

# DIACHRONY AND SYNCHRONY OF /l/ GEMINATION IN QUEBEC FRENCH\*

Annick Morin  
University of Toronto

## 1. Introduction

Quebec French has a phenomenon of /l/ gemination affecting object clitics *le* and *la* when they occur between vowels, as in [ʒəllapɛã] (/ʒə **la** apɛã/, 'I learn it.').

I claim that this process is a case of synchronic compensatory lengthening (henceforth CL) which arose from a diachronic sound change that is not CL in nature, supporting the view that synchrony and diachrony are not necessarily isomorphic. Building on a suggestion by Dumas (1987), I argue that the gemination of /l/ in object clitics *le* and *la* arose from the reanalysis of the /l/ of the subject clitic *il* as part of the object clitic, as *il* was losing its /l/ as of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As the variable /l/ of the subject clitic surfaced, the double [l] coming from the subject clitic and the object clitic was reanalysed as belonging to the object clitic. I show that the reanalysis was restricted to cases where gemination could be construed as CL (thus synchronic CL and not diachronic CL).

## 2. Data

Examples of object clitics *le* and *la* in non-intervocalic contexts, where gemination does not occur, are given in (1). In (1a), we see the object clitic in its full form: its vowel does not undergo elision and its /l/ does not geminate; it is however subject to variable deletion. In (1b), /l/ deletion is obligatory following /i/, and the /i/ syllabifies as an onset, realised as [j]. In (1c) and (1d), there is schwa deletion, and the /l/ remains. (Schwa deletion has been extensively studied; see Côté 2000, Picard 1991, among many others.)

- (1) a. /a    **la**    pɛã/            alapɛã ~ a:pɛã<sup>1</sup>  
      she it:fem takes            'She takes it.'  
      elle la        prend
- b. /i    **la**    pɛã/            japɛã  
      he it:fem takes            'He takes it.'  
      il la        prend

---

\* Thanks to Yoonjung Kang, Keren Rice, Anne-Marie Brousseau and the Toronto phonology reading group for their helpful comments, as well as the audiences of the 16<sup>th</sup> Manchester Phonology Meeting and the Rencontres de linguistique française at the University of Toronto for discussions on earlier versions of this work. Thanks also to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its financial support through the CGS Doctoral Scholarship (no. 767-2007-2220). A longer version of this paper with more detailed discussions (Morin 2008) is available upon request.

<sup>1</sup> The data in this paper are based on my own speech.

- c. /a lə pɤã/            aɫpɤã  
 she it:masc takes        ‘She takes it.’  
 elle le            prend
- d. /i lə pɤã/            iɫpɤã  
 he it:masc takes        ‘He takes it.’  
 il le            prend

Note that in these examples the underlying representation for the subject pronoun spelled *elle* is assumed to be /a/, and the underlying representation for the subject pronoun *il* is /i/.<sup>2</sup>

The contexts where /l/ deletes are not clear cut and are subject to variability across speakers. The phenomenon of /l/ deletion is addressed in the literature (e.g. Pupier & Légaré 1973), and a detailed study of this process is beyond the scope of this paper. What is crucial here is that the /l/ does not delete if the vowel is lost by elision; rather, it geminates.

When object clitics *la* or *le* appear intervocally, the clitic vowel deletes by elision and the /l/ geminates. Examples are given in (2).

- (2) a. /a la apɤã/            allapɤã  
 she it:fem learns        ‘She learns it.’  
 elle la            apprend
- b. /i la apɤã/            illapɤã  
 he it:fem learns        ‘He learns it.’  
 il la            apprend
- c. /a lə apɤã/            allapɤã  
 she it:masc learns        ‘She learns it.’  
 elle le            apprend
- d. /i lə apɤã/            illapɤã  
 he it:masc learns        ‘He learns it.’  
 il le            apprend

The preceding context is not limited in terms of lexical category: gemination can occur following a subject clitic, as in (2), but also following and adverb, as in (3a), or a complementiser, as in (3b).

- (3) a. /syɤmã la apɤãd/        syɤmãllapɤãd  
 surely it:fem learn        ‘surely learn it’  
 sûrement la            apprendre

<sup>2</sup> As Poplack and Walker (1986) observed, *il* now clearly has one unique representation, /i/. For *elle*, there is variation across speakers. I am assuming two allomorphs: /al/ before vowels and /a/ before consonants, based on the following forms: [apɤã] (/a(l) pɤã/, ‘she takes’); [alaprã] (/a(l) aprã/, ‘she learns’); saaprã, *not* \*salaprã (/sa aprã/, ‘it learns’).

b.	/a	<b>la</b>	apɤãd/	allapɤãd
	to	it:fem	learn	'to learn it'
	à	la	apprendre	

Examples with other vowel-initial verbs are given in (4), showing that gemination applies regardless of the quality of the following vowel.

