

***i*-ABLAUT IN LITHUANIAN DEVERBAL NOUNS: TOWARDS A SYNCHRONIC DESCRIPTION**

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1. Introduction

➤ **The Problem.** Ablaut (vocalic alternations, Lith. *balsiu kaitos*) is widespread in Lithuanian word-formation (see e.g. Leskien 1884; Ambrazas (ed.) 1997: 67–73). Deverbal nouns are particularly prone to show ablaut:

“There is hardly a single deverbal noun in Lithuanian, which, having a meaning of a nominalized action (*sudaiktinto veiksmo reikšmę*), would retain the short vowel of the original verb.” (Akelaitienė 1996: 24)

The system of ablaut in Lithuanian is extremely complex, and it is usually impossible to link a single derivational process (e.g. formation of deverbal nouns) to a dedicated ablaut pattern. Moreover, the same verb may give rise to several formations with different vocalic grades:

sutikti ‘meet, agree’ → *santykis* ‘relation’, *santaika* ‘concord’
palinkti ‘bend down’ → *polynkis* ‘inclination’, *palanka* ‘bent’

➤ **State of the Art.** Though formation of nominals in Lithuanian has been subject to a number of studies, both as parts of wide-scale descriptive works (e.g. Skardžius 1943; Ulvydas (ed.) 1965: 303–306, 423–436), and as specific contributions (e.g. Leskien 1891, Urbutis 1961, Ambrazas 1993), the systematic description of the distribution of ablaut grades is lacking. Most descriptive studies simply list words showing ablaut without even posing the question about possible rules regulating the choice of the root vowel.

➤ **Our Goals.** In our contribution, we aim at showing that the distribution of ablaut grades in a substantial subset of Lithuanian deverbal nominal formations is not random but rather obeys quite strict, though not unexceptional, rules.

It is important to stress that we are looking for a **purely synchronic** distribution, and disregard the historical sources of possible rules and exceptions (e.g. whether the *i* of the root reflects the PIE or Proto-Baltic zero grade of **ei* or of **e*).

➤ **The Data.** We limit ourselves to suffixless prefixal deverbal nouns (*galūnių vediniai*) based on verbs with roots containing vowel *i*. This choice is motivated by the comparatively large number of such formations (our database includes ca. 200 lexemes formed from ca. 80 roots) and by the fact that they show an impressive variety of ablaut patterns.

2. The Findings

The distribution we have found is complex and contains rules of different degrees of generality. Some of the exceptions to the more general rules can themselves be stated as rules applying to a limited domain.

➤ **The General Rule**

(1) If the deverbal noun belongs to the ‘hard’ declension class (NomSg *-a*, *-as*, NomPl *-os*, *-ai*), the vowel grade is *a* (if followed by a sonorant) or *ai* (otherwise). If the deverbal noun belongs to the ‘soft’ declension class (NomSg *-is*, *-ys* NomPl *-iai*), the vowel grade is *i* (if followed by sonorant+obstruent) or *y* (otherwise).

Supporting data:

Table 1

Root ‘Hard’ declension

1. Roots ending in a sonorant

-gim-	išgama ‘degenerate’ < išgimti ‘degenerate’
-gin-	išgana ‘common pasture’ < išginti ‘drive away’, užuogana ‘enclosure’ < užginti ‘drive into’
-kil-	
-mir-	išmara ‘weakling’ < išmirti ‘die out’
-rim-	atrama ‘support’ < atrimti ‘lean’, parama ‘sm.’ < parimti ‘sm.’
-skil-	įskalas ‘slit, section’ < įskilti ‘become split’, nuoskala ‘shiver’ < nuskilti ‘split off’, praskala ‘rift’ < praskilti ‘split, splinter’
-skir-	
-spir-	atspara ‘prop’ < atspirti ‘prop up’, paspara ‘sm.’ < paspirti ‘sm.’
-svir-	persvara ‘preponderance’ < persvirti ‘lean over’
-šil-	
-tir-	
-tvin-	atatvanas ‘flooded place’ < atitvinti ‘flood’, patvanas ‘flood’ < patvinti ‘flood’

