

# Sonorant patterns in consonant clusters of West Slavonic

## What's wrong with the left edge of words?

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# Intro

- ▶ Syllabic consonants (synchronically or diachronically) arise from the deletion of a vowel (schwa, yer) and the subsequent spreading of the melody of the following consonant (typically, a sonorant)
- ▶ native intuition/versification: syllable peaks

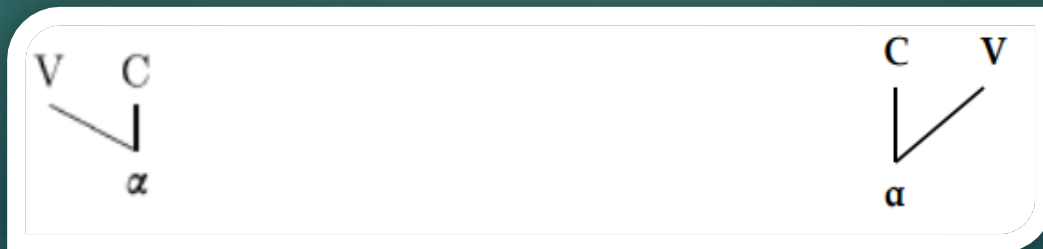
# Roadmap

- ▶ previous proposals for the representation of syllabic cons's: "hermaphrodites" bec. *both* C and V
- ▶ present proposals: (i) syllabic cons's may not have a uniform structure within a phonological system; and (ii) syllabic consonants are left-branchers unless they are forced to spread to their right-hand-side
- ▶ Further issues to be discussed, alternative analysis

# Previous proposals: two major solutions

## left-branching VC structure

- Szigetvári 1999, Scheer 2004, Garami 2019, etc.
- a consonantal head spreads onto a vocalic position on its left



## right-branching CV structure

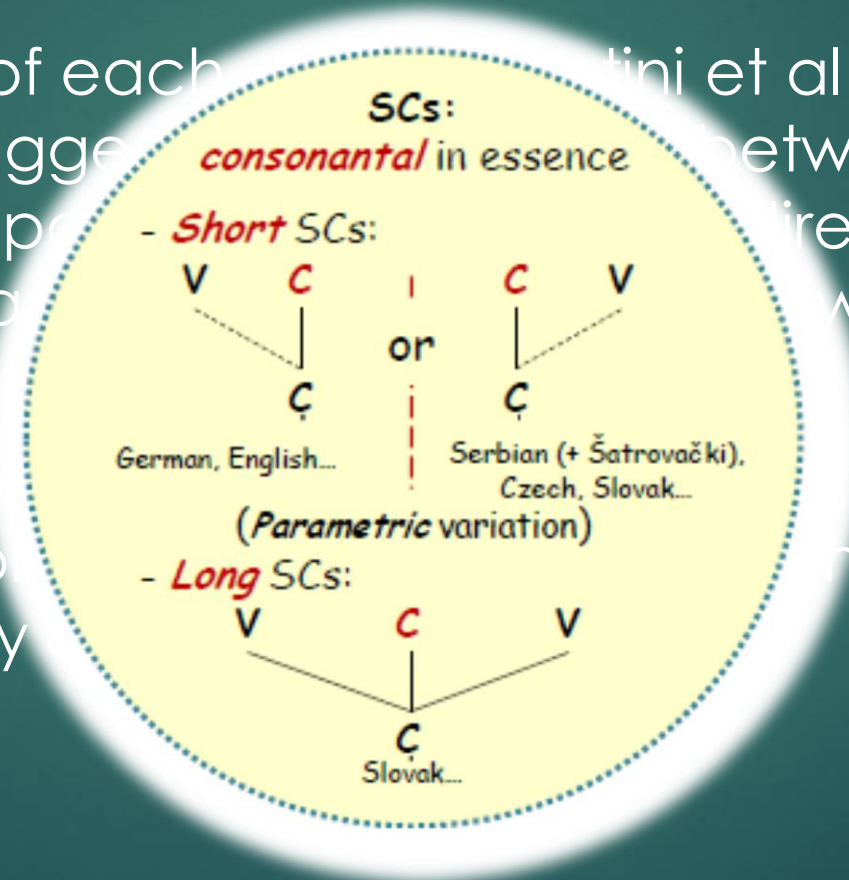
- Rowicka 1999, Blaho 2004, etc.
- a consonantal head spreads onto a vocalic target in a CV string

# Previous proposals: two major solutions

- ▶ independently of each other, Caratini et al. 2011 and Polgárdi 2015 suggest that the choice between VC and CV is subject to parameter setting - the direction of syllabic consonant formation depends on which empty V position is active
- ▶ at the same time, both studies explicitly argue against the monopositional representation, when the syllabic consonant solely occupies a V position

# Previous proposals: two major solutions

- ▶ independently of each other (see e.g. Borer & Chomsky 2011 and Polgárdi 2015 suggest that the direction of syllabification of VC is subject to parametric variation, which empty VC is not) (see also the discussion in the next slide)
- ▶ at the same time, the monosyllabic VC is not the syllabic consonant solely because of the direction of syllabification (see also the discussion in the next slide)



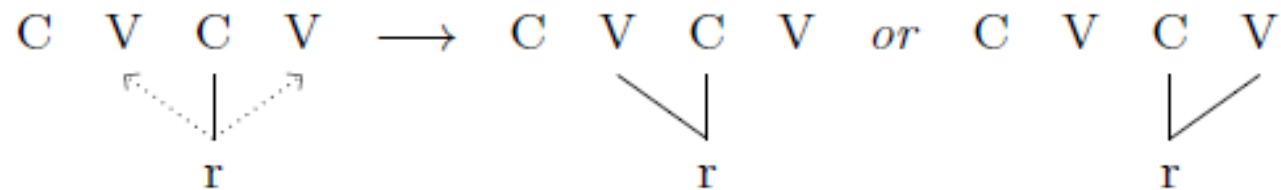
# Previous proposals: against uniformity

- ▶ Ziková (2007) argues that in Czech syll. con's can be either left-branchers or right-branchers depending on their position within the word
- ▶ **root-medial** liquids are **right-branching**
- ▶ **root-final** liquids are **left-branching**

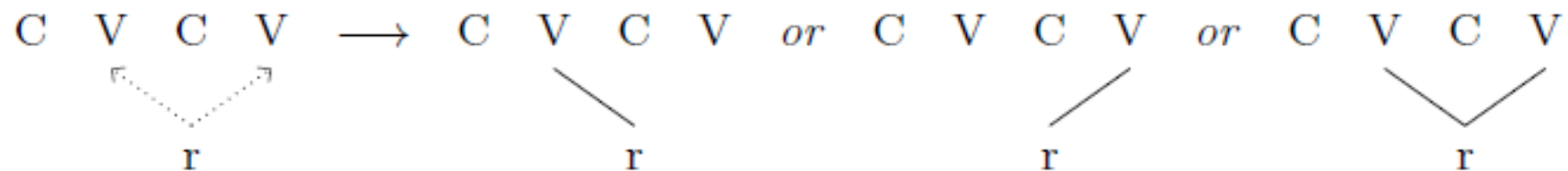
# Current proposals

- ▶ Savu 2019 proposes that branching direction is determined by which adjacent empty V needs licensing/silencing
- ▶ Plus: both branching directions can co-exist in one language, argues against uniformity

## (1) Czech syllabic consonant



## (2) Slovak syllabic consonant

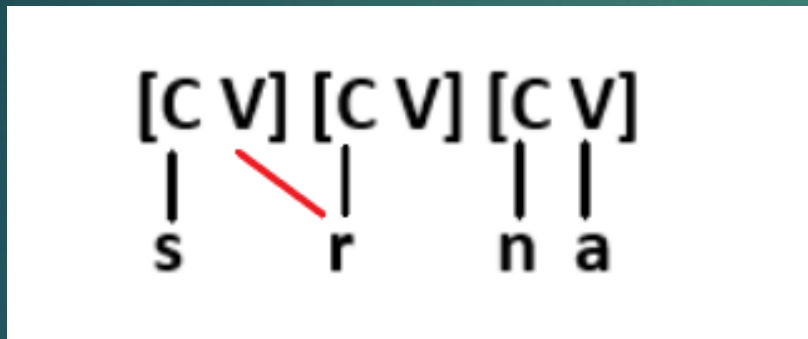




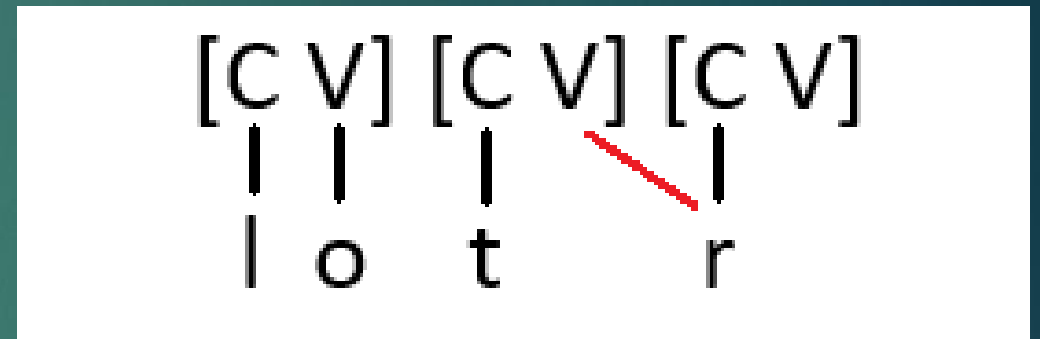
# Our proposal

- ▶ SCF depends on whether the sonorant's own empty V or the empty V belonging to another CV slot is more attractive for the sonorant
- ▶ Spreading within your own CV slot seems to maintain a weaker relation
- ▶ Spreading to your left means spreading *outside* your own CV slot, i.e., straddling two CV slots -> interpreted as 'syllabic'

# Word-internal syllabic consonants in Slovak



# Word-final syllabic consonants in Czech



# Word-initial trapped consonants in Polish

[C V] [C V] [C V]  
| / | | |  
r t ę ć

# Word-initial trapped consonants in Czech

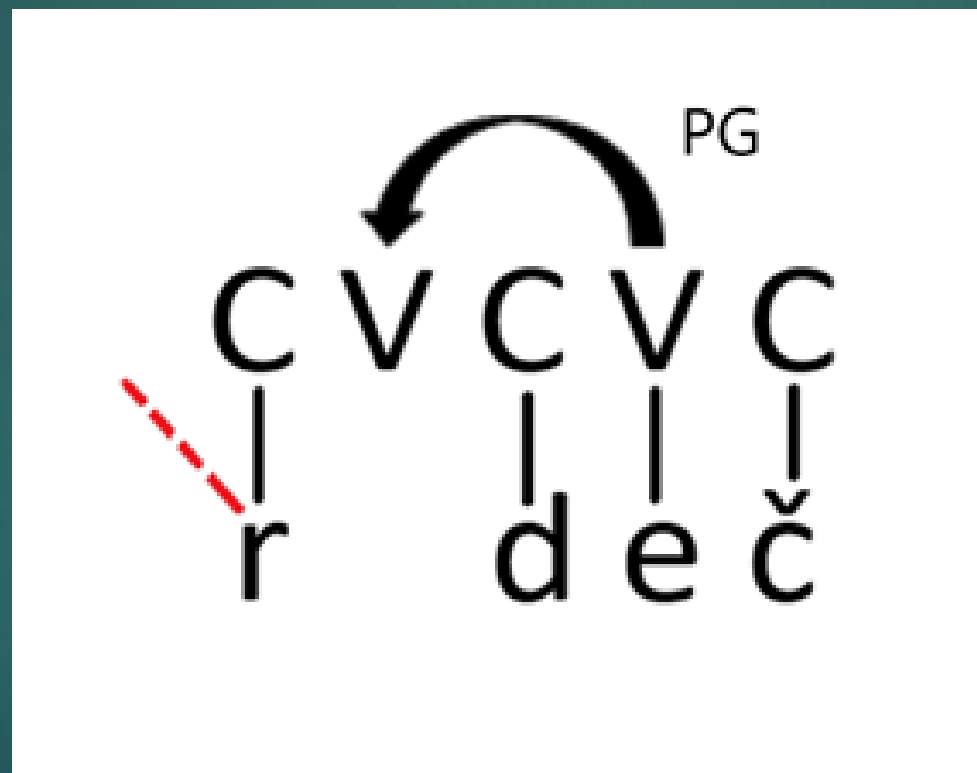
[C V] [C V] [C V]  
| / | | |  
r v á t

# But...

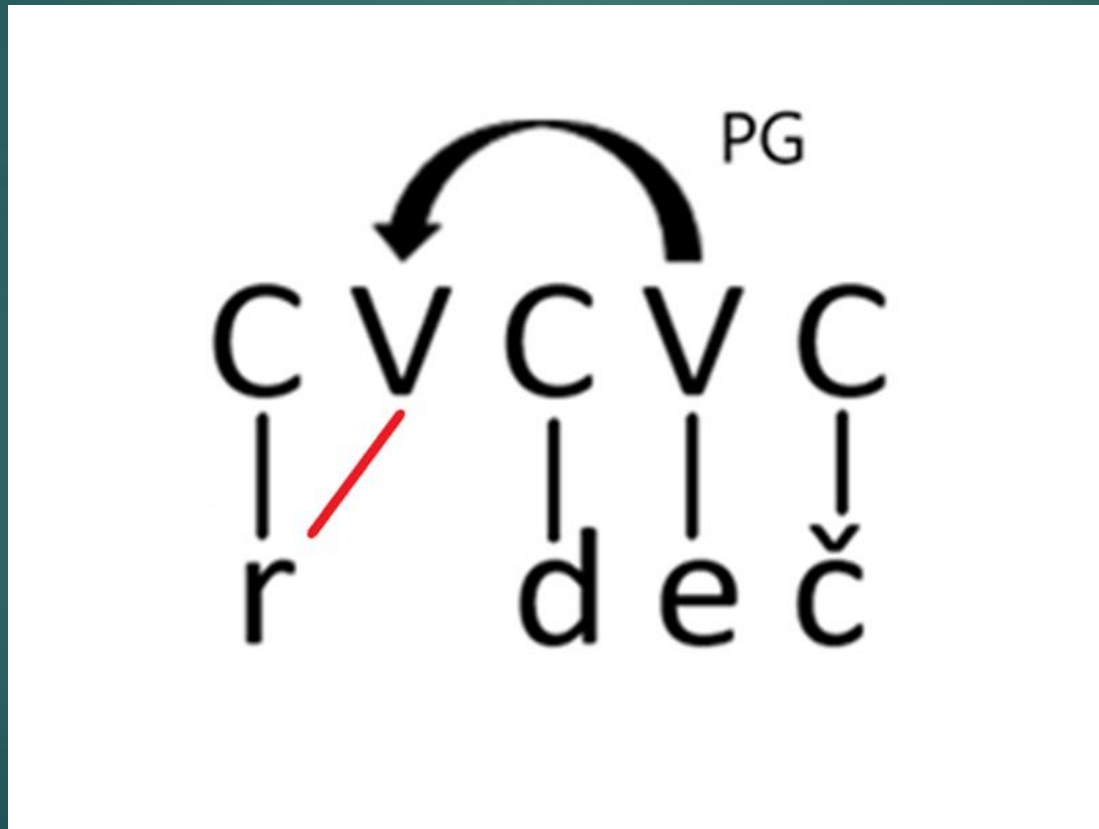
- ▶ Slovene syllabic /r/: surprising freedom in its distribution:
  - ▶ word-finally and preconsonantly (e.g., *vrh* ‘top’)
  - ▶ plus: word-initially (e.g., *rdeč* ‘red’), where other Slavic languages treat historically yer-related sonorants as “trapped”, i.e., as non-nuclear: Czech *lhát* (‘to die’), Russian *rta* (‘mouth GenSg’), Slovak *rmut* (‘haze NomSg’)
- ▶ What is the structure of the syllabic trill?
  - ▶ a  $\text{ə}+\text{C}$  sequence, a  $\text{C}+\text{ə}$  sequence, an **inherent ə** or **syllabic allophone** of r?
  - ▶ in “ $\text{ə}+\text{C}$ ” sequences the /ə/ is a phonetic element present in nuclear and non-nuclear trills as an essential part of trill production (Jones 2002)

# /r/ in Slovene – in CVCV

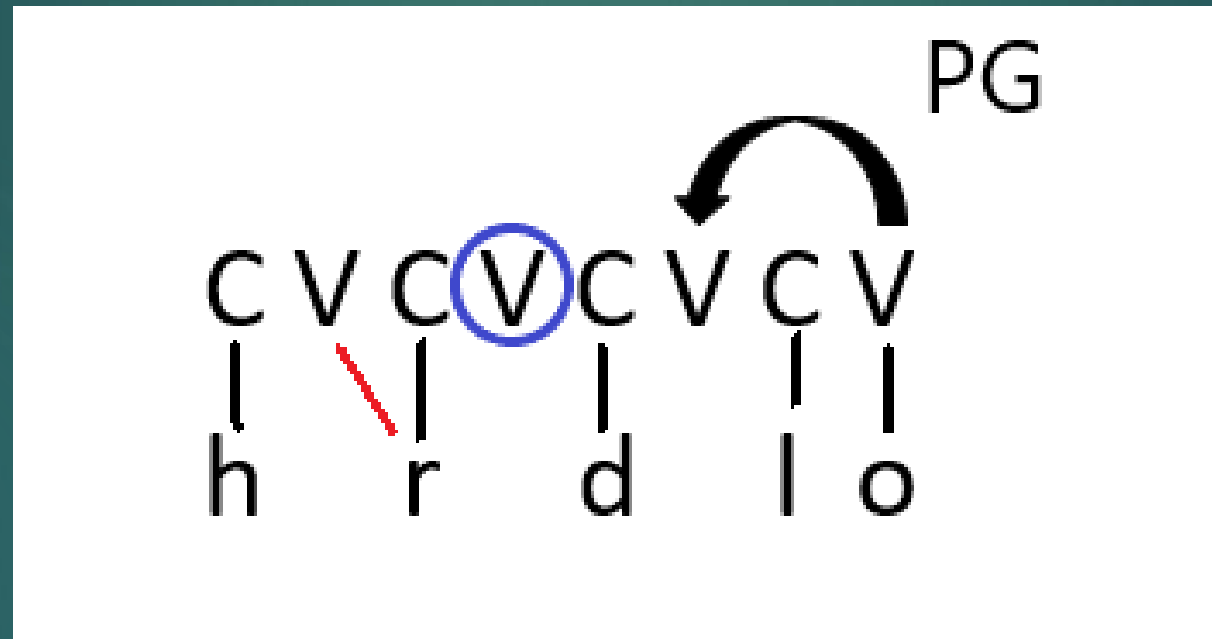
## Phonological terms



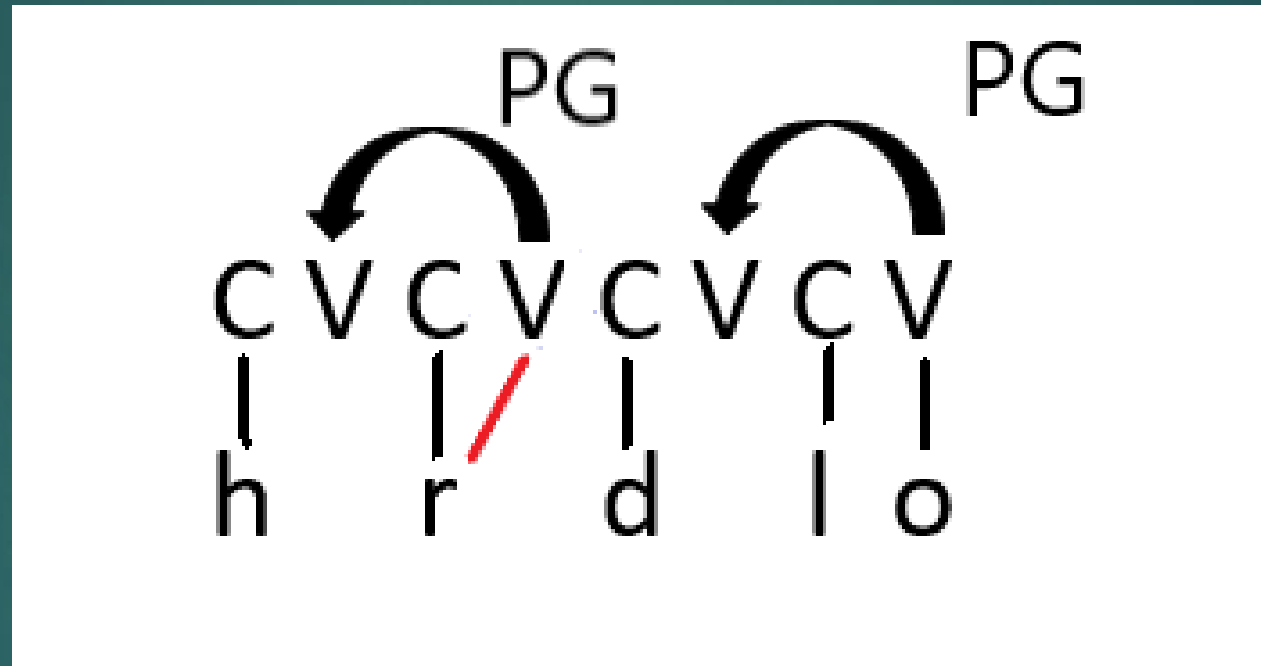
# /r/ in Slovene – in CVCV Phonological terms



# /r/ in Slovak heavy clusters



# /r/ in Slovak heavy clusters



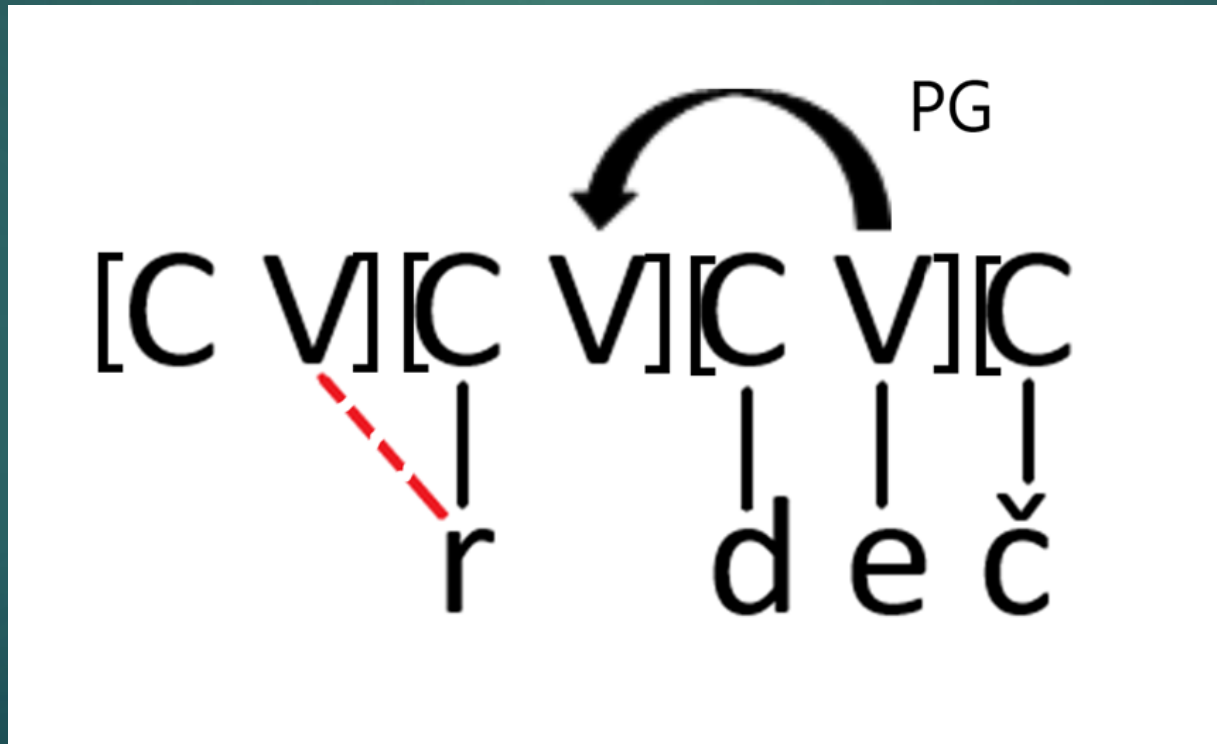


# Conclusion

- ▶ Syllabic consonants may preserve their left-branching structure except when they are forced to spread right in order to save all nuclei
- ▶ Trapped consonants are right-branching
- ▶ Further issues:
  - ▶ What parameter makes the choice between trapped and syllabic word-initial sonorants?
  - ▶ Alternative analysis (to be elaborated on)

# Alternative analysis

- ▶ Boundary marker [CV] in Slovene (hinted at in Scheer 2004, Živanovič p. c.)



# References

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