **berbicem*. Moreover, certain Picard words exhibit variation between a metathesized and a non-metathesized form (e.g., *quérpette* is attested alongside *crépette* for 'pancake'), while other words are attested only in their apparently metathesized form. Finally, and most importantly, many Picard words containing a /Cre/ sequence cannot be metathesized, as shown in (3):

| | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| (3) a. | <i>prépérer</i> / <i>*pérpérer</i> | 'to prepare' |
| b. | <i>adrèche</i> / <i>*adérche</i> | 'address' |

While more research would be necessary to provide a definitive analysis of non-derived word-internal metathesis in VP, we propose that *guérnouille*, *guérnier*, and *quérpette* are all the result of a historical process of metathesis which intermittently inverted /re/ sequences. This analysis accounts for the fact that only /re/ is metathesized word-internally in Picard (never /le/, for instance), that not all /Cre/ sequences are metathesized, and that some words exhibit variation between /Cre/ and /Cer/. In addition, if we assume that this phonological change took place in the not-so-recent history of Gallo-Romance, we account for the fact that the words for ‘attic’ and ‘frog’ contain metathesized sequences in many Gallo-Romance varieties.

We now turn to the word-initial and monosyllabic-word environments. Contrary to the word-internal context, the apparent metathesis phenomenon is not limited to /r/ in this context, as shown in (4) and (5) below:

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| (4) | Picard | French cognate | Picard gloss |
| | a. <i>ébzoïn</i> | <i>besoin</i> | ‘need’ |
| | b. <i>érvénir</i> | <i>revenir</i> | ‘to come back’ |
| | c. <i>élveu</i> | <i>lever</i> | ‘to raise’ |
| | d. <i>évnir</i> | <i>venir</i> | ‘to come’ |
| | e. <i>écmin</i> | <i>chemin</i> | ‘road’ |
| | f. <i>émnaceu</i> | <i>menacer</i> | ‘to threaten’ |
| (5) | a. <i>vir él portrait</i> | <i>voir le portrait</i> | ‘to-see the picture’ |
| | b. <i>jours éd vagances</i> | <i>jours de vacances</i> | ‘days of vacation’ |
| | c. <i>aveuc és castchètte</i> | <i>avec sa casquette</i> | ‘with his cap’ |
| | d. <i>j’passe éch mércrédi</i> | <i>j’passe ce mercredi</i> | ‘I spend Wednesdays’ |
| | e. <i>Albért, émn honme</i> | <i>Albert, mon homme</i> | ‘Albert, my husband’ |
| | f. <i>pu fort éq li</i> | <i>plus fort que lui</i> | ‘stronger than him’ |

Once again, however, a synchronic metathesis rule fails to account for the data, since such a general phonological process would generate ungrammatical forms. (6) below contains pairs of words which differ only, or most importantly for us, in the position of /e/, thus showing that not all /e/’s can be metathesized.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---------------------------------|
| (6) | a. <i>dégouteu</i> ‘to disgust’ | c. <i>ménageu</i> ‘to spare’ |
| | b. <i>édgoutteu</i> ‘to drip’ | d. <i>émnaceu</i> ‘to threaten’ |
| (7) | a. <i>Et pi qu’chés guérnouilles i croassoait’t</i> [kʃegernuj]/*[kʃgernuj] ‘and since the frogs cawed [sic]’ | |
| | b. <i>six éch n’est point coér neuf</i> [siseʃne]/*[sisʃene] ‘six it NEG is not still nine’ = ‘six is still not nine’ | |

Considering these data, the possibility emerges that our analysis of word-internal metathesis above was too narrow in scope and that we should consider the words in (4) and (5) above as additional examples of historical metathesis. There are, however, two arguments against this analysis. First, while word-internal metathesis is common in Gallo-Romance varieties, metathesis in word-initial position and monosyllabic words seems to be restricted to Picard. Second, the "metathesized" vowel in words like *émnaceu* and *éch* is not always present, and its presence is predictable based on the environment: as shown in (8) below, /e/ appears after a consonant, but not after a vowel.

