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## Finnish Consonant Gradation: A Government Phonology Analysis

Consonant Gradation (CG) is — alongside vowel harmony — *the* predominant phonological phenomenon in Finnish. It is a special kind of lenition causing paradigmatic alternations. Tentatively, we can say that the so-called “strong grade” occurs in the onset of open syllables, the “weak grade” in the onset of closed ones: *seppä* [ˈsepːæ] ‘smith NOM. SG.’ (strong) ~ *sepä-n* [ˈsepæn] ‘id. GEN. SG.’ (weak) or *kipu* [ˈkipu] ‘pain NOM. SG.’ (strong) ~ *kivu-n* [ˈkivun] ‘id. GEN. SG.’ (weak).

CG only applies to stops in voiced environments (*i. e.* intervocalically or after a sonorant). It is realised in different ways: geminates degeminate (“quantitative CG”), while simple stops undergo various changes like spirantisation, complete loss or assimilation (“qualitative CG”). The identification of the lenition site has been a problem for traditional phonological frameworks, which has often led to the claim that CG cannot be handled by phonology any longer. Apparent exceptions include: (i) non-application before a long vowel, no matter if the syllable is closed, (ii) weak grades in cases where there seems to be no trigger, (iii) complications with possessive suffixes etc.

The present analysis is couched in the framework of Government Phonology (GP), *cf.* Kaye, Lowenstamm & Vergnaud (1985, 1990). In particular, I will elaborate on a previous GP analysis of CG by Gibb (1992) who shows that the alternation site can easily be captured in this framework. However, her analysis contradicts the ideas of Lowenstamm (1996), Ségéral & Scheer (1999) and Szigetvári (1999). The latter works constitute a sort of “offspring” to standard GP. Therefore, a re-analysis of CG seems to be in order. It will be shown what the consequences of these changes in theory are for the analysis of CG: Government relations can be restricted to right-headed ones (contra Gibb 1992) and the mechanism of (Proper) Government, traditionally responsible for vowel-zero-alternations, can be used to account for CG, too.

CG is particularly interesting for standard GP and related models, as it is usually seen as a closed-syllable phenomenon. In spite of the notion “syllable” having no status in the GP framework(s), we will be able to make precise predictions on the occurrence of CG. The complications mentioned above disappear and a simple solution can be obtained.

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