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THE SLOVENE NEO-CIRCUMFLEX REVISITED

Keith Langston disagrees with my account of the Slovene neo-circumflex. He rejects compensatory lengthening as an explanation of the neo-circumflex, primarily on theoretical grounds. His “moraic analysis” is quite unacceptable to me because it starts from an a priori segmentation of the speech flow. In a strict autosegmental approach, the segmentation of the speech flow should be part of the analysis and not be given a priori. Langston’s rejection of Van Wijk’s law, according to which the simplification of certain consonant clusters yielded lengthening of the following vowel, is based on a misguided theoretical interpretation which led him astray.


1. gen.pl., e.g. lîp, brâtov, řêt,
2. masc. loc.sg., e.g. o brâtu,
3. masc. dat.sg., e.g. k brâtu,
4. masc. inst.pl. and loc.pl., e.g. z brâti, pri brâtih,
5. inst.sg. a-stems, e.g. lîpo,
6. inst.du. and inst.pl. a-stems -ăma, -ămi,
7. neuter plurals, e.g. lêta, vîna,
8. oblique cases of i-stems, e.g. nîti,
(9) present tense, e.g. māžeš, mīsliš,
(10) passive participle, e.g. māzanš,
(11) masc. l-participle, e.g. sēdəl, trēsəl,
(12) fem. l-participle, e.g. pisāla, nosīla,
(13) imperatives such as nēs‑me, žen‑se, also trespîmo, tresîte,
(14) imperatives such as pâdaj, igrâjte,
(15) infinitives such as lâjati,
(16) supine, e.g. spât,
(17) definite adjective, e.g. stâri, stâro,
(18) comparative, e.g. stârši,
(19) relational adjectives, e.g. bâhji, bâbski, bâbin,
(20) derived nouns with jers, e.g. prâvda, slâmka, lîpnik, lêtnik, zdrâvje, brâštvo,
(21) derived masc. nouns such as rîbič,
(22) trisyllabic fem. nouns such as zabâva,
(23) i-stems such as mîsəl, kâzən,
(24) ja-stems such as krâja (cf. Kortlandt 1976: 4 = 2011: 54),
(25) masc. nouns such as mēsec, jâstreb (cf. Kortlandt 2011: 55, 265),
(26) adverbs such as lêtos, jûtri, drêvi.
These instances fall into the following categories:


II. Lengthening before a weak jer which was lost in the following syllable (18, 19, 20, also 11 and 23, where the epenthetic vowel is more recent, with analogical extension in trēsəl). At this stage, word-final weak jers had already been lost after a single consonant, e.g. stâr.

III. Lengthening before a long vowel in the following syllable which was shortened (2 through 10, 12, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26), analogically in k brâtu (3), vîna (7), lâjati (15).

IV. Lengthening in the imperative before a clitic and analogical extension (13, 14).

V. The falling tone in the supine (16) is a result of Meillet’s law and therefore much older (cf. Stang 1957: 154).
Langston rejects compensatory lengthening (II and especially III above) as an explanation of the neo-circumflex, primarily on theoretical grounds (2007, cf. also 2006: 280–283). His “moraic analysis” is quite unacceptable to me because it starts from an a priori segmentation of the speech flow. In a strict autosegmental approach, the segmentation of the speech flow should be part of the analysis and not be given a priori (cf. Kortlandt 1972: 137–149). Similarly, Langston’s rejection of Van Wijk’s law, according to which the simplification of certain consonant clusters yielded lengthening of the following vowel (cf. Kortlandt 2011 passim), is based on a misguided theoretical interpretation which led him astray. Van Wijk’s law must not be compared to Hayes’ “onset deletion” (thus Langston) but rather to his “glide formation” (1989: 280), as in Old Icelandic ljúga ‘to lie’ < *liugan. As theoretical considerations can easily embody the reflection of rationalized prejudice (cf. Kortlandt 2010: 7–20), it is important to give priority to an empirical approach.

