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CONTENTS

ONDŘEJ ŠEFČÍK / HARALD BICHLMEIER / ROMAN SUKAČ The life and work of an improbable (but not impossible) linguist	9
KRISTÝNA DUFKOVÁ A selected bibliography of Václav Blažek	13
PATRIZIA DE BERNARDO STEMPEL Die altkeltische Weihinschrift von Bern und das Schicksal auslautender Sibilanten in der Keltiké	41
ALEŠ BIČAN Syllabic nasals in Czech	59
HARALD BICHLMEIER The non-Indo-European substratum in Germanic: some notes on the history of the topic	73
ROGER BLENCH Things your classics master never told you: a borrowing from Trans New Guinea languages into Latin	93
VÍT BOČEK Briefly on the origins of Mediterranean Lingua Franca	103
ALLAN R. BOMHARD Etymological notes II: more Nostratic etymologies	109
EUDMILA BUZÁSSYOVÁ On word formation in late ancient Latin Grammar	119
EYSTEIN DAHL Come rain or shine: the etymology and lexical semantics of some precipitation verbs in Indo-European	131

GEORGE VAN DRIEM Seres, Tocharians and phylolinguistics	143
MICHAEL FORTESCUE What's in a linguistic 'mesh'	149
DITA FRANTÍKOVÁ External syntax of Hittite cardinals: noun phrase modifiers and/or heads	175
JADRANKA GVOZDANOVIĆ Pannonian in a linguistic perspective	191
IRÉN HEGEDŰS The etymology of Prasun <i>ūp'ūn</i> 'one'	201
ILONA JANYŠKOVÁ Протобългаризми в старославянском языке	215
PETR KARLÍK Der Tod des Supinums (Ein Blick in die Geschichte der tschechischen Grammatik)	233
HELENA KARLÍKOVÁ Der Kuss im indogermanischen Wortschatz (Herkunft, Motivierung, Funktionen)	245
RONALD I. KIM The numerals 'one' to 'ten' in Ossetic	257
FREDERIK KORTLANDT The disintegration of the Indo-European language family	267
VINCENT MARTZLOFF / BARBORA MACHAJDÍKOVÁ Consonant clusters in South Picene: synchrony and diachrony	277
H. CRAIG MELCHERT The etymology of Hieroglyphic Luvian <i>tina⁽ⁿ⁾t(a)</i> - 'tithe'	299
NORBERT OETTINGER Zum griechischen Orpheus	309

GREGORIO DEL OLMO LETE The Ugaritic archives of the “Maison du Lettré” and “Maison de <i>Rašap’abu</i> ”	313
GEORGES-JEAN PINAULT Tocharian taxonomy of wealth	323
JIŘÍ REJZEK On the language situation in the Czech lands after the arrival of the Slavs	339
WOJCIECH SMOCZYŃSKI The etymology of Lith. <i>žiūrėti</i>	351
HARRY STROOMER An Ayt Hdiddu Berber text from James Bynon’s collection	355
ROMAN SUKAČ Rolling the paradigms about	361
ONDŘEJ ŠEFČÍK On the development of the cluster <i>pt</i> in Pre-Slavic and on Common Slavic <i>sedmь</i>	367
DANIELA URBANOVÁ / JURAJ FRANEK <i>Hoc ego averse scribo</i> : the <i>aversus</i> -formula on Ancient Greek and Latin curse tablets	375
PAVLA VALČÁKOVÁ Etymology of animal names in the works of Václav Blažek	393
JOÃO VELOSO Old hydronymy in northern Portugal: digging for the roots of ‘Almorode’	397
RÉMY VIREDAZ Notes d’ <i>étymologie slave</i>	403
BOHUMIL VYKYPĚL Bemerkungen zur deutschen Sprachwissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus	423
ROGER D. WOODARD A formal and functional interpretation of Linear B <i>qi-wo</i> as /k ^w iwo-/	435

SYLLABIC NASALS IN CZECH¹

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Abstract:

The paper deals with syllabic nasals in Modern Czech contrasting them to the other syllabic consonants the language has, namely the liquids [r] and [l]. Two such nasals occur, the bilabial nasal [m̥] and the alveolar nasal [n̥]. They are found mostly in borrowings from German and English. Having identified 118 lexical items with syllabic nasals, the author discusses the phonotactics, origin and variation of these segments. It is shown that the nasals are syllabic in slightly different contexts than the liquids.

