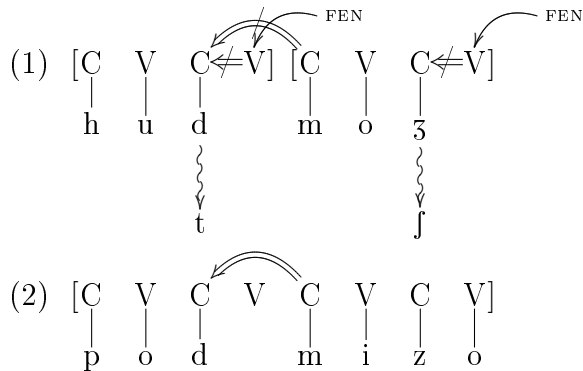


# Morphological complexity and final obstruent devoicing in Slovene

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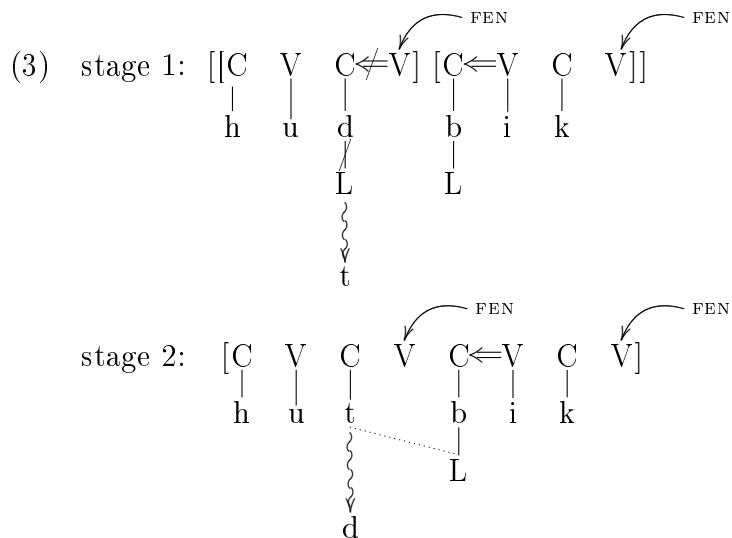
In this presentation I will examine the phenomenon of final obstruent devoicing in Slovene within Government Phonology framework (KLV, 1990; Scheer, 2004, and other works). Toporišič (2000) observes that voiced obstruents in Slovene cannot appear word-finally unless (i) they are a part of a (primary) preposition or (ii) the next word begins in a voiced obstruent. The author, however, does not provide reasons for this distribution.

I argue that devoicing is loss of melodic material in unlicensed positions, more precisely loss of element L, which is responsible for voicing in obstruents. Final obstruent devoicing in Slovene appears in word-final positions of words belonging to major categories (i.e. nouns, adjectives, verbs) as illustrated by *hud mož* [hut mof] ‘an angry man’ in (1). On the other hand, final obstruent devoicing is absent in prepositions like in the prepositional phrase *pod mizo* [podmizo] ‘under the table’ as illustrated in (2). (In each of the illustrations only the phonological relations relevant to the discussion are indicated. IPA characters provide a summary of the melodic elements attached to each skeletal position.)



In order to explain these phenomena I use Kaye’s (1995) proposal that analytic morphology is visible to phonology in terms of phonological domains and non-analytic morphology is not visible to phonology at all. Following Ségéral and Scheer (1999) I show that unlicensed positions, which typically occur domain finally (or preceding an obstruent), tend to lose melodic material, which results in obstruent devoicing, while the absence of devoicing in prepositions is due to the fact that prepositions do not represent phonological domains on their own, but form one with the word they select. Therefore their final consonant may be licensed when preceding a vowel or a sonorant.

I also show that cases of final voiced obstruents that do not seem to undergo devoicing in domain-final position are not exceptions to the above proposal. A closer inspection reveals that this occurs only when they precede a voiced obstruent. What is more, also underlyingly voiceless obstruents become voiced in this position. Therefore I conclude that in these cases the element L spreads to the positions on its left thus making voiceless obstruents voiced. In this way the spreading of L obscures the effects of obstruent devoicing before voiced obstruents. This is illustrated by *hud bik* [hud bik] ‘an angry bull’ in (3).



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