

SPEECH TYPES, SPEECH CULTURE
AND THEIR SEGMENTAL CORRELATES

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ABSTRACT

The experiments with various segmental traits are described, demonstrating the advantage of a new method of analysis of sociolinguistic variability. It is applicable to the languages with strongly expressed democratization tendency and consists in correlating a set of linguistic traits of spontaneous speech not directly to social characteristics, but to the types of speech and speech culture levels of the speakers, which are correlated both with linguistic traits and with social characteristics.

Nowadays for quite a number of languages, Russian included, the main trend of the sociolinguistic development is their democratisation, i.e. the rapprochement of the substandard varieties with the standard one. This process makes itself apparent firstly, through the mastering of the speech norms by former unnormative speakers, secondly, through the penetration of substandard features into the norm-bearers' speech. This trend being caused by such social processes as the mass-media spreading, the educational level uplifting, both rural

and urban population's migration, has hard consequences for the linguistic development. For Russian it manifests itself through the gradual erasing of the distinctions between dialectal, urban popular and standard (literary) speech. The situation of the beginning of the century, when local dialects were typical for peasantry, urban popular speech - for uneducated towns-folk and the Standard Russian - for intelligentsia, has greatly changed since then. Therefore the link between definite speech culture levels and definite social strata using different varieties of Russian has been partially broken. At present the speakers of any language variety can be met among any social strata just as the bearers of any speech culture level can be found among the speakers of any variety. Thus the correlation between the definite linguistic features occurring in spontaneous speech and the social characteristics of the speaker cannot be established directly. The only profitable way of sociolinguistic analysis in this situation is to correlate the social characteristics of the speakers to their speech type (ST: standard or normative, not quite normative, unnormative) and their speech

culture level (SCL: from high to low) and the latter two to the set of linguistic features, thus linking the social belongings of the speakers with definite linguistic features in the indirect way. Besides, the social structure of the linguistic groups and the linguistic structure of the social groups should be established.

It is exactly in this way that the present study was carried out. Firstly, it was shown in the course of the auditory experiments that such social characteristics as the educational level, the social status, the character of profession etc. are very poorly recognized by experts when listening to spontaneous texts: the percentage of correct recognition for 29, 44 and 70 speakers in different series was accordingly 56, 36 and 31 on the average. On the contrary, ST and SCL are unanimously ascribed by a group of listeners to 88 and 98% of speakers out of 206. Secondly, it has been found out in the course of the correlation analysis based on 69 1.5-2 min texts that out of 80 specific traits of different linguistic levels 42 correlate significantly with ST and 56 with SCL; meanwhile only 37 correlate with social position, 34 with educational level, 18 - with professional usage of public speech, 10 - with social status etc. At last, it has been demonstrated that the linguistic structure of various educational, professional and age groups differs to a considerable extent.

Having thus proved the rightfulness of methodology, the question arose which segmental features are sig-

nificant if all for the estimation of ST and SCL both by the researcher and by the experts.

First, it was decided to test the influence of the segmental layer upon the estimation of ST and SCL as compared to the other language layers. For the purpose 4 series of experiments were carried out where 18 listeners had to establish ST and SCL of the 6 informants (2 possessing high, 2 mid and 2 low SCL) by 1) listening to the isolated words cut out from the original text (segmental information preserved), 2) listening to the text in noise (prosodic information), 3) reading the written version of the text (lexico-syntactic information), 4) listening to the original spontaneous text (integral es-

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timation). The results show that the significance of different levels depends on the SCL: with the bearers of low SCL the prosodic level is the poorest since it has the lowest SCL marks; next goes the lexico-syntactic level which is somewhat better organized judging by the estimation; the isolated words series having the highest marks, the segmental subnormal traits influence the SCL estimation least of all. The shortcomings of all the levels being summed up, the integral SCL marks are the lowest. On the contrary, with the bearers of mid and high SCL the integral estimation is the highest showing the integrity of the natural texts compared to the unnatural character of the other

1 These experiments were carried out together with N. Bogdanova and P. Skrelin.

series. The isolated words and the written texts have lower marks than the texts in noise. That testifies to non-importance of segmental and syntactic organization for SCL estimation as compared to that of prosodic level, as the integral SCL estimation grows up parallel to the rising of the prosodically based marks.