The posttonic long vowels which gave rise to the neo-circumflex have different origins:

(i) Original non-acute long vowels and diphthongs (2, 4, 8, 9, 19, 21, 25, 26).

(ii) Post-posttonic long vowels which lost the acute at an early stage (Kortlandt 2011: 163, 298) and became directly posttonic as a result of Dybo’s law (ibidem 171, 305), e.g. ženâmi, zabâva (6, 7, 12, 22). The remaining acute long vowels were shortened (ibidem 168, 172, 303, 306).

(iii) Long vowels which originated from Van Wijk’s law (9, 24, cf. ibidem 169, 304).

(iv) Long vowels which originated from contractions in posttonic syllables (5, 10, 17).

According to Langston (2007: 90), »it is puzzling why we find reflexes of the neocircumflex in the L sg. of masculine nouns (e.g., Slovene brâtu) but not in the N sg. of most feminine nouns (e.g., Slovene krâva)« and »both the a-stem N sg. ending and the u-stem L sg. ending would have originally had a long vowel and they were both accented in mobile stems«. The point is that the loc. sg. ending of the u-stems *-ū < *-ēu was non-acute and therefore was not shortened whereas the nom.sg. ending of the a-stems *-aH was shortened under the stress and in the first posttonic syllable, e.g. in krâva, but not in the second posttonic syllable which became the first posttonic syllable as a result of Dybo’s law, e.g. in ženâmi, zabâva, osnôva, nosîla, pisâla, also nom.pl. telêta, but not in gostîla, kovâla, sedêla, želêla, mîslîla, vîdela, where the neo-circumflex was only introduced analogically in a limited area (cf. Rigler 1970). It is difficult to see how this distribution arose if it was not conditioned by the following long
vowel. In the neuter plural form unstressed *-ā was generalized at a stage when stressed *-àH had not yet lost the acute tone, as is clear from lēta versus drvā. At a later stage the neuter plural long ending spread in Čakavian, Posavian and Slovak (cf. Kortlandt 2011: 326).

I shall not go into a discussion of the thematic vowel in the present tense because this topic has been dealt with in detail by Willem Vermeer (1984: 361–386). After stems in a consonant (where Van Wijk’s law operated), the expected quantity of the thematic vowel in the three accent paradigms is as follows (cf. Kortlandt 2011: 37–39 for the a-flexion and the adjective):

(a) short -e- in the e-flexion, long -ē- yielding neo-circumflex in the je-flexion, long -ī- yielding neo-circumflex in the i-flexion,

(b) short -e- in the e-flexion, short -e- after retraction of the stress from long -ē- in the je-flexion, short -i- after retraction of the stress from long -ī- in the i-flexion,

(c) long -ē- if the stress was retracted from a final jer and short -e- elsewhere in the e-flexion, long -ē- in the je-flexion, long -ī- in the i-flexion.

It is easy to see how either the short or the long vowel could be generalized in different flexion classes. Langston writes (2007: 86): »there is no obvious explanation for why long vowels would have been shortened only in the present tense endings in -e and not in other environments in the Čakavian dialects that have preserved posttonic length (e.g., Novi 3 sg. plâče vs. oprāvī)«. It appears that the neo-circumflex was automatically shortened when the long -ī- was restored here, probably because there was a constraint on consecutive long vowels at that time (cf. Steinhauer 1973: 151–154). The neo-circumflex in Novi čûje, ubûje, šîjēn (Langston l.c., fn. 13) is due to generalization in the je-flexion (cf. Steinhauer 1973: 261). In the definite adjective, the only Novi example of a neo-circumflex is stârī, -ā, -ō (cf. Steinhauer 1973: 249) while all other instances of accent paradigm (a) have a short stem vowel before the long ending. The isolated example is evidently a relic form with restored length in the endings.
References:


Ponovno o slavenskom neocirkumfleksu

Sažetak


Ključne riječi: akcentuacija, slavenski neocirkumfleks, akut, kompenzacijsko duljenje, Van Wijkov zakon, Dyboov zakon

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