

## RUSSIAN VERBAL STRESS RETRACTION AS NON-LOCAL ALLOMORPHY

Ora Matushansky  
SFL (CNRS/Université Paris-8/UPL)/UiL OTS/Utrecht University  
Ora.Matushansky@cnrs.fr

**Problem:** Since Garde 1968, 1998, Halle 1973, Melvold 1990, Gladney 1995, Feldstein 2015, etc., in the present tense Russian verbs have been known to exhibit one of three patterns: systematic stress on the stem, systematic post-stem stress and the variant pattern with post-stem stress in the 1sg and post-stem stress in all other forms (illustrated with 3sg):

(1) Accentual interaction in Russian verbs, illustrated for the semelfactive suffix *-nu-*,

		accented PRES-3SG	accented PRES-1SG	accented PAST-FSG	unaccented PAST-PL
a.	stem: <i>-top-</i> 'stomp'	tóp-n-e-t	tóp-n-u	tóp-n-u-l-a	tóp-n-u-l-i
b.	post-stem: <i>-max-</i> 'wave'	max-n-í-ó-t	max-n-ú	max-n-ú-l-a	max-n-ú-l-i
c.	variant: <i>-obman-</i> 'lie'	obmá-n-e-t	obma-n-ú	obma-n-ú-l-a	obma-n-ú-l-i

**Underlying representations:** with Jakobson 1948, Halle 1973, Melvold 1990, etc., we assume that the vowel of the semelfactive suffix *-nu-*, overt before consonantal suffixes (like the past-tense suffix *-l-*), is deleted before vocalic suffixes (such as the first-conjugation present-tense suffix *-ě-*) by a general vowel-before-vowel deletion process to avoid hiatus. The suffix *-ě-* is retained before consonantal suffixes and deleted before the vocalic 1sg suffix *-u-*:

(2) a.  $\sqrt{-nu-ě-t} \rightarrow \sqrt{-n-ě-t}$  3sg  
 b.  $\sqrt{-nu-ě-u} \rightarrow \sqrt{-n-ě-u} \rightarrow \sqrt{-n-u}$  1sg

**Underlying accents:** Russian stress follows the Basic Accentuation Principle (BAP, Kiparsky and Halle 1977), by which the leftmost accent wins. Following the same uncontroversial prior analyses (Garde 1968, 1998, Halle 1973, Melvold 1990, etc.) I assume that the present-tense suffix and the semelfactive suffix, as well as most theme suffixes, introduce an accent (evidence comes from athematic verbs).

**Retraction:** Halle 1973 and Melvold 1990 propose that the stems in (1c) are lexically marked to trigger retraction, an independently motivated process moving accent one syllable to the left, in all cells except 1SG. Yet Feldstein 2015 points out that two more forms based on the present tense, the imperative (surface *-i* or *-j*) and the present tense gerund (surface *-ja*), have the same stress placement as the 1SG form. The fact that the non-retracting suffixes are all simple vowels (*-V#*) strongly suggests that the process is phonological in nature.

**Proposal:** I will argue that the pattern in (1c) involves allomorphy of the present-tense suffix across another suffix (which can be semelfactive or theme). Specifically, I suggest that with “retracting” stems the present-tense suffix is realized as the front yer *-ĭ-* marked to resist accentuation. Independent evidence for the existence of such a yer comes from Halle 1973, observing that retraction in nouns can either land on the stem-final yer or skip it. Thus the three nouns in (3), while post-accenting in the singular, have stem stress in the plural. Our crucial contrast is (3b) vs. (3c), which both contain a stem-final yer. In the nominative plural the stem yer is not vocalized and stress in both examples falls on the syllable before it. In the genitive plural in (3b) the stem yer is vocalized and stress is stem-final, as in (3a), yet in (3c) the stem-final yer is not stressed (for whatever reason) and stress shifts one syllable further to the left.

(3) a. *-koles-* ‘wheel’: nom.sg: *kolesó*, nom.pl: *koliósa*, gen.pl: *koliós*  
 b. *-kolíc-* ‘ring’: nom.sg: *kolícó*, nom.pl: *kólíca*, gen.pl: *koléc*  
 c. *-pisím-* ‘letter’: nom.sg: *pisímó*, nom.pl: *písíma*, gen.pl: *písím*

I suggest that the present-tense *-ĭ-* allomorph shares whatever property the yer in (3c) has that makes it resistant to accentuation. More specifically, I propose that both yers are unaccentable. For the present-tense allomorph this entails that the accent assigned to it (whether underlying or arising from the deletion of the vowel of the preceding accented suffix) ends up on the next syllable. When the next syllable is that of the 1sg suffix *-u-* (or any other vocalic suffix), stress surfaces on it. The remaining suffixes, however, are consonantal and can be argued to all

contain yers (2SG *-šǔ-*, 3SG *-tǔ-*, 1PL *-mǔ-*, 3PL *-ntǔ-*; the one exception is the 2PL *-te-*, for which a special proviso is needed). Since unvocalized yers cannot be stressed, stress is shifted to the preceding syllable (that of the present-tense suffix) again and from it, by the same mechanism as in (3), to the syllable before it (i.e., the final syllable of the stem).