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| (8) a. | <i>boéne ésmaine</i> | [bwen esmɛn] | 'good week' |
| | <i>in smainne</i> | [ɛ smɛn] | 'during the week' |
| b. | <i>l'frère d'ém feume</i> | [l frer d em fœm] | 'my wife's brother' |
| | <i>vlo m'valise</i> | [vlo m valiz] | 'here's my suitcase' |

The question now becomes: which is the underlying form? I.e., is a vowel inserted following a consonant, or is a vowel deleted following another vowel? Both processes are widely attested. There is evidence that, in this case, the consonant-initial forms are underlying. Many grammatical words in Picard consist of two allomorphs: one occurring prevocally, the other preconsonantly. E.g., the masc.sg form for the definite determiner is *chu* before a consonant and *chl'* before a vowel, while the 3masc.sg subject marker is *il* before a vowel and *i* before a consonant, as shown in (9)a and (9)b below. Thus, we can use this test to determine whether words like *cmin/écmin* 'road' and *cmincher/écmincher* 'to begin' have vowel- or consonant-initial underlying forms. (9)c shows that the preconsonantal allomorphs are selected.³

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| (9) a. | <i>chu bal</i> | 'the bal' | <i>chl'autocar</i> | 'the bus' |
| b. | <i>i court</i> | 'he runs' | <i>il avoait</i> | 'he had' |
| c. | <i>chu cmin/*?chl'écmin</i> | 'the road' | | |
| | <i>i cminche/*?il écminche</i> | 'he starts' | | |

Based on these facts, we conclude that the underlying form for *cmin* is /kmɛ/ and that a word-initial /e/ is inserted when *cmin* follows a consonant. Thus, the minimal pairs in (6) and (7) above can be attributed to the fact that some words have underlying /e/'s, while others acquire a vowel in certain pho-

³ Another piece of evidence against vowel deletion is the fact that the alternation in (8) is completely regular and thus differs from the related phenomenon of vowel aphaeresis, which affects all vowels and is variable in VP.

nological contexts; e.g., the underlying form for *dégouteu* is /degutø/, while that for *édgoutteu* is /dgutø/. Therefore, what looks, by comparison with French, like metathesis is actually a process of word-initial vowel epenthesis.

Now that we have established that we are witnessing epenthesis rather than metathesis, we should examine one final context where a vowel is inserted between consonants. Indeed, it is not rare to see an /e/ appear at the end of words when words ending in consonant clusters precede a consonant, as in (10) below. Given that this environment mirrors the word-initial context, we assume that they are both instances of the same general epenthesis rule.

- (10) a. *quante al sorte* [sɔrt] *aveuc Sidonie*
 ‘when she goes-out with Sidonie’
 b. *J’én sorté* [sɔrte] *point*
 ‘I NEG go-out not’ = ‘I’m not coming out’

3 The Syllable Structure of Vimeu Picard

In the preceding section we saw that epenthetic /e/ is inserted at the edges of consonant-initial and consonant-final words when these words surface in contact with other consonants. Thus, vowel epenthesis in VP appears to play the same role as in many other languages: it allows otherwise unsyllabifiable consonants to be syllabified (cf., e.g., Clements & Keyser 1983, Itô 1989, Repetti 1996, Colina 1997). In order to ensure that this analysis is warranted for Picard, we must, however, determine the syllable structure of this language. Assuming such widely accepted principles as the Sonority Sequencing Principle (Selkirk 1984), which stipulates that segments in a sequence are syllabified with the most sonorous segment constituting the head or nucleus of the syllable with a decrease in sonority as one moves towards either edge, the Sonority Hierarchy (e.g., Clements 1990), which ranks segments in relative increasing sonority from obstruents to nasals to liquids to glides to vowels, and Place of Articulation Restrictions (e.g., Rice 1992), which stipulate that segments syllabified within the same constituent may not bear the same place of articulation, we provide the following description of the syllable structure of VP.

