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REGIOLECT AS A VARIETY OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The paper addresses the problem of the regional variety of the Russian language – regiolect, which to a certain extent reflects peculiarities of the life of the population in a particular region. The heterogeneous nature of its formation has been proved, since its sources are not only dialects transformed under the impact of the literary language but also regionally marked vernaculars, literary linguistic units, and local borrowings. It was found that the regiolect occupies an intermediate position between vernacular and literary languages in the structure of the national language, and differs from the first one by its regional character, and from the second one – by the absence of a literary norm. The inconsistency of the so-called 'democratization' of the norms of the literary language was substantiated, since it is oriented not towards reference texts, but towards carriers of various subcultures. It was established that the stability of regiolects is due to the fact that they reflect features of the life of the region, regional objects, and significant cultural phenomena of the region. The importance of further study of the regiolect was substantiated. The novelty of the study is that a detailed analysis of the concept of regiolect was carried out for the first time, the genesis of this linguistic structure was clarified, its place in the system of the national language was defined, and the attitude towards the literary language and extra-literary linguistic structures was determined.

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Keywords: Regiolect, dialect, national language, semi-dialect, norm



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1. Introduction

Recently, due to the loss of dialects, the problem of regional varieties of the national language that serve for communication of people living in a particular region has become relevant in linguistic literature. However, these regional varieties of the national language, called regiolects in linguistic science, have not yet been sufficiently studied, which was the reason for their investigation in this study.

2. Problem Statement

A number of researchers believe that regional dialects do not disappear but are transformed into regiolects. At the same time, there is often an involuntary confusion of the concepts of dialect and socioleme that employs dialects, and the concept of regiolect is interpreted by various linguists in a somewhat ambiguous and contradictory way. The place of the regiolect in the national language system is also defined in different ways. An obvious inconsistency is found in designation of the term of this phenomenon; the problem of the sources of the regiolect remains unresolved. The attribution of the regiolect to the literary language seems to be very controversial and provokes a revision of the norm of the literary language and the violation of its unity.

3. Research Questions

3.1. The concept of regiolect

The term regiolect goes back to the Roman dialectological school (Doppagne, 1978; Khorosheva, 2011; Martin, 1989). In Russian linguistics, it is first encountered in the work by Borodina (1982), pointing out its unstable character in comparison with dialects, which, in her opinion, are more stable. Later, Trubinsky (1991), a famous Leningrad dialectologist, a specialist in dialect syntax, started to use this term together with his colleague Gerd (2001). In order to determine the genesis of the regiolect, Gerd (2001) points out that it is a transformation of a dialect that has lost its bright dialectal features. However, a similar idea was expressed long before by Filin (1973), who used the term semi-dialect instead of the term regiolect, which is a loan translation of the German Halbmundart: 'The local dialect is also a system albeit currently transforming into a semi-dialect'. Thus, the regiolect, according to A.S. Gerd, is opposed to the literary language, replacing the dialect on the basis of which it arose and which it denies. N.V. Khorosheva argues differently following the French dialectologists (as cited in Bulot, 1985; Martin, 1989) and indicates an intermediate position of the regiolect between the literary language and the dialect. However, she follows the idea of A.S. Gerd that regional dialects 'do not die out' but only transform into intermediate idioms (as cited in Khorosheva, 2011), which is meanwhile seems to be incorrect. The intermediate idiom assumes the presence of extreme members of the opposition. But if dialects are transformed into a different idiom, it means that this idiom is opposed only to the literary language, since the dialect has changed, i.e. disappeared. It cannot change and remain what it was. The incorrectness of such statements is due to the confusion of concepts. The fact is that dialects do not disappear and do not change, and do not transform into regiolects. A socioleme that uses dialects changes under the influence of the literary language. At the same time, the literary language assimilates primarily through school education, as well as through reading

