

## Well-formed branching onsets in Modern and Old Czech

Modern Czech (MCz) displays a very clear divide in the behaviour of word-final TR clusters (T=obstruent, R=sonorant) in Nsg and Gpl: while the former do not vocalize, the latter always do. Compare e.g. *bratr* "brother Nsg" with *játr-a – jater* "liver Npl, Gpl". In other Slavic languages such as Polish and Russian, both paradigms occur, i.e. with vocalized (Pol *srebr-o – sreber* "silver Nsg, Gpl", Ru *vedr-ó – věder* "bucket Nsg, Gpl") or unvocalized TR# (Pol *sióstr-a – sióstr* "sister Nsg, Gpl", Ru *igr-á – ígr* "game Nsg, Gpl"). Note that etymological yers cannot predict the vocalization patterns in any of the languages mentioned.

The MCz Nsg-Gpl contrast is not only observed for identical clusters, but also for clusters of the same root: compare e.g. *Petr* "Peter Nsg, masc" with *Petr-a – Peter* "Nsg, Gpl, fem". This difference in behaviour is intriguing in as much as both case markers are zero on the surface.

In order to tackle this puzzle, we look at the situation in Old Czech (OCz) and its evolution in MCz regarding the behaviour of word-final branching onsets. In OCz, both Nsg and Gpl show perfectly uniform behaviour: TR# in either morphological environment do not vocalize. Compare e.g. *bobr* "beaver Nsg" with *žebr-o – žebr* "rib Nsg, Gpl" (MCz *žebr-o – žeber*).

In order to see whether this situation that textbooks report for OCz is real, we studied the exhaustive output of a search for TR# in the electronic version of the OCz dictionaries and texts featured on the website (<http://vokabular.ujc.cas.cz>). We distinguish TR# in Nsg (157 words attested in the dictionaries), Gpl (23 words attested in OCz texts) and short forms of adjectives (9 words attested in OCz texts).

We show that while indeed none of the three morphological situations produces vocalized TR#. The only exception is hR#, which undergoes systematic vocalization in both Nsg (e.g. *uher, uhr-a* "pimple Nsg, Gsg" < CS *oghr-ъ*; *uhel, uhl-a* "coal Nsg, Gsg" < CS *oghl-ъ*) and Gpl (*jáhl-y, jáhel* "millet Npl Gpl; *Uhr-y, Uher* "Hungary Npl, Gpl"). We argue that hR# was an ill-formed word-final cluster in OCz because /h/ could not sustain a branching onset relationship with a following sonorant.

The evolution from OCz where TR# were unvocalized in Gpl to MCz where they systematically vocalize coincides with a change of status of sonorants: from OCz to MCz, trapped sonorants disappeared altogether (except word-initially as in monosyllabic MCz *lhát* "to lie" and trapped /ř/ as in bisyllabic MCz *hřbitov* "graveyard"), to become syllabic. All TR# examined were trapped in OCz and thus should have become syllabic in MCz. This is indeed what happened in Nsg (in OCz *bratr* is monosyllabic, while it is bisyllabic in MCz). But in Gpl they developed a vowel (Gpl OCz *játr*, MCz *jater*). There is thus reason to believe that the phonological exponent of Gpl is such that it prevented trapped TR# to become syllabic. In other words, what we seek to identify for the situation in MCz is the particular property of the exponent of Gpl (which is zero on the surface) that prevents sonorants in TR# to be syllabic.