(4)	a.	/a	<b>la</b>	ekut/	allekut
		she	it:fem	listens to	'She listens to it.'
		elle	la	écoute	
	b.	/i	<b>lə</b>	ãtã/	illãtã
		he	it:masc	hears	'He hears it.'
		il	le	entend	
	c.	/ty	<b>lə</b>	ubli/	tsyllubli
		you	it:masc	forget	'You forget it.'
		tu	le	oublies	

To summarise, the /l/ of Quebec French object clitics *le* and *la* does not geminate (and sometimes even deletes) when the clitics are in non-intervocalic contexts, and it geminates when the clitics are in intervocalic contexts. In fact, Walker (1984) observes “[...] the general strategy seems to be ‘if you can’t delete, geminate’ or perhaps ‘geminate before deletion gets you’, to speak metaphorically.” Although, as I show, there is a great deal of variation, Walker’s observation certainly applies for some speakers.

Interestingly, there are cases where gemination might be expected, but actually never occurs: as can be seen in (5), the object clitics *me* or *te* do not undergo gemination in intervocalic contexts, where the /l/ of *le* and *la* geminates.

(5)	a.	/i	<b>mə</b>	apɤã/	imapɤã	*immapɤã
		he	me	learns	'he teaches me'	
		il	me	apprend		
	b.	/a	<b>tə</b>	apɤã/	atapɤã	*attapɤã
		she	you	learns	'she teaches you'	
		elle	te	apprend		

While the /l/ of the object clitics *le* and *la* geminates, gemination fails to occur with the articles *le* and *la*, although on the surface they seem phonologically identical to the geminating clitics *le* and *la*. This is shown in (6).

(6)	a.	/a	<b>la</b>	ekɔl/	alekɔl	*allekɔl
		at	the:fem	school	'at school'	
		à	la	école		

b.	/a	lə	arena/	alarena	*allarena
	at	the:masc	arena	‘at the arena’	
	à	le	aréna		

To recapitulate, the consonant of the object clitics *le* and *la* undergoes gemination when they are in intervocalic position, but not when they precede a consonant-initial verb. Object clitics *me* and *te* never undergo gemination, nor do the articles *le* and *la*.

Now the data that we have just seen presents two puzzles: While the /l/ of object clitics *le* and *la* geminates in front of a vowel-initial verb...

1. The /l/ of object clitics *le* and *la* does not geminate preceding a consonant-initial verb.
2. The /m/ of the object clitic *me* and the /t/ of the object clitic *te* do not geminate in intervocalic position, and the /l/ of articles *le* and *la* does not geminate in front of a vowel-initial noun.

I propose that the solution to these puzzles can be found in the diachronic origin of the /l/ gemination phenomenon, which will be treated in the next section. As the subject pronoun *il* was losing its /l/, the double [l] that surfaced when it co-occurred with object clitics *le* and *la* was reanalysed as CL of the elided vowel of the clitic. As no elision occurs when object clitics *le* and *la* precede a consonant-initial verb, no CL could be assumed in these contexts and therefore no gemination occurs. As for the object clitics *me* and *te* and the articles *le* and *la*, they did not find themselves in a similar environment, that is, they were not similarly preceded by a word whose final segment was both unstable and identical to their initial consonant.

Synchronically, I propose that the different patterning of the *l*-initial clitics and the other forms lies in the underlying representations: the clitics *le* and *la* have an underlying mora, while the clitics *me* and *te* and the articles *le* and *la* do not. Clitics *le* and *la* do not geminate preceding a consonant-initial verb, since in such cases either the mora is realised by the vowel, or, if the vowel is deleted, the /l/ falls in a coda position, where the mora can be realised. Clitics *me* and *te* and articles *le* and *la* do not geminate because they do not have an underlying mora and therefore their initial consonant can syllabify as an onset.

The diachronic origin of Quebec French /l/ gemination will be addressed in section 3, and the synchronic analysis will be given in section 4.

### 3. History of /l/ Gemination

The historical origin of /l/ gemination has not received much attention in the literature. Dumas (1987) suggests that the /l/ of the subject clitic *il* would have been interpreted as part of the clitics *le* and *la*, as the subject clitic *il* lost its /l/ as of the 16<sup>th</sup> century:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Morin (1979) offers an alternative hypothesis. While it is not incompatible with the synchronic analysis presented here, it does not allow such a straightforward explanation of the asymmetry observed as does the reanalysis suggested by Dumas.

Ce redoublement [...] a dû se modeler sur une structure où le *l* était déjà double [...]. C'était bien le cas avant que *il* perde lui-même son *l* à partir du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'abord devant une consonne (**I vient**) et ensuite devant une voyelle aussi (**I arrive**). *Il l'a vu* s'était dit **II l'a vu** de toute façon jusque-là. [...] [À] partir du moment où il a été clair que *il* n'avait plus de *l* à lui et se réduisait maintenant à *i* tout court, le double **II** de la prononciation a pu être associé au *l'* représentant pour sa part *le* ou *la* : on était dès lors en face de **II l'a vu**, et non plus de **II l'a vu**. (Dumas 1987: 79)<sup>4</sup>

A double [l] could be heard, which, for speakers exposed to forms like [ivjɛ̃] for *il vient*, would have been reanalysed as part of the object clitics.

