SYLLABLE TONEMES IN LATVIAN

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ABSTRACT

The present contribution attempts to verify and specify the analogous phonological opposition of the two syllable tones occurring in the North-East Vidzeme and Latgale variants of the High Latvian dialect. The unification process of syllable tones which is under way in the Latvian Standard language has also been analysed.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Latvian the initial syllable bears the stress, as a rule. It is only in some cases that the stress may rest on any other syllable. The syllable tones is an independent prosodic feature in Latvian. It functions irrespective of word-stress. In some cases the syllable tone has a semantic function, for example, when distinguishing the adverb kā (Kā tu ro? 'How do you dig?') from the pronoun kā (Kā tev nāv? 'What do you lack?'). Latvian linguistics lacks experimental research concerning both the systems of syllable tones in the Standard language and dialects, and the processes proceeding in them. At present the unification of syllable tones can be observed in the Standard Latvian language. Formerly the attention to this phenomenon was drawn by J. Endzelins [3], V. Dambe [2], S. Raga [61]. The present research affirms that the unification proceeds in several directions: I. Under the influence of the Low Latvian dialect, called lejzmeniku, the drawing syllable tone as a hypernormal feature may be heard in some words, for example, navie 'weird, odd', laika 'people', aila 'street'. S. Raga [61] and V. Dambe [2] had also noted the occasional wrong use of the drawing syllable tone, in either one syllable tone (basically falling) or distinguished between the falling and broken tone within the limits of non-falling syllable tones. Sometimes the choice of these tones has semantic function, for example, when distinguishing the adverb kā (Kā tu ro? 'How do you dig?') from the pronoun kā (Kā tev nāv? 'What do you lack?'). Latvian linguistics lacks experimental research concerning both the systems of syllable tones in the Standard language and dialects, and the processes proceeding in them. At present the unification of syllable tones can be observed in the Standard Latvian language. Formerly the attention to this phenomenon was drawn by J. Endzelins [3], V. Dambe [2], S. Raga [61]. The present research affirms that the unification proceeds in several directions: I. Under the influence of the Low Latvian dialect, called lejzmeniku, the drawing syllable tone as a hypernormal feature may be heard in some words, for example, navie 'weird, odd', laika 'people', aila 'street'. S. Raga [61] and V. Dambe [2] had also noted the occasional wrong use of the drawing syllable tone, in

2. LATVIAN STANDARD LANGUAGE

In the Latvian Standard language there are conventionally distinguished: falling (\), broken (glottalized) (\) and drawing (\), yet the use of two tones: drawing and non-drawing is obligatory. It is left for a speaker to choose one syllable tone (basically falling) or distinguished between the falling and broken tone within the limits of non-falling syllable tones. Sometimes the choice of these tones has semantic function, for example, when distinguishing the adverb kā (Kā tu ro? 'How do you dig?') from the pronoun kā (Kā tev nāv? 'What do you lack?'). Latvian linguistics lacks experimental research concerning both the systems of syllable tones in the Standard language and dialects, and the processes proceeding in them. At present the unification of syllable tones can be observed in the Standard Latvian language. Formerly the attention to this phenomenon was drawn by J. Endzelins [3], V. Dambe [2], S. Raga [61]. The present research affirms that the unification proceeds in several directions: I. Under the influence of the Low Latvian dialect, called lejzmeniku, the drawing syllable tone as a hypernormal feature may be heard in some words, for example, navie 'weird, odd', laika 'people', aila 'street'. S. Raga [61] and V. Dambe [2] had also noted the occasional wrong use of the drawing syllable tone, in

3. DIALECTS

The syllable tones in dialects appear to be more stable. The area of the very singular High Latvian dialect with two syllable tones (\) in use, embraces the territory of two Latvian regions: Latgale and Vidzeme. We have made experimental measurements of the syllable tones used in Latgale, namely, in the subdialects of Mālakava, Bīskava, Zilasi, Jaunera and Preili. The obtained data have been compared to the characteristics of the syllable tones used in the formerly explored sub-dialects of North-East Vidzeme, namely, Ziemera (4, 5), Aluksne, Jaunlaićene, Karpava, Veclaićene (5). The sub-dialects under discussion are still used in daily commun
nophthong'gh produced by a (A) of toneme is specified by glottalization, i.e., a decrease in the regularity of the vocal cords vibrations. Yet it is impossible to state the starting point of glottalization only by oscillograms. Both types of tone are contrasted to each other by the presence or absence of a specific prosodic distinctive feature—an acute or level characteristic of the intensity and fundamental pitch changes. Yet it is indicated that intensity changes is a more precise tone indicator, for example, the monophthongs ḡ, ḡ, ḡ, ḡ, produced in phrases, differ in the intensity of the second part of monophthongs, in the absolute distinction between the intensity of the first and second part of a monophthong; they differ in the distance to the upper limit of intensity maximum in the distance between the maximum and minimum intensity; in the range of the rise and fall; in the rapidity of the intensity of rise and fall. The above mentioned indicators have a credibility rate of tone distinction which is > 97,0% - 99,9% (by Student's criterion). According to the fundamental pitch changes the same monophthongs differ only in the average fundamental pitch and that of the second part of the monophthong. Besides these indicators are only relative tone distinctive features (85,3% and 86,4% distinctive credibility by Student's criterion). Other measurements produce similar results. Consequently, in Latgale sub-dialects which produce level and acute tone opposition dynamics is the basic distinctive feature of these toneemes. I have arrived at similar conclu-

sions from my former research when investigating level and acute toneeme oppositions in North—Vidzeme sub-dialects 14, 51. So this permits generalization that in the High Latvian Non-selonian sub-dialects, where two syllable toneemes prevail, two types of toneemes are defined—level and acute and marked by A). This type of toneeme is specified by level intensity and fundamental pitch changes and longer duration. The intensity and fundamental pitch direction can be specified as level—falling, level rising—falling, or level rising; 2) the acute toneeme (conventionally called broken and marked with ^). This type of toneeme is specified by the acute intensity and fundamental pitch changes and shorter duration. The intensity and fundamental pitch direction can be described as acute falling, acute falling-rising, or acute rising-falling. In the Berzgale sub-dialect the oscillogram of the monophthong ḡ produced by an informant shows a particular saw-shaped design with a rising-falling—rising—falling direction. This type (A) of toneeme is specified by glottalization, i.e., a decrease in the regularity of the vocal cords vibrations. Yet it is impossible to state the starting point of glottalization only by oscillograms. Both types of tone are contrasted to each other by the presence or absence of a specific prosodic distinctive feature—an acute or level characteristic of the intensity and fundamental pitch changes. Yet it is indicated that intensity changes is a more precise tone indicator, for example, the monophthongs ḡ, ḡ, ḡ, ḡ, produced in phrases, differ in the intensity of the second part of monophthongs, in the absolute distinction between the intensity of the first and second part of a monophthong; they differ in the distance to the upper limit of intensity maximum in the distance between the maximum and minimum intensity; in the range of the rise and fall; in the rapidity of the intensity of rise and fall. The above mentioned indicators have a credibility rate of tone distinction which is > 97,0% - 99,9% (by Student's criterion). According to the fundamental pitch changes the same monophthongs differ only in the average fundamental pitch and that of the second part of the monophthong. Besides these indicators are only relative tone distinctive features (85,3% and 86,4% distinctive credibility by Student's criterion). Other measurements produce similar results. Consequently, in Latgale sub-dialects which produce level and acute tone opposition dynamics is the basic distinctive feature of these toneemes. I have arrived at similar conclu-

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