In our paper, we consider the status of a lexeme in the information structure of the utterance to be one of the main conditions that lead to the loss of sounds in Bulgarian dialects, simultaneously with the phonological factors.

This point of view is motivated by the analyses of the empirical data from three villages in Bulgaria — Markovo (Čirpan region), Malevo (one of the so-called «kina-villages» in Haskovo region) and Kralevo (Haskovo region). The elision is frequent in their dialect, but there are also competing forms with retained sounds. The dialect represented pertains to North-Thracian Bulgarian dialects. One of the peculiarities of this dialect is the salient elision.

The aim of this paper is to represent the influence of the information structure over the appearance of elision in dialects. The organization of the paper is as follows. First, we make a short overview of the theories on information structure. We focus on possible positions of the topic in the information structure of the sentence. Then we represent the specificity of the elision in Bulgarian dialects. Basing on these theoretical frameworks, we analyse different instances of elision from our database and compare them with the competing forms without elision. Than we make conclusions about the influence the information structure has on the level of phonology. The conclusions base on examples from the database for Bulgarian dialects collected by the Faculty of Slavic studies at Sofia University.

The analysis of the information structure of the sentence reveals some morpho-syntactic peculiarities of languages such as argument structure, doubling of arguments, word order, etc. The information structure is also one of the factors involved in the process of elision. Contemporary studies represent the information structure as a conjunction of two subsets — topic — comment and focus — background (cf. VAN VALIN 1997; NITSOLOVA 2001; PRIMUS 1993). The topic is usually defined as what the sentence is about (PRIMUS 1993: 880), the rest of the sentence is the comment. The topic phrase tends to occur at the periphery of the sentence. There are different methods of topic marking: by lexical or morphological elements, by certain types of syntactic structures (e.g. the clitic doubling in Bulgarian), or by intonation. The focus is relation between a constituent X and a focusing operator Y (which may be overt as with such particles as only, even in English, and the contrastive negation). The non-focused part of the sentence is the background of Y (cf. PRIMUS 1993). Factors that determine the focus are sentence prosody, word order and lexical markers. Here we follow the analysis of the information structure proposed.

\[
\text{Focus} > \text{Top}\* > \text{Foc} > \text{Top}\* > \text{Fin} > \text{IP}.
\]

There is only one Focus projection for the contrastive focus marked by the emphatic sentence stress and/or the focusing particles. The Topic projection could be recursive. There are two topic phrases in the following example (1) – na Ivan and knigiata, both of them marked by a resumptive clitic (mu and ja) and by the word order – they occupy a position in the left periphery of the sentence (the so called Clitic Left Dislocation – CILD).

(1) Na Ivan knigiata az mu ja podarit.

There is only one focus projection in this sentence – the personal pronoun az, marked as contrastive focus by the emphatic stress. One of the peculiarities of Bulgarian is that the subject pronoun is overt only when it is focused. When it is topic in the sentence, it is usually omitted (Bulgarian is a pro-drop language) (for discussion see MASLOV 1982: 353). There are also certain positions for the topic and focus in the right periphery of the sentence (cf. CARDINALETTI 2002, TISHEVA, DZHONOVA 2004). When the doubled object is postposed in respect to the verb, the construction is right dislocation, e.g. na Ivan in (2).

(2) Zazi kniga az mu ju podarit na Ivan.

The subject can also be right dislocated like in the following example (3):

(3) A na men tolkova mi beše interesna tja.

The movement of the subject to the right of the predicate marks the subject as right dislocation topic, because the regular word order of the constituents in Bulgarian sentence is SVO.

There are predicates in Bulgarian that require an obligatory clitic doubling of the object – strah me e, mâčno mi e, haresva mi (cf. mâčno mu e in (4)))

(4) Na Ivan mu e mâčno.

It is important to mention that the object with those predicates is doubled even when it occupies the FocusP. In those cases, additional factors like context, emphatic stress, focus particles, etc., help us to identify the status of the object in the information structure of the sentence. In (4) the PP na Ivan could be either topic, or focus if we treat the sentence alone. However, in discourse those sentences are never ambiguous.

In the generative framework, VPs cannot occupy the TopicP or the FocusP. In his publication on the functional sentence perspective of Bulgarian Ivančev (1978) does not impose such restriction. The grammatical means for the topic and focus (theme and rhyme in the terminology of IVANČEV) are the word order, the emphatic stress, the definite article and the context.

**Elision**

The relation between the information structure and the loss of sounds explains why elision appears only in some sentence positions and why we find competing forms with retained sounds in the speech of the same person. The following example illustrates this phenomenon:

(5) Ža si násučas māsuri i s māsur t'e zā tā češ.

There is no elision in the first mentioning of māsuri ‘spools’, the NP is not definite, while in the second clause the noun in the PP s māsur t'e ‘with these spools’ is definite and topicalised and consequently there is elision in the noun. In Bulgarian in order to be topicalised a constituent should be [+specific] and/ or [+definite]. In (5) the first mentioning of māsuri is [-specific] and [-definite]. In the second utterance the object s māsur t'e is both definite and specific and that is why it can be topicalised. The formal marker for topicalisation in this utterance is the left dislocation of the indirect object s māsur t'e – the object is preposed with respect to the verb.

Elision is defined as an omission of one or more sounds (e.g. a vowel, a consonant, or a whole syllable) in a word or phrase and is usually attributed to the ease of articulation. Many authors draw attention to the elision in Bulgarian dialects (MILETIĆ 1903, BOJADŽIEV 1991, STOJKOV 1993, etc.). Elision of sounds occurs in forms of all word classes. Different factors seem to condition the process of elision: the morphological structure of the word (e.g. duplication of some morphological meaning), the phonetic surrounding, the rhythmic pattern of the word, the syntactical structure, etc. It is also important to keep the meaning of the word. Usually these factors act together.

When a word becomes an exponent of a grammatical relation, it can be degraded phonetically much more easily. One of the characteristics of the Bulgarian grammar in general is the redundancy. This tendency is demonstrated in doubling of some morphological marker which results in a redundant marking of the category. Such redundancy is consistently found in the plural definite forms of all genders. Thus, the plurality is marked twice; one of the plural morphemes becomes superfluous and is eliminated. The morpheme that is normally deleted is the plural ending, e.g. žente instead of ženite, kon te instead of konete, etc.

**Elision and information structure**

In the data analysed we found three types of elision: 1) elision of final vowels – ĭ and u, cf. examples (6) and (7) (for discussion on this type of eli-
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find elision in the second mentioning of carevicatā – carcatā. This is due to the important condition to keep the meaning of the word. Even when the word is topicalised, if we omit a vowel from lukā, fasulā or bustanā we will violate the rule for consistency of meaning.

It is worth mentioning that the elision in dialects appears not only within separate lexeme. It is often observed within a phonological word, as we see in the following utterance (18):

(18) Dā gu zās e'jāt i dā g pojvāt.

Conclusions

To summarise, there are different factors that are involved in the process of elision: phonetic, morphologic, syntactic, etc. In this paper, we argued for the influence of the information structure over the elision of sounds in Bulgarian dialects. We based our hypothesis on examples from East-Bulgarian dialects due to the fact that in this region the elision is frequent. The data investigated proves that both information structure and morphological factors condition the elision. Hence, in some utterances we do not find elision in topicalised phrases, because the absence (or presence) of some morphological factors blocks the elision. The degree of influence the information structure has on the elision of consonants, vowels and syllables needs further investigation.

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Povzetek