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Studentata

This talk focuses on the utterly awkward pattern that is displayed by words such as *student* in BCS. While the Gpl -a provokes the vocalization of preceding alternation sites as elsewhere in the language (Gpl *studenat-a* = Gpl *vrabac-a*), the same alternating vowel should also surface in Nsg *student*, but does not. This is a violation of otherwise firmly established generalizations regarding vowel-zero alternations across Slavic languages: alternation sites always vocalize before word-final consonants (this is also the case in BCS outside of the *student* paradigm: *pas* - *ps-a* etc.).

In order to approach the problem, we first study the student pattern in BCS, where it interacts with a number of other properties of the language:

- the Gpl -a which does not behave like a full vowel
- *CC#: the absence of word-final consonant clusters in BCS
- -i allomorphy in Gpl that occurs with some CC-final stems: *mačk-a* - Gpl *mačak-a* "cat" vs. *mečk-a* - Gpl *mečk-i* "bear"
- different levels of loanword adaptation: *rekord* (foreign) vs. *student* (half-nativized) vs. *dokumenat* (fully nativized)

At the end of this inquiry, two questions emerge:

- what is the difference between *student* and *dokumenat*?
- what is the difference between Nsg and Gpl ? Both are zero phonologically speaking (Gpl -a behaves like a yer), but they do not behave alike

We submit that an analysis of Polish is able to answer the former question, while Czech offers the key to the latter question.

Polish indicates that all vowels which alternate with zero do not have to be lexically present (against the standard assumption in the analysis of Slavic where yers are always underlyingly present): they may also be the result of a true epenthesis. This is then the difference between *student*, which identifies as /student/, i.e. without lexicalized /a/, and *dokumenat* which is /dokumenat/, i.e. where advanced nativization has introduced an /a/ into the lexical representation. The [a] that surfaces in Gpl *dokumenat-a* is thus of lexical origin, while the [a] that is visible in Gpl *studenat-a* is an epenthesis.

Finally, Czech shows that there is an asymmetry between Nsg and Gpl, although both case markers are zero on the surface: while Gpl -ø systematically triggers epenthesis in stem-final consonant clusters in the evolution of the language, the same clusters remain unvocalized in Nsg -ø. We conclude that the Gpl marker is a piece of syllable structure whose concatenation places stem-final clusters in word-internal, rather than in word-final position.

The same analysis accounts for the asymmetry between Nsg -ø and Gpl -a, as well as for the relationship between Gsg -a and Gpl -a in BCS: while Nsg -ø is literally nothing, Gsg -a (and all other case markers except Gpl) is a lexically floating vowel that comes to sit in the final empty nucleus of the stem; by contrast, Gpl -a comes with its own syllabic material (like in Czech), a fact that removes it from the stem (the -a does not sit in its final empty nucleus) and therefore provokes epenthesis in stem-final CC clusters (just like in the evolution of Czech).