An doesn't always provide an onset. (cf. Mascaró 1996)

➢ An shows up in a context where its /n/ can't be an onset: before emphatic?

4) a. What an idiot.
   b. That's an ʔ idiot.

The /n/ in on here must be a coda, since English does not allow C1 onsets. But under (2), /n/ shouldn't be chosen here; it incurs an extra NO-CODA violation.

Examples like (4) are not anomalous. Adults in CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000) have emphatic ? after an 25% of the time (238/961).

Emphatic ? cannot be dismissed as 'extragrammatical.' It's debatable whether ? is a phoneme, segment, feature, gesture (Krofll 2001). But the distribution of emphatic ? is clearly grammar-internal: Any consonant immediately preceding emphatic must be morpheme-final (and thus potentially syllable-final).

5) a. an ʔ apple, mandarin ʔ ʔ apple, unʔável

6) That's an ʔ wir. (= That's an 'O.' # That's a 'no'.)

➢ Also, on sometimes surfaces as a syllabic nasal (again, not providing an onset). If (2) is correct, why does an onset get selected here instead of an?

7) ajvɡɔɾənoʃən 'I've got an ocean.' ≠ 'I've got a

➢ An sometimes gets selected even when there's a /ʔ/ to break the hiatus (4).

➢ An fails to be selected in a potential hiatus context: before fillers uh/um.

8) I'd like a um... a large coffee. (Pak 2014)

The potential hiatus here is resolved by either ʔ or the 'strong' /e/ (9) – crucially, not by an (only 1 instance of an uh/um in CHILDES, vs. 38 a uh/um).

9) a. I'd like /a/, e/ um...
b. I'd like an (ʔe, /a/)/ umbrella.

➢ If /ʔ/ and /e/ are available as hiatus-fixers, why don't they get used in (9b)?

More generally, if an/a an allomorphy really sees whatever's on the surface, why would it distinguish between an umbrella and a um?...

➢ Pause-fillers can't be dismissed as extragrammatical, since they are visible for Flapping – a classic 'late' phonological rule (Kaisse 1985, Bermúdez-Otero 2004): 10) Bu[l] um... I think that[ʔ]/ um...

And unlike /an, Flapping doesn't distinguish that[ʔ]/ umbrella from that[ʔ] um.

So how do we account for the a/an facts?

➢ There are historical reasons why an (instead of a) is selected before vowels: < Old English ān (‘one’): a/ən began alternating in Middle English (Crísa 2012). Alternation probably started as /n/-elision (an → a → /_/) (Vennemann 1972); then eventually became realized as allomorphy with default a.

➢ ModEng a/an happens to yield well-formed syllables much of the time, but this effect doesn't need to be explained in the grammar. My proposal:

11) Allomorphy rule for English a/an

➢ Allomorphy strictly precedes phrasal phonology (3).

So a/an can't see /ʔ/ or uh/um because allomorphs are inserted early in PF, before /ʔ/ or uh/um are added

➢ But Flapping sees everything because it is a late rule of the phrasal phonology, following both pause-filler insertion and resyllabification (10).

➢ Proposals that attempt to explain the optimizing effects of a/an rely on giving allomorphy access to surface phonology.

➢ But if a/an really can see what's on the surface, it should see everything on the surface – including emphatic ?/ uh/um, etc. – just as Flapping does. This prediction is not borne out.

➢ Since a/an seems at first sight to be a textbook example of optimizing allomorphy, this study raises questions about whether other reported cases are truly surface-optimizing and in turn, whether optimizing effects should be explained in the grammar.


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 стало быть, поскольку a/an не может быть слоговым префиксом в структуре.

Если a/an всегда обеспечивает фонематический под-некоторый, мы должны последовательно смотреть каждый слог производя предпочтительные структуры на поверхности.

Вопросы для дебатов

Если оптимизация аномалии в синхронической грамматике?

e.g., у a/an перед гласными

because this yields better syllables?

Yes. Allomorphy can 'see' and be directly influenced by the output of syllabification and other phonology.

No. Allomorphy strictly precedes phonology and can't 'see' what its surface effects will be.

(Instead of "an" instead of a/an)

Morphological merger

Vocabulary insertion (Allomorphy)

Phonology

LF

"Insert an if this yields a better phonological structure."