English stress is stable, lexical, and binary

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three claims about English word stress

1. stress is stable, ie
   - stressed Vs do not become unstressed
   - unstressed Vs do not become stressed
2. stress is lexical, ie phonology does not manipulate which Vs are stressed and which are unstressed
3. stress is binary, ie a V is either stressed or unstressed, tertium non datur (so we're not talking about binary feet here!)

how do we know if a V is stressed?

stress is relational

- first V is more prominent in *látest*, *látex*
- second V is more prominent in *lagóon*, *lampóon*
- ́ is the tonic if these words are final in the neutral reading of an utterance

yet, in some sense,

- the other Vs of *látèx* and *làmpóon* are also stressed
- while the other Vs of *látest* and *lagóon* are not stressed
- why do we think so?

stress shift

lampoon vs *lagoon*

- in *lampoon* either V may be more prominent than the other: *lampóon* vs *lámpoon póetry*
- in *lagoon* the first V may not be more prominent than the second: *lagóon*, *lagóon dólphin*, **lágoon dólphin*
- so both Vs in *lámpóon* are stressed, which one is more prominent is predictable from the context: *lámpóon*, *lagóon*

látest vs *látèx*

- the second V may not be more prominent than the first in any context in either word
- so what's the difference?

vowel quality

according to a wide-spread assumption

- vowels reduce in unstressed position to ə ɪ (ʉ)
- so lɛ́jtɛ̀ks vs lɛ́jtəst; lámpʉ́wn vs ləgʉ́wn
  (also *amulet* ámjʉlɪt, ámjələt)

however, this only works if. . .

- we use different symbols for "normal" and "reduced" vowels: eg ʌ vs ə; ɪ vs ɨ (ʊ vs ɵ), cf Bolinger 1986 and many others
- else vowel quality is not indicative of stress: cf
  Kentucky kɛntákɪj vs *Kennedy* kɛ́nədɪj;
  today tədɛ́j vs *Monday* mándɛj;
  abut əbʌ́t vs *butter* bʌ́tə;
  begin bɪgín vs *Biggin* bígɪn
- so we're using the appropriate symbol only because we know which vowels are stressed in the first place

vowel reduction is history

the GP view (à la Kaye 1995)

- full vowel∼reduced vowel alternations are lexical (ie not phonological): regular (analytic) affixation (eg of *-ing*, *-ed*, *-ness*, *un-*, etc) does not lead to vowel reduction, since it does not induce any change in stress
- nonanalytic (level-1) affixation may change stress; the relationship of *academy* əkádəmɪj–*academic* ákədɛ́mɪk–*academician* əkádəmíʃən/ákədəmíʃən is not phonological; note that practically only the consonants are constant, like in *sing* and *sang*, or *full* and *fill*
- vowel reduction is a historical relic (like ablaut, umlaut, velar softening, or spirantization), not a phonological process, but — like in the case of velar softening or vowel shift — spelling disguises this (cf *academic/academician*, *hide/hid*, etc)

stress is stable

if we exclude historical events from phonology

- stress will be stable, ie
  - Vs lexically stressed do not become unstressed: *work* wəːk, *wək; exc some one-syllable function words, eg *were* wəː, wə, this is lexical allomorphy
  - Vs lexically unstressed do not become stressed: the nonfirst Vs of wáːkəbəl are never stressed; exc in contrastive topic: *is the idea working? — no, it's workáble* wəːkə́bəl
- stresses are not all equally prominent, but no stress is lost
- "stress shift" is simply prominence shift: *sárdíne* vs *sárdíne spréad; léft hánd* vs *léft hánd dríve* (three adjacent stresses come out as "231")
- ⇒ word stress in English is stable and lexical

so why is the last V of *latex* stressed?

some segmental consequences of stress

- aspiration before stress vs t-lenition: *lát*[h]*èx* vs *lá*[ʔ]/[ɾ]/[s]*est*
- no syncope (including high vowel gliding) before stress: *Lebanon* lɛ́bə̸nən vs lɛ́b*ə̸nɔ̀n; *linear* lín/jə vs *delineate* dılín*/jɛ̀jt (nb this is not a stress-clash-avoidance strategy: cf *methodological* mɛ́θəd*ə̸lɔ́dʒıkəl, *characterize* kárəkt*ə̸rɑ̀jz)
- no excrescent plosive in nasal+fricative clusters before stress: *censure* sɛ́ntʃə, *prince* prínts vs *ensure* ın*tʃóː, *princess* prín*tsɛ́s, *incest* ín*tsɛ̀st
- unstressed ʉ̸w only before stress: *amulet* ámjʉ̸wlɛ̀t, ámjʉ̸lɛ̀t, ámjʉ̸lət, but *ámjʉ̸wlət; *stimulus* stímjʉ̸*wləs vs *stimulate* stímjʉ̸(w)lɛ̀jt

data from Wells 2008

vowels and stress

there are two types of vowels

- the vowels that occur in unstressed postion are ə ɪ ʉ əw ɪj ʉw
- although these vowels are not "derived" from other vowels by phonological rules, we could call them reduced
- all other vowels do not occur in unstressed position (a ɛ ɔ ɑj aw ɛj oj and all long vowels)
- thus the second V of *latex* is stressed
- for syllables with possibly reduced vowels we must consider segmental effects or stress shift (eg *Príncess Ánne* vs *sincére wísh*; *uncháined* vs *únchained mélody*)

lampoon vs *latex*

if both have both Vs stressed, what's the difference?

short answer

I whish I knew

longer answer

the contrast of *black bird* 'avis nigra' and *blackbird* 'Turdus merula' neutralizes in

- *black( )bird's nest* (difference in structure)
- *is this a black( )board? no, it's a black( )bird!* (emphasis)

also note

lámpóon pőetry vs **fáke látéx* (no stress shift in the other direction)

thanks to

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