TYPES OF SYLLABLE TONE ME IN THE ZIEMERI VARIANT OF HIGH LATVIAN DIALECT

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ABSTRACT

The research permits to confirm the supposition concerning the functioning of two types of syllable tone me in the Eastern variants of the High Latvian dialect. The answer to the disputable question on the place of glottalization in the monophthongs and diphthongs with a broken (acute) syllable tone me is searched for.

INTRODUCTION

At present the amount of experimental phonetic research in the field of Latvia dialects leaves much to be desired. We have attempted to investigate a variant (sub-dialect) of a very peculiar and only partly explored High Latvian dialect called Augšzemnieku. The sub-dialect under consideration is still widely used basically in everyday life. The Ziemeri sub-dialect may be heard in the north-eastern part of Latvia adjacent to the border of the Estonian SSR. However, the Estonian language has not affected the Ziemeri sub-dialect to any notable extent. The variant in question belongs to the eastern group of High Latvian dialect. A distinctive feature of these sub-dialects is the monophthongization of the common Latvian diphthongs ie (> i) and uo (> o), e.g. siva < sieva 'wife'; hla < uola 'egg'.

Two types of syllable tone me function in the Ziemeri sub-dialect, namely, the so-called falling (\) and broken (glottalized\), e.g. réit 'to swallow' and reit 'tomorrow'. The level syllable tone me (> ) occurring in the Latvian standard language is substituted by the falling syllable tone me in the Ziemeri sub-dialect, e.g. laime 'happiness', mūte 'mother', saule 'sun', in the Ziemeri sub-dialect are pronounced as laima, muota or mbota, sula. The two types of the syllable tone me were likewise distinguished by us in the sub-dialects used in the areas adjacent to that of the Ziemeri sub-dialect, namely, the sub-dialects of Aldķeme, Jaunlaiicene, Jaunroze, Karva and Veclaiicene. To differentiate and identify a variety of syllable tone me, we investigated the fundamental pitch, intensity and the spectrum dynamics of vowels (vocalic centre of syllable).

So in the Ziemeri sub-dialect two types of syllable pitch are most strikingly correlated according to the dynamics (characteristic motion) and direction of the fundamental pitch in vowels. They are as follows:

1) the syllable pitch specified by a rather narrow range and level changes in the fundamental pitch, and also a falling, rising, or rising-falling direc-
In the Latvian standard language, in which the falling, drawling and broken syllable tonemes are contrasted, the falling toneme is more distinctly realised (with a falling direction of the fundamental pitch). Be it otherwise, it would coincide both, with a broken and drawling syllable toneme. In the system of two types of syllable tonemes, functioning in the Ziemeri sub-dialect, it is essential that the falling syllable toneme should not coincide with the broken syllable toneme. Therefore, the falling syllable toneme is subject to greater variations - obtaining the characteristics similar to the drawling syllable toneme of the standard language;

2) a very distinct syllable toneme specified by a wide range and a cut changes in the fundamental pitch, and, likewise, a snift falling tone. There are cases when the direction of the tone is sniftly falling in the first half of the vowel, but rising in the second half of it without reaching the maximum frequency.

The second type of the syllable toneme is specified by a decrease in the regularity of vocal-choral vibrations, the so-called glottalization, pointed also out by A.Ibele, A.Kaunis, M.Vislo, M.Leizne, M.Kelamane, M.Veisena and others. The design of the irregular vibrations of this kind bears resemblance to the broken toneme (the so-called stod) of the Danish.

Until all the variants of the High Latvian dialect are not examined experimentally, it is disputable in which part of the vowel with a broken syllable toneme, in Latvian sub-dialects, the loss of regular vibrations occurs, or where there is a complete discontinuation (break) of voice.

