
To Be Faithful or to Be Unmarked? That is the Question. The Case of Positional Dependence in the Analysis of Polish Final Devoicing

KATARZYNA SATOŁA

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This paper examines the process of Final Devoicing in Polish from the perspective of Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky 1993, 2004 and McCarthy & Prince 1995). Attention is focused on two possible approaches to positional dependence: positional markedness and positional faithfulness. I argue that positional markedness fails to generate correct output forms and that positional faithfulness is the only theory that provides a viable analysis.

Polish operates with the rule of Final Devoicing which devoices voiced obstruents word finally. Schematically:

- (1) Prosodic Final Devoicing
 $[-son] \rightarrow [-voice]/_)_{PW}$

Crucially, the rule must respond to the end of the phonological word and not to the end of the morphological word because the latter fails to explain the occurrence of devoicing in obstruentsonorant clusters (Rubach & Booij 1990), as shown in (2).

- (2) *zubr* [-pr] ‘bison’ (nom. sg.) - *zubr* + *y* [-br-] (pl.)
mechanizm [-sm] ‘mechanism’ (nom. sg.) - *mechanizm* + *y* [-zm-] (pl.)

The word-final sonorant in the singular form is extrasylabic which means that it is transparent to prosodically conditioned rules (Rubach 1996). Therefore, at the time when the

rule of Prosodic Final Devoicing applies, the preceding voiced obstruent stands at the end of the PW and devoices, which is accordant with (1).

In the analysis of Polish Final Devoicing within the framework of Optimality Theory, I examine whether one of the approaches to positional dependence is more effective and provides a better insight. When I elaborate on the process in relation to positional markedness, the evaluations are correct except for words with obstruent-sonorant clusters, where it is assumed that these words do not undergo Prosodic Final Devoicing. The same analysis recast in positional faithfulness, on the other hand, can handle the data which appear to be problematic for positional markedness, but it runs into difficulty in the analysis of prefixes, because it predicts that in *nadatlantycki* ‘over the Atlantic Ocean’ the underlying voiced obstruent devoices, which is incorrect.

The abovementioned examples of prefixes and obstruent-sonorant clusters seem to be problematic, as it seems that none of the approaches generate correct output forms. However, Rubach (2008) proposes to replace the constraint IDENT[voice])_{ons} by IDENT[voice])_{preson}, which I follow suit and employ it in my analysis. With this refinement, the new constraint generates the correct outputs across the board. Therefore, I conclude that Polish favours positional faithfulness over positional dependence in the analysis of Prosodic Final Devoicing.