Central Standard Russian has a typologically uncommon word prosodic structure with a heavy nucleus. The syllable immediately preceding the stressed syllable is uncommonly prominent, forming a salient contrast, together with the stressed syllable, with unstressed syllables in other, weak positions, which are heavily reduced, both in quality and quantity. One could say that stress is produced over two syllables, and that vowels are reduced in two degrees. This first pretonic prominence appears to be a common feature of East Slavic, but it is much more pronounced in central Russia (Moscow) than in other areas of the East Slavic continuum, and possibly absent in the far North and far West.

I will present my ongoing study, based on recordings of 32 adolescents in Moscow and in Perm (Ural), a variety with North Russian features, where the difference between second and first pretonic vowels is known to be much smaller. The participants read utterances containing the words topotát’, pokopát’ and potakát’, which have two pretonic vowels.

I concentrate on duration, but we will also have a look at vowel quality and the role of pitch. Consonant durations might also be different.

I am open for suggestions on how I should continue this project. An earlier study suggests there may be an even larger difference between Moscow and Perm speech in (semi)spontaneous data. We also recorded spontaneous and semi-spontaneous speech from the same speakers, and from speakers from Novosibirsk.

If time permits, I will also touch upon my ongoing research on polar questions in regional varieties of Russian, based on data from read speech and from spontaneous speech. Recently, spoken corpora of spontaneous dialectal Russian have become available, which I currently use for exploratory research.