

## The change of \*e > i in (mostly) initial syllables in Latin

Nicholas Zair, Peterhouse, Cambridge

naz21@cam.ac.uk

1. Longstanding problem of apparently sporadic \*e > /i/ in Latin when followed by /i(:)/ in the next syllable. Fries' (2019) solution: raising of \*e takes place only when /e:/ is in the next syllable.

2. Two important sound changes:

2.1	c. 250 BC	c. 150 BC
	/ɛi/ > /e:/	> /i:/ (merger with inherited /i:/)

\*ueikī > ueci (CIL 1<sup>2</sup>.2874) > uīcī 'quarter, street'

2.2 Vowel weakening in open syllables C5th-C3rd BC:

/i/	*aditus	> aditus	'way'
/ɛ/	*ēlegō	> eligō	'I choose'
/a/	*kekadai	> cecidī	'I fell'
/o/	*kupidotāts	> cupiditās	'desire'
/u/	*kaputes	> capitis	'head (gen.)'

3. Evidence for Fries' raising rule:

- H *abiegniīs* (CIL 1<sup>2</sup>.698) < \**abiegneēs* < \**abiegneis* 'of fir wood' (acc. pl. n. *abiegnea* in same inscription)
- H *dīīs* < \**deēs* < \**deeis* < \**deiwoisi* 'to gods' (beside *deīs*, cf. nom. sg. *deus*)
- H *īīs* < \**eēs* < \**eeis* < \**eyoisi* 'to them' (beside *eīs*, cf. nom. sg. f. *ea*)
- U *mihi* < \**meē* < \**mehē* < \**mehei* < \**meg<sup>h</sup>ei* 'to me'
- H *mīīs* (ISS) < \**meēs* < \**meeis* < \**meoisi* 'mine'
- U *nīmīs* (if < \**nemēs* < \**nemeis* < \**ne meīH-is*) 'too much'
- *nihil* < \**neēl* < \**nehēl* < \**neheil* < \**ne g<sup>h</sup>eilom* 'nothing'
- U *nisi* < \**nesē* < \**ne sei* 'if not'
- U *sibi* < \**sebē* < \**sebei* < \**seb<sup>h</sup>ei* 'to him-, herself'
- U *tibi* < \**tebē* < \**tebei* < \**teb<sup>h</sup>ei* 'to you'
- *simītū* < \**semētū* < \**sem-eitū* 'together'

### 3.1 Advantages

3.1.1 Avoids counter-evidence: *decimus* ‘tenth’, *enim* ‘for’, *gelidus* ‘icy’, *geminus* ‘twin’, *genitor* ‘father’, *genitus* ‘begotten’, *gremium* ‘lap’, *here* ‘yesterday’ < \**heri*, *medius* ‘middle’, *melior* ‘better’, *penitus* ‘inward; inwardly’, *tepidus* ‘lukewarm’, *uenia* ‘favour, kindness’, *ueniō* ‘come’.

3.1.2 Combines two similar ‘rules’: unstressed raising (U), raising in hiatus before \*/e:/ in the following syllable (H).

### 3.2 Disadvantages:

#### 3.2.1 \**sNV-* > *siNV-*:

- *similis* ‘same, like’ < \**sṃh<sub>2</sub>-el-i-s*. \**semh<sub>2</sub>-li-s* is more likely on morphological and comparative grounds:
  - a) Old Latin *semol* (CIL 1<sup>2</sup>.153), *semul* → *simul* ‘at the same time’.
  - b) Old Irish *samail* ‘likeness, similarity’ can come from \**semalis* < \**semh<sub>2</sub>-li-s* as well as \**sṃh<sub>2</sub>-el-i-s*.
  - c) Greek ὁμαλός ‘even, uniform, level’ cannot come directly from \**somh<sub>2</sub>-lo-s* (> \**somlos*). Easiest explanation is \**semh<sub>2</sub>-lo-s* > \**semalos*, with influence from ὁμός ‘the same’.
- *sine* ‘without’ < \**spH-î*. \**senH-i* equally possible.
- *sinister* ‘left’ < \**sṃh<sub>2</sub>-is-teros*. \**senh<sub>2</sub>-is-teros* equally likely.

3.2.1 *nimius* (adj.) ‘too much’. Fries: from old neuter comparative \**ne meīH-jos*, subsequently reanalysed as an *o*-stem adjective. Proposed development \**ne-meyyos* > \**ne-mēos* > \**nimēus* > \**nimeus* > *nimius* (by vowel weakening).

