

Examples of Allophonic and Morphophonemic Alternations in OCS

I. Allophonic (the alternating sounds NEVER are opposed in a minimal pair)

A. Front/Back [u~ü], [a~ä], [ɔ~ö].

E.g. /grad-u/, /grad-a/, /kraj-u/, /kraj-a/= [gradu], [grada], [krajü], [krajä].

B. Non-palatalized/Palatalized labial or dental consonant [p~p'], [t~t'], etc.

E.g. /grad-y/, /gradi/=[grady], [grad'i].

II. Morphophonemic (the alternating sounds CAN occur as opposed phonemes in a minimal pair).

A. Automatic (the choice of phoneme is selected on the basis of phonetic environment; i.e. in some environments the two phonemes can be opposed, but in other environments the choice is automatic). In the specific phonetic environment, the two phonemes act just like allophones (although in other environments they act like two different phonemes).

Examples of automatic morphophonemic alternations:

1. regressive voicing assimilation in consonant clusters:

vez-ɔ , but vez-ti → vesti

/s/ vs. /z/ are opposed in /sa/ vs. /za/, but NOT before -ti!

Also: ispadati, rastočiti, etc.

2. bv → b, zr → zdr, zz → z, zs → s, etc. (see Lunt, pp. 36-37 for many more examples).

B. Non-Automatic Morphophonemic Alternation.

Sometimes called “grammatical,” since the conditioning factor is not phonetic (such as a following -t), but non-phonetic GRAMMATICAL information, such as “locative, first person singular, nominative plural,” etc.

E.g. In the feminine genitive singular, the ending is -y after non-palatals (hard consonants), but -ę after palatals (softs): e.g. žen-y, but duš-ę. However, in the masculine instrumental plural, the ending is -y after hards, but -i after softs (grad-y, but nož-i). Therefore, the alternations y/ę and y/i are not absolutely not automatic, since the phonetic environment (palatal consonant) doesn't tell you if the variant is -ę or -i. The only way to know that is to know the non-phonetic information that it is feminine genitive singular or masculine instrumental plural.

Other non-automatic alternations (see Lunt 39-39): consonant palatalization in the 1st pers. singular of Conj. II verbs, various palatalization of velars in the locative singular, nominative plural, and vocative; certain hard/soft pairs of vowel endings (y/i, y/ę, ě/i, ě/a)

Typically, speakers can only pronounce allophonic and automatic morphophonemic alternations the correct way and they are often not aware that any change has occurred (since it's automatic). Speakers can (and sometimes do) make errors in the production of non-automatic alternations and they are aware of their presence. For example, the s~z in English hat[s], but dog[z] is automatic, but the alternation of f~v is non-automatic in leaf, leaves (note that it does not occur in the plural of “eff,” i.e. “I got two effs on my exams,” not “two *[evz].”