Keywords: phonotactics, loanword, syllable, Czech, Anglicism, Germanism

1. Introduction

Modern Czech makes use of the syllabic liquids [r] and [l] (cf. *prst* ‘finger’, *vlk* ‘wolf’), but it has also two syllabic nasals, one of which is the bilabial [m̥] occurring in the native words *sedm* ‘seven’ and *osm* ‘eight’. The presence of the other syllabic nasal, the alveolar [n̥], is not usually acknowledged, most likely because it is not found in native words (Kučera 1961, Vachek 1968). If mentioned, it is said to be a substandard or dialectal variant of [m̥] in *sedm*, *osm* (VŠČ 1968: 59, Zeman 2008: 111), and its occurrence in dialects is in fact recognized (Bělič 1972a). Outside them the existence of [n̥] is acknowledged in the Czech pronunciation of proper names of English or German origin such as *Watson*, *Rosenberg*, *Ravensbrück* (VŠČ 1978: 82, Palková 1997: 270, Kučera/Zeman 2008: 17, Ziková 2017). However, the syllabic alveolar nasal also appears in appellatives, which likewise happen to be of English and German origin. Foreign-origin appellatives moreover attest instances of [m̥]. In this paper we discuss the occurrence of the syllabic nasals in Czech, their phonotactics as well as their origin and variation. It is shown that there are certain notable differences between the syllabic nasals and the syllabic liquids that concern the conditions in which they are syllabic and the segments they combine with.

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2. In search of syllabic nasals

The descriptions mentioning the syllabic nasals [m̥] and [n̥] are silent on the conditions under which these segments appear. No attention has been given to the limits and extent of their combinability with other segments. No one has considered whether nasal syllabicity is a distinctive feature distinguishing phonemes, a concomitant and automatic property of nasals in certain situations and/or a syntagmatic feature of prosodic/syllabic organization of utterances. What is more, nasal syllabicity is usually not marked in phonetic transcriptions offered in dictionaries with the exception of VŠČ 1978. The silence and the lack of marking may be interpreted as implying that nasal syllabicity is contextually predictable just like liquid syllabicity, which is also commonly left unmarked in transcriptions.

The evidence of the words cited to contain a syllabic nasal furthermore suggests that syllabic nasals occur in the same general phonotactic contexts as the syllabic liquids, namely between two consonants (C_C, e.g. *osmdesát* [-sɔ̃pd-] ‘eighty’, *vafnrok* [-fɔ̃r-] (type of coat) – cf. *prst* ‘finger’, *vlk* ‘wolf’) and between a consonant and a word boundary (C_#, e.g. *sedm* [-dɔ̃m] ‘seven’, *newton* [-tɔ̃n] (measure in physics) – cf. *vítr* ‘wind’, *mysl* ‘mind’). The assumption is supported by the fact that the nasals are, like the liquids, non-syllabic in all the other situations. These include any vowel-adjacent context (e.g. *most* ‘bridge’, *slon* ‘elephant’ – cf. *ráno* ‘morning’, *sokol* ‘hawk’), and most likely also the position between a word boundary and a consonant (#_C). The liquids are non-syllabic there (cf. *rtuť* ‘quicksilver’, *lhůta* ‘deadline’), and the same is true for [m] (cf. *msta* ‘vengeance’, which is monosyllabic). In our data the alveolar nasal is found in such a context only in the Vietnamese surname *Nguyen*. It is hard to say whether the nasal is syllabic or non-syllabic for *Czechs* there, and we will therefore refrain from any judgment on the syllabicity of [n] in the #_C context.

With this in mind, we have searched through the *Phonological Corpus of Czech* for the words in which the nasals [m] and [n] occur in the contexts C_C and C_#, and have assessed the words as to the syllabicity of the nasals. The Corpus contains over 450,000 unique words taken either from published dictionaries and other databases of Czech, including databases of proper names, or from various Czech texts. It also contains words from the unpublished *Phonological Database of Czech Anglicisms* so far not recorded in any published dictionary of Czech. The search has shown that not all the nasals are syllabic in the contexts C_C and C_#. There are certain restrictions discussed below. In fact, we have found no more than 118 lexical items with a syllabic nasal.² Derivatives, spelling variants

² Their list is available at <<http://www.ujc.cas.cz/phword>>.

and inflected word forms are not included in the count.³ The syllabic bilabial nasal [m̥] occurs in 23 lexical units, of which 12 are of native origin. These are the numerals *sedm* ‘seven’ and *osm* ‘eight’ and their derivatives with the components *-náct* ‘-teen’, *-desát* ‘-ty’, *-krát* ‘-times’, *-mecítmy* ‘-twenty’ and *-set* ‘-hundred’. The remaining 11 items are 2 Anglicisms, 8 Germanisms and 1 Russism. Note that all the Germanisms and the Russism are proper names. The syllabic alveolar nasal occurs in 95 words, of which 48 are Anglicisms and 47 Germanisms. The Anglicisms include 6 proper names, while the Germanisms 31. Before continuing, let us say a few words about the other nasals Czech has. These are [ŋ], [ɲ] and [ɲ̥]. The first two are allophonic variants of the nasals [m] and [n], respectively. The labiodental nasal [ŋ] is a free variant of [m] before [f] and [v], that is, words like *nymfa* ‘nymph’ and *tramvaj* ‘tram’ can be pronounced either as [nm̥fa], [tram̥vaj] or as [nɲ̥fa], [traɲ̥vaj]. It is possible that [ŋ] would be syllabic in case [m̥] stands before the labiodental fricatives. No such words occurs in our data, though.

