

No derivation levels needed: an alternative take on glottalisation of vowel-initial words in Slavic

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Background Glide and glottal stop insertion are argued by Rubach (2000) to provide support for the existence of lexical and postlexical levels in Optimality Theory (OT), since these phenomena can only be accounted for by proliferation of constraints in those varieties of OT that keep to a single derivational step. A growing number of constraints is considered to be a less desirable outcome than the introduction of new derivational levels (see Burzio 2001, Rubach 2004 for further discussion of the issue within OT). The goal of this talk is to provide an account of a subset of Rubach's data from Slavic within a different framework – Strict CV phonology (Kaye, Lowenstamm & Vergnaud 1990), which can not only capture these facts without any theoretical innovation, but also link them to other related data.

Scheer (2012) provides a unified explanation for a range of left-edge phenomena that tend to co-occur (restrictions on initial clusters, strength of initial consonants, the ability of the first vowel of the word to alternate with zero) – a word-initial empty CVs as a parameter of linguistic variation (first introduced by Lowenstamm 1999). Glottal stop insertion to the left of vowel-initial words (henceforth initial glottalisation, or IG) in Slavic languages appears to correlate with the presence of a word-initial empty CV as well.

Data and analysis¹ Regarding the behaviour of vowel-initial words in the utterance-initial context and after prepositions, the Slavic languages can be divided into three types: (i) those that insert a glottal stop word-initially (Czech, Bulgarian), (ii) those that do not (Standard Slovak, Polish) and (iii) an intermediate type that only exhibits IG in specific cases (Russian). In Russian, the glottal stop does not appear on the left boundary of vowel-initial words in connected speech, except utterance-initially or when the vowel-initial word is emphasised. The glottal stop is also capable of regressive devoicing of obstruents (in Czech, Bulgarian and Russian), which is triggered by voiceless stops in most Slavic languages.

I propose that IG is a manifestation of initial empty CVs, as illustrated by the data in Table 1. However, an initial glottal stop may appear for many different reasons and should be considered in relation to other patterns present in the language, just like other known effects of initial CVs like the ban on #RT, strength of initial consonants, etc.

In languages with initial CVs, the glottal stop fills in unlicensed onsets, which result from the inability of the V of the initial empty CV to govern (see (1–2) for examples illustrating the proposal and Faust (2023:19) for a similar proposal). Assuming that the Slavic voice assimilation in Strict CV is viewed as spreading of parts of melodic material from a licensed position (Ferme 2006), the unlicensed C can trigger regressive devoicing, which is precisely what happens in Bulgarian. Czech seemingly stands out as a counterexample: it exhibits IG despite other diagnostics pointing to the absence of initial CV. Nevertheless, considering that the glottal stop insertion as an onset-filling strategy is not restricted to word-initial positions in Czech, but occurs word-internally as well, it is likely caused by a different phonological process than the IG in Bulgarian. The IG in Czech tracks empty VC configurations, rather than unlicensed onsets.

Where the initial CV is absent, there are two options: utterance-initial onsets may be filled, like in Russian, or left empty, like in Standard Slovak. Interestingly enough, in Russian, which is initial-CV-free (judging by the availability of #RT), IG and the devoicing of the preposition sometimes occur if the word is emphasised (*Ja ne mogu poverit' v ÈTO* [fʔÈTO] 'I cannot believe THIS'). Given that empty CVs are taken to represent morphemic boundaries (Scheer 2012), one could argue that focus puts an empty CV before the emphasised word, thus replicating the patterns found in languages with initial CVs like Bulgarian.

Implications Assuming the influence of empty CVs onto the IG yields an analysis that does not require two independent derivational levels in phonology. The main empirical consequence of my proposal is that we should find at least some effects at the beginning of vowel-initial words in languages with word-initial CVs. In Slavic, the effect is often glottal stop insertion, although it may happen for other reasons. If a language with initial CVs and no glottal stop insertion exists, there should be no filling

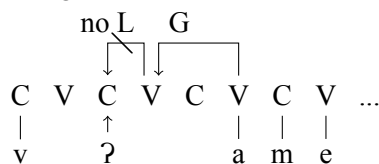
¹See Table 1 on the next page.

of non-licensed onsets elsewhere. A detailed investigation of more Slavic languages and dialects is so far yet to be completed.

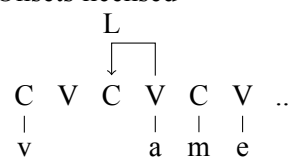
| | no initial CVs | initial CVs |
|---------------------|---|---|
| IG | <u>Czech</u> IG word/stem-initially (Dvořák 2010) [ʔoral] ‘plow’ 3.SG.PST [s-ʔoral] ‘together-plow’ 3.SG.PST [ˈbɛs ʔotpadu] ‘without a waste’ | <u>Bulgarian</u> IG word-initially (Rubach 2000) [ʔamerika] ‘America’ [fʔamerika] ‘in America’ |
| no IG | <u>Slovak</u> no IG whatsoever (Zauner 1966, Král’ 1988) | supposedly unattested |
| intermediate | <u>Russian</u> occasional IG [ʔamerika] ‘America’ [vameriku] ‘to America’ | |

Table 1: Interaction of the IG with initial CVs, illustrated with data

(1) Language with initial CVs
 IG targeted at unlicensed onsets



(2) Language without initial CVs
 Onsets licensed



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