

The evolution of Catalan (Phonetics and Phonology)

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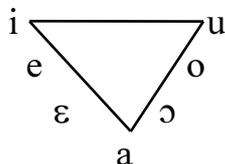
1. Vowels

1.1. Apocope of unstressed final vowels

- Final unstressed vowels are generally lost in **Catalan** even if they are preceded by two consonants: for example: VĪRTŪTEM > *virtut* ‘virtue’, FĪNEM > *fi* ‘end’, TŪSSEM > *tos* ‘cough’, MENSEM > *mes* ‘month’, CANTARE > *cantar* ‘sing’, LŪCEM > *llum* ‘light’, FĪDĒLEM > *fidel* ‘faithful’, ARTEM > *art* ‘art’, NŌCTEM > *nit* ‘night’, SANGUĪNEM > *sang* ‘blood’, QUANDŌ > *quan* ‘when’. Notice that **Catalan does not have epenthetic plurals**: *camió* > *camions* ‘truck(s)’
- In contrast, in **Castilian final –e is lost after –d, –n, –ç/z, –s, –r, –l** (for instance: VĪRTŪTEM > *virtud* ‘virtue’, FĪNEM > *fin* ‘end’, TŪSSEM > *tos* ‘cough’, MENSEM > *mes* ‘month’, MŌVĒRE > *mover* ‘move’, LŪCEM > *luz* ‘light’, FĪDĒLEM > [fjél] ‘faithful’), **and in the other cases** (NŌCTEM > *noch*, ARTEM > *art*, and so on) **it is regarded as a Gallo-Romance loan** that was characteristic of the Castilian *koine* of the origins. Besides, **Castilian has epenthetic plurals**: *camión* > *camiones*.

1.2. Diphthongization before yod and reduction of diphthongs

Stressed vowel system



Glides

[j] [w]
yod wau

- In Late Latin, stressed Ĕ shifts to /ε/ and stressed Ō shifts to /ɔ/.
- In **Old Catalan**, these vowels do not diphthongize – TĔRRĀ > [tɛrə] ‘land’ (in contrast with **Old Castilian** vowels – TĔRRĀ > [tjera]).
- However, **Old Catalan** stressed vowels undergo diphthongization before yod [j] (SPĔCŪLUM > [spjeɿ] > [spiɿ] ‘mirror’), diverging from **Castilian** vowels that do not diphthongize in this context (SPĔCŪLUM > [espezo] ‘mirror’). As the glide is high, in **Old Castilian** it has an influence on the stressed vowel and causes it to shift towards a higher vowel (that is, /e/)
- So, we have seen three Catalan features with respect to vowels: apocope of final unstressed –e, diphthongization before yod, and reduction of diphthongs [je] > [i]

2. Consonants

2.1. First Yod

2.1.1. Pre-stressed syllables

Tj	>	/ts/	>	/-s-/	>	/-z-/	>	Ø ~ /-z-/
		Late Latin		Old Catalan				Modern Catalan

ATTĪTĪARE > *atisar, atiar* ‘to poke the fire/log’

2.1.2. Post-stressed syllables

Tj	>	/ts/	>	/-s-/	>	/-s-/
		Late Latin		/-w/ when final Old Catalan		/-w/ when final Modern Catalan

Kj	>	/ts/	>	/-s-/	>	/-s-/
		Late Latin		Old Catalan		Modern Catalan

PETĪA > *peça* ‘piece’, PŪTĒU > *pou* ‘well, deep pool’, FOCACĒA > *fogassa* ‘bread, cake’, etc.

2.1.3. Preceded by consonants

^{CONS} Tj	>	^{CONS} /ts/	Late Latin	>	^{CONS} /s/	Catalan
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*CAPĪARE > *caçar* ‘to hunt’, *CATTĒŌNE > *caçó* ‘small saucepan’, LECTĪŌNE > *llicó* ‘lesson’, LĪNTĒŌLU > *llençol* ‘(bed) sheet’, *ALTĪARE > *alçar* ‘to raise, lift’, FORTĪA > *força* ‘strength’, *EXCAP(I)TĪARE > *escapçar* ‘behead, decapitate’, etc.

2.1.4. –STJ– and –SKJ– consonant clusters

-STj-, -SKj-	>	/sts/	Late Latin	>	/ʃ/	Catalan
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ANGŪSTĪA > *angoixa* ‘anguish’, *ASCĪATA > *aixada* ‘hoe’, VASCĒLLU > *vaixell* ‘ship’, DĪSCĪPŪLU > *deixeble* ‘disciple’, etc.

