

URBAN SPEECH AS A PRODUCT OF STANDARD, COLLOQUIAL AND DIALECTAL SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

This report deals with the problem of inter- and intralanguage interference. Two types of experimental data have been analyzed: first, modern Russian pronunciation in various areas of Russia and, secondly, Russian speech of native speakers of other languages in a number of Soviet Republics. It was found that there were similar deviations from the norm in the speech of non-native speakers of Russian, i.e. absence of palatalization and lack of i-glides in vowels, along with language specific peculiarities. The speech of native speakers of Russian was influenced by the dialectal, colloquial and popular features.

In our time the Russian language has become not only a tool for multinational communication within the many Republics of the Soviet Union, but rather a language used intensively in all spheres of life, as a second language in a number of republics. Widespread modern means of communication have led to the penetration of Russian literary language into every nook and cranny of the Russian Federation, where it exerts a certain influence on the dialectal speech of many a city. And the influence of the national languages and dialects on the literary language produces deviations from the norm in the phonetic realization of phonologically essential properties of the phonetic system. The influence of the Russian literary language on dialects and national languages should be subjected to special investigation. Russian language influence on the national languages leads to the appearance of "borrowed" phonemes, alongside Russian lexical loan-words. Dialects are gradually destroyed by the effects of literary pronunciation, the sound systems

are altered, although certain dialectal patterns show various degrees of stability /1, 2/.

We have observed Russian speech as it is spoken by the metropolitan population of the Russian Federation and Soviet Republics, as it is in the cities that the clash and interaction of normative and dialectal speech and colloquial speech is the sharpest.

The study of city speech may be approached in various ways. First, we may record standard Russian speech in a specific language medium and obtain a realistic picture of the language interference. Secondly, we may record the phonetic system of the Russian language in various functional conditions and define the more stable and the more mutable elements, i.e. find the weak points, elements that are subject to constant change, and the strong points that do not change.

The aim of the present investigation, conducted in the Phonetics Department of Leningrad University, is to study the functioning of the phonetic system of the Russian language from these two points of view. On the basis of comprehensive investigation of national-Russian bilingualism and intra-lingual interference, we hope to give a well-rounded description of the phonetic properties of the Russian language.

As an aid to understanding the nature of the interaction of phonetic systems, we have considered cases demonstrating the variable degrees and quality of opposition to Russian phonetic properties. Features under consideration are the effect on Standard Russian of Russian dialects, of closely-related languages (such as, Ukrainian and Byelorussian), of cognate but not very close languages (as Latvian and Lithuanian) and of unrelated ones (Estonian, Azerbaijanian and Georgian).

For comprehensive investigation of dialectal interference, the dialects from the following cities have been reviewed: North Russian cities (Archangel, Murmansk, Vologda and Perm), Central Russian cities (Gorky, Pskov, Yaroslavl, Kuibyshev, Volgograd), South Russian cities (Smolensk, Kursk, Ryazan, Rostov-on-Don, Krasnodar), Russian cities of the Urals (Sve-

rdlovsk, Chelyabinsk and Nizhny Tagil), and Siberian cities (Tomsk, Omsk, Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk).

Texts were compiled with regard to the frequency of vowels, consonants and their combinations in Standard Russian. The texts were tape recorded by groups from the cities under study of 20 to 40 native speakers representing good and poor skills in command of Standard Russian. The material was listened to by the experimenter, by a group of native subjects and then analysed experimentally. All deviations from the standard were fixed in the listeners' sheets. Findings were systematized and subjected to statistical processing, which revealed the most striking perceptual features and statistically significant segmental units (stressed and unstressed vowels, consonants and their combinations) and also suprasegmental features. It is not always easy to differentiate between segmental and suprasegmental features; for instance, a lack of unstressed reduction, which must be considered segmental, leads to rhythmical alteration in the word and affects the suprasegmental construction of the utterance.

The description of the phonetic properties of dialects and national languages in their comparison with the phonetics of Standard Russian was followed by experimental analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative differences were taken into account in the comparison of phoneme inventories.

The main difficulty for the second-language learner of Russian vowels is basically the necessity of mastering an articulation that differs from the articulation of his native tongue and of accepting certain distributional rules.

As for consonants, the speakers of other languages, and even of dialects, must alter their pronunciation habits in order to produce sounds having analogies in their mother tongue, and, moreover, they must master new distinctive features, another system of oppositions, and distributional rules. It seems that the problem of mastering Russian consonants is more exacting than that of the vowels.

