

Glottal epenthesis at domain edges in Filomeno Mata Totonac

Glottal consonants [h] or [ʔ], or spread/constricted glottis features are required at certain domain edges in FM Totonac, and are disallowed domain-internally¹. The domains referred to on the right and left boundaries are different. At the left edge, all vowel-initial prefixes and roots receive a preceding glottal stop, which does not delete under further prefixation. The relevant domain on the right edge is the phrase, with glottalization or aspiration marking the word-final segment prepausally. With a handful of lexical exceptions, glottal features and segments are prohibited inside these domain edges; this includes the morphological glottalization of the final consonant that marks the second person singular subject, which can surface only prepausally. Since laryngeal consonants are common epenthetic segments at prosodic boundaries (Hyman 1989; Blevins, forthcoming), an analysis of these glottals as epenthetic segments demarcating domains seems well-motivated and explains their unusual distribution². A historical process of final vowel loss complicates the analysis, however. This paper explores how prosodic, phonological and morphological constraints interact to produce the surface forms.

The facts at the right edge are more complex than the simple situation of glottal epenthesis preceding a vowel on the left edge. At the right prepausal domain edge, final segments are glottalized or aspirated depending on the class of the segment. In vowel-final words, short final vowels are unmarked

kúyu	‘armadillo’	munú	‘s/he waters it’
nakú	‘heart’	čiiipá	‘s/he grabs it’

and long final vowels are glottalized.

číškú’U	‘man’	tantǎí’I	‘s/he dances’
nána’A	‘mother’	stá’A	‘s/he sells it’

For words with final consonants, the feature + or -sonorant determines the type of prepausal epenthetic features. Generally sonorants are glottalized:

stay’	‘squirrel’	ʔtantál’	‘naked’
šsuun’	‘bitter’	qam’	‘tasty’

and obstruents are aspirated:

saqaq ^h	‘white’	kuc ^h	‘aguardiente’
ksnat ^h	‘I embrace him/her’	paš ^h	‘s/he bathes’

¹ All data from fieldwork by the author in 2003-2006.

² The unusual distribution of glottal segments has been remarked on by researchers of other Totonac varieties, most directly in MacKay (1999:42).

Several systematic exceptions to these rules exist, since morphologically glottalized final obstruents are immune to the attachment of the floating phrase level spread glottis feature. Morphological assignment of glottal features is associated with two constructions, 2nd person singular subject in verbs, and a deverbal nominal construction, ta+VERB+∅= ‘that which is VERBed’:

čup’	‘you poke it’	tantɬíy’	‘you dance’
takuk’	‘load, what is carried’	taliits’	‘smile’

There are several other exceptional cases among nominals in which final obstruents glottalize, contrary to expectations, which will be discussed.

A diachronic process of final vowel deletion complicates this analysis by making it difficult to determine what a word-final segment is. Prepausally and in citation form, words that end in an aspirated or glottalized consonant have noisy releases with associated vowel features that are optionally but frequently deleted in rapid speech. I analyze these as latent segments in the sense of Zoll (1994), that is, lacking a root node.

“The term “latent segment” should be considered to mean floating features which materialize as full segments in contexts determined by the grammar.” (Zoll 1994:7).

Postlexically, these vowel features do appear as fully voiced vowels in connected speech.

I will provide an analysis in which phonological constraints on final vowels interact with morphological and prosodic insertion of glottal features to derive the actual surface forms.

References

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