Palatalization

Notice what happens when a [coronal] obstruent is followed by /y/:

Don’t you → /dOːmt yu/ → [downčə]
I bet you → /Iː bEt yu/ → [aybɛčə]

The obstruent becomes [−ant] under the influence of the [−ant] /y/. The rule is called Palatalization. We can state it as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{−son} \\
\text{coronal}
\end{array} \quad \rightarrow \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{−ant} \\
\text{+ strid}
\end{array} \quad \quad \rightarrow \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{−cons} \\
\text{−syll} \\
\text{+ hi} \\
\text{−ant}
\end{array}
\]

(The /y/ itself also deletes; we won’t be worrying about that here.)

Unlike the other rules we have been looking at, this rule applies across words. But it also applies within a word:

digestion /dIːEst+yVn/ [dəjesčən] (or [dayjesčən])
nomination /nOmInAt+yVn/ [naməneyʃən]
presidential /prEzIdEnt+y+Al/ [prezidenšl]
habitual /hAbIt+yu+Al/ [həbɪtɥuːl]
Egyptian /EjIp+y+An/ [iʃɪpʃən]
sensual /sEns+yu+Al/ [senʃuːl]

We will not address the question of why /t/ sometimes palatalizes to [ʃ] instead of [č].
Palatalization/Velar Softening, p. 2

**Velar Softening**

- electricity /VlEktrlk+Itl/ [əlektrnsiti]
- criticize /krltlk+lz/ [krtsaslz]
- criticism /krltlk+lzm/ [krtsaslzm]
- romanticize /rO:mAnt+l+Iz/ [rmtntsaslz]

These words exemplify the “softening” of the velar /k/ to [s] before long and short /l/ (i.e. [ay] and [l]). There are more details to the rule, but we will limit our attention to this part.

k → s / ___ l(·)

Note: Velar Softening has to apply before Vowel Spellout.

**Velar Softening + Palatalization**

Since [y] is related to [l], we might expect /k/ to soften before /y/ as well; and it does. But /s/ before /y/ undergoes Palatalization. So:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{k} \quad \text{Velar Softening} \quad \text{s} \quad \text{Palatalization} \quad \text{š}
\end{array}
\]

As in:

- electrician /VlEktrlk+yAn/ [əlektrnšn]
- phonetician /fO:n+Et+l+yAn/ [fwnntfšn]

This shows that Velar Softening applies before Palatalization.