- (11) a. Branching onsets require a distance of 2 between their components
- | | | | | |
|------|-------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|
| i. | /p/ | <i>m’plache</i> | [m.plaʃ] | ‘my place’ |
| ii. | /pj/ | <i>ch’piot</i> | [ʃ.pjo] | ‘the kid’ |
| iii. | */km/ | <i>*ch’cmin</i> | *[ʃ.kmɛ] | ‘the road’ |
| iv. | */dv/ | <i>*route dvant</i> | *[rut.dvɑ̃] | ‘road ahead’ |

- b. Branching nuclei consisting of [w,u] + vowel are allowed, but not those consisting of [j] + vowel
- i. *troés* [trwe] 'three'
 - ii. *pluie* [plɥi] 'rain'
 - iii. *oblieu* *[obljø]/[obljə] 'to forget'
- c. Complex codas are allowed, if the 1st element is a liquid⁴
- i. *pérc* [perk] 'park'
 - ii. *calme* [kalm] 'calm'
 - iii. **prèsque/présqué* [*presk/pres.ke] 'almost'
- d. Codas may license place features
- acceptabe* [ak.sɛp.tab] 'acceptable'
- e. Appendices:
- i. /t/ in word-final position: /t/ is the only consonant which can occur at the end of all words, regardless of the sonority of the preceding segment (compare with /ʃ/, the subjunctive morpheme, which cannot occur after an obstruent)

in directe [ɛ̃.di.rekt] 'in direct' = 'live'

i communiq't [i.ko.my.nikt] 'they communicate'

*qu'j'ém dépéque/*dépéque* 'that I hurry.subj'

qué j'dorche 'that I sleep.subj'
 - ii. no word-initial appendix: contrary to French and English, word-initial appendix /s/ is not allowed; instead, this consonant behaves like other consonants and requires an epenthetic vowel as syllabic support

**inne statue/inne éstatue* [*ɛ̃n.sta.ty/ɛ̃.nes.ta.ty] 'a statue'
- f. Syllables with empty nuclei are not allowed: either consonant deletion or vowel epenthesis is required
- *contre/conté/contré* *[kɔ̃tr] / [kɔ̃t] / [kɔ̃.tre] 'against'
- pour *cmincher/écmincher* *[pur.kmɛ̃.ʃe]/[pu.rek.mɛ̃.ʃe] 'to start'

The discussion and the examples above show how syllable structure and epenthesis are closely intertwined; indeed, it is often the fact that epenthesis is required in some contexts but not in others that reveals differences in syllabi-

⁴ Branching codas are generally not accepted in phonological theory; for example, Kaye's 1990 Binary Principle forces all such word-final consonants to be syllabified as onsets.

fication. E.g., the fact that /sr/ is a possible complex onset⁵ but that /sm/ is not is revealed by the contrastive behavior of the two sequences when they follow a consonant: *inne sringue* [ɛ̃n.srɛ̃g] 'a syringe' vs. *inne ésmainne* [ɛ̃.nes.mɛ̃n] 'a week'. While this approach to determining syllable structure might appear circular, the fact that the structure which it reveals falls so clearly in line with general principles of syllable structure makes us confident that our conclusions are valid. Indeed, these conclusions allow us to account for a number of facts which had initially appeared mysterious to us. E.g., based on the fact that there are no /vl/ onsets in French, we were surprised to discover that no epenthetic vowel is inserted when *vlo* 'here's' follows a consonant. The syllable structure above accounts for this: /vl/ is a possible onset in VP⁶, making epenthesis unnecessary. Conversely, with the word *rién* 'nothing', we were surprised to find that epenthesis is obligatory when this word follows a consonant-final word. The requirement for a minimal distance in the onset predicts obligatory epenthesis, since, according to Clements' Sonority Hierarchy, /rj/ is not a possible onset. The contrast between **ch' rio* 'the stream' (the grammatical form is *chu rio*) and *ch' piot* 'the kid' confirms that /rj/ and /pj/ are syllabified differently: /pj/ is a possible onset in VP, while /rj/ is not.