**Alternative 1: stem accentuation:** The first hypothesis, that the patterns in (1) correspond to accented, post-accenting and unaccented stems, respectively, is disproved by comparing the present-tense paradigms to the past tense, where only two patterns are attested, showing that the semelfactive suffix is accented. Since this accented suffix is to the left of both tense and agreement inflection, by BAP the stress pattern in (1c) cannot be due to an unaccented stem. As athematic verbs and verbs with the unaccented theme suffix *-a-* exhibit accentual variability in the past but not in the present, this hypothesis is further disproved.

**Alternative 2: hiatus resolution:** Idsardi 1992:124 proposes that stems like (1c) fail to trigger stress retraction in 1SG because the present tense suffix (*-ě-*) is deleted before a vocalic suffix. Two problems arise with this proposal. Firstly, as noted by Feldstein 2015, retraction also fails in the present tense gerund (surface *-ia*), which, however, is not vocalic underlyingly. Secondly, while second conjugation verbs also exhibit the pattern in (1c), the second-conjugation present-tense suffix, *-i-*, is not deleted before the 1sg *-u-*, but rather turns into a glide.

To illustrate both points, consider the second-conjugation verb in (4) with the theme suffix *-e-* (motivated by the past-tense form in (4a)) and the present tense suffix *-i-* (motivated by the 3SG form in (4b)). As the 1SG form in (4c) shows, [i] before a back vowel triggers glide-formation and subsequent mutation (Halle 1963, Lightner 1972, Coats and Lightner 1975, Bethin 1992, etc.), which is a distinct process from that invoked for (1c). Postulating *-a-* as the underlying form of the gerund suffix yields the incorrect surface representation (4d). (Lightner 1965:76 postulates the historically motivated *-nC-*, if we adopt this view as well, the crucial factor will be that a different vowel is created, which does not inherit the yer's unstressability.)

(4) a.	vid- e- l- a see TH PAST F [she] saw	c.	vid- e- i- u ⇒ <i>viž'u</i> see TH PRES 1SG <i>I see</i>
b.	vid- e- i- t ⇒ <i>vidit</i> see TH PRES 3SG <i>sees</i>	d.	vid- e- i- a ⇒ <i>*viža</i> see TH PRES GER <i>seeing</i> (attested: <i>vid'a</i> )

**Alternative 3: non-locality:** The relation between the root marked for the “retraction” diacritic and the present-tense suffix is non-local, as is particularly clear in the case of the semelfactive suffix *-nu-*. Can it be argued that it is the suffix following the root (the semelfactive in (1) or the theme suffix in (4)) that is assigned some special property by the root? If yes, what would this property be? It cannot be unaccentability, because with the unaccented consonantal past-tense suffix *-l-* there is no retraction. It cannot be a floating accent, because this would render the whole stem post-accenting and retraction would still be unexpected. Finally, it would have to be linked to the present tense, because the vowel-initial passive past participle suffix *-ěn-* does not trigger retraction, and in this the non-locality resurfaces.

**Further discussion:** The postulated special yer is motivated historically (the first-conjugation present-tense suffix *-ě-* is historically derived from the *-ǐ-* theme), yet the second conjugation present-tense suffix is generally assumed to be *-i-* (4). Do we assume the “retracting” variant to also be *-i-* even though a retracting [i] is not independently motivated? I will argue that there is independent evidence for postulating that the surface [i] before the 3SG suffix in (4b) arises from a two-step process: firstly, the theme suffix *-e-* undergoes ablaut in the present tense. This ablaut is independently motivated by the verb *molóti* ‘to grind’, whose root vowel is fronted in the present tense (1SG: *mel'ú*), and by the so-called transitive softening verbs, whose theme can be argued to undergo the same process. The second step transforms the *i-ǐ* sequence into the [i] of the second-conjugation present tense. If this analysis is correct, it will do away with the two standard conjugation classes of Russian, retaining just *-ǐ-* throughout, which would be lowered

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to [ě] in the first conjugation (because the preceding vowel there is not [i], it will be deleted or changed into a glide before [i], which itself will be lowered before non-1sg endings as discussed above). Irrespective of this additional proposal, the hypothesis that the pattern in (1c) involves a suffix with properties known to be attested elsewhere (3c) is progress on prior proposals.