In contrast, a potential example of syllabic [ɲ] is found among our data. The velar nasal [ɲ] is a positional variant of [n] before [k] and [g], so that the words like *banka* ‘bank’ or *mango* ‘mango’ are realized as [baŋka] and [maŋgo]. It is thus likely that the syllabic nasal that may be pronounced in the surname *Rosenkranc* is actually the velar nasal [ɲ].

The last nasal is [ɲ̥]. Unlike [ŋ] and [ɲ], it is a phonemic nasal, not just an allophonic variant. In standard non-dialectal Czech it is never syllabic, but the use of a syllabic palatal nasal has been reported for some dialects. It occurs (or used to occur) as an outcome of the reduction of front high vowels after the palatal nasal. For example, the word *zedník* ‘mason’ may be realized as [zɛdɲ̥k] instead of [zɛdɲi:k]. In some words and in some regions, the syllabic [ɲ̥] varies with the sequence of [ɲ] and a reduced accompanying vowel [ə] (i.e. [zɛdɲ̥ək]), but the two pronunciations are hard to discern according to the most recent dialectological survey (ČJA 5: 147). Since the data collection for ČJA took place in the 1960s and 1970s, it is uncertain whether the palatal nasal is still preserved in the dialects. The reduction is mentioned in a more recent analysis of the South West Moravian dialects (Čižmárová 2000), but according to the author of the analysis (personal communication) it is probably no longer used or at least used by the older generation only.

³ We have further excluded two types of word. First, interjections such as *hm*, *ehm*, *uhm* as well as verbs derived from them, namely *zahnkati* ‘to say *hm*’ and its variant *zahnhati*. Second, words ending in the suffix *-ism*, mostly likely realized as [-zm̥] (e.g. *impresionism*). The suffix is obsolete now, having been replaced by *-ismus* (*impresionismus*).

3. Occurrence

Having a database of the words containing a syllabic nasal, we can look into the occurrence of these segments and compare it with the occurrence of the syllabic liquids in order to find differences and commonalities. The starting hypothesis is that both types of sonants are syllabic under the same conditions. The two potential syllabic contexts are C_C and C_#. These macro-contexts can be divided into several subtypes according to the place of articulation of the neighboring consonants. A sonant can be preceded by an obstruent (O), a nasal (N) or a liquid (L), and followed by any of these consonant types or by a word boundary (#), which gives 12 possibilities. Note that the consonants [r] (ř) and [j] form a separate class, but are not considered here because all the sonants are non-syllabic in their vicinity (but see Bičan ms. on some possible exceptions among Anglicisms such as *multiplayer* [-jɾ]).⁴

The liquids occur in all the possible contexts except for L_L. They are always syllabic there, though some limitations apply (Bičan 2013). In contrast, nasal syllabicity is much less straightforward. First of all, the syllabic nasals occur only in obstruent-initial contexts. Secondly, although both syllabic and non-syllabic nasals are possible in those contexts, the liquids are always syllabic there. The only situation in which they are in agreement with the liquids is the word-final context C_#. Here both of the nasals are syllabic like the liquids.

The occurrence of [m̩] is exemplified in (1). To begin with, it occurs in the word-final position (O_#), which is actually the only situation, if we leave out derivatives, where a syllabic nasal is found in the native words. It is also attested in two Anglicisms. Another example is probably the word *Chorezm* ‘Khwarezm’, mostly likely borrowed from Russian, though ultimately probably of Persian origin. However, since the word belongs to a specialized vocabulary, we cannot confirm the syllabicity of the final [m].

(1)	Non-syllabic, native	Syllabic, native	Syllabic, foreign
O_#	(not found)	<i>sedm</i> <i>osm</i>	<i>rhythm</i> [-tm̩] - <i>and-blues</i> <i>custom</i> [-tm̩]
O_O	<i>zmdlelý</i> [zmd-] <i>zmlhouřiti</i> [zml̩-]	<i>osmdesát</i> [-sm̩k-] <i>sedmkrát</i> [-dm̩k-]	<i>Rožmberk</i> [-z̩mb-] <i>Rýzmburk</i> [-z̩mb-]
O_N	<i>kradmě</i> [-dm̩-] <i>rozmnnožit</i> [-zmn-]	<i>sedmmecitný</i> [-dm̩m-] <i>osmnáct</i> [-sm̩n-]	(not found)
O_L	<i>smrad</i> [smr-] <i>odmlada</i> [-dml-]	(not found)	(not found)

More interesting are the other contexts. As the examples under (1) show, the contexts O_O and O_N allow for both a non-syllabic and syllabic bilabial nasal.