Building on Dumas' suggestion, I propose that /l/ gemination arose as a result of reanalysis of the clitics *le* and *la* as *il* was losing its /l/.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, I propose that surface geminates which could be heard when the /l/ of *il* became unstable were construed as CL of the elided vowel of the clitic.<sup>6</sup> This explains why there is no synchronic gemination in front of consonant-initial verbs: there was no elided vowel to compensate. As for the clitics *me* and *te*, and the articles *le* and *la*, they did not occur in environments where geminates could surface.

Assuming Dumas' hypothesis, the situation as *il* began losing its /l/ was as in (7): 'conservative' speakers pronounced [il] before a vowel, but [i] before a consonant, while 'innovative' speakers pronounced [i] everywhere.

(7)	/il/	$\begin{array}{l} \nearrow \\ \searrow \end{array}$	<b>il</b> lá aprã → [illapɾã] 'he learns it' <b>il</b> la prã → [illapɾã] 'he takes it'	('conservative' speakers)
	/i/	$\begin{array}{l} \nearrow \\ \searrow \end{array}$	<b>i</b> lá aprã → [ilapɾã] 'he learns it' <b>i</b> la prã → [ilapɾã] 'he takes it'	('innovative' speakers)

In other words, two competing forms would be heard for 'he learns it', and the same competing forms would be heard for 'he takes it'.

<sup>4</sup> I provide the following translation. As of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, *il* started losing its /l/, first before a consonant (*I vient*), then before a vowel (*I arrive*). *Il l'a vu* had been pronounced with a double /l/ until then. As it became clear that *il* did not have an /l/ of its own anymore, and had become simply /i/, the double /l/ could have been associated with the *l'* representing *le* or *la*. We then had *II l'a vu* instead of *II l'a vu*.

<sup>5</sup> The intuition is that the subject pronoun *il* very often precedes the object pronouns *le* and *la*. It remains to be seen whether clitic doubling, which is very common in Quebec French, played a role in favouring the reanalysis of the /l/ from the final consonant of /il/. Clitic doubling is the co-occurrence of a subject pronoun with a subject NP, as in [ʒãimãʒlapɾɔm] (/ʒã i mãʒ la pɾɔm/, 'John **he** eats the apple.').

<sup>6</sup> Quebec French also has /n/ gemination, which affects the object clitic *en*, as in [tsynnãprã] (/ty **ãn** aprã/, 'You learn (of it).'). Its detailed study will have to await further research, but it seems plausible that *en* might have undergone reanalysis in a similar fashion to the clitics *le* and *la*: I suggest that, like *le* and *la*, *en* was reanalysed as undergoing CL as the preverbal negative marker *ne* (elided prevocally) was disappearing.

From there, three possible situations could have arisen: (1) The forms with [ll] are retained; (2) The forms with [l] are retained; (3) An asymmetry is introduced. I will examine them in turn.

### 3.1 The ‘conservative’ forms are retained

If the forms with the double [l] are retained for both *il l’apprend* and *il la prend*, there are two possible analyses the learners could have come up with. One is to posit /il/ as underlying representation for *il* and an elision rule, generating the forms in (8): both *il l’apprend* and *il la prend* surface with a double [l], reflecting the underlying representations (one [l] belonging to *il*, the other belonging to *la*), and *à l’école* surfaces with a singleton [l], which is expected, since there is only one /l/ in the input.

- (8) a. **il l’apprend** (‘he learns it’)
- |     |           |       |                           |
|-----|-----------|-------|---------------------------|
| /il | <b>la</b> | apɛã/ | Underlying representation |
| il  | <b>l</b>  | apɛã  | Elision                   |
| [il | <b>l</b>  | apɛã] | Surface form              |
- b. **il la prend** (‘he takes it’)
- |     |           |      |                           |
|-----|-----------|------|---------------------------|
| /il | <b>la</b> | pɛã/ | Underlying representation |
|     | -----     |      | Elision                   |
| [il | <b>la</b> | pɛã] | Surface form              |
- c. **à l’école** (‘at school’)
- |    |           |       |                           |
|----|-----------|-------|---------------------------|
| /a | <b>la</b> | ekɔl/ | Underlying representation |
| a  | <b>l</b>  | ekɔl  | Elision                   |
| [a | <b>l</b>  | ekɔl] | Surface form              |

Another possibility is that /i/ is the underlying representation for *il*, and that an intervocalic /l/ gemination rule generates [illapɛã] for both *il l’apprend* and *il la prend*. This analysis is rejected, since it incorrectly generates \*[allekɔl] for *à l’école*. The ordering of the rules is not crucial: either ordering will generate forms with geminate [l] in all three cases.