- But several problematic sound changes: \**-eyy-* was not treated the same as a diphthong \**-ei-* followed by any other consonant, cf. *eius* ‘of this’ < \**eyyos* < \**esyos*, *peior* ‘worse’ < \**peyyōs* < \**ped-yōs*, \**pompayyānos* > \**pompeyyānos* (by vowel weakening in closed syllables) > *Pompeianus* ‘Pompeian’, not \**Pompēanos* > \**Pompianus*. Retention of double \**-yy-* shown by alternative spellings *eīius*, *peiior*, [Po]mpeiianis (CIL 4.9144).
- Adj. *nimius* probably a secondary creation from *nimis* ‘too much’ (adv.): not separate evidence.
- *nimis* could come from \**nemēs* < \**ne meīH-is*, but \**nemīs* < \**ne miH-is* is equally likely.

3.2.4 *cinis*, *-eris* ‘ash’: LW from a Semitic source (cf. Aramaic *kīnāšā* ‘sweepings’) according to Fries, along with Greek *κόνης*, *-ιος* ‘dust’.

- But the Greek and Latin pair ‘look’ Indo-European (acrostatic *i*-stem with *o/e* ablaut in Greek, from which is derived an *s*-stem; Weiss 2020: 149; on this process see Rau 2014: 339).
- And Semitic borrowings hardly common in Latin.

4. We could solve some of these problems by formulating a new rule: raising between a coronal and a nasal before a vowel which is [-low, + front] (or includes one, if diphthong /ei/ is still in existence, depending on timing) in the following syllable:

- *nimis* < \**nemīs* (or < \**nemēs* < \**nemeis*)
- *similis* < \**semīlis* < \**semalis*
- *sine* < \**seni*
- *sinister* < \**senisteros*
- *simītū* < \**sem eitū*

4.1 This makes sense comparatively and typologically.

4.1.1 Raising of \**e* also occurs before nasals in \**nC* sequences, where C is not coronal, and in the sequence \**menV-* (Weiss 2020: 148):

- \**tengō* > *tingō* ‘I tinge’, \**lembos* > *limbus* ‘fringe’, \**enferus* > *inferus* ‘lower’
- \**meneswā* > *Minerua*, \**men-* > *minor* ‘I threaten’, *minae* ‘threats’

4.1.2 Coronals cross-linguistically lead to fronting of adjoining vowels (Hume 1994: 8–12, 214–226; Flemming 2002: 66–81, 2003: 348–352). Fronting of \**e* combined with raising effect of following \**N* could have led to confusion of \**e* and \**i*.

4.2 This leaves *cinis* unresolved. A couple of possibilities here, with disadvantages:

- \**e* > i/\_N[-low, +front] is impossible: *geminus*, *genitor*, *genitus*, *penitus* could be avoided (see below), but not *enim*, *gremium*, *ueniō*, *uenia*.
- \**e* > i/C\_N[-low, +front], where C is not a labial, or /r/.
  - Exceptions *geminus*, *genitor*, *genitus* can be avoided by stipulating that the change took place before vowel weakening to /i/.
  - Patterning of /r/ with the labials may be due to lip-rounding (cf. \**srīgos* > *frīgus*, \**founesris* > *fūnebris*, \**werd<sup>h</sup>om* > *uerbum*, Sen & Zair 2022: 414–16), or ‘darkness’ of syllable-onset /r/ (cf. lowering effect in e.g. \**peparai* > \**pepirai* > *peperī* ‘I brought forth’, \**per-yurō* > *peirō* ‘I swear falsely’; Sen & Zair 2022: 420–22).

- If the rule took place before vowel weakening, *similis* will have to be explained in another way (generalisation from compounds like *consimilis*, which are attested early, and indeed perhaps existed in Italo-Celtic, on the basis of Old Irish *cosmail*).
  - Not much cross-linguistic evidence for shared features of [+coronal] and [+velar] consonants in terms of effect on adjacent vowels.
- c) \*e > i/k\_N[-low, +front] and \*e > i/[+coronal]\_N[-low, +front] (this could take place after vowel weakening, and thus include *similis*). But seems pretty arbitrary.

5. For the other forms Fries' rule could be correct (Occam's razor). However, it is to be noted that, once we explain *simītū* by raising before a nasal, all other forms fall into the two categories U and H for which we have independent evidence for vowel raising.

