This paper reports on the results of an investigation into the duration of acute and circumflex vowels and vocalic diphthongs in extended speech contexts. The results obtained lead us to the conclusion that duration is not the main factor in the differentiation of accent type.

In Lithuanian, long monophthongs, and vocalic or mixed diphthongs (vowel plus either liquid or nasal consonant) in stressed position may have falling or rising accent. The terms "falling" and "rising" retain musical connotations, and the actual nature of the intonation is in doubt, so for practical purposes it is better to use the neutral terms "acute" and "circumflex" /1/. These terms refer only to the names of the signs used to mark the accent /2/. Some investigators have proposed that the most notable prosodic feature of Lithuanian accent is vowel duration /3/, with the circumflex vowels being longer than acute ones /4/.

The duration of syllabic nuclei in the Lithuanian colloquial language has been experimentally investigated by many linguists. Previous studies used the following as test material: 1) isolated two-syllable words /5/, 2) minimal pairs in isolation and 3) minimal pairs placed at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of short phrases /6/.

The purpose of this research was to study the duration of acute and circumflex vowels and vocalic diphthongs. The experimental data consisted of 128 utterances, typical of the Standard Lithuanian language, recorded on magnetic tape by 3 male and 2 female subjects. Measurements were obtained from intonograms.

In the experimental material the vowels and diphthongs under investigation are found in various phonetic environments and in various positions in the phrase. The vowels in question are found in all possible positions in the word and in the phrase. So as to compensate for the influence of the position of the word in the phrase the experimental phrases were constructed.
so that the vowel is found an equal number of times in each position. In order to compensate for differences in absolute duration in different positions computations are based on relative differences in duration. The data for each subject were individually analyzed, but since the same corpus was used for each subject we can also contrast the data on vowel and diphthong duration for all the subjects as a group. Previous studies which examined the duration of long stressed vowels revealed that: 1) in isolated two syllable words the duration of circumflex vowels is always greater than that of acute vowels /î/, 2) in short phrases material results indicated that duration of circumflex vowels is greater in 86.7% of the cases /û/.

The results of the present research revealed that there is almost no difference in duration of the acute and circumflex vowels. This leads us to the conclusion that duration of circumflex vowels is not the main factor in the differentiation of accent type in the Lithuanian colloquial language.

Some Lithuanian linguists /10/ claim the diphthongs /au/, /ai/, /ei/ are almost equal in duration, irrespective of the accent type. The results of the present research revealed that acute diphthongs are longer than circumflex ones. Substantial difference in the duration of the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ pronounced with different accent type.

1. There is no significant difference in duration between acute and circumflex vowels.
2. There is a substantial difference in duration of the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ pronounced with different accent type.
3. Where (2) is relevant, acute diphthongs are longer than circumflex ones.
4. There is no significant difference in duration for the diphthongs /æi/, /æu/, /ie/ pronounced with different accent type.
5. According to their duration, diphthongs may be classified into three groups, irrespective of accent type: /æu/, /æi/ - the longest, /æi/ - medium, /æu/, /ie/ - the shortest.

REFERENCES

1/ A.Girdenis, Pomologija, Vilnius, 1981. 188.

6. Circumflex diphthongs in the speech of female subjects show no difference in duration.