### 3.2 The ‘innovative’ forms are retained

In this case, as in the previous one, there are two possible analyses. One is that the underlying representation for *il* is /i/, and [ilapɛã] is generated for both *il l’apprend* and *il la prend*. In the first case, an elision rule applies to resolve the hiatus, and in the second case the output corresponds to the underlying representation. Under this analysis, [alekɔl] is still straightforwardly generated.

The other possibility is that /il/ is the underlying representation for *il*, and in addition to the elision rule there is a preconsonantal /l/ deletion rule. The outputs for both *il l’apprend* and *il la prend* are [ilapɛã] with a singleton [l]. The form [alekɔl] (*à l’école*) is also generated without problem. The elision rule and the /l/ deletion rule do not interact, and therefore could apply in either order.

### 3.3 An asymmetry is introduced

It is plausible that sufficient evidence for /i/ as underlying representation for *il* on the one hand, and sufficient frequency of forms like [illapɤã] on the other hand, favoured the following analysis: /i/ is the underlying representation for *il*, and the [ll] is obtained by CL for elision of the clitic vowel. Moreover, speakers pronouncing [il] before a vowel and [i] before a consonant would have generated the forms in (9) and (10).

- (9) a. i pɤã → [ipɤã]      b. i la pɤã → [ilapɤã]  
 he takes                      he it:fem takes  
 'he takes'                      'he takes it'
- (10) a. il apɤã → ([ilapɤã])      b. i la apɤã → ([ilapɤã])  
 he learns                      he it:fem learns  
 'he learns'                      'he learns it'

Notice that the forms in (10a) and (10b) are identical, despite the presence of the object clitic *la* in (10b), while (9a) and (9b) are unambiguous. As competing forms [i] and [il] were heard, there could have been a tendency to assign different phonological status to them, leading to an analysis where /i/ was taken as underlying, with a mora assigned to the clitic.

We saw above that an analysis involving a gemination rule would generate the wrong output for *à l'école*. I propose that the analysis that seemed most plausible to the learners is the one in (11), where /l/ gemination is construed as CL for the elided vowel (11a). Since there is no elision in *il la prend* (11b), there cannot be CL and thus the form [ilapɤã] was retained, for which the analysis is straightforward. Now why is there no CL in *à l'école* (11c)? My proposal, which I discuss in more detail in 3.4 below, is that while clitics *le* and *la* were reanalysed as having an underlying mora, articles *le* and *la* were not. This mora was a result of preceding /l/ of *il*, as discussed in section 2.

- (11) a. **il l'apprend** ('he learns it')
- |    |           |       |                           |
|----|-----------|-------|---------------------------|
| /i | <b>la</b> | apɤã/ | Underlying representation |
| i  | <b>ll</b> | apɤã  | Elision & CL              |
| [i | <b>ll</b> | apɤã] | Surface form              |
- b. **il la prend** ('he takes it')
- |    |           |      |                           |
|----|-----------|------|---------------------------|
| /i | <b>la</b> | pɤã/ | Underlying representation |
| [i | <b>la</b> | pɤã] | Surface form              |
- c. **à l'école** ('at school')
- |    |           |       |                           |
|----|-----------|-------|---------------------------|
| /a | <b>la</b> | ekɔl/ | Underlying representation |
| a  | <b>l</b>  | ekɔl  | Elision                   |
| [a | <b>l</b>  | ekɔl] | Surface form              |

Once *il* has completely lost its /l/, there is a geminate when the object clitic occurs in front of a vowel-initial verb (12a), but not before a consonant-

initial verb (12b).<sup>7</sup> Now if we look at the underlying representations, in both forms the /l/ is in intervocalic position. Yet, only in (12a) does it geminate.

- (12) a. [iɫɫapɾã] UR: /i **la** aprã/ → i **llá** aprã (elision + CL: la → ll)  
 b. [iɫapɾã] UR: /i **la** prã/ → i **la** prã

But as I have shown, reanalysis occurred in contexts where the geminate could be construed as CL: in (12a) there is elision, and the /l/ of the clitic geminates; in (12b), there is no elision, and the /l/ of the clitic does not geminate.

This analysis solves the first puzzle, namely why the /l/ of object clitics *le* and *la* does not geminate in front of a consonant-initial verb.

### 3.4 Mora Acquisition?

For the second puzzle, namely why (i) the /m/ of the object clitic *me* and the /t/ of object clitic *te* do not geminate in front of a vowel-initial verb, and (ii) the /l/ of articles *le* and *la* does not geminate in front of a vowel-initial noun, while the /l/ of object clitics *le* and *la* **does** geminate in front of a vowel-initial verb, I propose that the answer is in the underlying representation of these forms, more specifically, that object clitics *le* and *la* have an underlying mora, while object clitics *me* and *te*, and articles *le* and *la* do not.

I propose that articles *le* and *la* and object clitics *me* and *te* could not be reanalysed in the same way because of the absence of the conditioning environment: the articles never follow the subject clitic *il*; as for the object clitics *me* and *te*, although they do follow the subject clitic *il*, the condition for reanalysis is also not met, since there is no similar preceding element ending with an [m] or a [t] that could have been analysed as part of these clitics.

