

Can we use rendaku for phonological argumentation?

Abstract

This paper addresses the general issue of the quality of phonological data, using rendaku as a case study. Rendaku is a well-known voicing process that accompanies compound formation in Japanese. The issue of the quality of phonological data has been discussed from time to time from various perspectives throughout the history of phonological research, with recent renewed interests. This paper takes up rendaku as a case study to discuss this issue, because rendaku has been used to argue for many theoretical apparatuses, but it is rarely acknowledged in the theoretical literature that rendaku involves extensive lexical irregularity. The specific question addressed in this study is whether it is appropriate to use rendaku for phonological argumentation. Ultimately, the answer that this paper will propose is yes, but the more crucial lesson is that the theoretical phonology should examine the quality of phonological data more explicitly. The current discussion should offer a first step toward establishing a general guideline about what kind of evidence can be used to decide whether a pattern under question is phonological or not.

1 Introduction

1.1 Theoretical background

Phonologists analyze phonological processes where some sounds alternate with other sounds, and construct phonological theory based on these analyses.¹ However, several researchers have pointed out that not all alternations should be used for phonological argumentation, and there are several reasons.

One type of warning comes from the observation that some alternations involve gradient changes, which is hard to reconcile with the view that a phonological process changes one category to another. For example, in English, coda [l] is velarized, and it is tempting to use this process for

¹This paper sets aside phonotactics. Whether phonotactic knowledge is governed by grammar or instead governed by lexical statistics is an also important issue (see e.g. Berent et al. 2007; Daland et al. 2011; Kager & Pater 2012; Ohala 1986), but this paper remains neutral about this debate.

phonological argumentation. Sproat & Fujimura (1993) show however that the degree of velarization is gradient (i.e. it is not a matter of yes-velarized or not-velarized), and the degree of velarization correlates with the strength of phrase boundaries at which the [l] is located. Similarly, Nolan (1992) found that in English phrasal assimilation, where word-final coronal consonants appear to assimilate to the following dorsal consonants (as in “late call”), the assimilation is not complete: [t] in “late” does not fully become [k]. Although a later study by Ellis & Hardcastle (2002) found that some speakers show categorical changes, this general finding offers us a good lesson—some apparent “phonological patterns” may not involve a change in categories (see also Hayes 1992). A perhaps more thorny problem is that a single language can show both a categorical and a gradient version of the same alternation, and one proposed solution is to treat the former as phonological and the latter as phonetic (e.g. Cohn 1993 and Zsiga 1997).

Another type of argument comes from the observation that some patterns are not replicable with nonce words, and therefore its productivity is in doubt. Being non-productive would mean that the pattern is lexicalized and no longer a part of a productive phonological grammar. This concern was raised against the generative phonology as early as Ohala (1974), who addresses the productivity of velar softening in English (see also Pierrehumbert 2006). To take an example from Japanese, the past tense formation involves various “phonological” processes (e.g. post-nasal voicing, velar deletion, epenthesis, etc). Vance (1987), however, shows that these changes are not fully replicated in experimental settings. Later studies consistently fail to systematically replicate the alleged “phonological” patterns in the past tense formation (Batchelder, 1999; ?; Vance, 1991). As Vance (1991, p. 156) states, “[the experimental result] is consistent with the claim that even morphologically regular Japanese verb forms are stored in the lexicon.” The fact that the patterns are not productive unfortunately went unacknowledged in theoretical linguistics (e.g. Davis & Tsujimura 1991; Ito & Mester 1995; Lombardi 2002; Rice 1993). This situation is particularly unfortunate because the failure to replicate the existing patterns with nonce words is reported in a well-known introductory book (Vance, 1987). To the extent that phonological theory is about a *generative* component of a grammar, phonological theory should be based on processes that are productive.

The third type of concern comes from the (small) number of relevant examples. Again to illustrate this problem with Japanese, the palatalization patterns found in mimetic forms have been argued to instantiate a case of conflicting directionality (Zoll, 1997), in which coronal and non-coronal consonants show different directionality effects when they attract the palatalization morpheme (Hamano, 1986; Mester & Ito, 1989; Zoll, 1997). Alderete & Kochetov (2009) show however that there are not many examples supporting this claim, and there are also a number of counterexamples; their informants did not replicate the expected patterns either. Therefore, it seems important to make generalizations based on a sufficient number of examples.

