Case concord at the syntax-phonology interface

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INTRODUCTION/QUESTIONS

Both Icelandic and Estonian exhibit case concord, where case is marked on several elements within a single nominal phrase:

(1) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>čest-ir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>čest-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT</td>
<td>čest-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>čest-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case-marking not only affects the realization of concord markers, but, in certain circumstances, it affects the Root/stem as well.

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Nominal morphophonology in Icelandic

In Icelandic, case is bundled with gender and number and expressed as a single suffix (?). For some words, certain constellations of gender, number, and case result in stem changes as well (?).

(3) strúk-ur ‘boy’

CASE SG PL

NOM strúk-ir strúk-ar

ACC strúk- strúk-a

DAT strúk-i strúk-um

GEN strúk-s strúk-a

Vowel changes at work:

- u-shift: responsible for the alternation between Øu [øʊ] and a [a].
- i-shift: a mostly frontier process causing a number of different changes. Both u-shift and i-shift are pervasive in the language, affecting noun and verb stems.

It can be shown that these vowel changes are not driven by phonology alone—they are morphophonological processes.

Nominal morphophonology in Estonian

The Estonian declension system is incredibly complex. Traditional grammar books describe 7 basic declensions comprising 22 open-class types and 23 closed-class types. The declension classes are not connected to gender (Estonian has no gender) or any other syntactic or semantic property—they are “morphology alone.”

The declension systems are largely defined by the shape and prosodic structure of diagnostic case forms rather than affixal variation (Selvlen 2008).

(5) kõrvis ‘pumpkin’

CASE SG PL

NOM kõrvis- kõrvis-a-d

GEN kõrvis- kõrvis-a-te

PAR kõrvis-a-t kõrvis-a-id

CASE SG PL

NOM plu- plu-a-d

GEN plu- plu-a-te

PAR plu-a-t plu-a-id

Again, these changes are not purely phonological; they are morphophonologically conditioned.