

Word-final obstruent voicing as an outcome of the lenis/fortis contrast transformation in
Lower Luga Ingrian (Finnic)
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Word-final obstruent voicing has sparked a lively conceptual debate between the proponents of Universal Grammar (UG) and those of Evolutionary Phonology (EP). UG considers language change (and synchronic distributions) as stemming from universal markedness constraints. EP derives synchronic typology from rare or common sound changes. The frequency of a given change in EP depends on the physiological biases related to language acquisition and use.

Word-final obstruent voicing is one of the crucial cases allowing one to falsify one of these two mutually exclusive frameworks. It is dispreferred but not impossible from the viewpoint of physiological biases related to language change, and so expected to be rare but possible in EP. In turn, UG has a constraint that *a priori* prohibits this process. UG is expected to guide language acquisition and change, so word-final voicing is not expected to be ever possible.

A search for cases of word-final obstruent voicing vs. for arguments to disprove or re-analyse it has become a *cause célèbre* of the debate. Blevins (2004: 108-10, 2006a, 2006b) discussed Lezgian and Somali as potential cases of word-final voicing, but those were questioned by Kiparsky (2006, 2008). Blevins et al. (2020) then proposed Lakota as a more convincing case, but this has been recently re-analysed as lenition by Schwarz and Ulfsbjorninn (2023).

This talk discusses a new case of potential word-final obstruent voicing, found in the Lower Luga dialect of the vanishing Ingrian language (Finnic). Two stages of this process, divided by ~80 years, have been described by Mägiste (1925: 3:22-24) and Kuznetsova (2009: 190-93, 2012, 2020). Lower Luga Ingrian differs from the other three Ingrian dialects in that it is a specific contact variety between two closely related languages, Ingrian and Votic (Rožanskij 2010). Potentially under this contact influence, a single opposition of lenis and fortis stops *p*, *t*, *k* and *s*, found in other Ingrian dialects, has transformed here into two independent contrasts: in voicing (voiced : voiceless) and length (short : long). For this reason, long and voiced phonemes became possible here, cf. the following examples from Soikkola and Lower Luga Ingrian:

Soikkola Ingrian	Lower Luga Ingrian	Gloss
<i>sata</i> ['ʃaɖa:] – <i>sättā</i> ['ʃat'a:]	<i>sata</i> ['sata:] – <i>sattā</i> ['sat:a:]	'hundred' (NOM – ILL)
<i>sātu</i> ['ʃa:ɖü] – <i>sättū</i>	<i>sada</i> ['sada:] – <i>saddā</i> ['sad:a:]	'garden' (NOM – ILL)
['ʃa:t'u:]		

In Soikkola Ingrian, fortis obstruents are realised as voiceless and geminate, while lenis as short and either (half-)voiced or voiceless depending on the context. The contrast exists after a vowel (V) before a V or a sonorant (R). Word-initially, -finally, and in obstruent clusters, only lenis obstruents are possible. Word-final lenis obstruents are voiceless, but in sandhi before a V or R can be optionally voiced: *lühüt* ['lühü:t] 'short' > ['lühü:d] *no:ra* 'short rope'.

In Lower Luga, the situation is quite different and much more complex. In particular, voicing contrasts are possible also word-initially (*pū* 'tree' vs. *börölājn* 'little insect'). Word-finally, original lenis consonants have phonologised into short and voiced: *lühüd* ['lühü:d] 'short', *maad* ['ma:d] 'country:PL'. However, short and long voiceless obstruents are also possible in this position as a result of final vowel loss (still ongoing in most varieties): **lühütta* > *lühütt(ə)* ['lühü:t:ə ~ 'lühü:t:] 'short:PRT', **maata* > *maat(ə)* ['ma:tə ~ 'ma:t]. In frequent grammatical suffixes, we observe further word-final obstruent voicing as a result of

vowel loss. For example, the following variants have been attested in my field data for the 3SG suffix *-pi* occurring in verbs like **jää-pi* ‘remain-3SG’: **-pi* > [pi > p̣i > p’ > **b’** > **b**]. The same variability is reflected also in “naïve” manuscripts by native speakers, cf. forms *ǎnu* <jääp̣i> ~ *ǎñḅ* <jääb’> ~ *ǎñḅ* <jääb’> ~ *jääb* found in texts written by a Lower Luga speaker (Kuznecova 2020: 201).

More details will be discussed, but in sum, the Lower Luga case rather lends support to the EP prediction that, under very specific circumstances, word-final obstruent voicing is possible.