These concerns were acknowledged from time to time throughout the history of phonological theory (de Lacy, 2009, 2014; Hayes, 1995; Kawahara, 2011a,b; Ohala, 1974, 1986; Nolan, 1992). For example, Hayes states “I occasionally wondered, Where is the normal phonology that I was trained to study?” (Hayes, 1995, p.68)—processes that seem to apply more or less automatically without exceptions now appear to be “phonetic-y” and those morphological patterns that seem irrelevant to phonetics appear to be non-productive and/or come with many exceptions. Considering these issues, it is clear that the quality of phonological data should be examined more carefully (for recent discussion, see de Lacy 2009, 2014; Kawahara 2011a,b; see also Schütze 1996 for a similar concern in syntax).

In this general context, this paper discusses what kinds of evidence can be used to decide whether a pattern in question is phonological or not, especially when the pattern is morphological with extensive lexical irregularity. This paper takes *rendaku* as a case study. This following discussion should not be taken to be conclusive, and I fully expect that some people may disagree with some arguments that I make below. Nevertheless, what is important is that we explicitly discuss this issue; only after we accumulate case studies of this sort, can we make a step toward establishing general guidelines about what kind of evidence can decide whether a pattern under question is phonological or not.

2 A case study: *rendaku*

2.1 What *rendaku* is

With the concerns discussed in section 1.1 in mind, this paper examines *rendaku*, which is a voicing process that accompanies compound formation in Japanese (e.g. /oo+**t**anuki/ → /oo-**d**anuki/ ‘big raccoon’).² The way phonologists often put it is, for example “a rule of sequential voicing—*Rendaku*—voices initial obstruents in second elements of compounds” (Ito & Mester, 1986, p.50).

A more lexically-oriented characterization is found by Vance (2014):

Many Japanese morphemes exhibit a well-known voicing phenomenon called *rendaku*...Such a morpheme has one allomorph beginning with a voiceless obstruent and another allomorph beginning with a voiced obstruent. An example is a morpheme meaning ‘bird’: it appears with voiceless initial /t/ in /tori/...‘bird’...and it appears with voiced initial /d/ in /hati+dori/...‘hummingbird’. When a morpheme shows this kind of alternation...it is customary to say that *rendaku* occurs in a word that contains this allomorph (p.137, with slight modifications on transcription).

²The phonemic transcriptions in this paper follow a widely adopted analysis. Phonetic details are provided only where relevant.

This characterization of rendaku treats rendaku as a matter of the distribution of two allomorphs, and does not posit or imply the existence of “a phonological voicing rule”.

The reason behind this careful wording is because rendaku involves much lexical irregularity. Vance (2015) provides a recent overview on various factors that affect the applicability of rendaku. One irregular aspect of rendaku is the fact that it applies only to native words, but that this etymological characterization often fails in actuality; many native items fail to undergo rendaku and some non-native items undergo rendaku. In addition, it is often not predictable whether rendaku applies to a particular compound or not. Some near minimal pairs are shown in (1):

(1) Lexical irregularity of rendaku

- a. /kuro-**kami**/ ‘black hair’ vs. /aka-**gami**/ ‘red hair’
- b. /kata-**kana**/ ‘katakana spelling’ vs. /hira-**gana**/ ‘hiragana spelling’
- c. /niwa-**tori**/ ‘chicken’ vs. /yama-**dori**/ ‘mountain bird’
- d. /ero-**hon**/ ‘porn magazines’ vs. /bini-**bon**/ ‘porn magazines’
- e. /asi-**kuse**/ ‘leg habit’ vs. /kuti-**guse**/ ‘mouth habit’

Furthermore, there are some items that never undergo rendaku, even when these items violate no constraints that systematically inhibit rendaku application (e.g. /kemuri/ ‘smoke’ and /tuyu/ ‘dew’: Vance 2014, p.140). For these items, there are no phonological or morphological reasons for rendaku not to occur, but rendaku does not apply.

