

# INTERPRETATION OF FINAL UNSTRESSED VOWELS AFTER SOFT CONSONANTS IN RUSSIAN NOUNS: *DOES MORPHOLOGY MATTER?*



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## Hypothesis 1: Morphology can influence the pronunciation and perception of vowels

pole		pole
/pol' <u>a</u> /	≠	/pol' <u>i</u> /
'field.NOM.SG'		'field.LOC.SG'
'field.ACC.SG'		
	↑	
seno	→	pole
/s'ena/		/pol'a/
'hay.NOM.SG'		'field.NOM.SG'

the same declination, a vowel after a hard consonant

A.A. Šaxmatov mentions the idea of morphological influence in *Očerki sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo jazyka*. Moscow: Učpedgiz, 1925/1941.

## Hypothesis 2: Morphology doesn't matter

pole		pole
/pol' <u>i</u> /	=	/pol' <u>i</u> /
'field.NOM.SG'		'field.LOC.SG'
'field.ACC.SG'		

OR

## How to check these hypotheses?

M.V. Panov proposes an experiment in *Voprosnik po sovremennomu russkomu literaturnomu proiznošeniju: Instrukcija*. Moscow: USSA Academy of Science, 1960.

## Experiment 1

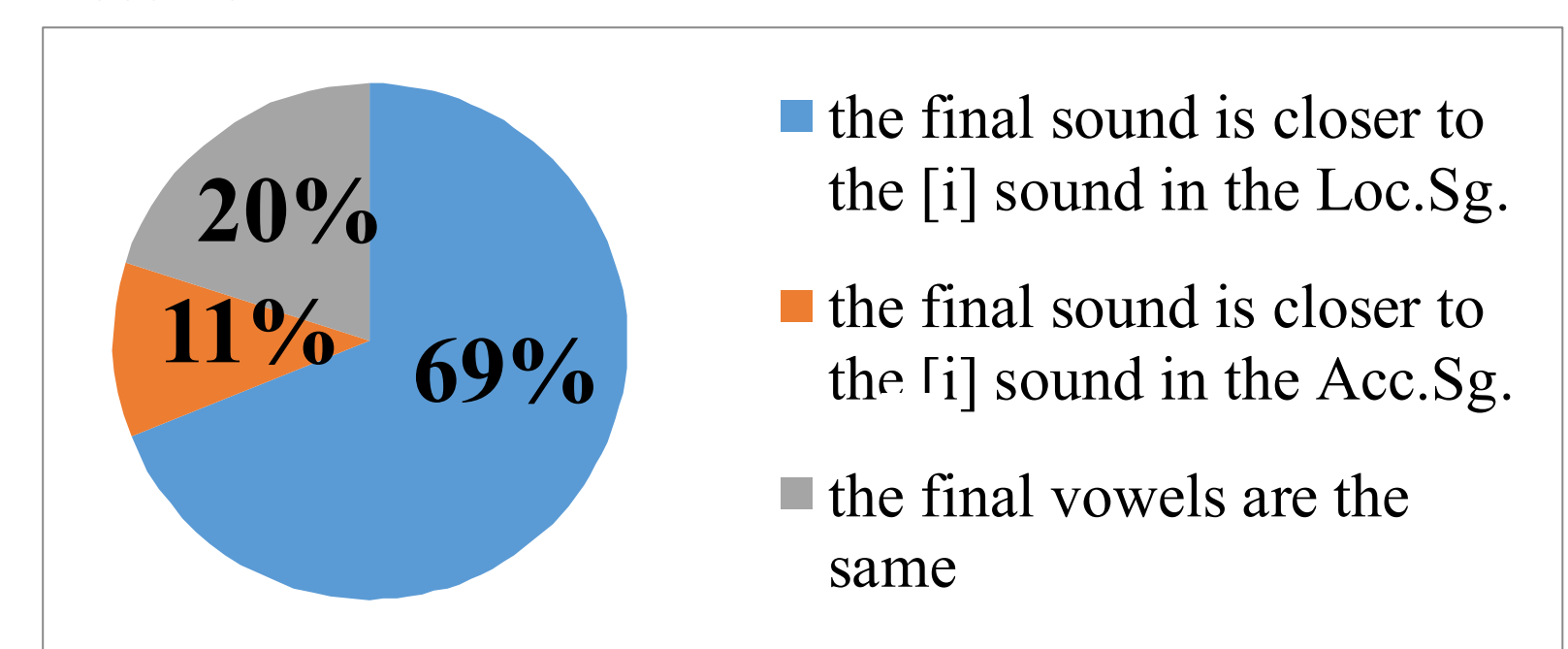
We used the method described by M.V. Panov:

**Participants:** 100 native Russian speakers

**Task:** To read two phrases and answer in which of them the final sound is closer to the [i] sound:

(grad padal) na eto pole                      **VS.**                      (rabotali) na etom pole  
'the hail was falling on the field.ACC.SG.'                      'worked.PL in this field.LOC.SG.'

