

# Text-setting in English and Spanish song and its implications for the study of linguistic prosody

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## Abstract

### *Background to the research or performance/installation*

The study of verse and music, as well as of their interaction in song, has contributed crucially to the evolution of suprasegmental phonology. In recent years, Optimality Theory has been applied to the analysis of English metrics (Hayes and MacEachern 1998, Kiparsky 2006) and of text-setting in English (Hayes, in press).

### *Interdisciplinary issues*

An obvious limitation of the studies carried out up until the present moment is the narrowness of their scope – they deal almost exclusively with English songs –, which makes their theoretical claims not powerful enough. It is necessary to analyse materials in other languages in order to present a truly interdisciplinary project, and thus be able to check the validity of the general theoretical assumptions made by OT in the fields of metrics and text-setting.

### *The issue/hypothesis under investigation*

This paper is devoted to the comparative examination of the most important text-setting constraints as applied to a corpus of English and Spanish folk and art songs. A theoretical and empirical analysis of these songs is developed to determine the degree of accuracy of the OT-based theories argued for in Hayes and MacEachern (1998), Hayes (in press), and Kiparsky (2006). The two main issues addressed in this paper are (i) the constraints used to define what a line is in English and Spanish folk songs, and (ii) the positioning of stressed syllables in both text-setting traditions.

### *Conclusions/future directions*

This investigation can shed some light on the study of the long-established prosodic scale (from stress-timed to syllable-timed languages) asserting the importance of incorporating music into linguistic investigation.