⁴ The glosses for the Czech Anglicisms are not provided when their spelling and meaning match their English source words. The glosses for the other examples are usually given only on their first mention.

The examples with [ɱ] are either derivatives of the numerals *sedm* and *osm* or foreign-origin words, all of which are names of castles or chateaux like *Rožmberk*, *Rýzmburk*. The words share a common property: [ɱ] is found after another, a vowel-filled syllable. In contrast, the non-syllabic examples are all of native origin. They are of three kinds: (i) A word contains a bilabial nasal in the onset of its initial syllable, e.g. *zmdlelý* (adj. derived from *zmdlít* ‘to become weary’), *smrad* ‘bad smell’. (ii) It is a derivative of a word of type (i), e.g. *rozmnóžit* ‘to duplicate (perf.)’, *odmlada* ‘since youth’ (cf. *množit* ‘to duplicate (imperf.)’, *mladý* ‘young’). (iii) A word contains the sequence [ɱɲɛ] spelled as *mě*, e.g. *kradmě* ‘by stealth’. The sequence has developed from palatalized [mʲ], that is, it was originally a single segment.

In short, the syllabicity of the bilabial nasal is dependent not only on phonotactics, but also on the origin of words. Morphological structure may also play a role. In the syllabic examples the bilabial nasal stands either before a synchronic morphological boundary (the native examples) or before an original morphological boundary, i.e. the place names like *Rožmberk* and *Rýzmburk* are originally compounds containing the German elements *Berg* ‘hill’ and *Burg* ‘castle’. Since the elements in the forms *berk* and *burk* appear in many other castle names (e.g. *Špilberk*, *Cimburk*), it could be viewed at least as a pseudo-morpheme in Czech.

However, all of these are extra-phonological facts, concerning either diachrony or morphology. At the phonological level we face a difference between a non-syllabic and syllabic bilabial nasal, a difference that has a meaning-distinguishing potential (cf. [-dɱɲ-] in *kradmě* × [-dɱm-] in *sedmmecítmý*, [-zɱn-] in *rozmnóžit* × [-sɱn-] in *osmnáct*; cf. also [-zɱd-] in *nezmdlelý*, negative of *zmdlelý* × [-sɱd-] in *osmdesát*). To put it simply, non-syllabic [m] occurs in the same *phonological* contexts as syllabic [ɱ], and the two nasals can be, at least potentially, replaced in such a way that brings about a change in meaning. Thus, the nasals might be interpreted as two separate phonemes /m/ and /ɱ/, with the syllabicity being a distinctive feature, rather than as two allophonic variants of /m/, as is usually assumed. Although such an analysis is possible, we propose another one: treating the syllabicity of [ɱ] as a phonological signal of a boundary between higher-level units, that is, as Trubetzkoy’s (1939) *Grenzsignale*. Accordingly, the bilabial nasal would be syllabic in the contexts O_O and O_N⁵ if and only if the consonant that follows [ɱ] belongs to a distinct phonological domain. Or, which is equivalent, the bilabial nasal would be non-syllabic in O_O and O_N when the consonant that follows it belongs to the same phonological domain. The higher-level unit is here a morpheme (-*desát*, -*náct*) or a pseudo-morpheme (-*berk*, -*burk*).

⁵ And *mutatis mutandis* also in O_L, though no examples have been found.

Let us now pay attention to the alveolar nasal. It is always syllabic in the obstruent-initial contexts with one exception of the Anglicism *copartnership* [-tɲɪʃ-], in which the liquid is syllabic (see also the next section). Examples follow; all come from loanwords, and in all [ɲ] stands after a vowel-filled syllable.

- (2) Syllabic [ɲ]
 O_# (not found)
 O_# *newton* [-tɲ], *greisen* [-zɲ] (type of granite), *fashion* [-ʃɲ]
 O_O *šunkňfleky* (type of meal), *papndekl* ‘cardboard’, *secondhand* [-kɲd-]
 O_N *selfgovernment* [-vɲm-]⁶
 O_L *cotton-rayon* [-tɲr-], *vafňrok*, *crimsonramblerka* [-sɲr-] ‘Crimson Rambler rose’

