

## Tone, stress and length interactions in Central Neo-Štokavian

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This paper discusses a set of hitherto unobserved or underdescribed prosodic phenomena in the Central Neo-Štokavian (sub)dialect of Serbo-Croatian (SCr). SCr has inherited and innovated in various ways a relatively complex pitch-accent system from Proto-Slavic, based on the interaction of tone, length and stress (ictus). Tone and stress interactions are particularly complex in the Neo-Štokavian dialect, where an innovative Stress Retraction rule (SRR) has operated to produce a rather skewed distribution of pitch contours. Namely, as a result of SRR, stress coincides with a H tone in Neo-Štokavian only if the syllable bearing H is word-initial. Otherwise, stress is assigned to the syllable immediately preceding H, thus producing a rising contour tone (L\*H). Standard SCr is based on this prosodic system (cf. Lehiste & Ivić 1986, Inkelas & Zec 1988, Zec & Zsiga 2009).

The most innovative central group of Neo-Štokavian dialects (spoken in Bosnia and adjacent areas), however, tends to differ prosodically from standard SCr in a number of ways. First of all, they are characterized by a length-based qualitative vowel reduction, affecting all tonic and posttonic syllables. When disyllabic words with a rising pitch on the initial syllable are affected by the reduction, they will surface as monosyllables with a rising pitch (e.g. *kònji* ‘horses’ > *kònj*, *dóđi* ‘come-IMP’ > *dóđ*), a situation dispreferred in standard SCr. In addition, in a number of polysyllabic words, an innovative rising pitch appears on the initial syllable instead of the etymological falling one (e.g. *májka* ‘mother’ for the etymological *májka*, *kárta* ‘card’ for the etymological *kárta*, etc.), thereby effectively manifesting tone reversal.

In this paper, I examine more closely the diachronic evolution of the Neo-Štokavian prosodic system, in the context of tone-stress interaction and co-evolution over time. I show how Central Neo-Štokavian prosodic innovations represent a series of repair strategies for the Neo-Štokavian skewed distribution of pitch contours, that was brought about by the SRR. As a consequence, Central Neo-Štokavian features as a transitory idiom between different tone-stress interaction types (from tone governing stress, as in standard SCr, to dominantly stress governing tone), but also from a relatively complex and unstable standard SCr pitch-accent system to a more stable, but still typologically awkward, rising-contour initial stress system, with word-initial L tone attracting stress while avoiding the lexical H altogether. Therefore it doesn’t fit easily into the general typology of tone and stress interactions (de Lacy 2002), where systems such as Central Neo-Štokavian, in which stress tends to be attracted to L tone while simultaneously H tone is ignored, are explicitly excluded. In that sense, the innovative Central Neo-Štokavian data discussed here may contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of the possible tone-stress interaction types, but also of the exact mechanisms and motivations for tonal change and transition between different prosodic systems.

### References

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