2. Roots ending in an obstruent

-drik-	nuodraikos ‘a kind of straw’ < nudrikiti ‘spread’, padraika ‘frivolous creature’ < padrikiti ‘scatter’
-kiš-	užkaiša ‘slide valve’ < užkišti ‘stuff up’
-kit-	
-krit-	pakaita ‘change’ < pakisti ‘change’
-lik-	atlaikas ‘remainder’ < atlikti ‘remain’, palaikai ‘legacy’ < palikti ‘remain’
-mig-	
-miš-	įmaišas ‘admixture’ < įmišti ‘get mixed in’, priemaiša ‘sm.’ < primišti ‘sm.’
-nik-	
-riš-	prieraiša ‘affection’ < pririšti ‘bind to’, sąraiša ‘tie’ < surišti ‘tie up’

‘Soft’ declension

pokylis ‘feast’ < pakilti ‘raise’

atskyris ‘rank’ < atskirti ‘separate’, poskyris ‘section’ < paskirti ‘set, allot’
 atospyris ‘rebuff’, atspyris ‘support’ < atspirti ‘prop up’, paspyris ‘prop’ < paspirti ‘prop up’, sąspyris ‘argument’ < suspirti ‘prop up’
 nuosvyris ‘inclination’ < nusvirti ‘hang down’, posvyris ‘slope’ < pasvirti ‘lean’
 atšylis ‘thaw’ < atšilti ‘grow warmer’, išylis ‘heating’ < išilti ‘grow hot’
 potyris ‘experience’ < patirti ‘experience’, prietyris ‘sm.’ < pritirti ‘sm.’
 potvynis ‘flood’ < patvinti ‘flood’

iškyšis ‘protuberance’ < iškišti ‘thrust out’, pakyšis ‘bribe’ < pakišti ‘slip, give’, prakyšis ‘loss’ < prakišti ‘push through’, užkyšis ‘bolt’ < užkišti ‘stuff up’
 pokytis ‘change’ < pakisti ‘change’
 atkrytis ‘relapse (of an illness)’ < atkristi ‘fall away’, įkrytis ‘hollow’ < įkristi ‘sink into’

įmygis ‘deep sleep’ < įmigti ‘fall sound asleep’, nuomygis ‘first dream’ < numigti ‘sleep’, sąmygis ‘deep sleep’ < sumigti ‘fall asleep’
 sąmyšis ‘confusion’ < sumišti ‘get mixed’

įnykis ‘ardour’ < įnikti ‘apply oneself to’
 paryšis ‘garter’ < parišti ‘tie under’, perryšis ‘bandaging’ < perrišti ‘bandage’, sąryšis ‘connection’ < surišti ‘tie together’

