

REMARKS ON NEW HOMOMORPHS AND HOMOFORMS IN
MODERN SLOVENE

V sodobni slovenščini je precej besednih parov, katerih člana sta, kolikor se je tonemsko razlikovanje izgubilo, postala enakoglasna.

In Modern Slovene, a number of words formerly distinguished by long rising and falling tones have collapsed into pairs which coincide phonetically and have given rise to various types of homonyms.

Among the South Slavic languages, and indeed among their sister Slavic languages, Slovene and Serbo-Croatian occupy unique positions with regard to the development of their respective prosodic systems. Traditional grammars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries describe both languages as possessing vowel length (quantity) and tone (pitch), as well as stress, as phonemic features. The norm for Serbo-Croatian was established in the nineteenth century by Vuk Karadžić and further refined by his pupil Djuro Daničić in their classic description positing a four tone system for that language. The system is still accepted by normative grammarians today and continues to be reflected in dictionaries and grammars of Serbo-Croatian, despite well known discrepancies among the various dialects and challenges by a number of Yugoslav and foreign linguists.¹ Even if the system of four tones is still viable for certain speech areas of Serbo-Croatian, certainly it is in transition for the language as a whole.

A similar situation pertains for Slovene which, unlike Serbo-Croatian, enjoys a standardized and universally accepted writing system. Its phonetic realization, however, varies from speech region to speech region, and the retention of tones differs in degree among various dialects.² Classic descriptions of Slovene, formulated by M. Valjavec at the end of the nineteenth century and employed by M. Pleteršnik in his two-volume Slovensko-nemški slovar of 1894-95, posit a system of tones similar to Serbo-Croatian. As recently as 1921 and 1924 that four tone system was repeated in Breznik's Slovenska slovnica.³ In his work Breznik recognizes a long falling accent (*dolg potisnjen*) as in *sin*, a long rising accent (*dolg potegnjen*) as in *človek*, a short falling accent (*kratek potisnjen*) as in *brat* and a short rising accent (*kratek potegnjen*) as in *tema*. This claim no longer receives any serious following, and more contemporary descriptions of the language pro-

¹ See, for example, pp. 136-138 of the work by T. F. M a g n e r and L. M a t e j k a Word Accent in Modern Serbo-Croatian (University Park and London, 1971) in which the authors propose a system allowing only for the opposition of short vs. long vowels.

² See, for example, R a d o L. L e n c e k, The Structure and History of the Slovene Language (Columbus, 1982): Chapter Four »Slovene and its Dialects« (pp. 133-157).

³ Anton Breznik, Slovenska slovnica za srednje šole, 2nd rev. ed., Prevalje, 1921: but cf. also pp. 36-42 in the 3rd ed., Prevalje, 1924. (1st ed. 1916, 4th 1934.)

pose a system of three tones, excluding the short rising one, for standard literary Modern Slovene. Even this system is now considered, however, to represent an older or more conservative literary norm, and most speakers of Modern Slovene do not observe tone distinctions in their speech. The vocalic system of Slovene as realized in contemporary speech has in its conservative form the following distinctive features: tone, vowel length and stress. As is the case with tone, certain dialects do not employ a phonemic opposition of length. Thus in a hierarchical arrangement, stress may be viewed as primary. For the purposes of this paper, however, we shall accept the intermediate position which presupposes a system in which both stress and vowel length are functional and tone is not. The reasons for this are justifiable based on practices noted below.

The new Academy Dictionary⁴ notes in parentheses only the distinction between a long rising and a long falling tone. The widely used reference work Slovenska slovnica by Bajec et al. likewise notes the partial presence of three tones⁵, as does the Slovenski pravopis.⁶ It is clear that a norm of four tones is not operative for Modern Slovene. Despite the fact that in the central dialects, including the base for the contemporary standard language in which stress and both length and tone are still considered to be functional for some speakers and tone only for an even lesser number of speakers, most descriptions of Modern Slovene have confronted this dilemma by accepting a system which allows for a phonemic difference between short and long vowels only and which ignores tone. Vowels are listed typically in three groupings:⁷

(1)	(2)	(3)
í	ì	i
é	è	e
ó	ò	o
á	à	a

The preceding graphic description distinguishes between stressed ((1) and (2)) and unstressed (3) vowels. Within the stressed groups we see an opposition of short and long vowels, as well as an opposition between long open and closed *e* and *o* for long vowels only. Among the short vowels we include phonemic short *ə*. Such a system

⁴ Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika, Vol. I. Ljubljana, 1970. On pp. XXIV and XXV dynamic and tonemic stress are presented. On pp. L–LVIII tonemic stress is discussed in greater detail by part of speech, those comments being particularly relevant for those sections of this paper to follow which illustrate instance of homomorphy in verbs and nouns.

