

## Can the direction of harmony change over time? A case study from Hungarian

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In addition to palatal harmony, Modern Hungarian (MoHu) is also generally regarded as exhibiting some form of labial harmony (e.g. Siptár & Törkenczy 2000: 63–74). The latter, however, is restricted in an unexpected way: it only applies to short mid front suffix vowels, resulting in the so-called ternary suffixes, seen in the superessive forms [ha:z-on] ‘house SUP’, [tøk-øn] ‘pumpkin SUP’ vs. [sɛm-ɛn] ‘eye SUP’. The lexical representation of the suffix contains the back vowel [o], which results in [ø] via palatal harmony, delabialised to [ɛ] after front unrounded vowels.

Historically, the two processes also differ: while palatal harmony is reconstructed already for Proto-Uralic, labial harmony only emerged in the Old Hungarian period (OHu, 11<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> c.). The latter follows diachronically on a series of changes that introduced front rounded vowels. One of these, surprisingly, involved an extensive but variable spreading of rounding in the opposite direction, i.e. regressively, starting from final vowels that were themselves deleted eventually (Losonczy 1915, Kiss & Pusztai 2003): e.g. ‘bishop’ SG \*[piʃpeky] > [pyʃpøk], and PL \*[piʃpeke-k] > [piʃpekøk]/ [piʃpøkøk]/ [pyʃpøkøk].

In this talk, we will argue that it is possible to make sense of the apparent change of direction of labial harmony if, following the Government Phonology analysis of Polgárdi & Rebrus (1998), we do not regard the MoHu process as spreading, but as delinking. In this analysis, there is a requirement in MoHu that the marked combination of the elements |I| and |U| in a suffix vowel must be licensed by the same combination in the stem vowel (indicated by an arrow on the nuclear projection in (1)). In (2) the stem vowel doesn’t contain |U|, therefore, licensing fails, and the |U| of the suffix delinks.

(1) <i>licensing of  I U </i>	(2) <i>progr. delabialisation</i>	(3) <i>regr. labialisation</i>	P <sup>1</sup>
N $\rightarrow$ N	N $\not\rightarrow$ N	N $\rightarrow$ N	
O N <sub>1</sub> O N <sub>2</sub> O N <sub>3</sub>	O N <sub>1</sub> O N <sub>2</sub> O N <sub>3</sub>	O N <sub>1</sub> O N <sub>2</sub> O N <sub>3</sub>	
[x x x x x x]	[x x x x x x]	[x x x x x x]	
t A k A n	s A m A n	s A m A n	
I »»»» •	I »»»» •	I »»»» •	
U U	<U>	• «««« U	
[tøk- <u>øn</u> ]	[sɛm- <u>ɛn</u> ]	[søm- <u>øn</u> ]	

We propose that the same licensing requirement already existed in OHu, only the response to its failure was different. Instead of delinking of |U| in the weak position, another option is to spread |U| to the strong position, as in (3), enabling in this way the licensing required. This is thus not classical harmony, but rather an example of strengthening, commonly involving assimilation. The subsequent change from regressive labialisation to progressive delabialisation can then be understood as the choice of weakening in a weak position instead of the earlier strengthening observed in a strong position, to satisfy the same licensing requirement.

**References:** Kiss, Jenő & Ferenc Pusztai (eds. 2003) *Magyar nyelvtörténet*. Budapest: Osiris. • Losonczy Zoltán (1915), Az ö-zés története. *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 44: 373–406, 45: 45–116, 195–266. • Polgárdi, Krisztina & Péter Rebrus (1998) There is no labial harmony in Hungarian: A Government Phonology analysis. In Casper de Groot & István Kenesei (eds.), *Approaches to Hungarian. Vol. 6. Papers from the Amsterdam Conference*, 3–20. Szeged: JATEPress. • Siptár, Péter & Miklós Törkenczy (2000) *The Phonology of Hungarian*. Oxford: OUP.