Now could anything motivate this asymmetry synchronically? A possible link would be to the capacity of these forms to bear stress. Clitics *le* and *la* do bear stress when they are in a post-verbal position, which they occupy in imperative forms, as in (13).

- (13) a. /ekut **la**/            ekut**lá**  
 listen.to her:acc    'Listen to her.'  
 écoute -la
- b. /ekut **lə**/            ekut**lḁ**  
 listen.to him:acc    'Listen to him.'  
 écoute -le

Contrastively, clitics *me* and *te* cannot occur in imperative forms. Rather, the strong forms of these pronouns, *moi* and *toi*, must be used, as shown in (14).

<sup>7</sup> The current situation would correspond to a further stage, where the /l/ of the object clitic deletes and the /i/ of *il* syllabifies as an onset, yielding [japɾã].



- (14) a. /ekut **mwa**/ ekot**mwá** \*ekot**ǹ**  
 listen.to me 'Listen to me!'  
 écoute -moi
- b. /tɛ **twa**/ tɛt**wá** \*tɛt**ǹ**  
 shut.up you 'Shut up!'  
 tais -toi

An indication that there has indeed been reanalysis of the clitic forms comes from the fact that the clitics *le* and *la* also geminate their /l/ when they follow the subject clitics *je* and *tu*, as in (15).

- (15) a. /ʒə **la** apɕã/ ʒəllapɕã  
 I it:fem learn 'I learn it.'  
 je la apprends
- b. /ty **la** apɕã/ tyllapɕã  
 you it:fem learn 'you learn it.'  
 tu la apprends

Unlike *il*, subject clitics *je* and *tu* did not have a final /l/ to lose. Thus the [ll] in (15) must come from somewhere else; the reanalysis proposed here gives a plausible and straightforward explanation of these facts.

#### 4. Synchronic Analysis

In the previous section, I propose that object clitics *le* and *la* are analysed as having an underlying mora, while object clitics *me* and *te* and articles *le* and *la* are morales. Under this account, elision of the vowel of clitics *le* and *la* is compensated by /l/ gemination while elision of the vowel of clitics *me* and *te* and of articles *le* and *la* is not. Pupier & Légaré (1973:75) note the compensatory effect of gemination (“Il est clair que la gémation compense l’effet destructeur de l’élision dans le clitique”)<sup>8</sup>, but the analysis they propose fails to capture it: their gemination rule (l → ll / V + \_ + V / CLITIQUE) applies to the output of the elision rule; once elision has applied, the output form does not contain the elided segment anymore. As I will show, assuming that clitics *le* and *la* have an underlying mora captures the compensatory effect of gemination and makes a gemination rule unnecessary.<sup>9</sup> Although I will also depart from Pupier & Légaré with respect to the underlying representation of the subject clitics *il* and *elle*, the analysis that I will propose is otherwise broadly compatible with theirs.

In developing the synchronic analysis, I assume a Hayes’ (1989) type theory of mora. A mora is a unit of weight that can be assigned to segments

<sup>8</sup> It is clear that gemination compensates for the destructive effect of elision in the clitic. (My translation.)

<sup>9</sup> I assume that the underlying representation of *la* is /la/ and that the underlying representation of *le* is /lə/, both with mora. While the /ə/ of *le* does not surface at all in examples (1c-d) and (2c-d), it does surface in certain cases, namely when the clitic occurs between consonants, as in [pɕɛlɔpɕãd] (/pɕɛ **lə** pɕãd/, ‘to take it’).

underlyingly and that is associated with certain positions in the syllable. For instance, a short vowel is assigned one mora, so is a geminate consonant, while a long vowel has two moras. A short consonant bears no mora. The nucleus of a syllable is associated with a mora in all languages, while the onset is never associated with a mora, and the coda is associated with a mora in some languages (see Hayes 1989). Moras can also be re-associated in the course of a derivation, if a mora-bearing segment is deleted, as we will see below.

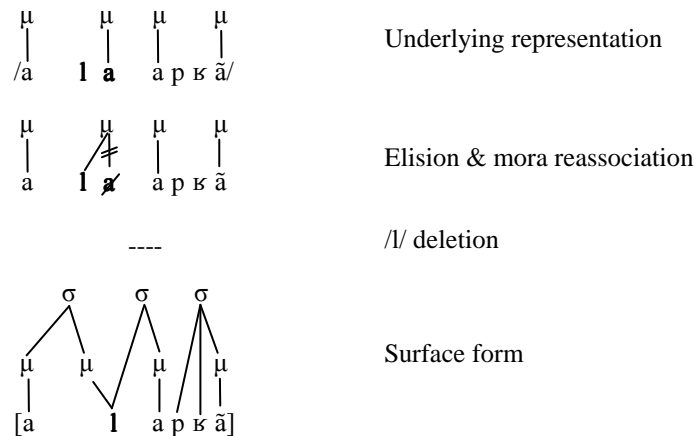
Assuming that clitics *le* and *la* have an underlying mora captures the fact that /l/ gemination compensates for elision of the vowel of these clitics. I will show derivations, using an elision rule and (since, as we have seen, there is also /l/ deletion) an /l/ deletion rule, inspired by those proposed by Pupier & L egar e (1973). These rules are given in (16).