## **Results:**



## Experiment 2

**Stimuli:** we recorded a list of phrases containing Russian nouns *pole* 'field', *more* 'sea', and *gore* 'grief' in Nom.Sg/Acc.Sg, Loc.Sg, and Gen.Sg. Then we extracted these words from the phrases and presented them as stimuli in the experiment.

**Task:** To read the beginnings of the phrases and to decide whether a word that is pronounced afterwards suits the context:

*Rebjonok nikogda ne plaval v ...* 'The child has never swum in ...'  
(Requires Loc.)

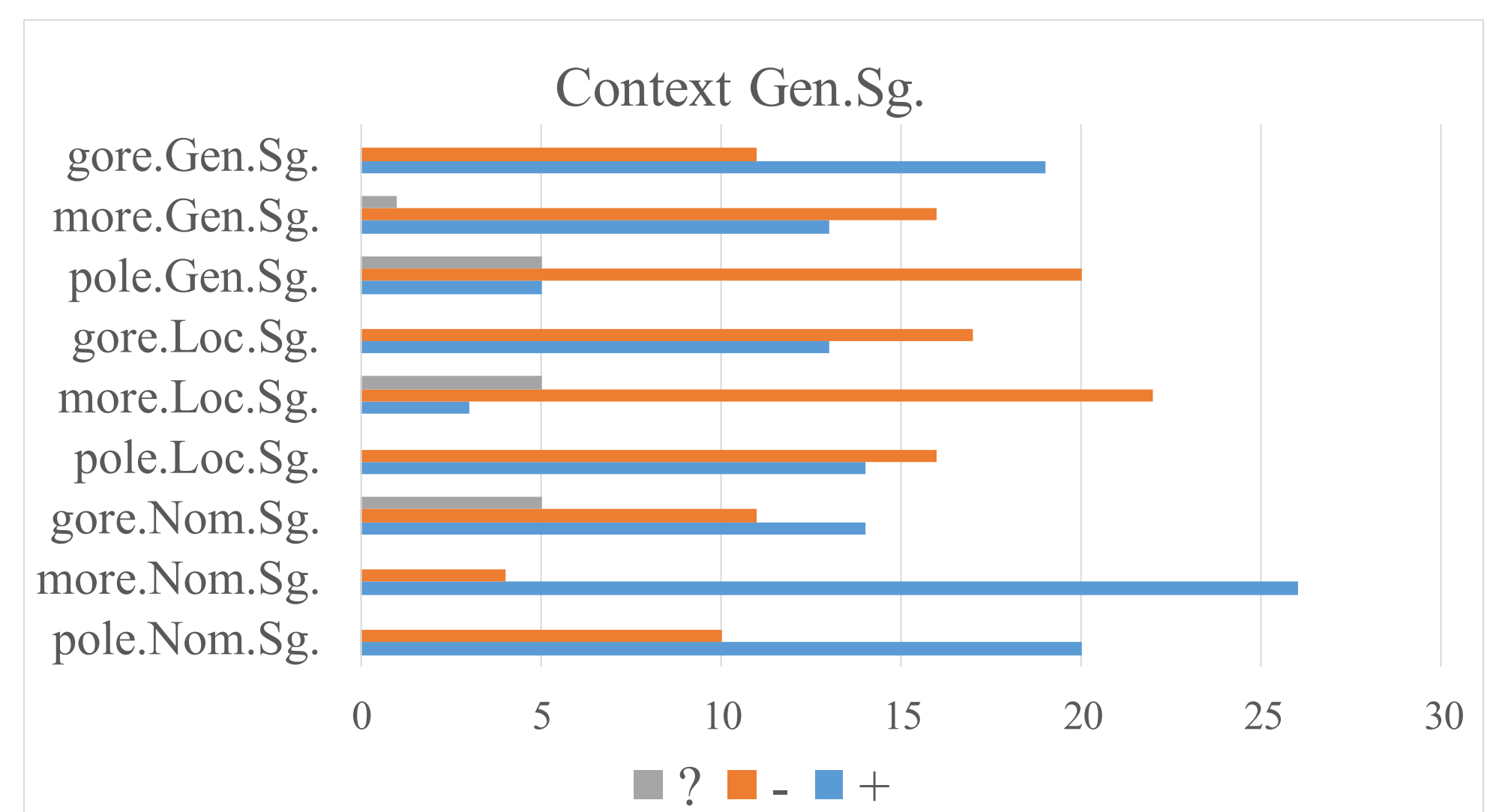
