

**On the shortening of vowel length of the first component of compounds in
Standard Serbian
Stanimir Rakić (Belgrade)**

The Standard Serbian (SS) is a pitch-accent language characterized by four different accents: short-falling (*rība* 'fish'), long-falling (*grà:d* 'town'), short-rising (*sélo* 'village') and long-rising (*glá:va* 'head'). Falling accents can occur only on the word initial syllables, while rising accents are traditionally assumed to occur on any syllable of the word except the last one. Rakić (1991) has however proposed a general rule according to which the rising accent may fall on the penult if the final or penult syllable is heavy; if the final syllable and the penult are light, the antepenult is preferred in trisyllabic words, but in bisyllabic words the penult is accented. This rule covers the majority of cases, but many of the numerous exceptions must be accounted for by extrametricality rule.

In SS as in English, trochaic shortening can shorten the foot (HL)_F into the optimal foot (LL)_F (Prince 1990). In English, the vowel length of the first components of English compounds cannot be shortened by trochaic shortening because the principle of strict cyclicity bans the alternation of lexical units if the condition of 'derived environment' is not satisfied (Rakić 2015). In SS such shortening is also impossible in the so-called 'semi-compounds' in which each component keeps its own accent as in the examples *dí:zel-mótōr* 'Diesel engine', *gò:l-rá:zlika* 'goal difference', *prà:h-šèčēr* 'powdered sugar'. In these examples there is no linking vowel which would make the previous syllable open, and trochaic shortening is impossible. In SS, if the compounds make prosodic words and have a linking vowel, trochaic shortening often applies as in (1):

- (1) *kř:v* 'blood' + *o* 'linking vowel' + *tò:k* 'flow' → *křvotōk* 'bloodstream'
vì:d 'sight' + *o* 'linking vowel' + *krù:g* 'circle' → *vìdokrūg* 'field of vision'

In (1), the linking vowel forms a foot with the first components to which trochaic shortening can apply as in (*vì:do*)_F(*krù:g*)_F → *vìdokrūg*. The linking vowel *o* crucially provides a required 'derived environment' for trochaic shortening.

The shortening of the first components which as independent words have a rising accent involves the change of tone which so far has not been satisfactorily explained. Comparing the accent of the first compound components with its independent forms, we notice that the long-rising accent of the independent forms is shortened into the short-falling one in compounds:

- (2a) *zì:m(a)* + *o* + *lì:st* → *zìmolīst* 'a woody perennial plant'
 'the stem of the noun *zì:ma* 'winter' + l. vowel + 'leaf'
rù:k(a) + *o* + *pì:s* → *rùkopīs* 'handwriting'
 'the stem of the noun *rù:ka* 'hand' + l. vowel + 'the stem of the verb *pì:sati* 'to write''
- (2b) *vòd(a)* + *o* + *pà:d* → *vòdopād* 'waterfall'
 'the stem of the noun *vóda* 'water' + l. vowel + 'fall'

In (2) two-syllabic words are replaced in the first components with one-syllabic stems bearing a falling accent plus a linking vowel. In (2a) trochaic shortening applies. The same alternation of tone without shortening occurs in (2b). Inkelas & Zec (1987) tried to account for the change of tone in (2b) by proposing that there is a special rule which cancels the tone of the first compound components. They did not specify to which type of compounds this rule applies, so supporting evidence for it is missing. They simply assume that there is a special rule – 'Initial High' which on the first syllable of the compounds without tone inserts a short-falling accent.

The rising accents in SS are generally considered to extend over the stressed syllable and the post-stressed one, while falling accents extend over the stressed syllable. This means that the falling accent on the one-syllabic stems of the compound's first components in (2) corresponds to the rising accent of the two-syllabic independent words. Therefore, the following replacement in (2) are made: *zǐ:ma* - *zì:m*, *ru:ká* - *rù:k*, *vóda* - *vòd*. It is well-known from tone languages that tone can spread to the left or to the right to neighboring syllables. In SS we can add the complementary alternation of tone shrinking which is obvious in back-formation in (4):

- (4) *dú:žiti* 'to make longer' – *dù:ž*, f. 'a segment of a straight line', *glá:siti* 'to pronounce' – *glà:s* m. 'voice', *hó:dati* 'to walk' – *hò:d* m. 'walk' *rá:diti* 'to work' – *rà:d* m. 'work'.