fiction, print media, listening to radio and television broadcasts, and characterized by general prevalence, universality, multifunctionality, stylistic differentiation, and prestige. The literary language suppresses dialects, as a result of which the number of dialect speakers is steadily shrinking. The ongoing processes of urbanization, changes in the socio-economic life of rural residents, and universal schooling have radically changed the language preferences of dialect carriers. They reject the dialectal archaic and switch to the literary and vernacular languages in everyday communication, diluting them with certain dialect features that exhibit amazing vitality, especially in the field of phonetics (fricative [g], retention of unstressed 'o', etc.), less often in the field of syntax, morphology, and vocabulary. This fact was pointed out by Filin (1973), who noted that dialectal features do not disappear, but "they are preserved in the form of separate elements in the speech of even highly educated people" (p. 4). The stable preservation of dialectal phonetic features in regiolects is explained by the fact that they practically do not complicate the perception of the utterance content.

3.2. The problem of the regiolect and its place in the system of the national language

Analysis of the scientific literature on the issue of the regiolect revealed contradictory judgments about it, even the opposite ones. Thus, as already mentioned above, Borodina (1982) argues that the regiolect is characterized by variability and instability, while the dialect shows stability similar to the language. In contrast, Trubinsky (1991) believes that dialects under the impact of the literary language lose their bright dialectal features, which sharply oppose them to the norm of the literary language; the resulting regiolects are more stable, and less amenable to change under the external influence. In the past, dialects were characterized by significant stability, which is noted by Borodina (1982), but now a completely different situation has arisen. The socioleme that uses dialects in communication is steadily reducing, while the socioleme that employs the regiolect is increasing, as a result of which the regiolect gains relative stability. Gerd (2001) believes that the regiolect, on the one hand, does not have the status of the literary language, and on the other hand, 'due to the presence of many regionally varying features' does not coincide 'completely with the urban vernacular'. The author points to an intermediate position of the regiolect not between the dialect and the literary language, but between the literary language and the vernacular. It differs from the literary language by its irregularity and local prevalence, and from the vernacular language – by its regional limitations only. Regiolect, according to Gerd (2001), develops in the area of border dialects, which include cities and urban-type settlements. This differential feature of the regiolect is specified in the Dictionary of Linguistic Terms, which notes that it serves to designate the speech of residents of medium and small towns, in which the impact of local dialects and vernacular is observed (Zherebilo, 2010). It should be noted that the local features characteristic of the literary oral speech of residents of large cities are clearly manifested not only in phonetics and orthoepy but also in vocabulary. For instance, the speech of the inhabitants of St. Petersburg shows lack of dissimilation of the combinations -chn and -cht. They pronounce *kone[chn]o* instead of *kone[shn]o*; *[cht]o* instead of *[sht]o*. Local colouring is also manifested at the lexical level. Thus, in St. Petersburg the chicken is called 'kura'; in Vladikavkaz a three-liter jar is called a 'ballon'. Consequently, the regiolect is characterized by phonetic, lexical and grammatical features typical of the speech of the population of a vast region. A.S. Gerd claims that the regiolect as a special variety of the national language 'postulates the presence of a special linguistic state, which is almost the main form of verbal communication of large groups of the ethnic group in a certain region' (Gerd, 2001; Yaguello, 2003).

The introduction of the term regiolect into scientific circulation is of great scientific importance, because it marks the most important variety of the national language, which was previously 'dissolved' in the ambiguous term 'dialect' that did not reveal its essential characteristics. The vast majority of researchers interpret the regiolect as locally marked phonetic, lexical and grammatical features of speech. For some reason, Kosharnaya (2017) narrows the concept of regiolect to a 'special vocabulary of a region'. Zvarkina (2013) states that regiolects reflect the peculiarities of regional culture. It is this fact that explains their vitality and coexistence along with literary languages, which is clearly demonstrated in the works by Kadolo (2011), Korneiko (2013), Walter (1998), Neale (1998), and Widdowson (2002). The problem of the sources of the regiolect remains unclear. As shown above, most researchers believe that regiolects were formed on the basis of dialects. At the same time, Erofeeva (2003) asserts that the regiolect includes not only lexemes that go back to dialectisms but also vernaculars, words of colloquial speech of townspeople, literary words 'that have received emphatically wide functioning in a certain region'. In the national regions, the regiolect includes local borrowings from the languages of the peoples of Russia. It is known that in the Russian language there are literary variants of words: 'obuh and ob'uh, 'tvorog and tvo'rog, 'inache and i'nache, etc. Interestingly, different regions use different variants, as already indicated by Filin (1973). It is arguable that the regiolect, according to Khorosheva (2011), 'is based on the dialectal substrate'. The substrate is 'traces of the defeated language in the composition of the winning language when two languages are crossed' (Akhmanova, 1966). In this regard, the question arises: what languages are crossing? Apparently, the author considers the dialects of the Russian language to be independent languages, which can hardly be accepted. Even if we assume that dialects are indeed independent languages, it remains unclear which language has recognized the winner over the dialect and exhibits traces of the latter.