The remaining possible places where the syllabic nasals could occur are the nasal- and liquid-initial contexts. All the nasal-initial contexts are ruled out due to two phonotactic restrictions (Bičan 2013). First, Czech does not allow sequences of more than two nasals. Second, a two-nasal sequence must stand between two vowels (cf. *mnoho* ‘lots’, *vemme*, 1p.pl. imperative of *vzít* ‘to take’). Thus, no nasal, whether syllabic or not, is found in the contexts N_O, N_N, N_L, N_#. In contrast, the liquids [r] and [l] occur in nasal-initial contexts and are syllabic there (cf. *mrně* ‘tiddler’, *mlčet* ‘to be silent’). The syllabic liquids are also found in liquid-initial contexts, but the nasals are non-syllabic there (cf. *jilm* ‘elm’, *koncern* ‘group of companies’ (L_#), *barmština* ‘Burmese language’, *hrnčír* [-rɲtɪɾ] ‘potter’ (L_O), *výkřmna* [-křmɲ-] ‘pig farm’, *gouvernement* [-rɲm-] ‘government’ (L_N), *palmerston* [-lmř-] (L_L, no examples for [ɲ]).

To sum it up, in Czech a nasal is syllabic only if preceded by an obstruent, whereas a liquid is syllabic even if preceded by a nasal or a liquid. Second, nasal syllabicity is dependent on word position. The syllabic nasals occur only after a vowel-filled syllable, never in a word-initial syllable. In contrast, the syllabic liquids are possible there both in the native words (*brzo* ‘soon’, *plný* ‘full’) and foreign-origin words. In the latter type of vocabulary, however, such occurrence is not very common and is instantiated by a few old loanwords (cf. *krleš* (interjection), *škrpál* ‘worn-out shoe’).

4. Combinability

The syllabic nasals always occur before an obstruent, but they may be followed by any type of consonant except for [r] (ř) and [j]. Nasal syllabicity is thus mainly dependent on the preceding consonant rather than on the following one, which is also, though to a less extent, true for the liquids (Bičan 2013). In this section we consider the combinability of the syllabic nasals.

⁶ The pronunciation is according to NASCS.

Neither of the syllabic nasals stands after a palatal stop, and as explained above, they are not possible even after a palatal nasal. They share this restriction with the syllabic liquids, which do not enter into such combinations either. Secondly, the bilabial nasal [m] is preceded by the alveolars [t], [d], [s], [z], the post-alveolar [ʒ] (*Rožmberk*) and the velar [x] (*Rychmburk*). No example of [m] following an affricate or a labial is found among our data. Due to the limited number of words with this nasal, we refrain from making any conclusion about their ability to combine with the affricates. However, the absence of any combination with the labials has a parallel in another restriction (Bičan 2013): in the syllable onset, non-syllabic [m] cannot be preceded by [p], [b], [f] (though it may be preceded by [v] provided that it is a form of a prefix, cf. *vmísit* ‘to fold in’ × *mísit* ‘to be folding in’). The fact that the combinations [pm], [bm], [fm] and [vm] are not attested may then be understood as an extension of this distributional restriction on the syllabic [m].

The alveolar nasal [n] is preceded by all the obstruents except for [c] and [ʃ] (see above), [h] and the voiced affricates [dʒ] and [dʒ]. The absence of [dʒ] is not surprising due to its extremely limited occurrence in Czech. The absence of [h] before the syllabic nasals is worth noting, though. Although the combinations [hn] and [hn] are common in the native words (cf. *hrdina* ‘hero’, *hltat* ‘to gobble up’), they are virtually non-occurrent in the foreign-origin words, the sole example being the zoological name *tahr*. Since all the Czech words with a syllabic nasal are, except for *Chorezm*, loanwords from German and English, it is of course not surprising that a syllabic nasal is not preceded by [h]. The occurrence of glottal fricatives is restricted in the two donor languages, so that it is unlikely or even impossible that the combinations [hm] and [hn] would appear in a loanword from them. Yet it is a matter of historical chance that Czech has not borrowed words from languages where such combinations are allowed. While discussing the combinability of the syllabic nasals, let us return to their occurrence in the O_L context, that is, when they stand next to a liquid. There is one important limitation to this occurrence: the liquid must be non-syllabic. If it is syllabic, which means it is followed either by a consonant or by a word boundary, the nasal will be non-syllabic. To put it otherwise, the problem concerns the syllabicity in the sequences ONLC and ONL#. In such sequences the nasal as well as the liquid occur in a phonotactic context in which both could be syllabic. There is, thus, a competition in syllabicity between the two. However, in such a situation only one of the sonants is actually syllabic.

