Think globally, act locally

Marko Simonović (University of Graz/University of Nova Gorica; rkicma@gmail.com)
Petra Mišmaš (University of Nova Gorica/University of Graz; petra.mismas@ung.si)

Slovenian is one of the languages used as a source of data for a model of non-local allomorphy in Božič (2019). Specifically, Božič (2019: 501) argues for non-local allomorphy in Slovenian because the root of the verb can differ depending on the finiteness of the form and this interaction occurs across the theme vowel (*ž-e-ti* 'to reap' vs. *žanj-e-m* 'I reap'). In this talk we will, based on observations in Marvin (2003), propose a general account of theme vowels in Slovenian as the spellout of the *v* head and present additional data in favor of the more traditional analysis *že-∅-ti~žanj-e-m* (e.g. in Šekli 2010), which only involves local allomorphy.

Slovenian verb forms have the structure Root(√)-Theme(θ)-Tense&Agreement Morphology(φ). Verbs can have different theme vowels in finite and non-finite forms, as in (1), but they do not have to, as in (2).

(1)   a.   √-θ1-INF   b.   √-θ2-1PL
            drž-a-ti   drž-i-mo
            'to hold'   'we hold'
(2)   a.   √-θ1-INF   b.   √-θ2-1PL
            usp-e-ti   usp-e-mo
            'to succeed'   'we succeed'

The conjugation classes (conceptualized as combinations of theme vowels, also considering stress) generally do not categorically correlate with argument structure (e.g. *spati* 'to sleep' vs. *držati* 'to hold'). A peculiar exception is found in the class combining the theme vowels *é* (stressed e) in non-finite tenses and *í* (stressed i) in finite tenses (e.g. *zven-é-ti* 'to sound', *zven-í-mo* 'we sound'): the verbs in this class never project an external argument. This restriction has already been observed in Marvin (2003:100) for the deadjectival verbs of this class (*besn-é-ti 'to be furious'*), which have causative counterparts of the *í/í* class (*besn-í-ti* 'to make furious').

Focusing on the *é/í* class of verbs, we present a survey of both (i) deadjectival and (ii) non-deadjectival *é/í* verbs in standard Slovenian and propose a formalization in terms of Distributed Morphology. Our central claim is that theme vowels are the spellout of the *v* head and that all the relevant Vocabulary Items (VI) depend on the feature content of the *v* and the adjacent heads. Crucially, this analysis is different from that in Marvin (2003), where the theme vowels are part of the root, and that in Božič (2019), where the theme vowels realize the Aspect head. Starting with (i) deadjectival verbs, we confirm Marvin's findings that the inchoative/causative pairs are restricted to the deadjectival domain and propose a VI that inserts the theme vowel *é* in the *v* which lacks an external argument in the context of an adjectival categorial head and a non-finite T. The theme vowel *í* then works as the Elsewhere allomorph in this class. As for (ii) non-deadjectival members of the *é/í* class, these are captured by a more general VI which refers to specific roots, while remaining restricted to *v*'s which lack an external argument.

Taking our analysis of the *é/í* class as evidence for the position of the theme vowel, we argue, contra Božič (2019), that root allomorphy is always conditioned by the spellout of the *v*. Crucially, we show that the correct analysis of the apparent non-local allomorphy *ž-e-ti ~ žanj-e-m* is in fact *že-∅-ti~žanj-e-m*. The inclusion of this verb in the *e/e* class is admittedly conceivable, yet undesirable on several grounds: (i) there are verbs with root allomorphy which undoubtedly belong the *∅/e* class (*plu-∅-ti~plov-e-m* 'sail') and (ii) considering the quantitative distribution of conjugation classes, the *e/e* analysis begs the question why no verb with root allomorphy belongs to much more frequent classes *i/i* and *a/a* (**ž-a-ti~žanj-a-m* or **ž-i-ti~žanj-i-m*), which account for a vast majority of Slovenian verbs.

References:

Božič, Jurij. 2019. Constraining Long-Distance Allomorphy. The Linguistic Review 36.3. 485-505.
Marvin, Tatjana. 2002. Topics in the stress and syntax of words. Doctoral dissertation, MIT. Šekli,
Matej. 2010. Oblikotvorje in jakostni naglas glagola v knjižni slovenščini. Slovanstvo v slovenskem
jeziku, literaturi in kulturi: zbornik predavanj. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.
139-160.