

Serbo-Croatian (henceforth SC) verbalising suffix *-ova-* covers a variety of functions, from the derivation of denominal verbs to the integration of loanwords. Interestingly, while both its prosody and its productivity have changed over the past 150 years (for which descriptions of standard SC prosody are available), one striking generalisation seems to hold for all the periods and uses: the prosody of *-ova-* verbs shows that the suffix always combines with bases whose surface realisations need to be taken into account. We consider three sets of bases with which *-ova-* has combined throughout its history, in the order of appearance: (1) native nouns, (2) international (mostly Latinate) stems originating from earlier contact with German and French, and (3) English stems originating from the current contact with English.

In order to formalise the way in which the surface prosody of the base gets preserved, the well-established mechanism of Lexical Conservatism (Steriade 1997) will be implemented. LC is a family of constraints which militate against the emergence of allomorphs different from the existing ones.

0. Serbo-Croatian prosody

SC has a pitch-accent system (for a recent overview, see Werle 2009) in which accents are classified as either falling or rising. The falling accents (constrained to the first syllable in native words) are monosyllabic, with both stress and tone on the same syllable. The rising accents (which in principle can surface wherever there is room) are tonal spans over two syllables, with stress on the leftmost syllable of the span. This is why the rising accents are often referred to as ‘disyllabic’. While rising spans are generally analysed as the result of the spreading of the underlying H(igh tone)s onto the next syllable to the left, falling accents are considered post-cyclic: they get assigned if no tone is assigned in the derivation. In this presentation, we use capitals to mark H’s, so that a single capitalised syllable nucleus in a word means a falling accent (e.g. vOdu ‘water.ACC’), whereas multiple capitalised syllable nuclei mean a rising span (e.g. vOda ‘water.NOM’). Stress is not marked, as it is predictably on the leftmost syllable with a H.

1. Native bases

As the very few verbs with non-syllabic bases show, the suffix *-ova-* is itself a carrier of a tonal span, which means that its UR is /ova, H/: *ps-OvAti* ‘swear’, vaguely related to *ps-A* ‘dog.Gen’.

The period in which *-ova-* was prevalently combined with native bases is very well described in the normative literature. In this period, the rule was that, if the base noun has a consistent prosodic pattern in its nominal paradigm, the *-ova-* verb inherits that prosodic pattern. In all cases where the prosody varies across the case forms, the suffix becomes dominant and surfaces with its rising span (Delaš 2013).

(1a)		NomSg	GenSg	LocSg	
vErovati	‘believe’	vEr-a	vEr-ee	vEr-i	‘belief’
Imenovati	‘name’	Im-e	Im-en-a	Im-en-u	‘name’
dOrUčkovati	‘h. breakfast’	dOrUčak	dOrUčk-a	dOrUčk-u	‘breakfast’

(1b)					
darOvAti	‘present’	dAAr	dAAra	dAArU	‘present’
robOvAti	‘be a slave’	rOb	rObA	rObU	‘slave’
hajdukOvAti	‘be a hajduk’	hAjdUUK	hajdUUkA	hajdUUkU	‘hajduk’

Our analysis of the implementation of this rule in the normative literature (most importantly the accent marks in recent dictionaries, e.g. Nikolić 2000) shows that the speakers/authors tend to consider the singular forms only (cf. *im-En-A* ‘name.NOM.PL’).

Formalising these facts, we show how LC needs to be taken into account in determining whether a noun can serve as a dominant base.

One important feature of the picture just described is that there are no cases in which the prosody of the base “crosses into the suffix” – either the base or the suffix have all the H’s in the word. This regularity holds throughout the periods we observe.

2. International bases – -ova- becomes pre-accenting

In the intense contact with European *Kultursprachen* – most importantly French and German in the 19th and 20th century, -ova- was one of the loanword integration verbalisers (the other two being the ever accented borrowed suffixes -ira- and -isa-). Since the source verbs (mostly French verbs in -er and -ir and German verbs in -ieren) generally had no prosodic contrast/prominence to preserve, -ova- developed a default prosodic shape which can be analysed as an H associated with the final syllable of the base (as illustrated in 2).

(2)				(3)			
a.	σ	rImovati	‘rhyme’	a.	σ	lOgovati	‘log’
b.	σσ	dIrIgovati	‘conduct’	b.	’σσ	EdItovati	‘edit’
c.	σσσ	dezInfIkovati	‘disinfect’	c.	σ’σ	rikvEstovati	‘request’

These international verbs outnumber the verbs with native bases in modern Eastern SC many times over. This may be a reason why, in actual usage, the prosodic shape in (1a) has virtually vanished and the verbs have been assimilated into the default type in (2). Moreover, even the type *Imenovati* (1b) is often transformed into the default-conforming *ImEnovati*. There is only a dozen of native nouns which consistently have a stable prosodic pattern different from the new default (e.g. *lOOgorovati* ‘camp’, related to *lOOgor* ‘camp’). Not surprisingly, all of these satisfy the LC condition on a single prosodic allomorph in the nominal paradigm perfectly.

3. English verbs – LC all over again

The current contact with English, in which -ova- is the default verbaliser (in Eastern SC, see Simonović & Samardžić 2014), generally allows the replication of the original stress position. This is why stem shapes have been introduced which are banned in native words – those with a falling accent on a non-initial syllable (3c). The class displaying this shape also shows the limitations of LC: it is confined to the stems ‘sponsored’ by an actual English verbal stem. On the other hand, if the same prosodic shape is created by the concatenation of an accentless prefix and a verb – *iz+lOgovati* – a rising span is created automatically and the stress is shifted: *IzlOgovati*, **izlOgovati* ‘log out’.

4. LC is “demand-sensitive”

The analysis of the position of the -ova-verbs in the SC verbal system shows that, throughout the periods considered, the -ova-verbs need a surface sponsor in order to encode any kind of prosodic contrast; otherwise they display the default, which has changed from the pattern in (1b) to that in (2). More importantly, a formalisation of the LC requirements in each case shows that prosodic information which LC preserves is dependent on which contrasts the bases in question display. This in turn explains why, while SC prosody has generally remained unaltered, the suffix which is mostly dependent on surface forms for its bases, has shifted both its underlying/default prosody and the conditions under which it protects the prosody of its base.

This case study will provide a background against which the relationship between the two types of correspondences – input-output and surface correspondences – will be discussed. We shall also turn to the methodological issues which a strict distinction between the two raises for the theory of phonological representations, especially in the context of the lexicon in contact.