The problem is exemplified by words like *smrk* ‘pine’, *smrt* ‘death’, *smlč* (2p.sg. imperative of *smlčet* ‘to be silent about’) or *šmrnc* ‘oomph’. In all of them the nasal [m] stands between an obstruent and a sonant, which is a context that al-

lows for nasal syllabicity (see above). Similarly, in all of them the liquids stand between a nasal and an obstruent or a nasal, which are contexts permitting liquid syllabicity (cf. *mrkat* ‘to blink’, *mlčet* ‘to be silent’, *mrňavý* ‘tiny’). Yet the words *smrk*, *smrt*, *smlč* and *šmrnc* are all monosyllables. Since the syllabic nasals occur only in polysyllabic words after a vowel-filled syllable, it is reasonable to assume that the syllabicity is a property of the liquids in the words just given. It is in accord with the fact that Czech allows other monosyllabic words in which the liquids are syllabic (e.g. *prst*, *vlk*), but no monosyllabic word containing a syllabic nasal. The same analysis is applicable to the words like *odmlčet* ‘to pause’, even though here [m] appears after a vowel-filled syllable. The words of this kind are, however, always derivatives of other words, that is, the vowel-filled syllable is part of a prefix (cf. also *roz-mrznout* ‘to melt’, *ne-smrtnelný* ‘immortal’, *vy-smrkat* ‘to blow one’s nose’).

All of this implies two conclusions. First, in case of the competition in syllabicity, the liquids are preferred to the nasals. Second, Czech does not allow a syllabic liquid next to a syllabic nasal.

5. Origin

The syllabic nasals originate from various sources. In the native words they are results of the historical development of Czech. Originally, the numerals *sedm* and *osm* ended in a yer vowel, and the nasal [m] was non-syllabic. Once the vowel got lost, the non-syllabicity of the nasal was probably retained for some time (i.e. *sedm* and *osm* were monosyllabic), but the nasal became eventually syllabic like the liquids standing in the same phonotactic context (Trávníček 1935: 229f., Bělič 1972b).

In the foreign-origin words the syllabic nasals are products of the phonological adaptation of German and English words and of one Russian word, *Chorezm*. If the nasal is indeed syllabic in the latter word, its syllabicity has been phonotactically induced because it is non-syllabic in Russian. On the other hand, the syllabic nasals found in the Germanisms and Anglicisms always come from an original syllabic segment or a segment combination.

In the Germanisms both of the syllabic nasals [m̥] and [ɲ] can be traced back to the German orthographic sequence *en*, which is pronounced in post-consonantal unstressed position either as the sequence [ɛn] or as the syllabic alveolar nasal [ɲ], depending on the style or the variety of German (Russ 2010: 29). In German the syllabic variant is subject to progressive place assimilation (cf. *haben* [-bɲ] → [bm̥], *legen* [-gɲ] → [gɲ]); cf. Hall 1992: 193), which is not reflected in Czech. Instead, the alveolar nasal [ɲ] has undergone, in that language, regressive place assimilation to the following bilabial consonant (see (3a)). In all the other cases the German [ɛn]/[ɲ] has given the syllabic alveolar nasal (= (3b)),

though, as suggested above, it might have also been assimilated to a syllabic velar nasal in the surname *Rosenkranc* [-zŋk-].

(3)	German		Czech	Condition	Examples
(a)	[əŋ] ~ [ŋ]	→	[ŋ]	before [p], [b]	<i>Rožmberk, ajzŋboňák</i>
(b)	[əŋ] ~ [ŋ]	→	[ŋ]	elsewhere	<i>vafŋrok, šunkŋfleky</i>

The evidence for the assimilation comes from the spelling. To begin with, the assimilation has been operative in the place names such as *Rožmberk* (< G. *Rosenberg*), *Rýzmburk* (< G. *Riesenburg*)⁷. The same assimilation has taken place in the appellative *ajzŋboňák* ‘railwayman’, which is reflected in the spelling *ajzmbňák* recorded in the Czech dialect dictionary SNČJ (s.v. *ajzŋboňák*). It is hard to tell whether the assimilation also occurs in the other two Germanisms included in our database, *Rosenberg*, *Rosenbaumová*, which contain [ŋ] before a bilabial stop. The pronunciation of surnames is not codified, and is subject to variation according to personal preferences or family tradition.

In the Anglicisms the origin of the syllabic nasals is in many ways similar to the Germanisms. In fact, it is reasonable to assume that the adaptation of German loanwords has acted as a model here. The sources are as follows:

(4)	English		Czech	Examples
(a)	[əŋ] ~ [ŋ]	→	[ŋ]	<i>rhythm-and-blues</i>
(b)	[əŋ]	→	[ŋ]	<i>custom</i>
(c)	[ŋ] ~ [əŋ]	→	[ŋ]	<i>fashion, newton</i>
(d)	[əŋ] ~ [ŋ]	→	[ŋ]	<i>open-source, secondhand</i>