There is nothing new about these observations—the first comprehensive generative treatment of Japanese phonology by McCawley (1968) states that he is “unable to state the environment in which the “voicing rule” applies...[t]he relevant data are completely bewildering” (footnote 18). Ohno (2000) goes so far as to say that “rendaku is not a productive synchronic phonological rule. [His experimental result] contradicts the rule-based analyses of Otsu (1980) and Itô and Mester (1986)” (p. 163). Provided below is another quote from Vance (2014):

According to Okumura (1955), it is extremely difficult to specify when rendaku occurs, although there are certain tendencies. This candid assessment could perhaps be improved slightly by replacing the words ‘extremely difficult’ with the word ‘impossible’; certainly nothing in the half century of subsequent research on rendaku suggests that Okumura was overly pessimistic (pp.139-140).

The current paper can be understood as a constructive response to such a lexicalist view of rendaku. Can we not be too “pessimistic” to throw rendaku away from phonology entirely?

2.2 The role of rendaku in phonological theory

The most important reason to explicitly address this issue is because rendaku has been used to argue for many theoretical apparatuses in the phonological literature.³ This means that these theoretical claims will lose their empirical ground if rendaku is not phonological at all—phonological theorization should be made based on phonological data, rather than something else, such as lexicalized patterns.

To flesh out this point in detail, theoretical works on rendaku have identified five important properties, listed in (2), which had significant theoretical ramifications (see Kawahara & Zamma to appear for details).

- (2) Rendaku is...
 - a. a voicing process.
 - b. blocked when the morpheme already contains a voiced obstruent (=Lyman's Law).
 - c. not blocked by [+voice] in sonorants.
 - d. blocked when the second element is a left branch constituent of a compound (=Right Branch Condition).
 - e. opaque with respect to velar nasalization.

These properties have been used to argue for the following theoretical apparatuses in (3)-(7):

- (3) As a voicing process, rendaku is:
 - a. an autosegmental spreading rule (Ito & Mester, 1986).
 - b. a morphologized version of intervocalic voicing (Ito & Mester, 1996).
 - c. a reflection of a universal morpheme realization requirement (Ito & Mester, 2003a).
- (4) Lyman's Law is evidence for:
 - a. a deletion rule of a floating feature (Ito & Mester, 1986).
 - b. OCP(+voice) (Ito & Mester, 1986).
 - c. self local-conjunction of *VOICED OBS (Ito & Mester, 2003a).
- (5) Sonorant voicing is ignored by Lyman's Law because:
 - a. it is underspecified (Ito & Mester, 1986).
 - b. sonorants do not bear [voice] (Mester & Ito, 1989).
 - c. obstruents and sonorants bear different voicing features (Rice, 1993).
- (6) Right Branch Condition arises because:
 - a. phonology is sensitive to c-command (Otsu, 1980).
 - b. morpheme concatenation applies cyclically (Ito & Mester, 1986).

³An additional reason is that rendaku appears in a number of introductory phonology textbooks (Gussenhoven & Jacobs 2011, p. 58; Kenstowicz 1994, p. 493, pp. 511-512; Roca 1994, pp. 75-76; Spencer 1996, pp. 60-61), but none of them mentions its lexical irregularity. One danger is that those who read these textbooks, if they do not know Japanese well, may think that rendaku is a regular exception-less pattern. Personally I have met a few non-Japanese professional linguists who misunderstood rendaku this way.

- c. different morphological branching results in different prosodification (Ito & Mester, 2003a).
- (7) The opaque interaction between rendaku and Lyman's Law is evidence for:
 - a. Sympathy Theory (Ito & Mester, 1997).
 - b. the distinction between lexical and post-lexical phonology (Ito & Mester, 2003b).

It is not crucial how convincing each argument is. More important is the simple fact that rendaku and its properties have been used for phonological argumentation extensively, and that rendaku has been made famous among the field of phonological theory in general.

To reiterate, this paper does not intend to deny the use of rendaku in phonological argumentation. Quite the contrary, in the face of lexical irregularity, and other general concerns discussed in section 1.1, this paper is proposing that we should examine whether we can use rendaku for phonological argumentation more carefully and explicitly.

3 Experimental evidence that rendaku is phonological

Now we move on to reasons to think that rendaku is indeed phonological, or better put, rendaku has a phonological aspect. We can get rid of two concerns raised in section 1.1 quite easily; nobody would probably argue that rendaku is a gradient, “phonetic-y” process, because rendaku occurs at the time of compound formation. Few people would argue that there are only a small number of examples for rendaku, unlike the case of mimetic palatalization, because there are in fact many examples undergoing rendaku (see Ito & Mester 2003a and Irwin & Miyashita 2013).