- (16) a. Elision:  $V_{[-stress]} \rightarrow \emptyset / + C \_ + V$   
 b. /l/ deletion:  $l \rightarrow \emptyset / V + \_ V_{[-stress]} C_0 + (\text{variable})$

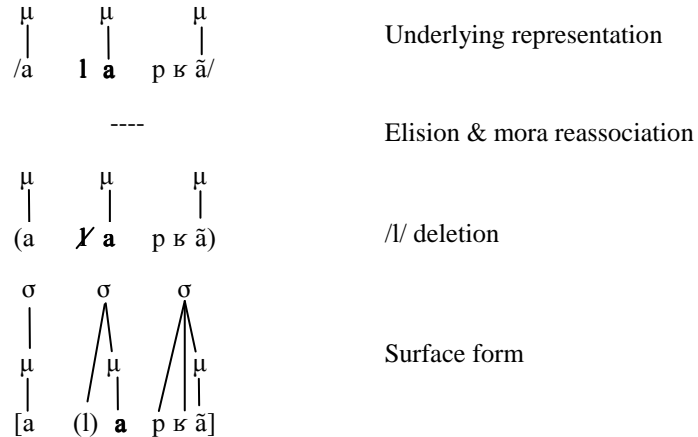
The derivations for the minimal pair in (1a) and (2a) are given in (17). In (17a), the vowel of the clitic undergoes elision, in order to resolve the hiatus, and CL occurs simultaneously. As we can see, the vowel of the object clitic *la* is associated with a mora. When that vowel deletes, the mora is preserved by being re-assigned to the /l/. Since it is now moraic, the /l/ cannot syllabify only as an onset: it becomes ambisyllabic, realising its mora in the coda position of the previous syllable. Thus, geminate [l] arises from moraic [l]. The /l/ deletion rule cannot apply here, as it applies to singletons only.

In (17b), the vowel of the object clitic does not delete, and therefore no CL occurs, since that vowel realises the mora. The /l/ deletion rule applies for some speakers. If not deleted, the non-moraic /l/ syllabifies only as an onset.

- (17) a. **[allapɾã]** *elle la apprend* ‘she learns it (fem.)’ (2a)

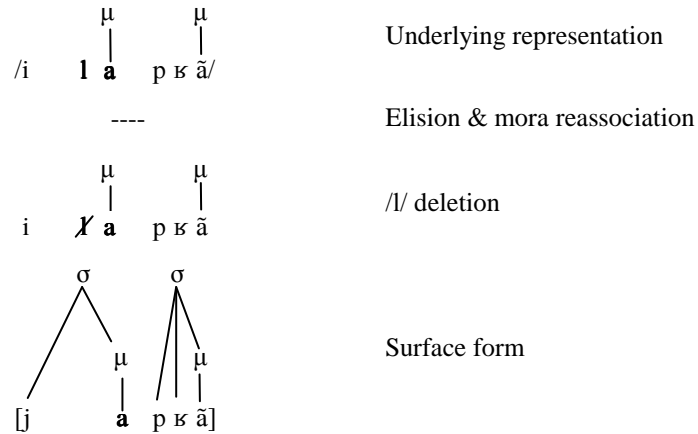


b. [alapɤã] *elle la prend* ‘she takes it (fem.)’ (1a)



In [illapɤã] (*il la apprend*, ‘he learns it (fem.)’, (2d)), elision applies, with CL of the consonant, just like in (17a). Again, the /l/ deletion rule does not apply. In the non-intervocalic context (18), there is no elision, thus no CL, and therefore the /l/ deletion rule can apply; in fact, here /l/ deletion is obligatory, and /i/ syllabifies as an onset.

(18) [japɤã] *il la prend* ‘he takes it (fem.)’ (1d)

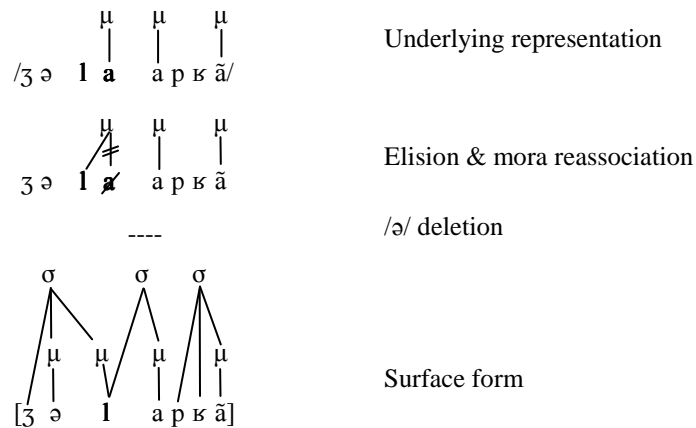


To explain the behaviour of the clitic *le*, we must take schwa deletion into account. I will use the rules of schwa deletion in monosyllables proposed by Picard (1991) and given in (19). The rules apply in the order provided.

