Reduction of non-high vowels after palatalized consonants and /j/ in unstressed positions in Russian produces [ɪ] (ikan’ e): /v’és’olo/ ‘cheerfully’ [v’és’Ilə], /v’es’ol’éj/ ‘more cheerfully’ [v’Is’Il’éj]. But sometimes the reduced vowel is schwa [ə], not the expected [ɪ]. These ‘exceptions’ to ikan’e are found primarily in grammatical endings (Avanesov 1972) and schwa has been attributed to analogy, either to the stressed suffix vowel (Korš 1902) or to the reduced vowel after non-palatalized stems (Isačenko 1947). But stressed suffixes constitute a minority in Russian nouns/adjectives (Zaliznjak 1967:172-3); sometimes no stressed suffix is available, e.g., lísje [l’is’jə] ‘fox’s’. Analogy tends to operate on less frequent items, but schwa is found both in frequent and non-frequent suffixes.

I argue that the exceptional behavior of ikan’e in inflectional suffixes is a paradigm effect: ikan’e is constrained by both, the need to maintain paradigm contrast (Panov 2004; Avanesov 1972) and the need for paradigm uniformity (Kenstowicz 2005). These competing forces account for different variants under identical phonetic conditions, e.g., -em is pronounced as [Im] in pólem ‘we weed’ but as [am] or [Im] in pólem ‘field’, instr sg, in spite of the fact that a stressed -óm variant available for both. Likewise, -ee is [éj] or [éjI] in sinée ‘bluer’ but only [éjI] in sinéet ‘turns blue’, and sinee ‘blue’ is [s’ín’əjə] while sinie is [s’ín’II]. The behavior of ikan’e reveals a change in progress subject to paradigmatic factors.