The bilabial nasal [ŋ] occurs in two Anglicisms, where it corresponds to the sequence [əŋ]. In *rhythm-and-blues* the schwa may be elided, thereby giving syllabic [ŋ] (= (4a)), while in *custom* it is non-elidable, at least according to LPD, which we use as the source of information about English pronunciation (= (4b)). The alveolar nasal appears in many more Anglicisms; its source is again twofold. It comes either from the original syllabic nasal [ŋ] freely varying with [əŋ] (= (4c)), or from the sequence [əŋ] freely varying with [ŋ] (= (4d)). To put it otherwise, in the former case the schwa is epenthetic and secondary, while in the latter it is elidable, and the elision is likewise secondary. The epenthetic-schwa variant occurs after coronal consonants (alveolars and post-alveolars) and after [v] in *Steven*, whereas the elidable-schwa variant is found after non-coronals (labials and velars), though it is also attested after coronals such as [tʃ] (*luncheon meat*), [t] (*Houston*) and [z] (*madison*).

In short, the syllabic nasals present in the Czech Germanisms and Anglicisms come either from the original syllabic nasals or from the original schwa-cum-nasal sequences, in which case the schwa has been interpreted as the syllabicity

⁷ The spelling variant *Rýzmburk* is also attested in older texts, suggesting an unassimilated pronunciation.

of the nasal rather than as a full vowel. Note that in some other words the schwa has actually been interpreted as a full vowel, for example in the Anglicism *black-bottom* [-tɛm] (NASCS).

6. Variation

A peculiar property of the syllabic nasals is their capacity to freely vary with sequences of a vowel plus a nasal. At first glance it is the same type of variation we described for the donor-language syllabic nasals in the previous section. Yet there are important differences. First, the vowel in such a vowel-*cum*-nasal sequence is a full vowel in Czech and a vowel that is phonemic in other contexts. Second, the variation is not phonologically conditioned, at least not from the synchronic perspective. Instead, it has been induced by orthography.

An orthography-independent variation is exemplified by the native words *sedm* and *osm*. Here the syllabic bilabial nasal [m̩] freely varies with the vocalized sequence [um], that is, the words are pronounced either as [sedm̩] and [ʔosm̩] or as [sedum] and [ʔosum]. The syllabic pronunciation is a mark of a careful or higher style, and seems to be a little less common than the vocalized pronunciation (Štěpánová 2016: 253f.). The back rounded vowel [u] is a product of the assimilation of the original epenthetic vowel *e* (Bělič 1972b).

In the foreign-origin words the syllabic nasals also vary with a vowel-*cum*-nasal sequences. Nevertheless, this variation is a reflection of the spelling pronunciation of the donor words that contain an orthographic vowel-*cum*-nasal sequence. Since in the Czech native words there are hardly any unpronounced silent letters, the vowel in such a sequence tends to be pronounced, which makes the nasal non-syllabic. This type of pronunciation is in fact recognized as a possibility (cf. VŠČ 1978: 82, 84 concerning the pronunciation of *en* in Germanisms).

Examples for the variation of [ŋ] in the Germanisms are given under (5). Note that sometimes the possibility of variation is suggested by alternative spellings such as *šunkenfleky* or by misspellings such as *ajzenboňák* (= (5b)). In this case, however, one cannot completely rule out the possibility that the vowel is epenthetic, even though the *e* vowel is of course the original vowel in the German sources of such words. Interestingly, the vowel [ɛ] has sometimes been subject to the assimilation to [u] in a post-labial context, which is suggested by the alternative spelling *papundekl* attested for the Germanism *papndekl* (= (5c)).

(5)	Variation	Examples
(a)	[ŋ] ~ [ɛn]	<i>Falkenštejn</i> (place name), <i>gruppenkřest</i> 'group launching ceremony', <i>pappenheimský</i>
(b)	[ŋ] ~ [ɛn]	<i>hexnšús</i> (cf. <i>hexenšús</i>), <i>šunkŋfleky</i> (cf. <i>šunkenfleky</i>) <i>haknkrajc</i> (cf. <i>hakenkrajc</i>), <i>ajznboňák</i> (cf. <i>ajzenboňák</i>)
(c)	[ŋ] ~ [un]	<i>papndekl</i> (cf. <i>papundekl</i>)

In the Anglicisms there are at least two types of variation for [ŋ] because it corresponds to two different orthographic vowel-*cum*-nasal sequences in English (see (6)). Other types of variation cannot be ruled out, though. It is possible that Czech will adopt English words in which [ŋ] or [əŋ] corresponds to other orthographic sequences. In fact, the variation with [an] is at least potentially possible for the Anglicism *hooligan* [-gŋ].