The most thorny issue is therefore its productivity. In addition, some independent evidence that rendaku is phonological would be desirable. We will address these issues in the next two sections. This section first discusses experimental evidence that rendaku is rule-governed; for the role of experimentation in addressing phonological research, see Cohn et al. (2012), Kawahara (2011a), Ohala (1986), Pierrehumbert et al. (2000), among many others.

3.1 Experimental evidence I: The behavior of nonce words

Many experiments have tested aspects of rendaku, using nonce words such as /semaro/ and /kidake/ (Kawahara, to appear). Some of the studies used a forced-choice wug test (Kawahara & Sano, 2014c), whereas other studies used a production study (Vance, 2014) or a naturalness rating study (Kawahara, 2012). These experiments show that rendaku applies to nonce words, often enough to think that it is at least partly productive. This use of nonce word to check the productivity of phonological patterns in fact has a long history: Halle's (1978) classic example is that English speakers can appropriately produce [s] to pluralize words like “Bach[x]”.

For rendaku, in the most recent forced-choice test (Kawahara & Sano, 2014b), nonce words underwent rendaku about 60% of the time, when they do not violate Lyman’s Law. If rendaku did not have a productive aspect, we would not expect rendaku to apply to nonce words at all. In the result graph, the error bar does not overlap with 50%, which means that rendaku applies to nonce words more often than the chance frequency.⁴

In Kawahara’s (2012) naturalness judgment experiments, which used a 5-point scale from “very unnatural (=1)” to “very natural (=5)”, nonce words that underwent rendaku were scored on average 3.42 in Experiment I (in which the participants were told that the stimuli were old native words) and 3.35 in Experiment II (in which the participants were told to treat the stimuli as nonce words). Rendaku applying to nonce words is therefore not judged to be unnatural—both when the stimuli were treated as old native words and when they were treated as nonce words.

Another point to note is the clear effect of Lyman’s Law (=2b)). In the wug experiments, those nonce words that violate Lyman’s Law undergo rendaku less likely than those nonce words that do not (e.g. Kawahara & Sano 2014b; Vance 1980). Also rendaku is rated less naturally when it violates Lyman’s Law than it is not (Kawahara, 2012). As Vance (2014) puts it, then: “Does it make sense to say that there is a constraint [=Lyman’s Law] on something (i.e., *rendaku*) that is not itself a rule?” (p. 143). At the very least, rendaku’s behavior in nonce word experimentation (i) is systematic in that it is sensitive to Lyman’s Law, and (ii) can be argued to be phonological, to the extent that Lyman’s Law can be independently characterized as a phonological principle such as OCP(+voice) (Ito & Mester, 1986).

3.2 Experimental evidence II: Fukuda and Fukuda (1994)

Having observed that rendaku can apply to nonce words and that rendaku is subject to Lyman’s Law in experimental settings, there are some additional experimental evidence that rendaku has phonological aspects.

First, Fukuda & Fukuda (1994) built on the general observation that children with specific language impairment (SLI) fail to learn productive linguistic processes, whereas they can learn lexical information without difficulties (Paradis & Gopnik, 1997). The experiment was a word-formation task using children with SLI and children without SLI. The children with SLI applied rendaku to infrequent or novel compounds much less frequently than children without SLI. Since the previous findings show that SLI children fail to learn productive rules, the fact that the SLI children failed to apply rendaku to unfamiliar compounds supports the idea that rendaku is a productive

⁴Can the pattern of rendaku in nonce word experimentation be explained by lexical analogy? The analogical analysis by Ohno (2000) is not developed enough to make solid predictions about nonce words. Ohno (2000: 162) says “If there is no possible reference to existing rendaku forms, the item does not undergo rendaku in a novel compound”, which would presumably not predict 60% of rendaku application for nonce words, especially because these speakers were explicitly instructed to treat the stimuli as nonce words—words that do not exist.

phonological process.

In contrast, the SLI children generally showed rendaku in familiar compounds. This result indicates that some familiar compounds with rendaku are stored in memory. The overall results thus show that rendaku perhaps has both lexical and productive aspects. No phonologists who know rendaku well would argue that rendaku is purely phonological without any lexical influence—what is important is that rendaku *can be* produced by a productive component of the grammar. See also Kubozono (2005) for its more recent interpretation of this experiment.

