

*Regional phonetic variation in the speech of young urban Russians: An exploratory study of quantitative and qualitative vowel reduction in Moscow and Perm*

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Most young urban Russians speak with little or no local characteristics in their speech, but small regional differences are likely to be present even in this language with a strong standard language ideology, especially in prosody. Contemporary Central Standard Russian is known for its unusual word prosody. Words have a heavy nucleus: the first pretonic syllable is unusually prominent, forming a salient contrast, together with the stressed syllable, with unstressed syllables in other, weak positions, which are heavily reduced, both in quality and quantity (Zlatoustova 1981, Kodzasov 1999). This means that effectively, there are two degrees of vowel reduction: a moderate degree for the first pretonic syllable (and for onsetless and final open syllables, contexts promoting long vowel duration) and a radical degree of reduction for any other unstressed syllable (Crosswhite 2000). This two-degree reduction is strong in many traditional rural dialects in Central Russia, but less so in other parts of Russia (Potebnja 1866; Vysotskij 1973; Al'muxamedova and Kul'šaripova 1980). Two recent studies suggest that this regional variation in prosodic word shape between Central Russian and non-central varieties is still present in modern urban Russian (Grammatčikova et al. 2013; Erofeeva 2005). However, in these two earlier studies, the number of speakers and vowels measured was very low.

We compared vowel quality and duration in the speech of a larger set of speakers to confirm that regional differences persist in modern urban speech, and to explore different prosodic factors that may play a role (position in the word, position in the sentence, accentual status). We recorded 32 adolescents, born in 1998 or 1999, in Moscow (central variety) and Perm (non-central variety). They read 10 sentences containing words with a CV<sub>2</sub>-CV<sub>1</sub>-CV<sub>0</sub>C structure with pretonic vowels /o/ and /a/ after non-palatalized consonants (which merge in most modern varieties of Russian), in several prosodic conditions.

The main finding is that, as expected, the Muscovites make a much larger difference between the first pretonic (V1) and second pretonic (V2) vowels than the pupils from Perm, even in this formal speaking style. In the Moscow data, the first pretonic is almost twice as long as the second pretonic, whereas in the Perm words, the two vowels have almost equal duration. This difference between Moscow and Perm speech is stable across all speakers and prosodic conditions, i.e. irrespective of the word's position in the utterance and its accentual status. The results were corroborated by a small auditory study.

Our vowel quality data confirm the parallel between quantity (duration) and quality (F1 and F2), both inside the second pretonic vowel (cf. Barnes 2006 on phonetic undershoot in Moscow speech) and between the second and first pretonics, with short second pretonic

vowels being less open than their longer first pretonic neighbours, but in Moscow, the latter can have the same open quality as the – even longer – stressed vowels.

These findings will be discussed in the context of theoretical models of language variation and change (cf. Auer 2005; Krause 2010).

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