-rizg-	sąraizga ‘tangle’ < surigzti ‘become entangled’	
-skrid-		poskrydis ‘flight’ < paskristi ‘fly’, sąskrydis ‘rally’ < suskristi ‘fly together’
-smig-	sąsmaiga ‘needle nozzle’ < susmigti ‘pierce’	
-stig-		priestygis ‘lack’ < pristigti ‘lack’
-tik-	nuotaika ‘mood’ < nutikti ‘happen’, santaika ‘concord’ < sutikti ‘agree’	atotykis ‘conformity’ < atitikti ‘conform’, nuotykis ‘adventure’ < nutikti ‘happen’, santykis ‘relation’ < sutikti ‘agree, meet’
-vis-	prievaisa ‘offspring (of animals)’ < privisti ‘breed’	
3. Roots ending in a cluster sonorant + obstruent		
-blind-	prieblanda ‘twilight’ < priblįsti ‘get dark’	
-dirb-		atodirbis ‘working off’ < atidirbti ‘work off’, įdirbis ‘groundwork’ < įdirbti ‘till’, išdirbis ‘output’ < išdirbti ‘work for some time’
-dirg-	išdarga ‘shameless person’ < išdirgti ‘get spoilt’	
-griNž-	atograža ‘tropic’ < atgrižti ‘return’, sangraža ‘reflexivity’ < sugrižti ‘return’	
-kimš-	įkamša ‘stuffing’ < įkimšti ‘squeeze into’, iškamša ‘stuffed animal’ < iškimšti ‘stuff’, sankamša ‘crush’ < sukimšti ‘cram into’, užkamša ‘plug’ < užkimšti ‘plug up’	
-kirp-	atkarpa ‘dress length’ < atkirpti ‘cut off’, iškarpa ‘cutting’ < iškirpti ‘cut out’, nuokarpa ‘scrap’ < nukirpti ‘clip off’, prakarpa ‘cut’ < prakirpti ‘cut through’	
-kirt-	įkarta ‘notch’ < įkirsti ‘notch’, iškarta ‘glade’ < iškirsti ‘cut down (trees)’, nuokarta ‘scrap’ < nukirsti ‘cut off’, prakarta ‘armhole’ < prakirsti ‘cut through’, užkarta ‘notch’ < užkirsti ‘notch’	sankirtis ‘intersection’ < sukirsti ‘chop up’, atkirtis ‘rebuff’ < atkirsti ‘chop off’, užkirtis ‘notch’ < užkirsti ‘notch’
-krimt-	pakramta ‘grief’ < pakrimsti ‘gnaw’	
-lind-	įlanda ‘hole’ < įlįsti ‘get into’, išlanda ‘outlet’ < išlįsti ‘get out’, pralanda ‘hole’ < pralįsti ‘get through’, užuolanda ‘den’ < užlįsti ‘creep behind’	
-link-	atlanka ‘lapel’, atlankas ‘flap’ < atlinkti ‘unbend’, įlanka ‘bay’ < įlinkti ‘bend inwards’, išlanka ‘curve’ < išlinkti ‘bend’, nuolanka ‘declination’ < nulinkti ‘incline’, palanka ‘bend’ < palinkti ‘bend down’, užlankas ‘welt’, užuolanka ‘winding’ < užlinkti ‘turn up’	įlinkis ‘sagging’ < įlinkti ‘bend inwards’, išlinkis ‘curve’ < išlinkti ‘bend’, perlinkis ‘twist’ < perlinkti ‘bend’, polinkis ‘turn for’ < palinkti ‘bend down’, užlinkis ‘bend’ < užlinkti ‘turn up’
-milž-		išmilžis ‘yield of milk’ < išmilžti ‘milk’
-mirk-	įmarka ‘pit for retting flax’ < įmirkti ‘get wet’	
-mirš-	už(u)marša ‘oblivion’ < užmiršti ‘forget’	
-nirt-		įnirtis ‘fury’ < įnirsti ‘become embittered’

-rink-	atranka ‘selection’ < atrinkti ‘select’, paranka ‘selection’ < parinkti ‘choose’, sąranka ‘collection’ < surinkti ‘collect’	
-sirg-	pasarga ‘indisposition’ < pasirgti ‘be ill’, persargos ‘cold’ < persirgti ‘have been ill’, posargos ‘influenza’ < pasirgti ‘be ill’	
-slink-	nuoslanka ‘landslide’ < nuslinkti ‘slip down’, paslanka ‘liveliness’ < paslinkti ‘move’	poslinkis ‘improvement’ < paslinkti ‘move’
-tilp-	įtalpa ‘capacity’ < įtilpti ‘go in’, patalpa ‘lodging’ < patilpti ‘fit in’	
-vilk-	apvalkas ‘pillowcase’ < apvilkti ‘clothe’, išvalka ‘hole for fish-nets’ < išvilkti ‘drag out’, pavalkai ‘horse’s collar’ < pavilkti ‘drag along’, pervalkas ‘portage’ < pervilkti ‘drag over’, sąvalkos ‘riffraff’ < suvilkti ‘drag together’	
-virt-	atvarta ‘second ploughing’, atvartas ‘flap’ < atvirsti ‘fall off’, išvarta ‘windfallen tree’ < išvirsti ‘fall out’, nuovarta ‘avalanche’ < nuvirsti ‘fall down’, pervarta ‘change’ < perversti ‘turn over’, sąvarta ‘dump’ < suvirsti ‘fall down’, užvarta ‘blockage’ < užvirsti ‘fall’	

At first sight, there is quite a substantial body of exceptions to the general rule. However, most of these exceptions are not random and can be themselves described by rules.

(2) Nouns of the ‘hard’ declension formed from verbs which lengthen the vowel in the Preterite, may have (and usually do have) vowel grade *y* instead of *a*.