Then an attempt was made to find out the segmental features which can help the researcher to establish the linguistic belongings of the speaker. As we have demonstrated earlier [1] although the list of peculiar segmental traits present in different varieties of spoken Russian coincides, the frequency of their occurrence differs depending on ST and SCL. For further analysis four segmental features frequently occurring in spontaneous speech were chosen: 1/ spirantization of stops (/č/ taken separately), 2/pronunciation of /č/ as not enough palatalized [c'], 3/ vocalization of consonants /l, l', r, r', v, v'/, 4/stronger /a/-vowel reduction than prescribed by the norm: pronunciation of [ɔ] instead of [ʌ] in the 1st pre-stressed syllable, at the beginning and in the end of the words. 4 texts (about 11.5 th phonemes) were transcribed, two speakers (a linguist and a worker) being the natives of Moscow and thus the bearers of the norm and two others (a worker and a journalist) - the natives of a small Northern city. The two of them (the workers) - the bearers of low SCL, while the other two - high SCL-speakers. The results show that all the chosen traits are typical for spontaneous speech as they occur in all the 4 texts. But there

exists a clear cut tendency to their different distribution in the texts: two features (№1, 3) are more typical for high SCL-speakers (the linguist and the journalist) while the other two (№2,4) are more frequent with the low SCL-speakers. As for ST, the traits connected with high SCL are also linked with the norm, as they are more frequent in the texts spoken by the Moskovites, both with high and with low speech culture. That testifies to the fact that SCL is still somewhat higher with the normative speakers. Still such traits as spirantization and vocalization are more dependent on the normative distinctions while the other two are influenced more by SCL differences. Although the further research is desirable where both a range of traits studied and a number of speakers would be increased, these results show that there exist definite segmental traits whose number of occurrence lets us to distinguish between different ST and SCL by the research analysis of spontaneous texts.

On the next stage of the investigation it was decided to study whether four of the described traits are essential for auditory analysis, i.e. whether their presence in speech influences the estimation of ST and SCL by the experts. For this purpose an experiment was staged where isolated words cut out of 6 texts (2 high SCL, normative ST, 2 mid SCL, non-fully normative and 2 low SCL unnormative) were listened to by a group of 10 experts in 5 series. Into the 1st series the words containing no peculiar pronunciation traits were included. The other 4

contained words with vocalized sonorants, spirantized stops, /č/ not enough palatalized, the cases of stronger /a/-vowel reduction.

The results of auditory analysis confirmed the results described above, that the SCL, when being estimated by the isolated words, is almost equal to that of the original text with low SCL bearers and far too lower with mid and high SCL bearers. That confirms the closer link of various linguistic levels with the speakers of high SCL. Besides, the results show that the presence of spirantized stops and vocalized sonorants in the series, being typical for normative ST and high SCL almost does not influence the estimation of the first and even rises that of the latter with the speakers of low SCL. As for /č/ not enough palatalized and stronger /a/-vowel reduction, being both of dialectal origin, they act quite in a different way. The presence of the first turns the former normative speakers (by 1st series estimation) into the unnormative but only slightly lowers their SCL marks, while the presence of the second trait influences more SCL marks lowering them and only slightly decreases ST marks. This demonstrates that /č/ not enough palatalized is connected in the mind of the experts with substandard (dialectal) varieties the speakers of which are not compulsory of low SCL. The stronger reduction is, on the contrary, linked with low SCL, typical for urban popular speech, which, being widely spread nowadays, is not estimated as unnormative.

On the whole, all the four pronunciation traits are used by experts in the process of estimating both
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ST and SCL.

To draw a conclusion it is necessary to underline that for many languages with blotted out social differentiation the sociolinguistic variation can not be described in any other way but indirectly through such general linguistic characteristic of the speakers as the type of their speech and the level of their speech culture, which have quite a definite set of linguistic correlates on all the levels of linguistic analysis, the segmental one included. The existence of these linguistic realities having been proved by auditory analysis results, their correlates can be used both by researchers and by experts to determine the linguistic belongings of the speakers in the course of sociolinguistic analysis, thus indirectly correlating concrete linguistic traits to the social characteristics of speakers.

As for the significance of segmental level for the estimation of speech, it is different by various ST and SCL.

REFERENCES

[1] GEILMAN, N. (1987). Variability of Phonemes in Spoken Russian. Proc. XI ICPHS. V.3, pp.161-164.

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