

# Vowel–Zero Alternations in West Slavic Prepositions

A Corpus Based Investigation of Polish, Slovak and Czech

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Academic dissertation in Slavic Languages, to be publicly defended, by  
due permission of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at University of  
Gothenburg, on November 8, 2014, at 10.15 a.m., in Lilla Hörsalen,  
Humanisten, Renströmsgatan 6, Gothenburg.



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

# Abstract

Ph.D. dissertation at University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014.

**Title:** Vowel–Zero Alternations in West Slavic Prepositions. A Corpus Based Investigation of Polish, Slovak and Czech.

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**Language:** English, with a Swedish summary.

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**Key words:** Polish, Slovak, Czech, vocalisation, prepositions, vowel-zero alternations, corpus, phonology.

ISSN 2000-1134

ISBN 978-91-981198-3-1

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the scope of the vowel–zero alternations in prepositions in the three major West Slavic languages, i.e. Polish, Slovak and Czech, and to formulate, within the Government Phonology framework, the general phonological principles responsible for the majority of these alternations.

Many prepositions in the Slavic languages have two competing forms, such as the Czech *v / ve in*. It has long been a recognised problem that the conditions regulating the use of these two forms cannot easily be formulated, a difficulty which has led to complications in both prescriptive language recommendations intended for native speakers and in the teaching of these languages to foreign learners.

The present investigation is based on extensive corpus data which have been studied primarily with quantitative methods, but also to some extent qualitatively. Data and previous research have also been derived from the literature on the subject. The contexts of the occurrences of the vocalised form of the prepositions have then been defined as precisely as possible, and the phonological principles responsible for the phonologically driven vocalisations are discussed and formulated.

A certain proportion of the alternations have also been found to occur on lexical, and not phonological grounds.

The findings of this thesis make it possible to present both language learners and native speakers with new, more precise and detailed information concerning the actual usage of the vocalised forms of prepositions. The thesis also provides some interesting language-specific observations on vowel–zero alternations in relation to the comparative and typological research on the subject.