⁵ Anton Bajec, Rudolf Kolarič and Mirko Rupel, Slovenska slovnica, Ljubljana, 1973. On pp. 29 and 30 the authors refer to rising and falling tones on stressed *a*, *e* and *o* stating: »Padajoči in rastoči poudarek sta v osrednjih slovenskih govorih sicer pogosto značilna za pomensko ločitev, vendar nista ukazana za pravilo v slovenskem zbornem govoru, ker ju mnogo narečij ne loči več in bi bila torej taka zahteva za splošno rabo neizvedljiva.«

⁶ Slovenski pravopis. Ljubljana, 1962. See p. 28, paragraph 28. Only the difference between long falling and rising *a* is recognized, as in *pomlād* and *vrāna*. The work does, however, provide the user with a number of examples of idiomatic uses in which rising and falling *i* and *o* may also be found. In the body of the lexicon tone is not distinguished.

⁷ See, for example, Slovenski pravopis, p. 14.

can also be seen in grammars written for foreigners as well as in Grad's Veliki slovensko-angleški slovar and in Kotnik's Slovensko-angleški slovar.⁸

We may conclude that the conservative standard literary form of Modern Slovene retains a limited and idealized tone system and is opposed to colloquial forms of the language, most of which function without tone distinctions. In such a system rising and falling tones on long vowels become neutralized and are now opposed only to short vowels.

We may then ask what effect the neutralization of long vowels has had on Modern Slovene? Has this process given rise to instances of homonymic clash? Restating our assumption that there exist in Modern Slovene long and short stressed vowels in phonemic opposition to one another (as well as stress, a fact not disputed), then we must seek possible areas in which words formerly distinguished by long rising and falling tones have collapsed into pairs which coincide phonetically and have given rise to various types of homonyms.⁹ There are indeed many such pairs. In some cases these include full, as well as partial homonyms (homoforms) and homomorphs. The remainder of this paper will focus on the latter two groups, setting forth a number of categories in which words formerly distinguished by tone have become neutralized and have merged.

1. The vast majority of verbs in Slovene have a nonmobile stress occurring on the infinitive, present tense, imperative, participle in *-l*, the supine and the past participle. Conforming to the preceding stress pattern are many verbs with stems in *-i-* in which the third person singular and singular imperative, second person plural and plural imperative, first person plural and first person plural imperative, the first and second person duals and their corresponding imperatives, i. e. a total of five forms, have taken on the same phonetic shape.¹⁰ We shall introduce the verb *mísliti* 'to think' as our example of homomorphy:

3 rd sing	<i>míslī</i>	imper.	<i>míslī</i>
2 nd pl.	<i>míslīte</i>	imper.	<i>míslīte</i>
1 st pl.	<i>míslīmo</i>	imper.	<i>míslīmo</i>
1 st dual	<i>míslīva</i>	imper.	<i>míslīva</i>
2 nd dual	<i>míslīta</i>	imper.	<i>míslīta</i>

⁸ Anton Grad, *Veliki slovensko-angleški slovar*. Ljubljana, 1982. Janko Kotnik, *Slovensko-angleški slovar*. 7th ed. Ljubljana, 1972. Compare also the vocalic inventory suggested by Edward Stankiewicz in his article »The Vocalic Systems of Modern Standard Slovenian«, *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics*, I/II (1959), particularly p. 75.

⁹ For purposes of this paper (full) homonyms are defined as words which have the same phonetic and orthographic shape in all forms, e. g. *bég* 'flight' and 'Turkish prince' or *kaltī* 'to germinate' and 'to temper'. Homophones are defined as words which have the same phonetic shape, e. g. *trd* 'hard' and *trī* 'vine' and result from the process of voicing or devoicing of the final consonant. Homoforms, also called partial homonyms, are those words which coincide orthographically and phonetically in a limited number of forms, e. g. *kadlīlo* 'incense' (noun) and 'was smoking' (neuter form of the participle in *-l* from the verb *kadīti*). Homomorphs are those homoforms which occur within the same paradigm. The latter two categories form the main focus of the comments in this paper. (Homographs, words which coincide orthographically, but not phonetically, e. g. *gáratī* 'to denude' and *garátī* 'to drudge', are also of theoretical interest, but are not germane to this paper.)

¹⁰ For additional information refer to Rado Lencek's article »The Slavic Imperative« appearing in *American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists*, Warsaw, August 21–27, 1973, especially pp. 182, 188, 189, 199–201. Refer also to footnote 4. above.

In the conservative literary norm we see that all of the imperative forms have a long rising tone, while the singular, dual and plural forms all have a long falling one.

