

# Ghost vowels and syllabification

Evidence from Bulgarian and French

by

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# Introduction

This dissertation provides description and phonological accounts for the patterns of ghost vowel alternations in two languages where these alternations are largely conditioned by constraints on syllabification: modern standard Bulgarian and a variety of standard French spoken in Paris.

Much more space (the whole chapter 1) is devoted to description of the Bulgarian data. This is necessary, because apart from Scatton's books, there are very few publications on Bulgarian phonetics and phonology written in languages other than Bulgarian. The description argues for distinguishing between ghost schwas that are underlyingly present and schwas that are triggered by epenthesis.

As for French schwa/zero alternations, there is a great deal of literature on the subject. Moreover, the French data I refer to are given very detailed description in a series of well-known publications. However, chapter 4 discusses the data from French and claims that different phonological status should be attributed to two distinct classes of French ghost vowels. Sensitivity of [ɛ]/zero alternations to the rhythmic structure of the utterance is another point of emphasis. Needless to say, I am perfectly aware that schwa/zero alternations in French are a widely variable phenomenon. I do not presume that the data on which my analysis is based reflect the behavior of all French speakers. However, to the extent that they represent one particular dialect of the language, as attested by the authority of the scholars who collected them, they constitute a valid test for the phonological model here exploited. Further research is needed to enlarge the coverage, taking into account other dialects of French.

Chapter 2 begins with comments on previous treatments of Bulgarian ghost vowels and of liquid/schwa metathesis in Bulgarian. The proposal for an alternative linear analysis (§2.3) aims to demonstrate that doing without word-final jers is possible in every framework. Then I give two accounts for the Bulgarian data in two different frameworks: Harmonic Phonology (the 3-level M/W/P model) and Optimality Theory (the 2-level Correspondence Theory version). Both accounts use the same underlying representations for words with ghost vowels: all ghost [e]'s and the ghost schwas that are viewed as underlyingly present are represented as floating vowels at M-level. In both accounts, some of the ghost schwas are assumed not to be present underlyingly and to be the product of default vowel insertions.

Chapter 3 offers a diachronic view on the Bulgarian ghost vowel alternations. My hypothesis is that both representations and rules associated with the Old Church Slavonic jer vowels (that gave rise to the modern ghost vowel alternations) have been subjected to reanalysis during the Middle Bulgarian period.

The variety of French discussed in chapter 4 is treated only in the framework of Harmonic Phonology. However, since this model is also applied to the analysis of Bulgarian, this makes it possible to conduct a contrastive description of the mechanism of ghost vowel alternations in Bulgarian and French (§4.4 ).

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