(6)	Variation	Examples
(a)	[ŋ] ~ [ɛŋ]	<i>chippendale, open-card, open-space, token</i>
(b)	[ŋ] ~ [oŋ]	<i>newton</i>

The variation exists for the bilabial nasal [ɱ] as well. In the Germanisms the nasal occurs only in the place names such as *Rýzmburk, Hazmburk*. Their pronunciation is probably not standardized in any manual or dictionary, but in actual usage the syllabic pronunciation seems to be in free variation with the vocalic pronunciation, which is also suggested by misspellings such as *Rýzemburk* and *Hazemburk* found on the Internet (= (7a)). It is interesting to note that in the case of *Rožmberk* the variation is with the sequence [um], as suggested by the misspelling *Rožumberk*. Here the vowel [u] may be either a product to the assimilation next to a labial consonant or an analogy of the [u] in the native words *sedm* and *osm*.⁸ Among the Anglicisms there is only one type of variation taking place in *custom* (recorded in the *Phonological Database of Czech Anglicisms*).

(7)	Variation	Examples
(a)	[ɱ] ~ [ɛm]	<i>Rýzmburk, Hazmburk, Hazmburk, Pechmburk</i>
(b)	[ɱ] ~ [um]	<i>Rožmberk</i>
(c)	[ɱ] ~ [om]	<i>custom</i>

The examples show that both of the syllabic nasals vary with a vowel-*cum*-nasal sequence. The nature of the vowel cannot be phonologically predicted in present-day Czech because it may in fact be any short vowel depending on the spelling of the word in which the variation takes place. Even in the native words *sedm* and *osm* it cannot be synchronically predicted, even though [u] has originally developed from a phonologically conditioned variation. As regards their phonological structure, the words are alike the foreign-origin words cited in (7). They differ merely in origin. However, if we viewed native words as forming a separate phonological system distinct though intersected with a phonological system of loanwords (cf. Fries/Pike 1949), we might claim that the vowel [u] is indeed predictable in the words *sedm* and *osm*. Yet this will not eradicate the fact that the form of the vowel is still phonologically unpredictable in the foreign-origin words.

⁸ The same development and vocalization is assumed for another castle name *Košumberk*, which is from *Koschenberg* (Profous 1949: 334f.).

7. Conclusion

Although the syllabic nasals [ɱ] and [ɲ] occur in very few words, most of which are of foreign origin, their presence in Czech cannot be ignored. It would be wrong to dismiss the foreign-origin words by saying they are not part of Czech. Most of them are recorded in dictionaries of the *Czech* language, and many are casually used by Czechs (e.g. *secondhand*, *ajznboňák*, *public relations*).

There are significant differences between [ɱ] and [ɲ]. The former occurs in two highly frequent native words (*sedm* and *osm*), but is far less common than the latter, which is confined to the foreign-origin words only. Moreover, the syllabicity of [ɱ] is not wholly phonotactically predictable. Given the pairs such as *rozmnožit* with [ɱ] and *osmnáct* with [ɱ], the syllabicity of the bilabial nasal has a meaning-distinguishing potential, be it interpreted either as a distinctive feature or as a boundary signal. The syllabic alveolar nasal does not seem to have this capacity. Its syllabicity is always a function of the phonotactic context it stands in. It is syllabic between an obstruent and a consonant or a word boundary, provided that the consonant is also non-syllabic. The latter condition reflects the fact that any nasal is always non-syllabic next to a syllabic liquid in Czech (cf. *smrt* ‘death’, *vlnka* ‘little wave’). If we pursue the above-mentioned analysis of the words such as *osmdesát* and *Rožmberk*, then the only context in which [ɱ] occurs is between an obstruent and a phonological-word boundary (*osm*, *custom* [-tɱ]).

However, the nasals [ɱ] and [ɲ] share the origin in words borrowed from foreign languages. They are found in loanwords from German and English, with a possible exception of *Chorezm*. Furthermore, both nasals correspond to the donor-language syllabic nasals that freely vary with a schwa-cum-nasal sequence. Finally, both of the Czech syllabic nasals show variation induced by spelling. This variation makes them different from the syllabic liquids [ʀ] and [ʀ̥] occurring in the native words. The latter are not subject to variation in non-dialectal Czech. The variation can be understood as a mark of foreign origin because in the loanwords the liquids do vary with vowel-cum-nasal sequences, and the variation is also due to spelling pronunciation (cf. the Anglicisms *cracker* [-kʀ] ~ [-ker], *pixel* [-ksʀ] ~ [-ksel], see NASCS).

I want to conclude this paper with the hope that Václav, to whom it is dedicated, will enjoy it, even though he has not probably devoted his astonishingly wide attention to synchronic phonological descriptions. Yet he has written very informed treatises of various *isms* in Czech (such as Celticisms, Iranianisms or Hebraisms), so that he may be convinced that such words are interesting from synchronic phonological perspective as well.

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