3.3 Experimental evidence III: Kobayashi et al. (to appear)

Second, Kobayashi et al. (2014) report an ERP-based neurolinguistic experiment that further supports the view of rendaku as rule-governed. ERP is an electrophysiological brain response to stimuli from outside, and it is now known that different types of ERP—LAN, P600, N400—are observed in response to different kinds of linguistic stimuli. The experiment found that Japanese speakers show LAN and P600 in response to rendaku-undergoing stimuli, using those items that do not usually show rendaku (e.g. /nomi-domo/ ‘drinking friends’ from /tomo/ ‘friends’, which is usually pronounced as /nomi-tomo/). LAN is independently known to appear as a result of overapplication of regular linguistic rules (Weyerts et al., 1997), and P600 is also observed in response to similar stimuli (at least in some cases) (Morris & Holcomb, 2005). The upshot is the overapplication of rendaku induces neurological responses that are similar to those observed in other cases of overapplication of grammatical rules. Therefore, Kobayashi et al.’s results support the rule-based nature of rendaku from the perspective of neurolinguistics.

4 Rendaku interacts with phonological constraints

In addition to the experimental evidence considered above, there are some additional reasons to think that rendaku is phonological. The arguments are based on the fact that rendaku is subject to phonological principles that are independently motivated on cross-linguistic grounds.

4.1 Markedness hierarchy among voiced obstruents

First, Ihara et al. (2011) addressed which consonants are most likely to undergo rendaku by a wug-test, and found the following hierarchy: /h/ > /k/ = /t/ > /s/, where /h/ is most likely to undergo rendaku and /s/ is least likely to undergo rendaku. This hierarchy can be interpreted as reflecting the markedness hierarchy, */z/ >> */g/, */d/ >> */b/ (/h/ becomes /b/ after rendaku). This hierarchy is compatible with what is arguably universal (Hayes & Steriade, 2004), reflecting the cross-linguistic markedness patterns and phonetic challenges that voiced obstruents present.

Voiced fricatives are cross-linguistically more marked than voiced stops, because voiced fricatives require high intraoral air pressure to cause frication, but at the same time the high intraoral air pressure makes it difficult to maintain airflow across the glottis (Ladefoged & Maddieson, 1996; Ohala, 1983). The rendaku application hierarchy among voiced stops is also compatible with the cross-linguistic markedness scale and with the aerodynamic difficulty hierarchy: the further back the oral occlusion is, the quicker the intraoral air pressure goes up, resulting in the cession of glottal airflow (Hayes & Steriade, 2004; Ohala, 1983; Ohala & Riordan, 1979).

To the extent that these markedness considerations are motivated in the phonology of other languages (Hayes & Steriade, 2004), it seems reasonable to think that rendaku is phonological, because it interacts with a cross-linguistically motivated phonological markedness hierarchy.

4.2 Prohibition against the adjacent homorganic consonants

The second piece of evidence comes from a prohibition against a pair of place-homorganic consonants in adjacent syllables, again a restriction that is known to hold in many different languages, most famously in Semitic languages (e.g. McCarthy 1979). In Japanese too, there is a stochastic tendency in the lexicon to avoid pairs of homorganic consonants, both in native words (Kawahara et al., 2006) and mimetic words (Hamano, 1986).

This co-occurrence restriction interacts with rendaku. /h/ becomes labial /b/ after rendaku. Given this alternation, words of the form /hVmV/ do not undergo rendaku, whereas words of the form /hVnV/ do (Kawahara et al., 2006). This contrast is illustrated in (8) and (9).

- (8) /hVmV/ words
- a. /hama/ –/suna-**hama**/ ‘beach’
 - b. /hamo/ –/oo-**hamo**/ ‘big hamo (fish name)’
 - c. /hima/ –/kake-**hima**/ ‘to fire’
 - d. /hime/ –/mai-**hime**/ ‘dancing princess’
 - e. /himo/ –/kutu-**himo**/ ‘shoe lace’
 - f. /hema/ –/oo-**hema**/ ‘big mistake’
- (9) /hVnV/ words
- a. /hana/ –/ai-**bana**/ ‘Aibana (flower name)’
 - b. /hane/ –/te-**bane**/ ‘hand wing’
 - c. /hina/ –/nagasi-**bina**/ ‘floating doll’
 - d. /huna/ –/oo-**buna**/ ‘big gibel’
 - e. /hune/ –/oo-**bune**/ ‘big ship’

This blockage of rendaku in (8) can be understood as avoidance of creating the surface [bVmV] configuration, which itself comes from avoidance of a pair of two adjacent labial consonants. To the extent that this restriction is motivated phonologically, again the blockage of rendaku in (8) constitutes evidence that rendaku has something to do with phonology.