4 Vowel Epenthesis and Syllable Structure

Our hypothesis concerning vowel epenthesis in VP is the following: a vowel is inserted in order to syllabify a segment which would otherwise be unsyllabifiable for reasons of sonority or place of articulation. While some languages delete unsyllabifiable consonants, it would seem that this option is generally disfavored in Picard. In the current terms of Optimality Theory, it would appear that VP ranks MAX, the constraint which requires every element of the input to be overtly realized, higher than DEP, the constraint which requires every element of the output to have a correspondent in the input.

In this section, we will test our hypothesis against the epenthesis facts of VP. We will make use of the syllable structure sketched in (11) above, relying particularly on the observation that this language does not normally allow syllables with empty nuclei. We will also make use of the notion of Intonational Phrase (IntPhr) as defined by Selkirk 1995:566 : IntPhr's are "spans of the

⁵ While, phonetically, /r/ is either apical or uvular in VP, we consider its phonological behavior to be that of a placeless glide, following Rice 1992.

⁶The question thus becomes why this onset is not possible in English or French.

utterance which are delimited by boundary tones". For example, while there is a single IntPhr in *I called Mary yesterday*, there are normally two such phrases when a sentence contains a preposed adverbial complement (*Yesterday, I called Mary*) or a left-dislocated phrase (*Mary, I called her yesterday*). As we will see, IntPhr boundaries play a crucial role in determining whether epenthesis is obligatory or variable.

The simplest case of vowel epenthesis is found in word-initial position within an IntPhr: in those cases where a consonant cannot be syllabified within the onset of the word to which it belongs underlyingly because of place and/or sonority restrictions, an epenthetic vowel is inserted allowing the consonant in question to be syllabified as the coda of a new syllable. This is exemplified in (12):

- (12) a. *in liméro comme ézz/*zz eutes* [kɔ.mez.zøt]
 ‘an issue like the others’ = ‘an issue like others’
 b. *pour écmíncher/*cmíncher* [pu.rek.mɛ̃.ʃe] ‘to start’

When a word beginning with a consonant that cannot be syllabified as part of the onset is located at the beginning of an IntPhr, vowel epenthesis becomes optional. As shown in (13) below, this variable behavior is found in sentence-initial position as well as after an intonational break within a sentence. Our hypothesis based on syllable structure does not predict that there should be a difference between these and the word-initial cases in (12) above, since, in both contexts, a consonant lacks a syllabic nucleus that can support it. We would like to propose here that the phrase-initial consonant can be licensed either directly by the syllable created by the insertion of an epenthetic vowel or indirectly by the IntPhr itself. While admitting that this proposal is in need of further development, it is not uncommon for segments to be licensed indirectly at the edge of a prosodic domain, whether that domain be the foot, the prosodic word, or higher up in the prosodic hierarchy (Piggott 1998).

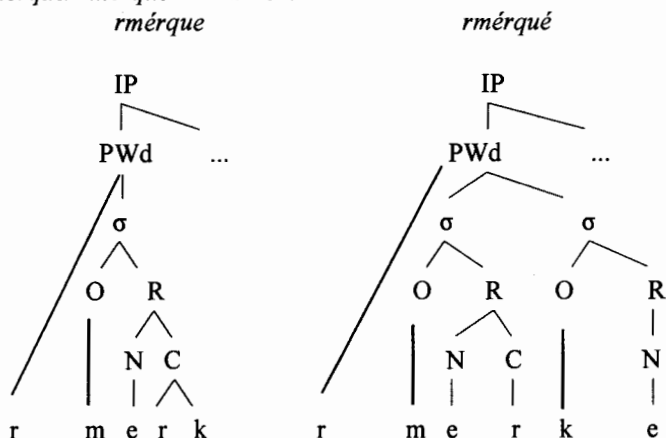
- (13) a. *Ch'Éch troisième homme il a parti* ‘The third man has left’
 b. *Ben non, éjj' n'ai point peu* ‘Eh no, I couldn't’