If Khorosheva (2011) understands a literary language as a winner, then it is not, because the regiolect is a non-literary language. If the regiolect is recognized as the winner over the dialect, then it is necessary to assume that it existed before interaction with dialects, which seems absurd. Consequently, the regiolect is a variety of the national language which is based on dialects and results from their interaction with its other varieties – literary and vernacular languages. Erofeeva (2003) illustrates the place of the regiolect in the system of the Russian national language in descending order of 'literariness': literary language – regional variety of the literary language – regiolect – dialect. The above scheme shows that dialects are transformed into regiolects, regiolects are transformed into a regional variety of the literary language, and the literary language is enriched by the regional variety of the literary language. At the same time, the regional variety of the literary language is an intermediate idiom between the literary language and the regiolect. In contrast to the regiolect, the regional variety of the literary language is part of the literary language, and in contrast to the literary language, it approaches the regiolect. Regiolect is an intermediate idiom between the regional variety of the literary language and the dialect. In contrast to the regional variety of the literary language, the regiolect approaches the dialect, and in contrast to the latter, it approaches the regional variety of the literary language. This is the dialectic of the interaction of regional varieties of the Russian language as understood by Erofeeva (2003). However, the above scheme proposed by Erofeeva is artificial and has little to do with reality. Thus, the existence of a regional variety of the Russian literary language is doubtful. The literary language cannot have varieties, since it is itself a variety of the Russian national language. Filin (1973) called regional varieties of the Russian language a real misunderstanding. There is probably no

reason to object to the existence of the American and Australian varieties of the English literary language or South American varieties of the Spanish literary language, which have been in use for such a long time without direct contact with their primary sources, but one can hardly speak about the Moscow or Voronezh varieties of the literary language (Filin, 1973). In fact, here we can speak about the existence of a regional linguistic norm and the violation of the unity of the literary language. Thus, opposition of the literary language to its regional variety is unacceptable. The regiolect cannot be opposed to dialects either, for they have already disappeared from the Russian national language. Consequently, the regiolect is opposed to the literary language as a non-normative system to a normative one, as well as to the vernacular language, as a regionally limited system is opposed to a system that does not have regional limitations. It should be noted that the distinction between dialects and regiolects seems to be rather vague, the border between them is indistinct, and the proposed criteria for this distinction are subjective. It seems that of the proposed criteria for distinguishing dialectisms and regionalisms, the most important is the one that takes into account the cultural significance of the designated reality for the region (Chronaki et al., 2015; Camras et al., 2017). As for the phonetic regional units, the greatest vitality is exhibited by those that in a given regiolect, being inherited from dialects, have insignificant functional load and do not interfere with understanding the meaning of the utterance, i.e. there is no danger of homonymy with literary language units. For example, hard labial consonants at the end of words such as lubof, markof does not create homonymy with the corresponding literary analogs, with the exception of rare cases such as krov – krov' (krof – krof). The problem of the relation of the regiolect to the linguistic norm seems to be interesting. Recently, V.I. Belikov (2003, 2007) has considered the traditional attitude to the norm as a general linguistic phenomenon. The radical idea of V.I. Belikov was supported by some other linguists (Kadolo, 2011). The scope of this paper does not allow considering all aspects of the normativity. It should only be noted that regionalisms should not be attributed to the normative linguistic units, but this, of course, does not exclude the possibility, under certain conditions, of their entry into the literary language, as it includes some dialectisms, professionalisms, vernaculars, etc. Lexemes should not be attributed to the literary speech, as they are often used in a particular region, especially those with varieties in the literary language, especially since the majority of speakers who use regionalisms in their speech are aware of their non-normativity. A number of scholars argue about the democratization of the language, about lowering the threshold of normativity that have led to regrettable results – to the loss of modern fiction literature, which is often replaced by its pitiful substitute. Recognition of the regional character of the norm undermines the unity of the Russian language. Belikov (2004) proposes to single out the core and the periphery in the norm, thereby providing wider opportunities for the entry of regionalisms, jargon, etc. into the literary language. However, this seems too radical, since the norm is a standard, violation of which must be determined by a number of factors. It is well known that the norm is a historical category and is subject to change, reflecting the openness and dynamism of the language system and preserving its communicative suitability. In addition, concept of the norm in the history of the Russian language was different: at first it was understood as a model, then as a customary usage, and then as a generally accepted standard. It is not clear why we should abandon the standard and return to the customary usage. To date, terminologization of our speech is underway, which ensures the accuracy of the expressed thoughts, and standardization of the norm contributes to this process as well.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to reveal the differential features of the regiolect, to determine its place in the system of the national language and cultural significance, to identify its genesis, and to study its relation to the literary language and the literary norm.