Two sub-groups of the preceding category include verbs with a shifting stress of the type *govoriti* 'to speak' and *nositi* 'to carry' in which only the first and second persons plural (and dual) and their imperatives coincide:

1 st pl.	<i>govorîmo</i>	imp.	<i>govorîmo</i>
2 nd pl.	<i>govorîte</i>	imp.	<i>govorîte</i>

Verbs with stems in *-e-* and *-ča-*, e. g. *želiti* 'to wish', *leteti* 'to fly' and *kričati* 'to shout' coincide in the second person plural (and dual) and imperative when the imperative has a falling stress:

2 nd pl.	<i>želíte</i> <i>kričíte</i>	2 nd imp.	<i>želíte</i> <i>kričíte</i>
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2. Within nominal paradigms we find many instances of homomorphy in which two different case forms now agree phonetically, including:

'man'	nom. sing. <i>môž</i>	gen. pl. <i>móž</i>
'tooth'	<i>zôb</i>	<i>zób</i>
'hair'	<i>lās</i>	<i>lás</i>
'year'	gen. sing. <i>lêta</i>	nom./acc. pl. <i>lêta</i>
'night'	<i>nočí</i>	<i>nočí</i>
'letter'	<i>pîsma</i>	<i>pîsma</i>
'foot'	acc. sing. <i>noğô</i>	instr. sing. <i>noğô</i>
'crab'	nom. pl. <i>râki</i>	instr. pl. <i>râki</i>
'bone'	nom./acc. pl. <i>kostî</i>	gen. pl. <i>kostî</i>
'year'	instr. pl. <i>lêti</i>	dual nom./acc. <i>lêti</i>

Homoforms (partial homonyms) resulting from tone neutralization now occur in a number of categories, including:

1. between two semantically different nouns:

<i>pōt</i>	'sweat'	<i>pót</i>	'road'
<i>pīk</i>	'spade'	<i>pík</i>	'sting'
<i>mēča</i>	'calf (of leg)'	<i>měča</i>	'soft spot'
<i>pāša</i>	'Turkish pasha'	<i>páša</i>	'pasture'
<i>pīvka</i>	'type of bird'	<i>pívka</i>	'drinker' (fem.)
<i>sōk</i>	'juice'	<i>sók</i>	'twig'

1. a. between case forms of two semantically different nouns:

<i>kūpa</i>	'cup' (nom. sing.)	<i>kūpa</i>	'purchase' (gen. sing.)
<i>vrāt</i>	'neck' (nom. sing.)	<i>vrát</i>	'gate' (gen. pl.)

2. between nouns and adjectives:

noun		adjective	
<i>bēl</i>	'eye disease'	<i>běl</i>	'white'
<i>dān</i>	'day'	<i>dán</i>	'given'
<i>svēt</i>	'world'	<i>svét</i>	'sacred'

3. between an adverb and the case form of a noun:

<i>rēs</i>	'really'	<i>rēs</i>	(gen. pl. of <i>réša</i> 'fringe')
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4. between two adjectives:

<i>vrāten</i>	'jugalur'	<i>vráten</i>	'of the door/gate'
<i>pāren</i>	'steamy'	<i>páren</i>	'in pairs'

5. between an adjective and a verb:

<i>mladī</i>	(adj. pl.) 'young'	<i>mladí</i>	(3 rd sing.) 'ripens'
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6. between a noun form and a verbal participle in *-l*:

<i>sěl</i>	(noun gen. pl.) 'hamlet'	<i>sěl</i>	(part. from <i>sésti</i> 'to sit down')
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7. between a noun form and a verbal form:

<i>slēči</i>	(noun, nom. pl.) 'rhododendron'
<i>sléči</i>	(inf.) 'to undress'
<i>dām</i>	(noun, gen. pl.) 'lady'
<i>dám</i>	(1 st person sing. from <i>dáti</i> 'to give')

solī (noun, nom. pl.) 'salts'
solī (3rd person sing. from *solīti* 'to salt')

šība (noun, nom. sing.) 'rod'
šība (3rd person sing. from *šībati* 'to whip')

8. between two verbs:

nalēta (se) (3rd sing.) 'tires of running'
nalēta (3rd sing.) 'falls' (as of snow)

The preceding categories are not meant to be exhaustive. Indeed many more may be identified.¹¹ The examples provided, however, do represent large groups of similar homomorphs and homoforms. They demonstrate the rise of homonymic pairs of words in Modern Slovene which in turn have the potential to produce ambiguity. The degree to which the ambiguity produces homonymic clash in the language will determine the fate of these pairs.

POVZETEK

Za potrebe pričujočega sestavka se ločijo: homonimi, tj. besede z enako glasovno in pisno podobo v vseh oblikah, npr. *beg* 'bežanje' in 'turški plemič'; homofoni, tj. besede z enako glasovno podobo, npr. *trd* in *trt*; homoforme, tj. besede, ki glasovno in pisno sovpadajo v omejenem številu oblik, npr. *kadilo* samostalnik in deležnik na *-l* srednjega spola; homomorfi, tj. homoforme znotraj iste paradigme, npr. *mislimo* sedanjik in velelnik. Navedene so pomembnejše kategorije homoform in homomorfov, nastalih ob izgubi tonemskosti.

¹¹ Cf. Jože Toporišič, Razločevalna obremenitev slovenskih prozodičnih parametrov, glasovna in naglasna podoba slovenskega jezika, Založba Obzorja, Maribor, 1978, 300-309; 1st published in *Slavica Pragensia* 21, *Acta Universitatis Carolinae - Philologica* 3-5, 1978, 89-96 (issued 1983).