- (19) i. Effacer le cheva de tout monosyllabe en L (*le*) si possible;  
 ii. Effacer le cheva de tout monosyllabe en F (*ce, je, se*) si possible;  
 iii. Effacer le cheva de tout monosyllabe en O (*de, me, que, te*) si possible.<sup>10</sup>

Crucially, schwa deletion is ordered after elision. In geminated forms like (20), once elision and mora reassociation have occurred, schwa deletion cannot apply because an illicit syllable structure would result. Ordering schwa deletion before elision would cause elision to yield an illicit syllable structure (because of mora reassociation).

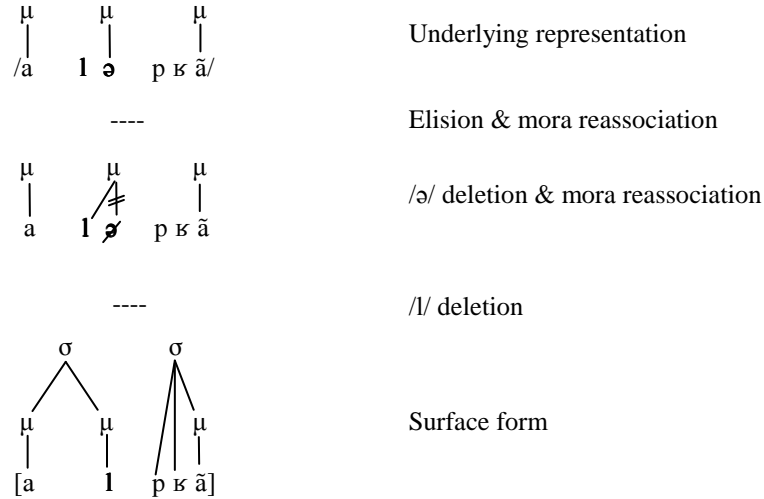
- (20) [ʒəllapʁã] *je la apprend* ‘I learn it (fem.)’



For [allapʁã] (*elle le apprend*, ‘she learns it (masc.)’, (2c)), there will be elision of the clitic vowel with CL, and the output form will be the same as in (17a). Schwa deletion will not apply, as elision will already have deleted the schwa. In the non-intervocalic context (21), however, the elision rule does not apply, since there is no hiatus to resolve, and the clitic vowel is deleted by the schwa deletion rule. In this case, although there is vowel deletion, and although the mora gets re-assigned, the /l/ does not geminate because since it now precedes a consonant, it syllabifies only as a coda, where it can realise the mora.

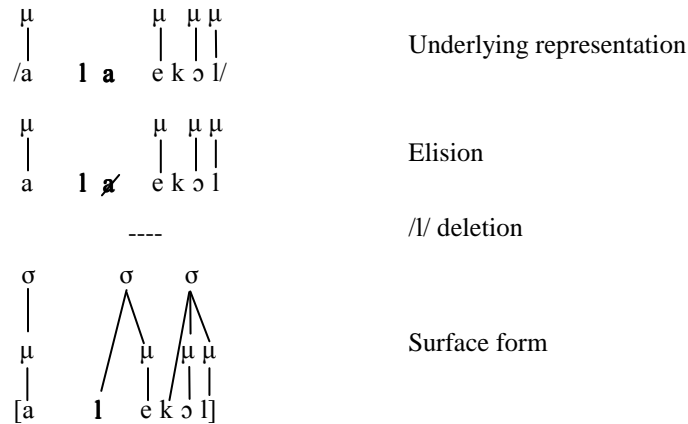
<sup>10</sup> i. Delete schwa in any liquid-initial monosyllable (*le*) if possible;  
 ii. Delete schwa in any fricative-initial monosyllable (*ce, je, se*) if possible;  
 iii. Delete schwa in any stop-initial monosyllable (*de, me, que, te*) if possible.

(21) **[alpɛ̃]** *elle le prend* ‘she takes it (masc.)’ (1c)

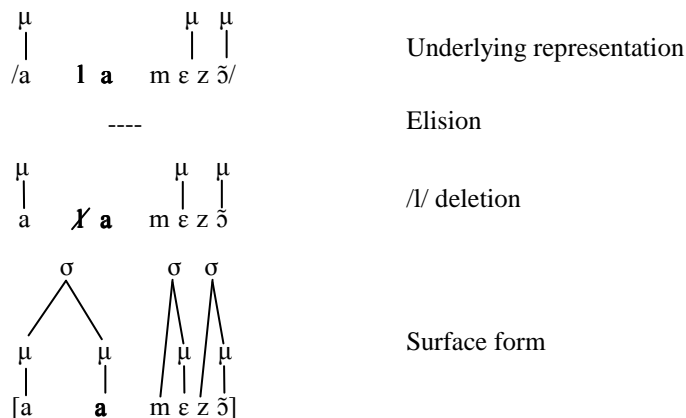


Derivations showing the article *la* before a vowel-initial noun and a consonant-initial noun are given in (22). We see in (22a) that, although there is elision, there is no gemination, that is, no CL: since the article does not have an underlying mora, the /l/ is allowed to fall only in an onset position. In (22b), since the following noun begins in a consonant, there is no elision and no gemination, as expected, and the /l/ of the article deletes.

