

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Palatalization Processes in Serbian

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In my talk, I will discuss the phonological-morphophonological puzzle of three palatalization processes in Serbian: First Velar Palatalization (**P1**), Velar Fronting (**P2**), and Iotation (**P3**). All three processes target *at least* velar obstruents /k, g, x/ in stem-final position. **P1** affects stem-final velars and two other consonants /ts, z/ outputting post-alveolars [tʃ, ʒ, ʃ], while **P2** only affects the three velars, outputting coronal consonants [ts, z, s], and **P3** targets every consonant. These processes are triggered by specific suffixes: **P1** by /i/ or /e/ initial suffixes, **P2** by /i/, and **P3** by /j/ initial suffixes. For example, in **P3**, /k, g, x, ts, z, t, d, l, n/ undergo assimilation, but labials /p, b, f, v, m/ are realized with a lateral approximant [ʎ]. All other consonants become [C+j] sequences. For instance, *jak* ‘strong’ – *ja[tʃ]-i* ‘stronger’, *glodati* ‘to gnaw’ – *glo[dʒ]-em* ‘I gnaw’, *kapati* ‘to drip’ – *ka[pʎ]-em* ‘I am dripping’, and *reč* ‘word’ becomes *re[tʃ-j]u* ‘word-INS’. Additionally, morphemes that trigger one of these processes do not trigger another, avoiding the occurrence of two processes within a single morpheme.

P1			P2						
a.)	<i>juna</i> [k]	‘hero’	<i>juna</i> [tʃ]-e	‘hero-VOC’	a.)	<i>juna</i> [k]	‘hero’	<i>juna</i> [ts]-i	‘heroes’
b.)	<i>Bo</i> [g]	‘God’	<i>Bo</i> [ʒ]-e	‘God-VOC’	b.)	<i>knji</i> [g]-a	‘book’	<i>knji</i> [z]-i	‘book-DAT.SG’
c.)	<i>pra</i> [x]	‘dust’	<i>pra</i> [ʃ]-iti	‘to dust’	c.)	<i>ora</i> [x]	‘walnut’	<i>ora</i> [s]-ima	‘walnut-INS.PL’
d.)	<i>ze</i> [ts]	‘bunny’	<i>ze</i> [tʃ]-ev-i	‘bunnies.’					
e.)	<i>kne</i> [z]	‘prince’	<i>kne</i> [ʒ]-e	‘prince-VOC’					

Unfortunately, the expectation that palatalization is always triggered by palatal-initial suffixes does not hold. In **P1**, numerous suffixes start with non-palatal V, e.g., *grafika* ‘graphics’ – *grafi*[tʃ]-ar ‘graphic artist’, etc. There are also instances where stem finals fail to undergo palatalization, e.g., *slika* ‘picture’ – *slik*-ar ‘painter’, *knjiga* ‘book’ – *knjig*-in ‘book-POSS’, etc. Within **P1**, the uniformity of the stem-final consonants is not always predictable; some of them will undergo palatalization more often than the rest.

I will use Element Theory (Bacley 2011) and Strict CV-Phonology (Lowenstamm 1996) to analyze the three palatalization processes in Serbian (cf. Starčević 2005). The ideal solution would be to describe all processes using **I**-spreading (1), where the prime **|I|** replaces the stem-final consonants’ non-headed resonance element. However, we face several problems, such as the fact that in **P2** suffixes, the **|I|** stays passive (does not spread) even though the suffixes start with /i/. Note that if **|I|** were active in **P2** suffixes, the outputs would then be post-alveolar consonants. Furthermore, non-palatal initial but palatalizing suffixes might contain a floating **|I|** to spread. Hence, one solution could be to use floating primes **|I|** in all non-palatal initial suffixes and **|A|** for coronalization (2), but this introduces additional complexity.



I will explore the cost of such a solution. Additionally, I will discuss asymmetries such as the motivation for [g] not patterning with stops *[ɟ] and how **P3** affects labials.