In word-final position, the situation is more complex due to the fact that different syllabification options exist. Where only one strategy is available, a single output is possible. E.g., when the final consonants do not constitute a possible coda, and when the second consonant is not /t/ and thus not a possible appendix, only an epenthetic vowel can save the final consonant. This is the case, for instance, when the first of the two consonants is not a liquid and the second is not /t/, the only possible appendix, as shown in (14):

- (14) a. *pasqué/*pasque j'sus pu souvint din chés cambes*
 'because I'm more often in the bedrooms'
 b. *O n'ouéyouot présqué/*presque pu clair*
 'we NEG saw almost anymore clear'
 = 'we could barely see anything anymore'

When the final cluster is a possible word-final consonant cluster, two outputs are also possible. This situation arises in two different cases. One is when the first consonant of the sequence is a liquid, since this is the only type of coda cluster that is possible in VP. In such cases, the final consonant can be syllabified as part of the coda or as the onset of another syllable if an epenthetic vowel is inserted, as shown in (15).

- (15) *Rmérque/Rmérqué bien...* 'Note...'

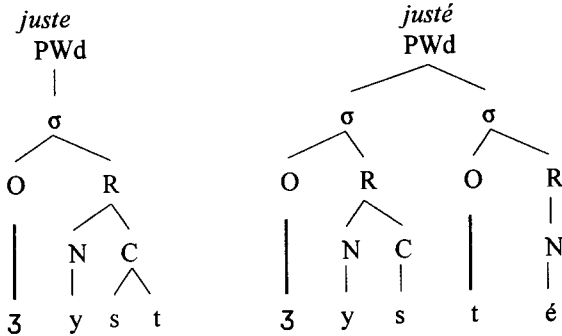


Yet why should there be two outputs? We propose that this results from the fact that neither output is truly optimal, each of them violating a highly-ranked constraint: *rmérque* violates Kaye's 1990 Binary condition which prohibits complex codas, while *rmérqué* violates DEP, since the epenthetic vowel lacks a correspondent in the input form. In future work, we intend to explore the possibility that this variation could be captured through the notion of crucial unranking (Prince & Smolensky 1993), following Anttila's 1997 proposal.

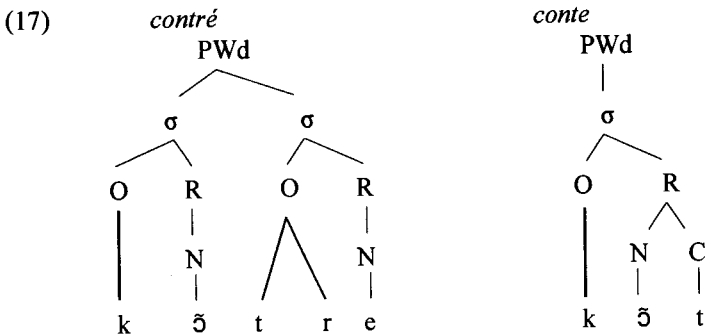
When the final consonant is /t/ and the preceding consonant is not a liquid, as in *juste* 'just', the cluster is not a possible coda; however, /t/ can be licensed by the prosodic word (PWd) as an appendix. In this case also, two outputs are possible: when the following segment is a consonant, *juste* can either surface without an /e/, if the /t/ is licensed by the PWd as an appendix, or with an /e/,

as shown in (16). Once again, we hypothesize that the variation between the two outputs is due to the fact that they violate constraints which are not crucially ranked with respect to each other: as indirect licensing is marked vis-à-vis direct licensing, the *juste* form, which contains an appendix indirectly licensed by the PWd, is not optimal, while the epenthetic vowel in *justé* violates the DEP constraint.