4.3 Identity Avoidance

Finally, Kawahara & Sano (2014c) identified a yet another phonological factor that interacts with rendaku, namely, avoidance of two adjacent identical CV moras (i.e. Identity Avoidance). Their nonce-word experiment showed that rendaku is more likely to apply when the two moras across a morpheme boundary are identical (e.g. [ika+**k**aniro]) than when they were not (e.g. [ika+**t**aniro]); i.e., Identity Avoidance increases the applicability of rendaku.

The experiment also showed that rendaku is less likely to apply when it would result in two adjacent identical moras across a morpheme boundary (e.g. [iga+**g**aniro]) than when it would not (e.g. [iga+**d**aniro]). Identity Avoidance decreases the applicability of rendaku.

To the extent that Identity Avoidance is a phonological constraint (Yip, 1998), rendaku should at least partly be phonological. The dual nature of Identity Avoidance is also interesting: it is a classic observation about phonological constraints that they can both trigger and block phonological processes, the observation known as “conspiracy” (Kisseberth, 1970). Identity Avoidance interacts with rendaku in such a way that it shows characteristics of typical phonological constraints.

What makes the results by Kawahara & Sano (2014c) even more interesting is the fact that in the existing patterns of rendaku, there is no such effects of Identity Avoidance. Irwin (2014) shows, based on the rendaku database (Irwin & Miyashita, 2013), that rendaku application is not blocked by adjacent identical moras in any substantial way. The effect of Identity Avoidance is therefore “emergent” in experimental settings—rendaku invites that grammatical effect to emerge.

5 Orthographic explanations of rendaku and Lyman’s Law

The previous section has surveyed arguments that rendaku has phonological aspects. Before jumping onto the conclusion that rendaku is indeed phonological, this section addresses one alternative analysis of rendaku, which any phonological theory of rendaku should take seriously; namely, an orthographic explanation of rendaku and Lyman’s Law.

As noted by Vance (to appear), rendaku is not simply a matter of “voicing of initial consonants”, but instead involves more complicated pairings of sounds when viewed at the phonetic level. The surface phonetic pairs that are related by rendaku are shown in (10). For each pair, the original sound is shown on the left, and the one that appears after the application of rendaku is shown on the right.

- (10) Pairing of sounds related by rendaku
- a. [ɸ]–[b] (e.g. [ɸue]–[bue] ‘flute’)
 - b. [ç]–[b] (e.g. [çi]–[bi] ‘fire’)
 - c. [h]–[b] (e.g. [ha]–[ba] ‘tooth’)
 - d. [t]–[d] (e.g. [ta]–[da] ‘field’)

- e. [ts]–[z] (e.g. [tsuma]–[zuma] ‘wife’)
- f. [tɕ]–[z] (e.g. [tɕikara]–[zɕikara] ‘power’)
- g. [k]–[g] (e.g. [ki]–[gi] ‘tree’)
- h. [s]–[z] (e.g. [sora]–[zora] ‘sky’)
- i. [ɕ]–[z] (e.g. [ɕima]–[zɕima] ‘island’)

Among those, (d, g, h, i) are straightforward minimal pairs of sounds that differ in voicing, but the others are not. Of course this complexity is not insurmountable; for example, for (a-c), it is possible to posit underlying /p/ (McCawley, 1968), which is realized as /h/ in non-voicing contexts and as /b/ in voicing contexts; /h/ further undergoes allophonic changes before /i/ and /u/, realizing as [çi] and [φu]. The deaffrication in (e, f) is also expected as a result of independently motivated intervocalic deaffrication, because rendaku usually occurs in intervocalic contexts.