Supporting data:

Table 2

-gir-	pagyra ‘praise’ < pagirti ‘praise’ (Pret. gyрэ)
-min-	nuomynos ‘trampled bread’ < numinti ‘trample on’ (Pret. mynè)
-pil-	išpylos ‘slops’ < išpilti ‘pour out’, nuopylos ‘remains’ < nupilti ‘pour off’, sampyla ‘embankment’ < supilti ‘pour together’ (Pret. pylè)
-pin-	sampyna ‘junction’ < supinti ‘interlace’ (Pret. pynè)
-skin-	išskynos ‘chopped bush’ < išskinti ‘cut down’, nuoskyna ‘woodcutting area’ < nuskindi ‘pick off’, praskyna, proskyna ‘cutting (in a forest)’ < praskinti ‘clear away’ (Pret. skynè)
-skir-	išskyros ‘secretion’ < išskirti ‘secrete; single out’, paskyra ‘warrant’ < paskirti ‘set’, perskyra ‘division’ < perskirti ‘separate’ (Pret. skyрэ)
-tir-	patyra ‘experience’ < patirti ‘undergo’ (Pret. tyrè)

Some of such verbs also have deverbal nouns with the exceptional short *i* instead of *y* or *a*:

-min-	išminos ‘trampled crops’ < išminti ‘trample down’ (mina, mynè)
-pil-	užpilas ‘infusion’ < užpilti ‘pour upon’ (Pret. pylè)
-pin-	įpinas ‘fillet’ < įpinti ‘plait into’, papina ‘knotting’ < papinti ‘knot’ (Pret. pynè)
-spir-	paspira ‘prop’ < paspirti ‘prop up’ (Pret. spyрэ)

Interestingly, into this group may also fall three nominals formed from verbs where *i~y* alternation is attested in the Present rather than in the Preterite and is, strictly speaking, not an instance of ablaut at all:

Table 3

-kil-	iškyla ‘crest’ < iškilti ‘rise, advance’, pakyla ‘platform’ < pakilti ‘rise’ (Pres. kyla < *ki- <i>n</i> -l-a, kilo)
-svir-	nuosvyra ‘overhang’ < nusvirti ‘hang down’ (Pres. svyra < *svi- <i>n</i> -r-a, sviro)

|| (3) Nouns of the ‘hard’ declension formed from verbs with roots ending in obstruent
 (single or a cluster) prefixed with *iš-* have an exceptional grade *i*.

Supporting data:

Table 4

-brizg-	išbrizga ‘rag’ < išbrizgti ‘become worn’
-drisk-	išdriskos ‘rags’ < išdriksti ‘get torn out’
-kiš-	iškyša ‘protuberance’ < iškišti ‘put out’ NB <i>y</i> instead of <i>i</i>
-knis-	išknisa ‘a place dug up’ < išknisti ‘dig up’
-krit-	iškritis ‘precipitation’ < iškristi ‘fall out’
-lik-	išlika ‘remains’ < išlikti ‘survive’
-plik-	išplika ‘bare place’ < išplikti ‘grow bare’
-tiž-	ištiža ‘irresolute person’ < ištižti ‘become slack’
-vis-	išvisa ‘degenerate’ < išvisti ‘degenerate’

Exceptions: none

After the systematic exceptions covered by rules (2) and (3) are excluded, the following exceptions to the general rule (1) can be listed (sign // means that there are nouns formed from the same root and conforming to the rules):

Table 5

Root	‘Hard’ declension	‘Soft’ declension
	1. Roots ending in a sonorant	
	1.1. <i>i</i> instead of <i>a</i> (i.e. no ablaut)	No exceptions
-gin-//	pragina ‘run’ < praginti ‘drive along’	
-min ₂ -	užuomina ‘allusion’ < užminti ‘hint’	
-vir-	išviros ‘residues from cooking’ < išvirti ‘cook’	
-svil-	pasvilai ‘burnt and stuck pieces of food’ < pasvilti ‘get a little burnt’	
	2. Roots ending in an obstruent	
	2.1. <i>i</i> instead of <i>ai</i> (i.e. no ablaut)	No exceptions
-brizg-	atbrizgos ‘fringe’ < atbrizgti ‘become ripped off’, nuobrizga ‘rags’ < nubrizgti ‘become frayed’	
-kib-	priekiba ‘adhesion’ < prikibti ‘stick to’, sankiba ‘clutch’ < sukibti ‘be coupled’	
-kiš-//	atkiša ‘protrusion’ < atkišti ‘stretch out’	
-krit-//	nuokritis ‘fallen fruit’ < nukristi ‘fall off’	
-lip ₁ -	palipa ‘footboard’ < palipti ‘climb up’, perlipa ‘stile (e.g. to climb over a fence)’ < perlipti ‘climb over’	
-lip ₂ -	prielipas ‘kokia pridėtinė daikto dalis’ (LKŽ) < prilipti ‘stick to’	
-riš-//	aprišas ‘bandage’ < aprišti ‘tie round’	
-rit-	paritas ‘a bar put under beams’ < paristi ‘roll’	
-tiž-	santiža ‘gruel’ < sutižti ‘become slushy’	