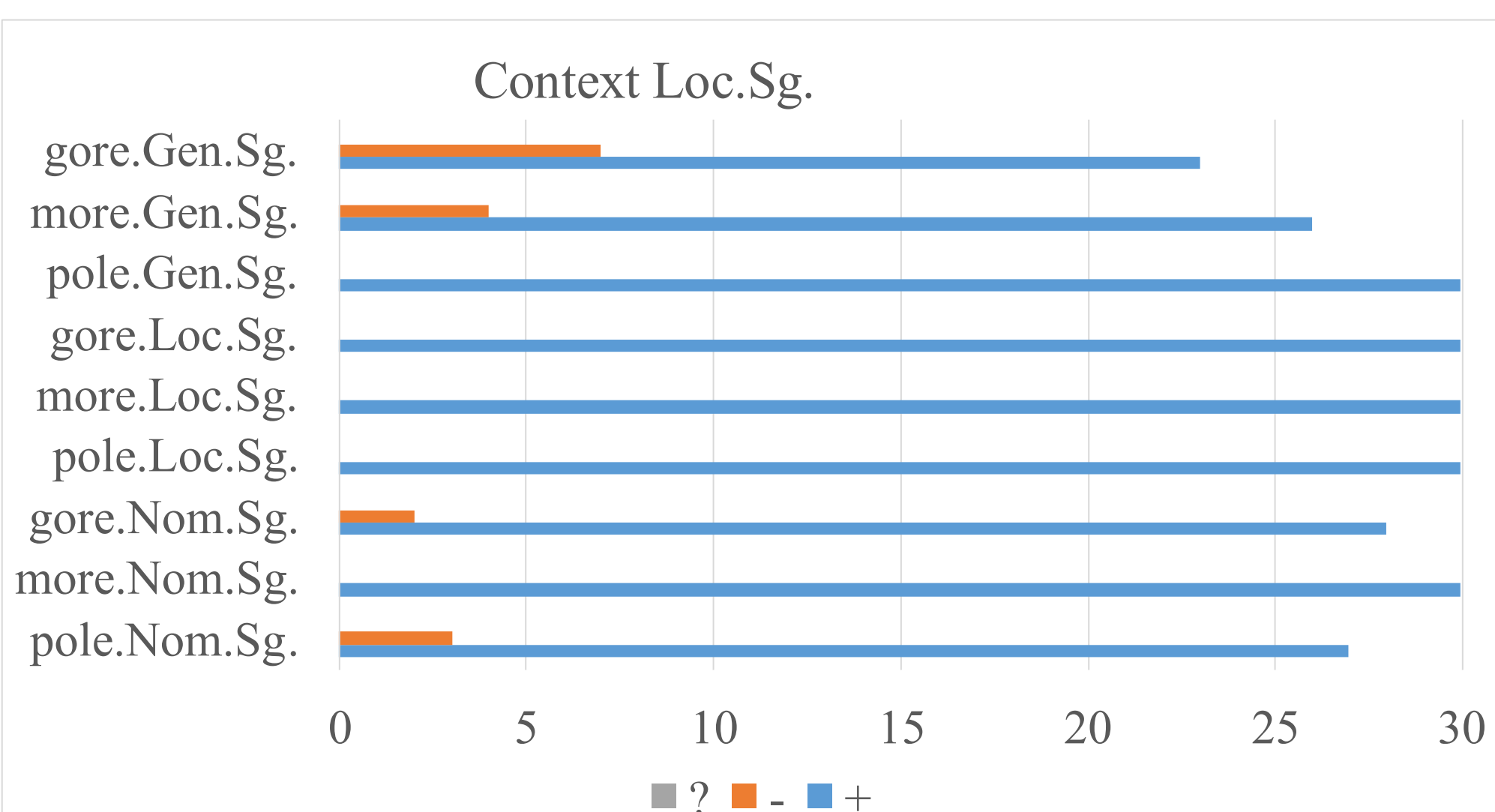
- 1) *more* /mor'i/ 'sea.Loc.Sg.'  
2) *more* /mor'a/ 'sea.Nom.=Acc.Sg.'  
3) *mora* /mor'a/ 'sea.Gen.Sg.'

**Participants:** 30 native Russian speakers

**Results:** it is the grammatical context not the quality of the vowel that matters:

If the participants expected to hear a noun in Nom. or Loc. most of them regarded any form they heard as suitable (+)

If the participants expected a noun in Gen. they often responded negatively (-) or expressed doubts (?)



??? Speakers distinguish the vowels whereas listeners do not ???