

Concerning New Štokavian Retraction

Croatian has a two-way pitch accent. When a syllable is stressed, it may take either a rising or a falling tone. Depending on the quantity of syllable, the tone may be either short or long. That makes a total of four tonic combinations:

1. short vowel with falling tone: *pěci* “to cook”;
2. short vowel with rising tone: *pèro* “feather”;
3. long vowel with falling tone: *mêso* “meat”;
4. long vowel with rising tone: *médo* “teddy bear”.

Such a system is said to be New Štokavian. Standard Croatian and Serbian both are New Štokavian based languages. Additionally there are two other combinations, namely:

5. long vowel with flat tone: *vodě*, Gsg. “water”;
6. short vowel with heavy tone: *dubína* “depth”.

These appear only in dialects. In standard language long vowel with flat tone (*vodě*) equals short vowel with a rising tone on preceding syllable plus a remaining length on the original syllable (*vòdē*). Short vowel with heavy tone (*dubína*) appears most obviously in Dubrovnik dialect. In standard language it equals short vowel with a rising tone on the same syllable (*dubina*). In terms of articulation heavy tone in Dubrovnik dialect is in fact a glottal stop: [ḍubʔina] and likewise *vručina* [vrutʃʔina] “heat”, *dobrota* [ḍobrʔota] “goodness”, *ljepota* [ʎepʔota] “beauty” etc.

Existence of heavy tone has been much neglected. It was first noticed by Stjepan Ivšić (v. Finka (1977)) who satisfied himself by pointing out only that heavy tone was more abrupt than regular falling tone on short syllable (hence the “heaviness”). Its glottal articulation went unnoticed and it was universally seen as an entirely synchronic and irrelevant aberration *a posteriori* in regard with rising tone on short syllable. Investigation of its origin in this paper has led me to dismiss such notions.

New Štokavian as compared with Old Štokavian is characterized by a pair of rising tones. We have already mentioned cases like *pèro* “feather” and *médo* “teddy bear”. Rising tones come from falling when they are retracted either from last or middle syllable. In other words retraction by and large affects a. p. *b* whereas a. p. *a* and *c* are affected to a somewhat lesser extent. Although retraction has been going on from ca. 14th century to present time, transformation from Old to New Štokavian is not a complete one. There are still Old and Middle Štokavian dialects. Besides, retraction affected neighboring Čakavian dialects as well. Islands of Korčula and Lastovo have an entirely New Štokavian accent system although in every other aspect they are Čakavian.

The course of retraction can roughly be sketched by looking into present Middle Štokavian dialects. Generally the stress is easier retracted to a long syllable. This is why we may find retracted *rúka* “arm” and unretracted *zorà* “dawn” within the same system. When it does retract to a short syllable the stress is generally easier retracted from the opened syllable. Again this is why we may find retracted *zòra* and unretracted *jezik* “tongue”. Finally the stress is easier retracted from the end of the word. This is why we find retracted *zòra* and unretracted Gsg. *jezika*.

I shall focus on Dubrovnik dialect which contains four regular New Štokavian tones (*pěci*, *pèro*, *mêso*, *médo*) and a regular length (3pl. *pèkū*, Gpl. *pérā*, *mêsā*, *médā*). It also contains heavy

tone (*dubína*). In terms of synchrony heavy tone appears only in middle syllable followed by a short syllable: *dubína* whereas Gsg. *dubìnē*. There is an additional aberration *i.e.* the coexistence of forms such as *zòra* and *zóra*. The latter is somewhat archaic and it appears only in first syllable followed by a short syllable: *zóra* whereas Gsg. *zòrē*.

It should be clear at this point that short rising tone is being eliminated for some reason. It is substituted with a heavy tone in the middle and with a long rising tone in the first syllable. Those wishing to establish a course of retraction should ask themselves why is that.

Attempts to solve this matter without looking into its history (*cf.* Brozović (2005)) usually end up claiming that the two aberrations are allotones of short rising tone. In a way this is true as their distribution is indeed complementary. Their origin however tells a different story. Some help in expounding it can be obtained from Ardelio Della Bella's dictionary (*cf.* Ligorio (2008)). Though it contains bundles of misleading mistakes, *Dizionario* offers a clear cut of the state in AD 1728 since it is accentuated through out. By the time it was printed, most of the retraction in Dubrovnik dialect was carried out.

We must assume that retraction started in 1400's on entirely Old Štokavian grounds: a falling tone on short and long syllable and a flat tone on long syllable, all distributed as they pleased. Length was by and large pretonic. The first to retract was Old Štokavian short falling from an opened and then closed last to a long first syllable: *rūkà, nāròd* "people" yielded *rúka, národ*. The outcome was two-folded: firstly, a new tone had arisen and secondly, elimination of pretonic length had started. Seeking to maintain balance, system then generated new pretonic length: *zorà* was analogically lengthened to *zòrà* to compensate for *rūkà*-type which had finished retracting. But this was clearly a wrong move as retraction immediately absorbed *zòrà*-type too. This is why we get *zóra* instead of *zòra*.

After it had finished with disyllabic, retraction moved on to polysyllabic words. First to retract was again Old Štokavian short falling from an opened and then closed last to a long middle syllable: Gsg. *počētkà* "beginning", *počētāk* yielded *počētkà, počētak*. This created a younger layer of long rising tone and continued to eliminate pretonic length. At this point the system presumably understood that creating yet another layer of length wouldn't do any good since it would only generate more rising tones. It needed something that wouldn't disturb the balance any further, a kind of old and new solution so it came up with heavy tone. It is acoustically almost identical with Old Štokavian short falling except for the fact that it is not the tone but rather a glottal stop. This is why we get *ježíka* instead of *jezika*.

Short rising tone wasn't generated until long tones began retracting: *sestrē, vodē* yielded *sèstrē, vòdē*. Their retraction brought chaos into the system since it resulted not only in another rising tone but also in new layers of posttonic length. This is why we get *dubína* and Gsg. *dubìnē, zóra* and Gsg. *zòrē*.

From the course of retraction it would seem that the two aberrations (*dubína, zóra*) were generated before the genesis of the short rising tone which they substitute. Calling them allotones is therefore incorrect with respect to the chronology. Insisting on it is rather like "putting one's shoes and socks" instead of "socks and shoes" and thus a clear case of ὑστερον πρότερον.

Summary

This is a paper about New Štokavian accent shifts and how to fit them in a time queue. Relying on data from the area of Dubrovnik, it tackles with rising tones and their allotones redefining them as true tones as a result of insight provided by chronological pursuit.

References

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