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Palatality, palatalization, uranization, softness (Based on MRI)

Abstract

This article aims to differentiate between the notions of “palatalization”, “palatalized”, “palatal” (=“mid-palatal”=“mid-lingual”), “softness”, “soft”, “softened” based on experimental data on Siberian languages. The methods of MRI and auditive control were used in the study. As a result, it was discovered that mid-lingual (palatal) consonants involve not only the medial part of the tongue as an articulator but rather front and medial parts of the tongue and sometimes its whole surface. Palatalization as secondary articulation, which is the raise of the middle of the tongue, not always causes the auditive effect of softness. In many cases we observe uranization which is palatalization with the auditive effect of hardness. Soft consonant pattern involves narrowing of the constriction of the vocal folds in the front part as primary articulation accompanied by moving the front edge of the glottis up and forth. The degree of palatalization as well as the degree of the perceived softness (soft or softened) might vary.

Keywords: consonants, softness, hardness, articulation, palatality, palatalization, uranization

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