

The underlying representation of [x x'] and [ɦ ɣ ɣ'] in Ukrainian.

This paper presents a phonological analysis of velar and laryngeal fricatives in Ukrainian. We set out to establish a single underlying segment for the voiceless fricatives [x] (velar) and [x'] (pre-velar), as well as the voiced fricatives [ɦ] (laryngeal), [ɣ] (velar) and [ɣ'] (pre-velar). At the outset of the analysis, we provide the phonetic facts, based on the literature on the subject (Bilodid 1969, Tots'ka 1981, Rusanovsky 1986). Since these facts are to a certain extent contradictory and not fully accurate, they are subsequently confronted with some important data collected in the course of fieldwork carried out by the author.

Next, we present an in-depth phonological analysis of the status of the fricatives. Contrarily to what is claimed in most literature, we argue that the velar fricatives //x// and //ɣ// are underlying in Ukrainian. We consider several arguments that point to //ɣ//, rather than //x//, which has been preferred in the literature up to now. Based on the symmetry of the underlying inventory, 1st Velar Palatalization and Surface Palatalization, we conclude that an analysis involving //x// is unworkable on phonological grounds.

In looking for an optimal way of representing the facts, throughout the analysis we make use of several phonological theories. We begin with a more traditional derivational approach, then we adopt the moraic theory and Feature Geometry, finally we put forward an Optimality-Theoretic account of the data. We conclude that an OT analysis is the most effective in dealing with this problem.

References

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