

Vocalic length as evidence for the incorporated–free particle distinction in Czech

Intro. Verbal particles in Germanic and elsewhere come in two varieties: incorporated and free. Slavic languages apparently have only the incorporated particles, hence the wide-spread term verbal prefix. Here we look at a length alternation found with Czech verbal prefixes, and argue that the alternation can be best explained if the prefixes too can be either incorporated or free, despite the fact that this has no obvious effect on their position in the surface string.

The length alternation. We start from the observation that some verbal prefixes have two distinct forms depending on their syntactic environment (a fact brought to attention by Scheer 2001). Roughly, when they attach to a verbal form, the prefix vowel is short, see the first column of Table (1). When they appear in a zero derived nominal, the prefix vowel is long, see the third column. For details concerning the verbal/nominal distinction, see Ziková (2012).

(1) Verb Prefix = CV, N prefix = CVV			
verb	gloss	zero N	gloss
vy -stup	get out!	vý -stup	outcome
na -stup	get on!	ná -stup	boarding
za -stup	step in!	zá -stup	substitute
při -stup	come here!	pří -stup	access
u -stup	step back!	ú -stup	retreat

Out of all the verbal forms that have the short prefix (like the present *za-stoup-í*, past *za-stoup-il*, infinitive *za-stoup-it*, passive *za-stoup-ený*, etc.), the imperative is chosen because it has no apparent suffix. And similarly, out of all the forms with the long prefix (relational adjectives *zá-stup-ný* ‘vicarious’, diminutive-like *vý-stup-ek* ‘protrusion’, etc.), the zero derived noun is chosen also because it has no suffix. The comparison of the two suffix-less forms shows that prefix quantity is not dependent on purely phonological context in any obvious sense. Instead, we are looking at a morpho-syntactically triggered process. What is this process?

Phonology. We propose that the prefixes in (1) are stored in the lexicon as long, and shorten in verbs. We implement this by a templatic requirement (Scheer 2001, Bethin 2003, Caha-Scheer 2008) that requires *verbal* prefixes to be max 1μ (long vowels count for 2μ). Such a template explains the facts in Table (1): prefixes that do not meet this requirement have to shorten.

The proposal runs against the existing analyses by Scheer (2001) and Ziková (2012), who propose that the prefixes are short in the lexicon, and lengthen in contact with the noun. Evidence for a shortening analysis starts from the observation that some prefixes are always short, see (2).

(2) Verb Prefix = CV, N Prefix = CV			
verb	gloss	zero N	gloss
po -stup	move on!	po -stup	progress
se -stup	come down!	se -stup	descent
od -stup	move away!	od -stup	distance

Nothing else said, the lengthening analysis predicts that in the first line, we get the N **pů-stup* instead of *po-stup*. The wrong prediction is avoided by stipulation: the prefixes in (2) are simply claimed not to undergo the process.¹

However, under the shortening analysis, we need not make any stipulations here. The prefixes in table (2) are simply analyzed as lexically short, surfacing as such in the nominalization. Their ‘promotion’ to a verbal prefix status triggers (under our analysis) a templatic effect (be max 1μ), which is trivially satisfied without any effect on the shape of the prefix.

Second of all, we capture the regularity which holds regardless of any processes, namely that ALL verbal prefixes have a canonical prosodic shape (cannot have 2μ , epenthesis aside). The lengthening analysis does not predict any such regularity. The verbal prefixes are listed in (3), which is an exhaustive list ordered alphabetically.

(3) *Verbal* prefixes have max 1μ : *na, nad, o, ob, od, pod, pro, pře, před, při, s, u, v, z, za*
 Note that some verbal prefixes have no vowel; this is compatible with the max 1μ template. For these prefixes, we predict that they do not show any additional length in nominal environment, because there is no prefix lengthening. The prediction is borne out.

Syntax. On the basis of such facts, we think that the shortening analysis is to be preferred. For us, the direction of the change is important in that we believe that also in the morphosyntactic

¹To be fair, Scheer and Zikova claim that the non-lengthening prefixes are a phonological class. But this has some problems too, since *pro-*, which falls in the same phonological class as the non-lengthening *po-*, regularly lengthens. In sum, one needs a diacritic to code which prefixes lengthen and which not.