(16) *juste/justé derrière éch chauffeur* 'just behind the driver'



One final context where word-final vowel epenthesis is possible within an IntPhr involves consonant clusters that have an onset-like profile rather than a coda-like profile, as in, e.g., *contre* /kɔ̃tr/ 'against'. /tr/ is not a possible coda, because of its sonority profile, and /t/ is not a possible appendix in Picard. Two output forms are possible. First, as in the previous cases, an epenthetic vowel can be inserted making it possible for /tr/ to be syllabified as an onset cluster, as shown in the *contré* form in (17) below. It is also possible, however, to delete the final liquid and to syllabify the /t/ as part of the coda of the preceding syllable, thus yielding a monosyllabic output form: [kɔ̃t].



The latter form, *conte*, raises a question: why is it possible to delete the /r/? Deletion was never a possibility for any of the other contexts considered so far. In our data, word-initial consonants are never deleted; some final consonants can be. However, the liquids in words like *contre* and *sable* 'sand' are the only segments which seem to be deleted in synchrony. Other consonants, such as the /m/ that might be posited at the end of *catéchisse* 'catechism' or the /t/ at the end of *journalisse* 'journalist', do not appear to be present in the underlying forms of these words. Indeed, since it is possible to insert epenthetic vowels to save final consonants, we should find instances of *catéchismé* and *journalisté* in our data. No such examples can be found. On the other hand, examples of *contré* and *sablé* were present, showing that the final liquids are present in the underlying forms of these words. Space constraints prevent us from investigating this issue in detail here. However, we attribute the fact that only word-final consonants can be deleted to the word-recognition difficulties that would arise if the initial consonant of a word were missing (e.g., [mɛ̃] for *cmin*). What remains to be determined is the reason why deletion of a final consonant is possible in *contre* but not in *pasque* (*[pas]).

Before moving on to the last context, that of word-final clusters occurring at the end of an IntPhr, we would like to briefly discuss an apparently surprising environment: that of 3pl verb forms. We mentioned earlier that the 3pl morpheme is a /t/ segment that can be added to any type of stem, no matter whether it ends in a vowel or in a consonant. When the stem is consonant-final, an epenthetic vowel is variably inserted if the verb occurs before a consonant-initial word, as seen in (18). In this respect, 3pl verb forms behave like any underived word which ends in a possible word-final consonant cluster.

- (18)a. *ses amis qu'i voz apport't vo jornal*
 'his friends that to-you bring your newspaper'
 = 'his friends who bring you your newspaper'
 b. *pi i sort 'té touté deux*
 'and they go-out all two' = 'and both of them leave'

Surprisingly, however, an epenthetic vowel can be inserted even when the 3pl morpheme is not preceded by a consonant, as in (19):

- (19)a. *il avoait'té voté* 'they had voted'
 b. *pér nuit il avoait't voté* 'at night they had voted'

This is the only context where epenthetic /e/ regularly appears despite the fact that it is not required to break up sequences of consonants unpronounceable in

Picard. Why might this be? The presence of the epenthetic vowel cannot be attributed to the fact that /t/ is an inflectional morpheme, since the 2pl /t/ morpheme does not trigger epenthesis, as we can see in (20):

- (20) a. *O sroéte putot 'conte' ?* 'you.pl would.be.2pl rather against'
 b. *o n'comprindroéte point* 'you.pl would.understand.2pl not'

Rather, we must take the spelling which is found in (19) seriously: the *t't* reflects the geminate character of the 3pl ending, which should, in consequence, be /tt/ rather than simply /t/. VP contains a number of morphemes which consist of a geminate consonant; for instance, the 3sg.acc pronominal clitic is /ll/, and the partitive/genitive pronominal clitic is /nn/. Both of these forms share the same distribution: while the geminate form surfaces in intervocalic environments, as in (21)a below, a simplified form is found in contact with a consonant, as shown in (21)b. However, degemination is not obligatory in this context: if an /e/ is inserted between the geminate and the consonant, the geminate is preserved, as in (21)c.

