

On the misbehaviour of pre-liquid yers in Old Czech

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Setting a problem: One of the most important rules of Proto-Slavic (PSl) phonology is Havlík's Law (Havlík 1889). It defines conditions on which yers (ь, ъ), high PSl vowels (V), transform to other Vs. According to it, only those yers which had been followed by another yer were transformed, remaining ones were deleted. The former yers are called strong, the latter weak; see (1). (2) shows that the application of Havlík's Law has to be rightward. Diachronic grammars of Czech mention one systematic exception from this rule concerning pre-liquid (L) yers. Their irregular behaviour is illustrated in (3) where PSl and OCz case forms are given. Pre-L yers in NomSg do not follow Havlík's Law because they disappear even if they are followed by the case marking yer. As a consequence, the L occurs in an interconsonantal position and becomes syllabic. (4) shows that the behaviour of pre-L yers depends on whether the L is followed by another consonant (C). If no C intervenes between the L and the case marker then the yer which precedes this L follows Havlík's Law properly.

Purpose: My aim is to provide answers to these questions: Why do yers followed just by LC clusters disobey Havlík's Law? What is the connection between the loss of the yer and the syllabicity of the L?

Existing analyses: In Czech diachronic grammars (e.g. Gebauer 1894), the structures with syllabic Ls are analysed in terms of rule ordering: yers in Cь/ъLC had disappeared before Havlík's Law started to work. As a consequence of yer deletion, syllabic L emerged. The main problem of this scenario is that it does not account for what is the connection between the loss of the yer and the derivation of the syllabic L. But, this is a crucial question because there is no automatic implication between these two things: (5) shows that Ls which were descendants of CLь/ъC clusters were not syllabic in OCz. Moreover, the post-L yers in the CLь/ъC strings behaved in agreement with Havlík's Law.

Interim summary: (6) summarizes two conditions that must be met for interconsonantal Ls to be syllabic: a yer before the L, a consonant after it. Moreover, those yers which had been before LC clusters disappeared regardless of the occurrence of a non-yer V or yer in the following syllable.

Analysis: To capture these generalizations we need an elaborated theory of syllable structure. Therefore my analysis is based on a lateral syllabic theory known as CVCV (Scheer 2004). I argue that: 1. Yers before LC clusters always disappear because they are in the *same syllabic environment* as yers followed by CV clusters. 2. Interconsonantal Ls in OCz are sometimes syllabic and sometimes not because they occur in *two different syllabic environments*.

Yers are lexically floating segments which are expressed phonetically only if they are not governed by a non-yer V (full V-position). In (7), the contrast between weak and strong yers is expressed laterally: both weak and strong positions are defined on the syllable level. As for syllabic Ls, they are linked both to a C- and V-position: the former determines their articulation, the latter their phonological behaviour. If the melody of the syllabic L spreads to the adjacent V-position and the floating yer is not expressed when the following V-position is full, the L in the Cь/ъLC must spread to the V-position to its right. And this V-position makes the pre-L yer weak (8). Structure in (8) also illustrates two necessary conditions on syllabic Cs: 1. they must be linked both to a C- and V-position, 2. they must adjoin the unexpressed V-position.

In the CLь/ъC clusters, the yer could be either weak (9a) or strong (9b). We know that even if these post-L yers are weak, the L is not syllabic; see (5). If the necessary condition on a L to be syllabic is its branching structure than the L in (9a) must be linked just to a C-position.

Conclusion: In OCz, yers before LC clusters are always weak because OCz allows Ls to branch from the C-position to the V-position on its right.

(1) 1. strong yer vocalization: Ъ, Ы → V / _C₀ {Ь, Ы}, 2. weak yer deletion: Ъ, Ы → ∅

	PSl	OCz	gloss
СЬСЬСЬ → CCVC	kozьl-ьc-ь	kozl-ec	goat, dimin., NomSg

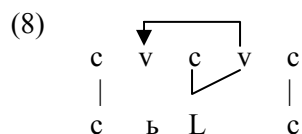
PSl: СЬ/ЬLC-Ь/Ь, СЬ/ЬLC-V	OCz: CLC, CLC-V	gloss
гьrb-ь, гьrb-a	hrb, hrb-a	hump, NomSg, GenSg

PSl: СЬ/ЬL-Ь/Ь, СЬ/ЬL-V	OCz: CVL, CL-V	gloss
котьl-ь, котьl-a	kotel, kotl-a	kettle

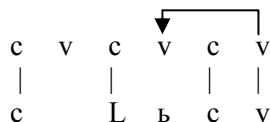
PSl: CLЬ/ЬC-Ь/Ь, CLЬ/ЬC-V	OCz: CLC, CLC-V	gloss
blьch-ь, blьch-a	blech, blch-a	flea, GenPl, NomSg

PSl	СЬ/ЬLC-Ь/Ь	СЬ/ЬLC-V	CLЬ/ЬC-Ь/Ь	CLЬ/ЬC-V
OCz	CLC	CLC-V	CLVC	CLC-V

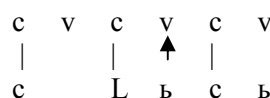
	phonetically expressed	governed	full V-position follows it
weak	✗	✓	✓
strong	✓	✗	✗



(9) a. CLЬ/ЬCV → CLCV



b. CLЬ/ЬСЬ/Ь → CLVC



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