Then, too, both vowels and consonants are joined in syllables in speech production and its perception, so that defects of pronunciation of one group of sounds infringe on the other.

Two aspects should be distinguished in the norm, namely, orthoepy, the phoneme composition of a word, and orthophony, the manifestation of phonetic correlates of a phoneme in a word. These aspects are relatively independent. Orthophonetic distortions are possible without the disturbance of the orthoepic norm, while the phoneme structure of a word may be distorted in spite of normative use of phonemes. The nature of Russian speech in the union republics is determined on the one hand

by the characteristics of the Russian phonological system, by the specific correlation of sounds and letters and for this reason must be uniform (for example the absence of palatalization, the omission of i-glides of vowels were observed in the speech of all people tested, no matter what their native language was). On the other hand, it is influenced by the native language.

The interference of the two phonetic systems is conditioned to a certain extent by the closeness of the languages. This may be true of the genetic kinship as well as the purely typological resemblance.

Moreover, the genetic affinity is not a decisive factor. Much more important are the manifestations of the phonetic system. Therefore, the interference of both languages closely akin (for instance Russian and Ukrainian) and languages that are genetically not related (Russian and Azerbaijanian) can produce sound distortions seemingly of the same type (i.e. soft sibilants, /i/ sound instead of /bi/, the appearance of /j/ in syllables where in Russian there should be a soft consonant + vowel /tja/, /mja/ and so forth. On the other hand, in some cases mistakes of this kind are completely absent when unrelated languages come in contact.

Still, in the interaction of cognate languages, the very closeness of the grammatical structure and lexical similarity encourages the use of lexemes and morphemes of the native tongue involving sound substitution even where it is not caused by phonetic difficulties.

Hence, in the study of sound interference of unrelated languages analysis of the phonetic system will be sufficient (including not only the set of phonemes but also their distribution and implementation in syllables and larger units), while in the case of cognate languages, all possible substitutions must be accounted for.

The study of Russian speech as a second language has revealed various numbers of deviations from the norm, minimal for Byelorussians, and maximal for Estonians and Georgians. These deviations are not at all alike. Some are found only in the speech of a certain language (i.e. the substitutions of sibilants by shibilants in the Russian speech of Estonians); other may be found in various languages, but their realization and phonological nature do not coincide. Certain features and elements of the Russian phonetic system are undoubtedly difficult for speakers of other languages, who replace /u/ with /i/ because they do not have the /u/ sound (such as Armenian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Georgian). Or in cases where the same oppo-

sition exists but the vowels are of different qualities (i.e. Ukrainian). The non-standard pronunciation of /bi/ is found in the Russian speech of Estonians, Moldavians and Azerbaijanians. The deviation from the standard is connected, first, with the specific articulation of the native /bi/-like sound and, second, with the incorrect articulation of the syllable itself, for example, *uu - xu*, the pronunciation of which is obviously influenced by spelling rules.

The speakers of all nationalities mispronounced the Russian /i/, though more rarely than /bi/. The vowel became more retracted if preceded by a partially palatalized or even non-palatalized consonant. Thus, both these traits were linked with incorrect syllable production and depended on the rules of phoneme realization in the syllable.

The commonest violation of orthophonic standards were the retention of unstressed /e/ instead of /i/ when preceded by partially palatalized or non-palatalized consonants (Moldavians, Azerbaijanians, Georgians, Armenians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Byelorussians and Estonians), the pronunciation of /o/ instead of /a/ and /'a/ preceded by palatalized consonants instead of /i/ when written "a" and "я" (Georgians, Ukrainians, etc.).

These mistakes are obviously caused by the different vowel distribution in the native language of the speakers, namely in the absence of vowel gradation of stressed and unstressed phonemes characteristic of Russian.

Some mistakes in vowel articulation are of orthophonic nature, i.e. the substitution of /e/ by /ɛ/, excessive vowel diphthongization and insufficient qualitative and quantitative reduction of /a/, etc.

The main difference in phonological relations between Russian and other national languages in the pronunciation of Russian consonants is the presence versus absence of consonant palatalization. In a number of languages this opposition does not occur at all (Estonian, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijanian). In some other national languages certain pairs are not contrasted in the same way (i.e. there is no /r'-r/ opposition in Byelorussian) or palatalized consonants are produced differently than in Russian (i.e. /t', d'/ in Lithuanian). This accounts for a number of orthoepic mistakes. And here, too, there are significant differences, depending on the nature of consonants.