The rising accents on polysyllabic stems are replaced with falling accents on monosyllabic stems. The same alternation also happens if the ending *-a* of the nom.sg. of the feminine nouns is replaced with neutral suffixes as, for example, in *kú:la* 'tower' – *ku:lskī* adj. 'of the tower', *zǐ:ma* 'winter' - *zì:mnjī* adj. 'of the winter' (Rakić 1991). Neutral suffixes do not allow the spreading of tone, it must shrink, and becomes falling. This shrinking accounts for the change of tone in (2). The segment *pì:s* in (2a) is also derived from *pí:sati* 'to write' by backformation.

The presence of the linking vowel is crucial for trochaic shortening in (1) and (2). There is however a small set of compounds which occur without a linking vowel and belong to the so-called 'proper' compounds because they have just one accent. These compounds are usually short compounds whose second components have maximally two-syllables as in (4):

- (4) *blágdan* (lit. *blà:g* 'gentle' + *dà:n* 'day') 'holiday',
čuvárkuća (lit. *čúva:r* 'watchman' + *kùća* 'house') 'janitor',
generálštab (lit. *genéra:l* 'general' + *štàb* 'headquarters') 'general staff',
krémpita (lit. *krè:m* 'cream' + *pìta* 'pie') 'custard-slice'.

In (4), the shortening of the length of the first components applies although no linking vowel is present. The compounds in (4) make up a prosodic word and have a rising tone falling on the penult or antepenult syllable of a whole compound (e.g. *blágdan* vs. *blà:g*, *čuvárkuća* vs. *čúva:r*). The shortening follows from the general rule that the rising accent on the closed syllable must be a short one (Rakić 2008). The only exception to this rule are some sporadic cases in which the accent falls on a syllable closed by a sonorant (e.g. *bé:rba* 'vintage', *vó:jska* 'army', *tó:rba* 'bag', *br:vno* 'log', *gá:jtan* 'braid', *pé:ršun* 'parsley'). However, the lengthening of the syllables closed by a sonorant is not a completely predictable process in SS. Nonetheless, there are generally a greater number of examples of the syllables closed with sonorants which bear the short-rising accent than those which bear the long-rising accent (s. Rakić 2008).

In this paper, I account for the change of tone in the compounds in (2) by proposing the shrinking of rising accents on monosyllabic stems, and further, I discover a particular set of compounds in which the general rule of shortening of the closed syllables applies. The examples (4) comply very well with the shortening rules noted provisionally by Rakić (1996) in the following way:

- (5) The length of the last suffix of the stems is shortened before
 a) bisyllabic or polysyllabic suffixes or,
 b) closed monosyllabic suffixes.

These lexical rules apply also to the compounds like those in (4), and otherwise profoundly affect the structure of SS lexicon. The first of them has the same form as Trisyllabic Shortening, the well-known rule from English phonology.

References

- Inkelas, S.& D. Zec 1988. Serbo-Croatian pitch accent: The interaction of tone, stress, and intonation". *Language* 64, 227-248.
- Prince, A.1990. Quantitative consequences of rhythmic organization, CLS26-II, Chicago, *Linguistic Society Chicago*, 355-398.
- Ракић, С. (1991) Циклични и неутрални суфикси у српскохрватском језику", *Научни састанак слависта у Вукове дане 20/2*, 417-426.
- Ракић, С. (1996). Правило краћења у српскохрватском језику, *Зборник Матице српске за филологију и лингвистику* 39/1, 141-156.
- Ракић, С. (2008) О месту узлазних акцената у српском језику – пример мономорфних именица, *Зборник Матице српске за филологију и лингвистику* 51/1-2, 75-86.
- Rakić, S. 2015. On the prosody and quantity od English Compounds, *JFLTAL*, Fall edition.