

Consonant Gradation
the
Uralic Way

Standard Finnish

- ▶ Strong in open syllable, weak in closed syllable
- ▶ Generally double stop > single stop, stop > fricative or Ø, sonorant + homorganic stop > geminate sonorant
- ▶ Some consonant clusters don't undergo gradation, and some words are "immune"

Standard Finnish

- ▶ NOM *katto* 'roof', GEN *katon* (GEN = *-n*)
- ▶ NOM *tapa* 'way', GEN *tavan*
- ▶ Pretty straightforward, right?

Southwestern Finnish

- ▶ Final *n* disappears (at least in GEN)
- ▶ So *katto, katon; tapa, tavan* > *katto, kato; tapa, tava*
- ▶ GEN is now marked primarily by gradation!
- ▶ (This does cause ambiguity in places: e.g. *sana, sana* 'word')

Standard Finnish (again)

- ▶ But what about this?
- ▶ NOM *sade* 'rain', GEN *sateen* (*d* is weak grade of *t*)
- ▶ Why do we see weak grade in NOM and strong in GEN?
- ▶ And what's with the long vowel in GEN?

Standard Finnish (again)

- ▶ Earlier: NOM **sateC*, GEN **sateCen*
- ▶ Closed syllable in NOM triggered weak grade in *t*
- ▶ Closed syllable in GEN triggered weak grade in final C ($> \emptyset$)

Northern Sámi

- ▶ This is where things start getting interesting.
- ▶ On the surface, it looks a lot like SW Finnish:
- ▶ NOM *giehta* 'hand', GEN *gieđa* (<đ> = /ǫ/)
- ▶ Just as in Finnish, GEN originally ended in *-n*, which disappeared

Northern Sámi

- ▶ What about *guolli* 'fish', GEN *guoli*?
- ▶ Single /l/ is original (cp. FI *kala*; ignore vowels for now)

Northern Sámi

- ▶ What about *guolli* 'fish', GEN *guoli*?
- ▶ Single /l/ is original (cp. FI *kala*; ignore vowels for now)
- ▶ Consonants strengthened in open syllables, not weakened in closed

Estonian

- ▶ Three possible consonant lengths: short, long, and overlong
- ▶ (Short) Illative often marked by overlong grade of stem consonant
- ▶ NOM *mägi* 'hill', ILL *mäkke* (cmp. FI *mäki*, *mäkeen*)
- ▶ > Consonant lengthened before long vowel, which was then shortened

Rhythmic Gradation

- ▶ FI Partitive: *muta* 'mud', PART *mutaa*; *maa* 'land', PART *maata*
- ▶ Partitive originally ended in *-ta*
- ▶ $t > \emptyset / V_{unstressed} _ V$

ObConlang?

- ▶ Finnish, Estonian, Sámi, etc. all still use regular suffixes in addition to gradation

ObConlang?

- ▶ Finnish, Estonian, Sámi, etc. all still use regular suffixes in addition to gradation
- ▶ But don't let that stop you!
- ▶ You could easily imagine a conlang where *all* morphology is done via gradation

Exemplish

	Proto- Exemplish	Early Exemplish	Modern Exemplish
NOM	kata	kata	kata
GEN	katas	kaðas	kaða
ACC	kataa	kattaa	katta

More Exemplish

	Proto- Exemplish	Early Exemplish	Modern Exemplish
NOM	jakah	jaḡah	jaḡa
GEN	jakahas	jak(k)aas	jak(k)a
ACC	jakaha	jakaha	jaka(ha)

Thank You!

Sources

- ▶ Estonian: Mikone, Eve. *Ilus eesti keel*. Turku, 2016.
- ▶ Finnish: (Various lectures at University of Turku)
- ▶ Sámi: Sirkka Saarinen's 2017 Northern Sámi course (University of Turku)