Voiced versus voiceless consonant opposition is observed both in Russian and other national languages investigated (except in Estonian), but in Azerbaijanian and Georgian consonants in some positions are only partially voiced. In addition, the distribution of voiced and voiceless consonants in several languages studied does not

coincide with Russian. This produces both phoneme substitutions and orthophonic mistakes.

Almost all native speakers (except Lithuanians and Estonians) retain voiced consonants in the word-final position. The largest number of deviations from Standard Russian has been registered in the Russian speech of Estonians, who do not observe such oppositions as palatalized versus non-palatalized consonants, voiced vs. voiceless and sibilant vs. shibilant. In addition, they make no contrast between fricatives and affricates. The number of accentual traits in Russian speech of other native speakers can be listed as follows: Armenians--22, Georgians--20, Azerbaijanians--17, Moldavians--17, Latvians and Ukrainians--15, Lithuanians--14, Byelorussians--10.

Our data for this investigation have shown that phoneme infringement in word production is caused by incorrect phoneme distribution. Even native Russian speakers are guilty of such deviations from Standard Russian at times.

The majority of mistakes appear to be the result of orthophonic deviations from the Standard, i.e. insufficient palatalization, weak velarization, affricates with incorrect durational correlation of occlusive and constrictive elements, excessive diphthongization of vowels, more open or more close vowels as compared to the standard, etc.

The speech of cognate language representatives (Byelorussians or Ukrainians) also has deviations from the norm that are characteristic of colloquial speech or of popular language which indicates an insufficient knowledge of standard pronunciation.

In the speech of urban residents of large cities of the Russian Federation along with standard usage in the pronunciation of vowels and consonants we have recorded both orthophonic and orthoepic deviations. A certain set of relevant features of segmental and suprasegmental levels, a specific city pronunciation variant is to a considerable extent determined by the phonetic systems of the surrounding dialects. In Northern Russian dialects vowel peculiarities were the most striking, while in Southern Russian dialects, consonantal peculiarities stood out. The Middle Russian pronunciation variant in the main coincided with Standard Russian, only some intonation patterns being different.

The absence of a common pronunciation norm can be explained, on the one hand, by the flow of rural population bringing dialectal speech to the cities, and, on the other hand, by the comparatively recent spread of the spoken mass media, while the written literary language has a long tradition. A similar situation is found in

many European and other languages. Older dialects have a stronger influence on speech than newer dialects. However, dialectal traits observed in the speech of city dwellers are not stable, but are found along with normative usage of vowels and consonants, and a kind of "phonetic accent" does not disturb the general perception of speech as literary, if rules of grammar and word usage are observed.

Deviations of an orthophonic nature that do not affect the phoneme composition of a word are more widespread and stable than orthoepic peculiarities (for instance, the pronunciation of a fricative /ɣ/ instead of a plosive /g/).

In addition to dialectal features having a definite local occurrence, the speech of an overwhelming majority of speakers had popular or colloquial features. These were, for instance, delabialization of an unstressed /u/ (*бурбо* - b'iro'), nonstandard reduction of /a/, substitution of affricates /c/ and /č/ by fricatives /s/ and /ʃ/, as in "пърка" /rúš'ka/ and "сочу е" /sonse/, the reduction of final /t'/ in an /s't'/ combination, such as "слабас" /slábas'/, etc. These same features occur in the speech of Leningraders and Muscovites, especially in the case of young people.

Substitutions of fricatives for affricates, as a most characteristic feature of colloquial speech has been described not only by specialists in Russian philology, but also by investigators of other languages, such as Slavic and Germanic.

Vowels and consonants are modified in different ways in the interaction of the native language standard, dialect and the popular language. Here the difference between interlinguistic and intralinguistic interference is strongly marked. Typical of the former is incorrect consonant articulation (a more retracted and open /e/ and /i/ which leads to distorted vowels after consonants in CV syllables, where in standard language the consonant should be palatalized, while for intralingual interference the errors in vowel pronunciation do not depend on palatalization.

The interference result is affected not only by the differences within the phonetic systems involved (phoneme differences in number, their distribution, etc.), but by how the interaction takes place. In the interference of Russian and a native language we usually encounter an incorrect reading of the text, i.e. an error in sound-to-letter transition. The character of sound interference shows an oral approach to mastering Standard Russian.

The degree of kinship between Russian and the native language naturally asserts itself. The number of accentual traits in the Russian speech of speakers of other

languages gives interesting data for further typological conclusions. In this respect languages such as Armenian and Georgian form one group, Azerbaijanian and Moldavian a second group, and Latvian and Ukrainian a third. Lithuanians in a number of accent traits occupy an intermediate position between Ukrainians and Byelorussians.

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