### 5.1 Enclitic/unstressed words (U):

- *mihi* < \**mehē* (but see below)
- *mīs* < \**meēs* (but see below)
- *nimis* < \**ne mēs* or \**ne mīs* (but see above)
- *nisi* < \**nesē*
- *sibi* < \**sebē*
- *sine* < \**senī* (but see above)
- *tibi* < \**tebē*

#### 5.1.1 Fries:

- a) Pronominal forms in Latin reflect Indo-European stressed forms.
- b) No evidence of enclitic status in Latin.
- c) No evidence of enclisis in closely related Sabellic languages (so loss of stress cannot be old).

a') Original stressed status does not prevent subsequent loss of stress. Function words such as pronouns often unstressed at the phrasal level (Selkirk 1996); in addition, constituents of a phrase can be deaccented if they are contextually given, a status that is always true of definite pronouns like personal pronouns (Truckenbrodt 2007: 445-50). Pronouns plausible targets for secondary destressing (as Fries 2019: 99-100 admits). Other function words show evidence of lack of stress in Latin: unexpected shortenings in \**k<sup>w</sup>am-sej* > \**k<sup>w</sup>āsī* > \**k<sup>w</sup>asī* > *quasi* 'as if', *sīquidem* > *siquidem* 'if indeed'.

b') All of the forms above (except *sine* and *mīs*) have short final vowel by iambic shortening, characteristic of unstressed or less-stressed words (cf. *ego* 'I' < \**egō*). Failure of word-final -s in the Latin comedians only before the verb 'to be' and personal pronouns (Pezzini 2015: 998-9) – there is independent evidence that 'to be' had clitic variants. Other evidence for raising in enclitic pronouns in

Latin: *suus* ‘his, her, their’ < \**sowos*, *tuus* ‘your’ < \**towos*, and genitive and dative singular of the relative pronoun *quoniam* > *cuius*, *quoniam* > *cui* (but not *meus*).

c’) There is evidence for lack of stress (via raising/syncope) in Oscan: **tíf[ei]** (Cumae 9/Cm 13), **tfei** (Capua 34.3/Cp 37) ‘to you’, **sífeí** (Capua 33/Cp 36) ‘to himself’ (NB same raising also found in ‘to be’: **íst** Abella 1.A.12, .15, .B.5, .8, .23, .30/Cm 1).

5.1.2 Why no raising in *enim*, which we also might expect to be unstressed? Only after a coronal?

## 5.2 Raising of /ε/ in hiatus:

- *abiegniīs* < \**abiegneēs*
- *diīs* < \**deēs*
- *iīs* < \**eēs*
- *mihi* < \**meē* (but see above)
- *mīis* < \**meēs* (but see above)
- *nihil* < \**neēl*

5.2.1 Note that this can explain more forms than are normally considered, because intervocalic /h/ was lost by the second century BC at the latest (and probably earlier), and in spelling just marks hiatus.

## 5.2.2 Raising of /ε/ in hiatus in other contexts:

- earliest example *pariat* = *pareat* (Lex Latina Tabulae Bantinae 10, late C2nd BC)
- *polliciarus* = *pollicearis* (Kropp 1.1.4/8, C1st BC)
- *soliam* = *soleam* (P. Rainer Cent. 164, late 1st century BC)

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 Fries’ explanation for his exceptions can probably be improved upon (especially if we also disregard *cinis*) by proposing a rule of raising before a nasal followed by a high or mid front vowel (or diphthong containing one).

6.2 While his rule of raising before /e:/ in the following syllable has the advantage of efficiency, there are also good reasons to prefer an explanation via both unstressed raising and raising in hiatus, for both of which environments there is good independent evidence in Latin.

1) Unstressed raising in function words (after a coronal)?	2) Raising in hiatus before /e:/ in the following syllable	3) Raising between a coronal (and /k/?) and a nasal
<i>mihi</i> < * <i>meġ</i> ‘to me’ (or rule 2)	<i>abiegniīs</i> < * <i>abiegneġs</i> ‘of fir wood’	<i>cinis</i> ‘ash’ < * <i>kenis</i>
<i>nimis</i> < * <i>nemīs</i> or * <i>nemġs</i> ‘too much’ (or rule 3)	<i>diīs</i> < * <i>deġs</i> ‘to gods’	<i>nimis</i> < * <i>nemīs</i> or * <i>nemġs</i> ‘too much’ (or rule 1)
<i>nisi</i> < * <i>nesġ</i> ‘if not’	<i>iīs</i> < * <i>eġs</i> ‘to them’	<i>similis</i> < * <i>semilis</i>
<i>sibi</i> < * <i>sebġ</i> ‘to him-, herself’	<i>mihi</i> < * <i>meġ</i> ‘to me’ (or rule 1)	<i>simītū</i> < * <i>semġtū</i> ‘together’
<i>tibi</i> < * <i>tebġ</i> ‘to you’	<i>mīs</i> < * <i>meġs</i> ‘mine’ (or rule 1)	<i>sine</i> < * <i>seni</i> ‘without’ (or rule 1)
<i>sine</i> < * <i>seni</i> ‘without’ (or rule 3)	<i>nihil</i> < * <i>neġl</i> < * <i>nehġl</i> ‘nothing’	<i>sinister</i> < * <i>senisteros</i> ‘left’

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