



# So how is the coda-onset change -kt(-) > -pt(-) a case of lenition?

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# So how is the coda-onset change -kt(-) > -pt(-) a case of lenition?

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## 0 Problems

-Is either *-kt* > *-pt* or *-pt* > *-kt* a case of lenition? If so, how to model it?  
-Are both *-kt* > *-pt* and *-pt* > *-kt* cases of lenition? If so, how to model it?

## 1 Fortition and lenition are related to the sonority scale

Fortition is typically associated with changes like:  
-fricative > stop (> affricate)  
-voiced > voiceless  
-lenis > fortis

Lenition is typically associated with changes like:  
-stop > fricative  
-voiceless > voiced  
-reduction to zero

>> WHAT ABOUT CHANGES IN PLACE OF ARTICULATION?

## 2 Fortition and lenition are dependent on the context

Government Phonology predicts that in *-C<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>-*, *C<sub>1</sub>* undergoes lenition

>> Prediction: BOTH *-kt* > *-pt* and *-pt* > *-kt* are lenitions

## 3 Velars and labials: their representation using elements

### 3.1 Harris and Lindsay (1995): Government Phonology

-*velars and labials have different element complexity*:  
-labials have U  
-velars have no place defining element

>> Prediction: only *-pt* > *-kt* is lenition (through loss of |U|)

### 3.2 Backley (2011: 77-84): Element Theory

-*velars and labials have identical complexity, but differ in headedness*:  
-velars = non-head |U|  
-labials = headed |U|

>> Prediction: *-pt* > *-kt* is lenition (loss of headedness) and *-kt* > *-pt* is a case of “acoustic reinterpretation” (cf. Jakobson’s [+grave] vs. [+acute], Liberman et al. (1952), Reetz and Jongman (2009: 261))

Problem: why does acoustic reinterpretation not work for *-pt* > *-kt*?

### 3.3 Carvalho (2013): cavity states

|H| = [spread] state of the pharyngeal cavity (ATRness)  
|N| = [spread] state of the nasal cavity (nasality)  
|A| = [constricted] state of the pharyngeal cavity (pharyngeality)  
|T| = [constricted] state of the supra-pharyngeal (=oral) cavity

coronals and velars share |H|, coronals have |T|, labials have |U| as well

> neither velars nor coronals are defined by a melodic element, and are therefore unspecified for place, while labials have |U|

>> Prediction: both *-pt* > *-kt* and *-kt* > *-pt* are cases of lenition

## 4 Conclusions

-*pt* > *-kt* is lenition because of loss of element |U|  
-*kt* > *-jt* is lenition because of loss of elements |ʔ|/|h|, and gaining |I|  
-*kt* > *-pt* is lenition because of gaining sonority through element

REFERENCES :  
Backley, Philip. 2011. *An Introduction to Element Theory*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.  
Carvalho, Joaquim De Brandão. 2013. Why there is no backness: the case for dismissing both [coronal] and [dorsal].  
In: J.-L. Léonard & S. Naïm. *Backness and backing*. Lincom, pp.45-58.

Latin	Italian	French	Galician	Spanish	Rumanian	gloss
	gemination	-kt > -jt > Vt	-kt > -jt	-kt > -jt > tʃ	-kt > -pt	
pe[kt]-	petto	poit(rine)	peito	pecho	pie[pt]	‘chest’
la[kt]-	latte	lait	leite	leche	la[pt]e	‘milk’
lu[kt]-	lotta	lutte	loita	lucha	lu[pt]ă	‘fight’
no[kt]-	notte	nuit	noite	noche	noa[pt]e	‘night’
li[ŋn]u-	legno			leño	li[mn]	‘(tinder)wood’

Table 1: reflexes of Latin -kt- clusters

Problem: Rumanian has /pt/ after any vowel

Table 2: English shows that preceding vowel was labial for -x(C) > -f(C) to happen

English	Dutch	German
/f/ spelt <gh>	/x/ spelt <ch, g>	/ç x k/ or Ø (spelt <h>)
cough	kuch-	keuch-
enough	genoeg	genug
laugh	lach-	lach-
rough	ruig	rauh
trough	trog	Trog

Table 3: Latin loanwords in Balcanic languages

Latin loanwords in Dalmatian (extinct) and Albanian show the influence of a preceding labial context:

Latin	Dalmatian	Albanian	gloss
o[kt]u-	gua[pt]o		‘eight’
co[ŋn]atu-	co[mn]ut		‘male relative’
lu[kt]a-		lu[ft]ë	‘fight’
pa[kt]-		pa[jt]oj	‘pact’
dire[kt]-		dref[jt]ë	‘direct, right’

Table 4: reductions of /kt/ > /ft/ in Dutch, independently of preceding V

		gloss	cf. German
ko/x/t	< kop-en	‘buy’	kauf-
beru/x/t	< beroep-en	‘notorious’	beruf-
sti[x]ting		‘fund’	Stiftung
lu[x]t		‘air’	Luft
za/x/t		‘soft’	sanft

Proposed representations for lenition of -kt to -pt and -jt, respectively:

