

A recent typological survey (Labrune 2021) has shown that word-initial rhotic avoidance (henceforth WIRA) is a typologically common phenomenon. Among the 159 languages in the *World Atlas of Linguistic Structure* (Dryer & Haspelmath 2013) that possess at least one phonemic rhotic, nearly half exhibit phonemic WIRA — defined as the non-occurrence of at least one phonemic rhotic in initial position. Additionally, 15% demonstrate phonetic WIRA, where initial rhotics are avoided through processes such as vowel prothesis or allophonic variation. The cause of WIRA is still poorly understood. This study investigates WIRA in the Turkish dialect spoken in the village of Fakaz (northern central Turkey), offering two contributions. First, this variety has, to our knowledge, never mentioned before in the literature on WIRA and second, it appears to be an exception to “a quasi-universal tendency” reported by Labrune (2021) that WIRA languages coming into contact with non-WIRA languages typically become non-WIRA languages, as word-initial rhotics in loanwords are commonly preserved. Proto-Turkic did not allow word-initial liquids and nasals (Johanson 2021). In most varieties of Turkish, this is still largely true in their native lexicon, but extensive borrowing from Persian, Arabic, and other languages has introduced many lexical items with word-initial liquids and nasals, including rhotics, making them non-WIRA languages. However, in Fakaz Turkish WIRA has been preserved in loanwords too through vowel prothesis: a high prothetic vowel, harmonized in backness and roundness with the following vowel, is inserted before initial rhotics in loanwords, as illustrated in (1). (1)

Standard Turkish	Fakaz Turkish	Source	Ar.
[rezilʲ]	[irezilʲ]		
[raði:l]	‘infamous’	[rahat]	
[wrahat]		Ar. [raːħat]	
‘comfortable’	[ramazan]		
[wramazan]	Pers. [ɾamaˈzɑːn]		
‘Ramadan’	Interestingly, initial laterals show less consistent adaptation (2), confirming Labrune’s observation that lateral avoidance implies WIRA but not vice versa (2). Word-initial nasals are even more frequently exempted from avoidance in loanwords.(2)		
	[ʲimon]	[ilʲimon]	
Ar. [liːmuːn]	‘lemon’	[ʲiale]	
	[ʲiale]	Pers. [lɑː	
‘la]	‘tulip’	We will present a detailed quantitative description of the rate of exceptions to word-initial lateral and	

**nasal avoidance. We propose that Fakaz Turkish WIRA can be accounted for in terms of avoidance of high-sonority consonants word-initially, with the scale rhotic > lateral > nasal reflecting the sonority hierarchy (word-initial /j/ is not avoided, but its distribution and role in phonological processes suggest that it does not function as a phonological sonorant in Turkic).**ReferencesDryer, Matthew S. & Haspelmath, Martin (eds.). 2013. *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. Available online <http://wals.info>.Johanson, Lars. 2021. The Structure of Turkic. In L. Johanson & É. Á. Csató (eds), *The Turkic Languages*. New York: Routledge, 26-59.Labrune, Laurence. 2021. Word-initial rhotic avoidance: a typological survey. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 6(1): 9. 1-19.

Ömer Tabak, Stefano Canalis  
Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, Turkey

## **Title**

Word-Initial Rhotic Avoidance in Fakaz Turkish