

The ambiguity of *-ization*

An important task of specialists in any field is the elaboration of a clear and adequate terminology. The coining and popularization of well thought out technical terms both reflects theoretical advances and facilitates clarity of thought and expression.

There is one region of phonetics/phonology where current terms are neither clear nor adequate. We use the suffix *-ize* (or *-ise*) and its derivatives *-ized* and *-ization* in two quite different senses. One of these, well-established in articulatory phonetics, is to describe secondary articulations. A VELARIZED segment is one where a velar articulation accompanies some other articulation having a greater degree of stricture: [ɣ] is a velarized alveolar. Similarly, [ɮ] shows palatalization and [ɮ̠] labialization. The other usage, commonly encountered in historical phonology and now increasingly in synchronic generative phonology, refers to a process involving change. Developments from [k] to [s, ʃ, tʃ] etc. are described as 'palatalization'; the use of [ʔ] as a realization of /t/ is described as 'glottalization'; and of course it is only with difficulty that we persuade students not to call the [ŋ] of *tenth* 'dentalized'.

A recent publication furnishes a striking example of how awkward this ambiguity can be. Smith, 1973, discusses the childish pronunciation which involves the replacement of adult-speech alveolar consonants by velars before [ɪ], thus *pedal* with [g], *handle* with [ŋ], etc. His use of quotation marks shows how conscious he is of the ineptness of contemporary terminology when he writes

the 'velarisation' of coronals takes place before a velarised (dark) [ɪ]. (p. 23)

What solutions to this difficulty suggest themselves? My feeling is that the static (secondary-articulation) meaning of *-ize* is the better established, so that it is for the dynamic (process) meaning that we must seek a new derivative device. I have toyed with two possibilities.

(1) Common-vocabulary pairs such as *solid-solidify*, *ugly-uglify*, *intense-intensify* suggest the use of *-ify*, *-ified*, *-ification*. On this basis we could say that children VELARIFY alveolars before [ɪ]; in *atlas* ['æʔtləs] the /t/ is (pre)glottalized, but in ['æʔləs] it is glottalized; Russian velars historically underwent (or synchronically undergo) palatalification and alveolarification. Regrettably, the resultant terms are clumsily sesquipedalian. And English stress rules unfortunately make them bear stress on the semantically unimportant *-al-*, *-ar-*.

(2) A better idea, it would seem, is to follow the example of *mature*, *dirty*, *spiral*, using the descriptive adjective or noun directly as a verb. (We already do this when describing vowel changes as FRONTING or BACKING.) So what children do to alveolars before /l/ is VELAR them: Smith's discussion refers to the velaring of coronals before a velarized consonant. The /t/ of ['æʔləs] is glottalled (in the States, glottaled). Russian shows the palatalling and alveolaring of velars.

This second proposal seems to yield terms which are unambiguous, yet trip reasonably freely off the tongue. In *ten minutes* we often bilabial the (underlying) /n/ of *ten*; in *ten things* we dental it. Speakers frequently nasal the /g/ of *langues modernes*. A synonym of elision is obviously zeroing. Synchronically, morphological alternations such as *face-facial*, *part-partial* can be said to involve the palatoalveolaring of alveolars, though historically this no doubt arose through palatalization (or do I mean palatalizing?). The development of Latin /ai/ to Romance /e/ is an instance of monophthonging. The various mutations of Welsh *pen* involve voicing (?voiceding, lenising) to *ben*, fricativizing to *phen*, and nasalling to *mhen*.

Have colleagues other, better, proposals?

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Reference

SMITH, N. V. (1973). *The acquisition of phonology*. Cambridge University Press.