In response to Vance (to appear), it is not impossible—or even not undesirable—to construct a phonological analysis of the complicated patterns in (10) in this way. Nevertheless, it is important to note that from the view point of orthography, all the pairings in (10) can be treated as an addition of the same diacritic mark (*dakuten*) (Vance, to appear). All the letters for the sounds that appear on the right in (10) are identical to those letters that represent the sounds on the left, with addition of the *dakuten* diacritic mark. Rendaku therefore can simply be understood as “the addition of a *dakuten* marker”: see the supplementary material.

Treating rendaku as a matter of orthography appears to come with additional virtues. Recall that Lyman’s Law ignores voicing in sonorants, and several theoretical apparatuses were proposed to account for that observation (=5)). However, there is a simple explanation in terms of orthography: Japanese orthography marks voicing on obstruents with a diacritic (*dakuten*), but not on sonorants. Therefore, Lyman’s Law can also be understood as a prohibition against two *dakuten* diacritics. This orthographic formulation of Lyman’s Law would also explain why /g/, after becoming [ŋ], would still block rendaku (=2e), because [ŋ] is written with a *dakuten* mark.

There is yet another independent argument for an orthographic formulation of Lyman’s Law in the loanword phonology. Geminate consonants can devoice when they co-occur with a voiced obstruent (e.g. /beddo/ → /betto/ ‘bed’) (Nishimura, 2006), and this devoicing can be understood as an effect of Lyman’s Law. Moreover, /p/ seems to cause devoicing of geminates as well (e.g. /piramiddo/ → /piramitto/ ‘pyramid’; /kyuupiddo/ → /kyuupitto/ ‘cupid’). This observation raises the possibility that this devoicing occurs because /p/ also has a diacritic mark in the Japanese orthographic system (*han-dakuten*). It is then very straightforward to say that Lyman’s Law prohibits two diacritics within a morpheme. (Though see Fukazawa et al. to appear for a phonological analysis which does not rely on the orthography.)

Given these considerations, should we say that rendaku and Lyman’s Law are purely orthographic? Perhaps not quite. First, children start acquiring rendaku well before they start learning

letters (Sugimoto, 2013), which cannot be explained if rendaku is purely a matter of letters. Second, Kawahara & Sano (2014a) found that Japanese speakers avoid creating identical consonants in adjacent syllables by way of rendaku (e.g. */**iga+gomoke**/ from /iga/+/komoke/). The consonantal identity effect cannot be reduced to an orthographic matter, because, for example, /ga/ and /go/ do not share the same letter in Japanese. Third, rendaku does occur even when the morphemes undergoing rendaku are written with a Chinese character, which does not show the *dakuten* diacritic. Fourth, the view that rendaku is purely a matter of orthography has a hard time explaining the evidence discussed in sections 3 and 4: why would purely orthographic processes be sensitive to phonological conditions and show features of regular rules in experimentation?

Finally, Haruka Fukazawa informed me (p.c.) that when her child learned rendaku, he over-applied rendaku almost to every lexical item before he learned orthography, which indicates that rendaku may at first be acquired as a productive, exception-less phonological rule. It is thus possible that lexical irregularity is acquired in later stages of acquisition, possibly with the acquisition of orthographic knowledge. A more systematic longitudinal acquisition is certainly hoped for (see Sugimoto 2013), not only to address this specific issue about the influence of orthography, but also to address the general issue of whether rendaku is grammatical or not.

To summarize, the intention of this section was not to dismiss the phonological account of rendaku in favor of an orthographic explanation. The real take-home message of this section is that phonologists should not simply ignore orthographic factors away. Ultimately, it may be that both phonological and orthographic knowledge influence the behaviors of Japanese speakers concerning rendaku (and possibly other phonological patterns).

6 Conclusion

The question that this paper raised was: Can we use rendaku for phonological argumentation? The answer that this paper proposed is “yes”, while bearing in mind its lexical irregularity and possible influence from orthography. This answer may not come as a surprise for many practicing phonologists. However, the bigger message that this paper wanted to raise goes beyond this simple question-and-answer: it is important to examine the quality of phonological data with explicit discussion, and this paper is a concrete exercise of this practice. Ultimately, even if the arguments presented in this paper do not go through, this paper does not lose its value, as long as the importance of the discussion of the quality of phonological data is appreciated.

It is hoped that this paper opens up discussion on the quality of phonological data for different phenomena in different languages. Based upon that research enterprise, we should be able to construct a more principled guideline about what kind of evidence can decide whether a phenomenon under question is phonological or not.

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