

Topics in Persian Phonology: Syllable Structure and Phonological Processes

Abstract

The main goal of this dissertation is to study the syllable structure in the Iranian variety of Persian, commonly known as Farsi. It offers a formal representational analysis of word-initial, word-internal and word-final consonant clusters. In Farsi, a word cannot begin with a vowel, nor with a consonant cluster. It can, nonetheless, end with a vowel, or with one or two consonants. Using the CVCV model of phonology, I propose to explain this asymmetry by using a language-specific parameter configuration. In this configuration, Final Empty Nuclei are licensed to be empty and enabled to govern. The left edge of the word is marked by an Initial CV unit that absorbs Government coming from the initial vowel. Infrasegmental Government is argued to be inapplicable in Farsi, since branching onsets do not exist in the language. The analysis of triconsonantal word-internal groups requires using an interface theory between phonology and morphology, such as that proposed by Kaye (1995). Initial TR groups are repaired by means of anaptyxis (TR > TVR), while *s*C groups are subject to prothesis (*s*C > V*s*C), further triggering a glottal epenthesis that allows to fill the initial empty Onset. Reparation by prothesis is due to the peculiarity of *s*C groups. In representational terms, this corresponds to the branching of *s* on the Nucleus to its left. The loss of this branching causes vowel prothesis. Within the Coda-Mirror theory, glottal deletion in Farsi is analyzed as an instance of lenition that occurs in unlicensed positions, preceded by metathesis between a glottal in post-coda and the preceding consonant.

Keywords: Persian phonology, syllable structure, consonant clusters, vowel epenthesis, glottal deletion, CVCV, Initial CV, phonology-morphology interface