MODERN TRENDS IN STANDARD RUSSIAN SOUND SYSTEM OF THE END OF THE XX-th CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of present study includes working out a detailed description of the present-day younger generation pronunciation peculiarities; characterization of the development tendencies of Standard Russian sound system; revealing the factors which influence this development. The study is based on the results of the sociophonetic research of the younger generation speech.

There are two different types of sound laws. Some of them predict the realization of the phoneme in one possible way: synchronically or diachronically. The sound of the morpheme can be pronounced correctly only in a one sound form (ежа 'water', пярх 'friend', etc.). The change of the pronunciation standard is connected with the phonetic regularities of a different type which describe the facts of synchronic coexistence of pronunciation variants. For example, [a] for [a:] in Standard form of Russian.

The results of our experiments show that in younger generation pronunciation the process of overcoming assimilation has achieved a new stage. For different consonant groups this process started in a different time. What contributed to the unevenness of this process was the fact that some positions supported the pronunciation of a soft sound and some of them - the pronunciation of a hard one. The obtained data show that there is a contrast in behavior of consonants before the soft sound in a "young" standard inside the root and in sandhi.

The main development tendency is the complication of consonant system, which is reflected in decrease of positional dependence of sounds [3, 336-343; 6, 442-446].

The process of overcoming softness of the sounds in the position before the soft consonant in the beginning of the century the softness of the consonant before the soft sound was obligatory: [m'k:] ('skirts'), [n'k:] ('lamps'), [m'k'] ('on the lamp'), [m'n'] ('Thursday'), etc.

The study of the middle of the century showed that consonant groups realized in three different ways: 1) for some sounds the old law is still working: dental+soft dental ([m'k:] 'little bridge'); [n'] + [n'], [n'] 'water', [n'] 'woman'; 2) for some consonant groups a new law became obligatory: the sound is always hard before the soft consonant: labial + soft back lingual ([m'k:] 'paws'), etc; 3) most of consonant groups allow variants in realization: dental + soft labial ([m'k:] and [n'k:] 'door'); labial+soft labial (o [m'k:] 'the bomb'), dental or labial+[j] ('cramps and [m'k:] 'go down', [n'k:] and [n'k:] 'snow storm') [1; 4; 5; 6].

The variability of the pronunciation of the words is usually a stage in the transition from one nonvariable sound law to another. The present study is concentrated on the description of the sound variants.

Such variants may occur because of their belonging to different pronunciation sub-systems: sociolinguistic ones (chronological, local or sex) and language ones (connected with phonetic peculiarities of such groups of words as borrowings, proper names, functional words, terms, interjections, etc.).

Most of the available information about modern Russian pronunciation is based on the results of the investigations which were held in the middle of the century [1; 4; 5; 6]. A new generation has grown since that time and there is no doubt that their pronunciation differs from the one of the preceding generation.

In order to fix a "young" pronunciation standard the sociophonetic study of the speech of the younger generation was carried out [3]. It is based on the data obtained from different experiments: tape-recordings of specially composed texts read aloud (200 informants); responses to written questionnaires (1000 informants); the recorded interviews (200 informants). Speakers were selected on the basis of demographic characteristics: all of them were Muscovites, their parents also used Standard form of Russian; the sample includes young men and women (born in 1965-73), who studied in different Moscow universities. All speakers used the Standard form of Russian.

The comparison of two chronological subsystems - the present-day younger generation pronunciation peculiarities and the sound speech of the preceding generation constitute the major focus of this paper.

CONSONANTS

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morpheme boundaries both of the variants are used: пауз'�есать - пауз'�есать 'to comb'. First of all the choice of the variant depends on the type of morpheme boundary: on the boundaries of fusion tendency the sound [u:] is more probable, but on the boundaries of agglutinative tendency the sound [u:] is used more frequently. The frequency of occurrence of sound [u:] on different morphemic sature are following: preposition + word (40%); prefix + root (49%), root + suffix (85%).

VOWELS
The main development tendency is the simplification of vowel system, which is manifested in the increase of phoneme neutralization.

The modern model of phoneme neutralization in the unstressed position after the soft consonant is the following: 4 phonemes out of 5 which constitute the phonemic system of Russian vowels coincide in the sound [i] (<a> [i'] 'clock', <o> [i'] 'spring', <e> [i'] 'wait', <a> [i'] 'kick' to shout) and only the phoneme <y> is realized in a different way (л 'yollo' 'love'). It's known that <y> is also involving in neutralization which leads to absolute simplification of the system [5, 22]. The obtained data show that according to the younger generation standard the pronunciation like [i'] instead of [i'] 'talip' are very rare. Such facts mostly occur in the words where there are conditions for assimilation with a vowel of another syllable: [i'] instead of [u'] 'bulletin'. But there is one position - in the suffix of the Present Participles - where the variant [i'] is pronounced even more frequently than [y]: вопау'ъ развещивать and вопау'ъ 'to spread'. In the unstressed positions after the hard consonant the neural-