(22) a. **[alekɔl]** *à la école* ‘at school’



b. [aamezɔ̃] à la maison ‘at home’



Note that in (22b) the /a/ of the article is assigned a mora in the end: it does not delete since the /l/ has already deleted; perhaps this is because if it did delete the article would be lost altogether (assuming a notion of morpheme realisation; see e.g. Walker 2000).

In this section I have shown how /l/ gemination is synchronically derived, and how it interacts with other phonological processes of Quebec French, namely schwa deletion and /l/ deletion. Assuming that object clitics *le* and *la* have an underlying mora captures the compensatory effect of gemination for the loss of the clitic vowel by elision. This also accounts for the fact that there is no gemination in preconsonantal position, since then, either the clitic vowel does not delete and the mora gets realised by the vowel, or the clitic vowel is lost due to the schwa deletion rule and the mora gets realised by the /l/ in the coda.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper I have presented a case of synchronic CL which does not originate from diachronic CL, thus supporting the view that synchrony and diachrony are not necessarily isomorphic. Building on a suggestion made by Dumas (1987), I have argued that the phenomenon of /l/ gemination in Quebec French is due to the reanalysis of the lost /l/ of the subject clitic *il* as part of the object clitics *le* and *la*. This reanalysis, however, has been restricted to cases of CL only, showing that it can be constrained by natural phonological processes.

I have shown that, synchronically, this phenomenon can be adequately accounted for by mora preservation. To account for the different behaviour of object clitics *me* and *te* and articles *le* and *la*, I have proposed that they do not have an underlying mora, while object clitics *le* and *la* do. I have proposed diachronic and synchronic explanations for this asymmetry. I have argued that, historically, articles *le* and *la* and object clitics *me* and *te* did not occur in the relevant environment to be reanalysed in the same fashion as object clitics *le* and *la*, and I have suggested that their lack of underlying mora synchronically is related to the fact that they cannot bear stress.

Assuming that the clitics *le* and *la* have an underlying mora allows us to dispense with a gemination rule applying to specific morphemes, as proposed by Pupier & Légaré (1973) and Picard (1990) and, more importantly, captures the CL nature of the /l/ gemination process.

The fact that Quebec French /l/ gemination can be accounted for as CL synchronically but not diachronically raises questions as to the nature of what has traditionally been described as CL, which I discuss in more detail in Morin (2008). As has been shown by Kavitskaya (2002), there are cases of diachronic CL that result in synchronic phonological processes of CL, and cases of diachronic CL that result in something else synchronically. It then seems reasonable to ask whether the fact that diachronic CL sometimes results in synchronic processes of CL has any theoretical implications. After all, as argued by Hale (2007), among others, a particular phonological process does not entail a corresponding sound change, and vice versa.

### References

- Côté, Marie-Hélène. 2000. *Consonant cluster phonotactics: A perception-based approach*, MIT Linguistics Dissertations, Cambridge, MA: MIT Working Papers in Linguistics.
- Dumas, Denis. 1987. *Les prononciations en français québécois*. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Hale, Mark. 2007. *Historical Linguistics: Theory and Method*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hayes, Bruce. 1989. Compensatory lengthening in moraic phonology. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20:253–306.
- Kavitskaya, Darya. 2002. *Compensatory Lengthening: Phonetics, Phonology, Diachrony*. New York: Routledge.
- Morin, Annick. 2008. Diachrony and Synchrony of /l/ gemination in Quebec French. Ms., University of Toronto.
- Morin, Yves-Charles. 1979. La morphophonologie des pronoms clitiques en français populaire. *Cahier de linguistique n° 9*, 1–36.
- Picard, Marc. 1990. On morphologically-conditioned sound change: the deletion and gemination of /l/ in Canadian French. *Probus* 2:103–112.
- Picard, Marc. 1991. La loi des trois consonnes et la chute du cheva en québécois. *Revue québécoise de linguistique* 20(2):35–49.
- Poplack, Shana and Douglas Walker. 1986. Going through (/l/) in Canadian French. In *Diversity and Diachrony*, ed. David Sankoff, 173–198. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Pupier, Paul & Luc Légaré. 1973. L'effacement du /l/ dans les articles définis et les clitiques en français de Montréal. *Glossa* 7(1):63–80.
- Walker, Douglas C. 1984. *The Pronunciation of Canadian French*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Walker, Rachel. 2000. Nasal Reduplication in Mbe Affixation. *Phonology* 17:65–115.