The analysis of spectrum dynamics of the vowels in the Ziemeri sub-dialect proves the weakening, or even fading of formants, in the case of the broken syllable toneme. An acute change in the dynamic design can be observed. In the sub-dialect under consideration, acute changes of the spectrum design are observed in the transition part of a diphthong. Sometimes the fading of formants is accentually delayed, e.g. It occurs at the beginning of the second element in the break diphthong. All the three constituent parts of the formant are distinctive enough. In the monophthongs with a broken syllable toneme, of the Ziemeri sub-dialect, irregular vibrations or a complete disappearance (break) of voice occurs at about the end of a third part, or in the middle of the syllabic element.

When investigating syllable tonemes by auditive methods, Latvian phyllogicist A.Briedaks expressed a view that in many variants of the High Latvian dialect, the disappearance, or acute changes in voice occur in the first (prolonged) element of a diphthong or a diphthongic combination, having a broken syllable toneme /1/. A.Briedaks refers also to the research made by A.Boles and M.Lepika /2/, who had analysed by auditive method the texts of the Jaunlaicene, Jaunroze and Veclaicene sub-dialects, which are adjacent to that of Ziemeri. The specification of these variations corresponds to the conventional term used for the broken syllable toneme. The first type of toneme is conventionally called falling, it would be more precise, from a phonological view point, to call the first type - unbroken or level.

According to dynamics and intensity direction in the vowels of the Ziemeri sub-dialect, two types of syllable pitch can be contrasted:

1) the syllable toneme specified by a v e l changes in intensity and also by a rising-falling direction of intensity;

2) the syllable toneme specified by a cut changes in intensity, and, also, by an acute falling or rising-falling direction of intensity. In some cases intensity may have a quick fall in the first half and a rise in the second half of a vowel without ascending to a maximum intensity of the second half of a vowel.

We may conclude that in both types of syllable tonemes a rising-falling intensity occurs, consequently, intensity direction (as well as the direction of the fundamental pitch) is of no significance in the differentiation of the types of syllable tonemes in the Ziemeri sub-dialect. Both types are contrasted to each other by the presence or absence of a specific prosodic distinctive feature - an a c u t e or a l e v e l characteristics of intensity changes (as well as the fundamental pitch changes).

Depending on the syllable toneme in the Ziemeri sub-dialect, long monophthongs differ as to their durations long monophthongs with a falling syllable toneme (Mv.) exceed long monophthongs with a broken syllable toneme (Mv.) in their duration. An average correlation is Mv: Mv: M = 1.7:1.2:1 (M = short monophthongs).

In the sub-dialect the duration of diphthongs is close to that of long monophthongs.

The differentiation of the syllable tonemes types in the Ziemeri sub-dialect is based on the spectrum, fundamental pitch, intensity and duration of vowels. Each of these parameters plays a certain role in differentiating tonemes. For example, the acute changes in the fundamental pitch and intensity, the decline in the toneme of monophthongs (reflected by the lowering of formants in the spectrum) and the reduced duration may signal the presence of a broken syllable toneme. Yet not a single parameter functions as the only, basic and reliable indicator. The spectrum, fundamental pitch, intensity and duration seem to compensate each other. It is credible that in different tonemes or intonation patterns the decisive role is played by one or the other of these distinctive features (for instance, it may be considered by preliminary observations that in interrogative phrases pitch, to a certain extent is dependent of its ability to differentiate syllable tonemes).
The syllable tonemes of monophthongal or diphthongal syllables, in fact, do not bear distinction among them - their distinctive features fully coincide. Judging by auditory perception, the distinctive features of the same kind are present in diphthongal clusters, which were not investigated by us.

We may conclude that both types of syllable toneme are contrasted to each other by the presence or absence of the specific prosodial feature - a c u t e or l e v e l changes in the fundamental pitch, intensity and spectrum. See also some illustrations (Fig. 1, 2, 3: 4) of the fundamental pitch and intensity of vowels with the both types of syllable toneme.

Fig.1. Diphthong iē in the word spiera

Fig.4. Monophthong å in the word åstu

We consider that, from the phonological view point, it would be more apt to call the two types of syllable toneme - a c u t e (or broken) and l e v e l (e.g. unbroken).

REFERENCES