5. Research Methods

Description of methods. The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was the work by I.A. Baudouin de Courtenay on the artificial nature of the literary language and its unity; the work by F.P. Filin, B.N. Golovin, S.I. Ozhegov, L.P. Krysina et al. on the conservatism of the literary norm and its stability; the work by B.A. Uspensky on the distinction between the living speech and the literary language; the work by V.V. Khimik on the national value of the Russian language.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following methods were used:

- theoretical – analysis and synthesis of linguistic and sociological literature on the topic of the study;
- comparative – comparison and critical analysis of the existing viewpoints on the problem;
- axiological – identification of regional cultural values expressed through the regional language.

6. Findings

Regiolects are a regional variety of the national language. The sources of the regiolect are the literary language, dialects that have lost their bright dialectal features, regionally marked vernaculars, local borrowings from the languages of the peoples of Russia, and the local toponymy. The absence of bright dialectal features and vernaculars, as well as the reflection of the peculiarities of regional culture, determine the stability of the regiolect. The regiolect is an intermediate idiom opposed, on the one hand, to the literary language, and on the other hand, to the vernacular language. Attribution of the regiolect to the linguistic norm is counterproductive and undermines the unity of the Russian literary language.

7. Conclusion

Regiolects, which are an integral part of the national language, synthesize regionally marked heterogeneous linguistic means in their composition, actively function in specific regions, and impart a specific regional coloring to the speech. Unlike dialects, regiolects do not exhibit the properties of a system and are characterized only by certain lexical and phonetic features. At the same time, the regiolect itself was formed on the basis of dialects that have lost their brightly dialectal features during their interaction with the literary language and the vernacular.

Russian regiolects in national regions were formed on the basis of the interaction of the Russian language and the language of the local population. Regiolects are local varieties of the Russian national language, they are not characterized by a codified norm and are not varieties of the literary language.

Of course, the literary speech cannot comprise only stylistically neutral linguistic units; it is quite permissible to use vernacular, jargon, colloquial words, regionalisms, which is legitimized by the entry of

words of the indicated categories with the corresponding stylistic marks into the normative dictionaries of the Russian language.

It is important to study the impact of the literary language on regiolects and vice versa. Of course, the impact of the literary language on regiolects is powerful and global, and their role in verbal communication is steadily declining and will continue to decline in the future. However, regiolects promote the enrichment of the literary language with various linguistic means. The language becomes stylistically more diverse, providing the opportunity to express the same phenomenon in different words, and spreads variance in the literary language, which is the most important condition for language development.

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