

Effect of phrasal accent on the articulation of Slovak /l/ in different syllable positions

Lia Saki Bučar Shigemori
Marianne Pouplier

This study examines the effect of phrasal accent on the articulation of /l/ in the syllable nucleus, onset and coda position using ultrasound.

Vowels have been argued to be the main carriers of prosodic emphasis. Under accentuation, the sonority of the vowel is enhanced by lowering the jaw and tongue and widening the oral cavity (Beckman et al., 1992). Based on Slovak, we investigate in the current study whether phrasal accent has a different effect on /l/, depending on its syllable position. Slovak has a dark /l/, which can be syllabic in both stressed and unstressed position (Král', 2005). A dark /l/ has been described as having both, a consonantal (tongue tip) and a vocalic (tongue back) gesture (Sproat and Fujimura, 1993). We want to examine whether accent differentially targets the tongue back gesture of /l/ in the nucleus position, thus strengthening the vocalic characteristics of the syllabic consonant. If /l/ is more vowel-like in the nuclear position, an enhancement of the vocalic tongue back gesture and a weakening of the consonantal tongue tip gesture is expected under accentuation.

Six native speakers of Slovak have been recorded using ultrasound. They read the pseudo words *plpap*, *plepap* and *pelpap*, embedded in two different carrier phrases to elicit two accentuation patterns. We compared the tongue shapes at the temporal midpoint of the /l/ for the two accent conditions separately for each syllable position. Preliminary results show the same pattern for accentuation in the three positions. The consonantal as well as vocalic gesture of /l/ are strengthened in the same way regardless of its syllable position, suggesting that /l/ is not more vocalic in the nuclear position.

References

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