Typological and diachronic perspectives on (particularly Balto-Slavic) morphonotactics

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The study of morphonotactics deals with the interaction between morphotactics and phonotactics (cf. Dressler & Dziubalska-Kołaczyk 2006), as a subfield of morphonology (cf. Dressler 1985, 1996). In this interaction morphotactics typically creates phonotactically marked structures which do not or only exceptionally occur in monomorphemic words. But this phenomenon has a typologically determined cross-linguistic distribution.

Similar to morphonology at large, morphonotactics plays no role in the ideal agglutinating type, as evidenced by Turkish. Languages which approach the agglutinating type to a smaller but still larger extent than the ideal inflecting-fusional type, may present a few morphonotactic phenomena, as will be illustrated with Hungarian. Weakly inflecting languages, which approach both the inflecting-fusional and the isolating type, present already more morphonotactic phenomena, all of them due to affixation, e.g. the English preterits *scream-ed, liv-ed, robb-ed* or the German second person singular forms *lach-st, stopf-st, qualm-st* or the Italian derivational prefixations *s-radicare, s-gridare, s-frenare*. Stronger inflecting languages present, in addition, morphonotactic sequences due to morphotactic modifications such as ablaut, i.e. due to non-concatenative sources, e.g. the Polish singular genitives *ln-u, mch-u, ws-i*, cf. also the derived adjectives *lw-i, mch-owy, wsi-owy*. This allows a typological comparison among Slavic languages.

In closely cognate Lithuanian, most word-final consonant clusters are of a morphotactic nature, e.g. imperative *dirb-k* 'work!', 3.Sg. Fut. *dirb-s*, Gen. *obel-s* 'apple'. In compounds, Lithuanian presents a marked contrast to Slavic languages. Whereas Slavic languages (similar to many other Indo-European languages) typically insert a vocalic interfix (linking vowel) between the two members of a compound (e.g. Pol. *teatr-o-logija, tor-o-mistrz, towar-o-znawstwo*), Lithuanian deletes the thematic vowel of the first constituent of a compound and thus creates new word-internal, morphonotactic consonant clusters, e.g. *juod+varnis* 'black raven' ← *juodas* 'black' & *varnas* 'raven'. German (and other Germanic languages) has another technique for creating new morphonotactic word-internal consonant clusters in compound formation: insertion of an –*s*-interfix, as in *Nahrung-s-mittel = Leben-s-mittel* 'food'.

When we compare older Indo-European languages, then we find similar morphonotactic phenomena in these strongly inflecting languages, e.g. the Latin perfect and past passive participle *sprē-v-i, sprē-tus* from present *sper-n-o*. Following work by, e.g., Benveniste (1935), Rix (2001), Alfieri (2007), I'll sketch how Proto-Indo-European (PIE) inflection and derivation has given rise to morphonotactic clusters in a more general way than, e.g. inl Polish. But this similarity between PIE and Polish is typological (approximation to the ideal inflecting-fusional type), there is rather little diachronic continuity, because Old Church Slavonic phonotactics is largely restricted by its open-syllable character.