

Chapter 1

Russian verbal stress retraction as induced unstressability

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This paper analyzes Russian verbal stress through the prism of the 1 pattern, which characterizes about a third of the productive second conjugation (*i*-verbs), as well as many others. In this pattern the 1 and a few other present-tense forms surface with inflectional stress, while all other cells of the present-tense paradigm appear with stem-final stress. I propose that this pattern arises as a result of the more general hiatus resolution process that deletes a vowel before another vowel, on the assumption that the accentual specification of the deleted vowel is retained. I propose that the vocalic thematic suffix is post-accenting and the vocalic present-tense suffix is accented. Once the former is deleted, the latter is rendered unstressable because it receives two conflicting accentual requirements: to bear stress (accentuation) and to shift it to the next syllable (post-accentuation). This conflict is resolved by the deletion of the present-tense suffix from the metrical tier, which forces the accent onto the ending if available and onto the final syllable of the stem otherwise.

lexical stress, accent, hiatus resolution, Russian, verbal stress, stress shift

1 The puzzle: The 1 present-tense pattern

The Russian verb productively consists of four parts: the lexical stem (henceforth, L-STEM), which contains the root and semantically contentful suffixes, the thematic suffix, the tense suffix and agreement morphology.¹ The thematic suffix is a cover term for a morpheme that appears between the verbal stem (potentially

¹The transcriptions below closely follow Russian orthography and do not indicate: (i) palatalization before front vowels (/Ci/ → [Cʲi], /Ce/ → [Cʲe]), (ii) various vowel reduction phenomena in unstressed syllables, (iii) voicing assimilation and final devoicing. Stress is marked by an

including verbalizing or imperfective suffixes) and the tense and agreement suffixes. Slavic thematic suffixes have been analyzed as verbalizers or as semantically null morphological glue.²

léz-	l-	a
L-STEM: climb	THEME: none	TENSE: past φ: .
(athematic verb) žértv-ov-	a-	l- a
L-STEM: sacrifice	THEME: a/i	TENSE: past φ: .
(thematic verb)		

As Russian is a lexical stress language (see *Zaliznjak1985, Melvold1989, Idsardi1992, Garde1998, Alderete1999, Revithiadou1999, Butska2002, and mat:Dubina2012*), each morpheme potentially introduces an accent, which can appear on it (which would make the morpheme ACCENTED), before it (PRE-ACCENTING) or after it (POST-ACCENTING). The position of the surface stress is determined by the Basic Accentuation Principle *mat:ex:BAP*:

THE BASIC ACCENTUATION PRINCIPLE (*KiparskyHalle1977*):

Assign stress to the leftmost accented vowel; if there is no accented vowel, assign stress to the initial vowel.

An examination of the accentuation of Russian thematic verbs reveals three productive patterns in the present tense correlating with two in the past: consistent stem stress (Table 1-a), consistent post-stem stress (Table 1-b) and variable stress in the present (final stress in the first-person singular, stem-final stress elsewhere, henceforth THE 1SG PATTERN) correlated with post-stem stress in the past (Table 1-c). The pattern in Table 1-d, involving stem-final stress in the present-tense correlating with stress on the thematic suffix in the past, cannot be called productive because it occurs with only four verbal stems, but as it also characterizes the productive verbalizing suffix *ov*, it is quite frequent.

The stem-stress pattern in Table 1-a corresponds to an accented L-stem (which, being leftmost, wins over any suffixal accents). The consistent post-stem stress in the past tense of both Table 1-b and Table 1-c suggests that the thematic suffix is accented, while the L-stems can be either unaccented or post-accenting. However, the 1 pattern in Table 1-c is not predicted by the system sketched so far, and neither is the pattern in Table 1-d, which only arises with the class of verbs whose thematic suffix surfaces as /a/ in the past and as /i/ (giving rise to the so-called transitive softening mutation) in the present (henceforth, the a/i class).

acute accent on the vowel. The yers (abstract high lax unrounded vowels) are represented as /*ĩ*/ (the front yer) and /*ũ*/ (the back yer). The letters *u* (IPA [tɕ], see *PadgettZygis2007*), *u* (IPA [s]), *ж* (IPA [z]), *u* (IPA [ɕɕ]), *u* (IPA [ts]) are traditionally rendered as *č*, *š*, *ž*, *šč*, and *c*.

²See *AntonyukQuaglia2022* for a range of opinions.

Table 1: Accentual interaction in thematic verbs

1L2.92cmXXL1.8cmX -1 -3 - . -
a. stem: -žal- ‘sting’ žál ⁱ -u žál-i-t žál-i-l-a žál-i-l-i
b. post-stem: -govor- ‘speak’ govór ⁱ -ú govór-í-t govór-í-l-a govór-í-l-i
c. 1: -l ⁱ ub- ‘love’ l ⁱ ubl ⁱ -ú l ⁱ úb-i-t l ⁱ ub-í-l-a l ⁱ ub-í-l-i
d. stem-final present: -koleb- ‘rock’ kolébl ⁱ -u kolébl ⁱ -e-t koleb-á-l-a koleb-á-l-i

In this paper I will link the 1 pattern to the unstressability of the present-tense suffix, which results from its absence in the metrical tier. I will propose that this absence itself arises from an accentual conflict: that with unaccented L-stems the deletion of the thematic vowel before the present-tense suffix creates an accentual conflict that can only be resolved by the deletion of the problematic position from the metrical tier. I will then hypothesize how post-accenting L-stems can produce both the consistent post-stem stress (Table 1-b) and the stem-final stress in the present (Table 1-d), and link the difference between the two situations to glide deletion and its timing.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section ?? I will introduce the segmental phonology of Russian verbal conjugation and the hiatus resolution mechanism: vowel-before-vowel deletion. I will also discuss the accentuation of the relevant morphemes revealed by their interplay in the athematic verb and show that in the presence of a thematic suffix a stress pattern arises that is not predicted by the interaction of these morphemes.

Section ?? discusses the role of the thematic suffix. I will show that the thematic suffix usually introduces an accent, which should have the double effect of removing the difference between unaccented and post-accenting L-stems and nullifying the impact of all following suffixes. As this predicts the impossibility of the 1 pattern and removes the possibility of explaining it in the terms of L-stem accentuation, a special lexical property, that of triggering stress retraction, has been appealed to. I will show that this hypothesis does not explain why some thematic classes are more prone to exhibiting the 1 pattern than others or why the paradigm cells that fail to undergo retraction are phonologically defined as simple vocalic suffixes. My explanation of the latter fact will be introduced in section Section ??: I will suggest that in the first conjugation the 1 pattern arises