- (21) a. *O ll'avoéme attindu* 'we it had waited'
 b. *tu l'sais* 'you.sg it know'
 c. *I llé savoait* 'he it knew'

Thus, there is evidence for a general but variable degemination rule in VP. Furthermore, Éloy 1997 reports that, in the Picard of Amiens, 3pl /tt/ is variably degeminated. Consequently, we propose that variable epenthesis in forms like *avoait't* correlates with variable degemination: a vowel is inserted when a geminate /tt/ precedes a consonant, but not when the geminate is simplified. In contrast, the morpheme for 2pl is an ungeminated /t/ which does not require epenthesis.

There is one final environment where we would expect epenthesis to occur: in word-final position at the end of an IntPhr. Very interestingly, it appears that this environment is generally incompatible with epenthetic /e/. As we can see in (22), words which normally allow for epenthesis within an IntPhr must surface without an epenthetic vowel at the end of an IntPhr.

- (22) a. *I povoait rpinser à s'nouvelle rinconte/*rincontre/*rincontré*
 'He could think back to his new encounter'
 b. *din chés leumières qu'i trann't/*trann'té*
 'in the lights that flicker.3pl'

While we can only conjecture on the reason for this prohibition at this point, one plausible explanation is that epenthetic vowels cannot be stressed in Picard. An alternative explanation would invoke an ALIGN RIGHT constraint which would force the end of a morphological word to be aligned with the end of the IntPhr (McCarthy & Prince 1993).

One final question remains: why do postverbal clitics constitute an exception, as in (23)? The fact that 3pl verbs do not accept an epenthetic /e/ in this context rules out the possibility that we might be dealing with the same phenomenon as in (19) and (21) above. Another possibility is that clitics do not constitute a real exception. Indeed, it is common for pronominal clitics in Gallo-Romance languages to have different preverbal and postverbal forms. E.g., in French, *me* is preverbal and *moi* is postverbal for 'me'. In VP, two forms must be distinguished, too: the preverbal form is a single /m/, while the postverbal form is a geminate /mm/. Consequently, it is not out of the question that the input form for 1sg.acc/dat in postverbal position could contain an /e/ that would be underlying rather than epenthetic: /mme/. Indeed, we must not forget that not all /e/'s in Picard are epenthetic and that underlying /e/'s are allowed in the final position of an IntPhr, as shown in (24).

(23) *Mais diseu mmé, quoé qu'i foait lo*
'but tell me, what is he doing there?'

(24) *Il ont mingè des quèrpèttes au solé.*
'they have eaten of-the pancakes at-the sun'
= 'They ate pancakes in the sun'

5 Conclusion

We have shown in this paper that what at first may have appeared to be metathesis consists of two different phenomena: historical word-internal metathesis and synchronic vowel epenthesis. We have focused on the latter and shown that, as with cases of epenthesis in general, a segment, here /e/, is inserted in order to syllabify consonants occurring at edges of domains that would be otherwise unsyllabifiable and thus subject to stray erasure. We have demonstrated that epenthesis is generally predictable once the syllabic structure of Picard has been determined. We have also identified contexts which allow for variable epenthesis. In these cases, other phonological properties of Picard, including the ability of the PWD and IntPhr to act as indirect licensors, allow for variable outputs.

This analysis has raised a number of questions which require further investigation. As we expand the object of our inquiry to include clitic sequences and

derived words, we expect to answer these questions and refine our analysis in general. Through a meticulous study of the variable patterns, we also expect to contribute to a very interesting research trend which proposes a model of linguistic competence capable of generating language-internal variation (cf., e.g., Anttila 1997; Sells, Rickford, & Wasow 1996).

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