

JURIS GRIGORJEVS,
INESE INDRIČĀNE,
JANA TAPERTE

LU Latviešu valodas institūts
jugrig@latnet.lv, ineseindricane@inbox.lv, jana.taperte@gmail.com

Latvian /v/ and /j/: acoustic study of different realizations

The Latvian consonant phonemes /v/ and /j/ are traditionally described as voiced constrictives. They are considered being obstruents, although some linguists suggest viewing /v/ as obstruent, i. e. [+consonantal], but /j/ – as sonorant, i. e. approximant /j/ which is characterized as [–consonantal]. This is caused by different pronunciation found for these consonants, their diachronic aspects and phonological vocalization in the tautosyllabic position, i. e. after a vowel in the syllable coda (Markus 2002, Pakerys 1995, Kazlauskas 2000). In the latest edition of the Latvian Grammar (LVG 2013), these consonants are classified as voiced fricatives based on their target articulation found in pure, idealized pronunciation. Nevertheless, in real speech samples different realizations of this idealized pronunciation can be found ranging from a fricative to a vowel.

The goal of the current study is to register the percentage distribution of different realizations of these phonemes in available speech material consisting of symmetric CVC units in carrier phrases.

The characteristics chosen for this study are the spectral shape and the relative intensity of the consonant in question, and the relative duration of the formant transitions of context vowels.

During the pilot study (Grigorjevs et al. 2015) the relative intensity of the consonants /v/ and /j/, and the relative duration of the formant transitions of context vowels has been addressed. If the relative intensity of /v/ and /j/ is compared with the relative intensity of sounds having similar formant pattern – laterals /l/ and /ʎ/, and vowels /u/ and /i/ – in the corresponding positions, it has been observed that the intensity of /v/ and /j/ is the lowest. If the relative durations of formant transitions are compared, the following pattern has been observed: the transitions are the shortest in case of laterals, medium in case of /v/ and /j/, and the longest between the diphthong components.

References

- Grigorjevs, J., I. Indričāne, J. Taperte (2015). Latvian v and j – fricatives or approximants?, in *2nd International Scientific Conference CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH IN PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY: METHODS, ASPECTS AND PROBLEMS. Abstracts*. Riga, May 14-15, 2015, p. 19 (http://www.lu-lavi.lv/media/upload/tiny/files/Abstracts_%20Phon%202015.pdf)
- Kazlauskas, J. (2000). *Rinkiniai raštai*. Vilnius.
- LVG 2013 – Aut. kol. *Latviešu valodas gramatika*. Rīga.
- Markus, D. (2002). *Latviešu valodas fonēmu galvenās šķirēj pazīmes fonoloģijas attīstības kontekstā*. Humanitāro zinātņu vēstnesis. Daugavpils, 61.–67. lpp.
- Pakerys, A. (1995). *Lietuvių bendrinės kalbos fonetika*. Vilnius.