2.2. *y* instead of *ai*

-krit-// sankrytos ‘wind-fallen trees’ < sukristi ‘fall down’

2.3. *a* instead of *ai*

-brid- atabradas ‘sand-bar’ < atbristi ‘come wading’

-kib- apkaba ‘iron ring’ < apkibti ‘stick all around’, atkaba ‘cut (of cars)’ < atkibti ‘come off’, įkaba ‘rowlock’ < įkibti ‘seize’, pakaba ‘hanger’, pakabas ‘coat-hanger’ < pakibti ‘be suspended’, priekaba ‘trailer’ < prikibti ‘stick to’, sankaba ‘cramp’ < sukibti ‘be coupled’, užkabas ‘hook’ < užkibti ‘catch on’

3. Roots ending in a cluster sonorant + obstruent

3.1. *i* instead of *a* (i.e. no ablaut)

-dirb-//

-gird- nuogirdos ‘rumour’ < nugirsti ‘overhear’

-grind- pagrindas ‘base’ < pagrįsti ‘ground’

-kirp-// prakirpa ‘cut’ < prakirpti ‘cut through’

-kirt-// atkirta ‘cutoff’ < atkirsti ‘cut off’, sankirta ‘intersection’ < sukirsti ‘chop up’

-pirk- išpirka ‘ransom’ < išpirkti ‘redeem’, papirka ‘bribe’ < papirkti ‘bribe’

-spirg- išspirga ‘crackling’ < išspirgti ‘roast’

-švilp- pašvilpa ‘spendthrift’ < pašvilpti ‘whistle’

-tirp- atotirpa ‘thawed patch’ < atitirpti ‘thaw off’, protirpa ‘sm.’ < pratirpti ‘sm.’

3.2. *a* instead of *i*

įdarbis ‘full swing (of work)’ < įdirbti ‘till’, uždarbis ‘earnings’ < uždirbti ‘earn’

3. Discussion

In section 2 we have argued that for the vast majority of Lithuanian prefixal nouns based on verbs with stem-vowel *i* the grade of the stem-vowel may be predicted by a simple and general rule (1):

- || (1) If the deverbal noun belongs to the ‘hard’ declension class (NomSg *-a*, *-as*), the vowel grade is *a* (if followed by a sonorant) or *ai* (otherwise). If the deverbal noun belongs to the ‘soft’ declension class (NomSg *-is*, *-ys*), the vowel grade is *i* (if followed by sonorant+obstruent) or *y* (otherwise).

This rule, hinted at in Akelaitienė (1996: 31), but without any systematic evaluation, is interesting in two respects. On the one hand, it links the choice of the stem-vowel to the synchronically quite abstract morphological feature ‘inflection class’ (‘hard’ vs. ‘soft’). On the other hand, from the point of view of both diachrony and synchronic morphophonology, rule (1) has a clear phonological motivation:

- the front vowels /i/, /i:/ are chosen when the stem-final consonant is palatalized and the endings following it may contain /i/, cf. NomSg *-is*, AccSg *-i*, LocSg *-yje*;
- the back vowel /a/ or diphthong /ai/ are chosen when the stem-final consonant is not palatalized and the endings following it may contain /a/, cf. NomSg *-as*, *-a*, AccSg *-a*.

Thus, the general rule (1), on the synchronic level, may be treated an instance of a highly morphologized **assimilation**.

In this light, at least one set of exceptions, i.e. words with *a* instead of *ai* (section 2.3 of Table 5) can be regarded as actually conforming to rule (1), since they contain a back root vowel.

From the distribution of exceptions in table 5 it is obvious that the majority of exceptional nouns simply have no ablaut at all, i.e. retain the vowel of the verb despite the ‘hard’ declension type. The fact that the ‘reverse’ type of exception (i.e. *a* or *ai* instead of *i* in nouns of the ‘soft’ declension) is virtually unattested, is particularly telling.

Interestingly, suffixless deverbal nouns formed from unprefixated verbs show a similar distribution of vowel grades (we omit the data for the sake of space).

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