2.1.5. K- + palatal vowel –analogical shift–:

2.1.5.1. In pre-stressed syllables

K + vocal palatal	>	/ts/	>	/-s-/	>	/-z-/	>	/s-/initial position, Ø ~ /-z-/
		Late Latin		Old Catalan				Modern Catalan

CAELU > *cel* ‘sky’, CEPA > *ceba* ‘onion’, PLACERE > *plaser, plaer* ‘pleasure’, VICINU > *vesí, veí* ‘neighbour’, etc.

2.1.5.2. In post-stressed syllables

K + vocal palatal	>	/ts/	>	/-s-/	>	/-s-/
				/-w/when final		/-w/ when final
		Late Latin		Old Catalan		Modern Catalan

PACE > *pau* ‘peace’, VOCE > *vou, veu* ‘voice’, etc.

2.2. Second Yod

(a)	Lj, K'L, G'L, T'L	>	/lj/	>	/l/
			Late Latin		Catalan

CĪLIA > *cella* ‘eyebrow’, ŌCŪLU > *ull* ‘eye’, SPĚCŪLU > *spill* ‘mirror’, RĚGŪLA > *rella* (ant.) ‘ploughshare’, *MŪTŪLŌNE > *molló* ‘milestone’, VĚTŪLU > *vell* ‘old’, etc.

Stressed /ɛ/ [< Ě] and /ɔ/ [< ō] diphthongize before *yod* and give /je/ and /we/ as a result. Later on, these diphthongs are reduced to /i/ and /u/, respectively.

2.3. Third Yod

2.3.1. Gj, Dj

Gj, Dj	>	[-ɣj-], [-ɔj-]	>	/z/ > (/dʒ/)	>	/z/ ~ /tʃ/
		Late Latin		Old Catalan		Modern Catalan

2.3.1.1. Syllable initial

DĪURNŪ > *jorn* ‘day’, SPONGIA > *esponja* ‘sponge’, etc.

2.3.1.2. Syllable final

RADĪŪ > *raig* ‘ray, beam’, PŌDĪŪ > *puig* ‘summit’ (Notice: ō > /ɔ/ > /we/ > /u/), FAGĚŪ > *faig* ‘beech tree’, etc.

2.3.2. Mj, Vj, Bj

Mj, Vj, Bj	>	[-mj-], [-βj-]	>	/z/ or the Late Latin solution
		Late Latin		Old Catalan

LABĪŪ > *llavi* ‘lip’, CAVĚA > *gàbia* ‘cage’, RŪBĚA > *roja* ‘reddish’, PLŪVĪA > *pluja* ‘rain’, COMMĚATU > *comiat* ‘farewell’, etc.

2.4. Fourth Yod

2.4.1. –kt–

/-kt-/	> /-χt-/	> /-jt-/	> /jt/ ~ /t/
Classical Latin	Late Latin	Old Catalan	Modern Catalan

ŌCTO > *vuit* ‘eight’, NŌCTE > *nyct* (ant.) > *nit* ‘night’, TRUCTA > *truita* ‘trout’, LACTŪCA > *lleituga* (near the Aragonese border) > *lletuga* ‘lettuce’, FACTU > *feyt* > *fet* ‘fact’, etc.

2.4.2. –ks–

/-ks-/	> /-χs-/	> /-js-/	> /ʃ/
Classical Latin	Late Latin	Old Catalan	Modern Catalan

AXĪLLA > *aixella* ‘armpit’, CŌXA > *cuixa* ‘thigh’, etc.

/-ps-/ > /-ks-/ _{analogical}	> /-χs-/	> /-js-/	> /ʃ/
Classical Latin	Late Latin	Old Catalan	Modern Catalan

CAPSA > *caixa* ‘box’, *ACCU ĪPSE > *aqueix* ‘this’, etc.

2.4.3. /-fj-/ > /-jf-/ and /-sj-/ > /-js-/

/-fj-/ > /-jf-/
/-sj-/ > /-js-/ (metathesis)
Old Romance Catalan

ARĒA > *era* ‘threshing floor where the wheat was beaten to separate the grain from the husk and straw’, FERRARIŪ > *ferrer* ‘blacksmith’, MONASTĒRIŪ > *monastir* ‘monastery’, PHASĒŌLU > *fesol* ‘bean’, etc.

2.4.4. /-ssj-/ > /ʃ/

/-ssj-/ > /ʃ/
Late Latin Catalan

GRŌSSĪU > *gruix* ‘thickness’, *CRASSĒU > *greix* ‘fat’, etc.

2.5. Some other consonants

2.5.1. Word initial L- > /λ/

LŪNA > *lluna* ‘moon’

2.5.2. Word final voiced stops or plosives > unvoiced

LŪPUM > *lloba* ‘she-wolf, female wolf’, LŪPUM > *llop* ‘wolf’, etc.