

## Glottalization in the Gaelic of Gigha and Islay: a phonological sketch

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(paper only)

Despite the publication of the detailed phonetic transcriptions of the Gaelic linguistic survey (*Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland*, Ó Dochartaigh 1994-97 [SGDS]), Gaelic examples are rare in discussions of phonological theory. This talk presents an analysis of a pervasive glottalization found in certain dialects, a little-known phenomena occurring in the phonology of Gigha and Islay, although with slightly different systemic consequences in each variety. The focus of the talk will be two-fold, both descriptive and theoretical. The descriptive account will lay out the facts of Gigha and Islay glottalization, as based on fieldwork by Hamp published in SGDS, as well as unpublished archival data from the Linguistic Survey of Scotland. The geographic distribution of this feature, based on published and unpublished sources, will also be delineated. Questions addressed by the analysis will include the following:

- (a) Is glottalization here properly represented as a ‘feature’ or as a ‘segment’?
- (b) How does glottalization bear on a consistent representation of hiatus in the dialects under consideration?
- (c) How does glottalization affect the perception of svarabhakti words in these speech varieties?

Svarabhakti words demonstrate an epenthetic vowel between a non-homorganic sonorant and a voiced obstruent; in western Hebridean dialects the epenthetic vowel is usually some copy of the preceding stressed vowel (Borgstrøm 1937; Oftedal 1956). Oftedal and Borgstrom both point out a particular rising or level tone pattern in these words, contrasting with the regular falling pitch of ordinary disyllabic words. The svarabhakti/non-svarabhakti contrast is one of the most-discussed, and yet little-understood, aspects of Gaelic phonology, with considerable literature on the phonological consequences of this particular type of epenthesis (Kenstowicz & Kisseberth 1979, Clements 1987, Bosch & de Jong 1997, 1998). Interestingly, the dialects of Gigha and Islay do not share the prosodic or featural patterns of svarabhakti that the Hebridean dialects demonstrate; if we ignore the glottalisation facts, it would appear that these dialects of Gaelic do not distinguish svarabhakti words at all. However, I argue that it is precisely the presence or absence of glottalization which now takes on this distinguishing role.

In addition to presenting a preliminary analysis of one intriguing aspect of Gaelic dialectology, I also hope to begin a discussion on the role and usefulness of large scale dialect surveys and archival materials for contemporary work in phonological theory.

Works Cited:

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