

Illustrations of Ukrainian Phonetics

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1. Introduction

This paper explores the phonetics of Ukrainian, the language natively spoken in Ukraine, specifically the Southwest dialect commonly spoken in the region of Lviv. Ukrainian belongs to the Indo-European family and Slavic subfamily and has three main dialects: East, Northwest, Southwest, distributed based on geography [1]. Ukrainian is spoken by roughly 40 million native speakers today [2]. The writing system of Ukrainian is the Cyrillic Alphabet, which is largely phonetic.

My consultant for this project is Maksym Alex Prokopovych. Maksym is 22 years old and was born in Los Angeles. He spoke Ukrainian as his first language at home, taught at first by his mother, supplemented with Saturday school. He continues to speak predominantly Ukrainian at home and can speak it fluently. Maksym learned English secondly starting from preschool and knows how to read and write Ukrainian proficiently. Every few years, he travels to Ukraine and can speak fluently with native speakers there. His dialect comes from his mother, who is from Lviv from west Ukraine.

The reference source for this project is Ukrainian, an “Illustrations of the IPA” article from the Journal of the International Phonetic Association by Cambridge University Press [3]. The article is a research article on accumulated sources on Ukrainian as a language. It also contains the Ukrainian phonemes and the allophones that may result from them in different contexts. In addition, diacritics and recording information is also included. Example words and paragraphs both in Cyrillic and IPA are also within its contents, as well as a Cyrillic alphabet. However, my consultant found the words provided outdated, formal, and too simple to illustrate the context-dependent allophones, so the word list provided from Maksym himself with edits from myself. For source pronunciations, I am using Wiktionary transcriptions [7].

2. Ukrainian Consonants

The consonants listed by Pompino-Marschall are listed in the chart below. Palatalized sounds in parentheses are allophones of the non-palatalized phonemes, also known as “half-palatalized”. As in the IPA chart, voiceless sounds are in the left part of each cell and voiced sounds are in the right part. Some phonemes here in Pompino-Marschall's consonant chart exist as allophones in my findings. I've marked those additional allophones with brackets.

(1) Consonant IPA chart

		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental/Alveolar	Alveolo-palatal/Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	plain	p b		t d			k g	
	palatalized	(pʲ) (bʲ)		tʲ dʲ			(kʲ) (gʲ)	
Nasal	plain		m		n			
	palatalized		(mʲ)		nʲ			
Fricative	plain		f	s z	ʃ ʒ		x	h
	palatalized		(fʲ)	sʲ [zʲ]	(ʃʲ) (ʒʲ)		(xʲ)	(hʲ)
Affricate	plain			t͡s [d͡z]	t͡ʃ d͡ʒ			
	palatalized			t͡sʲ d͡zʲ	(t͡ʃʲ) (d͡ʒʲ)			
Trill	plain				r			

	palatalized			[rʲ]				
Approximant	plain		v					
	palatalized		(vʲ)			j		
Lateral Approximant	plain			l				
	palatalized			lʲ				

The remainder of this section illustrates the consonant phonemes and their allophones. For each phoneme and word example, there will be several transcriptions each. The first is the broad transcription, which shows the underlying phonemes of the word. The second is a narrow transcription of how Maksym pronounces each word in the recording. There may be more than one of these if the pronunciation of the word was done in multiple ways. Finally, I will give narrow transcriptions of the words from Wiktionary [7].

The spelling of the word in Cyrillic will also be provided along with the glossary of meanings in English. The numerical order follows that of the recording. Respective allophones will be discussed in sections following each manner of articulation.

2.1 Ukrainian Consonant Palatalization

Palatalization is a contrastive feature of Ukrainian consonants and is reflected in the morphology of the Cyrillic alphabet, as palatalizing consonants often produces separate phonemes. For example, the set of Cyrillic representing unpalatalized phonemes *i e a y* (phonemes are /i ɛ u a/) is in complementarily distribution with the set of palatalized phonemes *ï ë я ю* (phonemes are /ji jɛ ju ja/) [6]. Pompino-Marschall describes three categories of palatalization: soft, semi-soft, and hard palatalized sounds. While phonetically semi-soft and soft sounds are all considered to be the original phonemes with a palatalizing diacritic, there exists a perceived distribution between them, in which soft sounds are considered completely palatalized, and hard sounds is considered unpalatalized, and semi-soft sounds are perceived as somewhere in between [3]. Accordingly, the IPA chart adds distinction between palatalized phonemes and non-palatalized phonemes. Ukrainian also has the general quality of being more enunciated and phonetic than languages such as English. The alphabet is highly phonetic and match broad transcriptions closely.

2.2 Plosives

The voiced plosives are fully voiced, as Pompino-Marschall notes, and in my recordings, oftentimes mark the places of most stress in words. Voiceless plosives are unaspirated throughout. It is possible the voiced plosives' complete voicing helps it contrast better with the voiceless plosives to form phonemic complementary distribution.

(2) Plosive phonemes

Number	Phoneme	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
64	/p/	/prɔstir/	[ˈprɔstʰir]	[ˈprɔsʲtʲir]	Простір	landscape
21	/b/	/berɛzɛnʲ/	[ˈberɛzɛnʲ]	[berɛˈzanʲ]	Березень	March (the month)
70	/t/	/tinʲ/	[cʰinʲ]	[tʲinʲ]	Тінь	shadow
68	/d/	/dʲɪvʲisʲ/	[dʲɪvʲisʲ]	[dʲɪˈvʲisʲ]	Дивись	look (command second person)
71	/tʲ/	/tʲulɛnʲ/	[duˈtʲɛnʲ]	[tʲulɛnʲ]	Тюлень	seal
34	/dʲ/	/dʲim/	[ˈdʲim]	[dʲim]	Дім	home/house
48	/k/	/kɔlɔ/	[ˈkɔlɔ]	[ˈkɔlɔ]	Коло	circle
32	/g/	/galij/	[ˈgaɫʲ]	[galʲ]	Галій	Gallium

2.3 Allophones of plosives

Several noted allophonic phenomena arise in production of varying prominence. There are roughly 3 following categories: palatalizing allophones as predicted by Pompino-Marschall, consistent apparent allophones as seen in Maksym's recordings, and mentions of possible instances I found but lacking strong enough evidence.

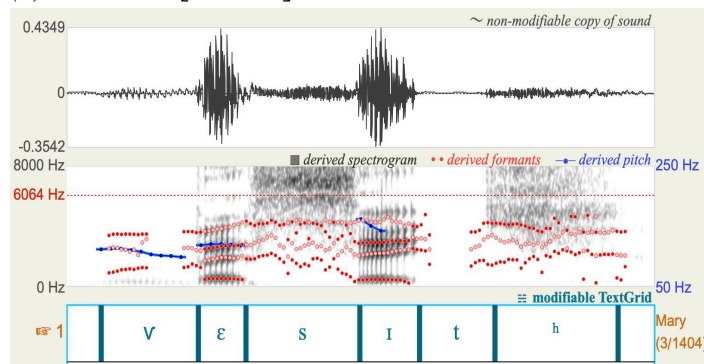
(3) Allophones of stops

Number	Allophone	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
7	/t/ → [tʰ] / V_#	/wɛsɪtʲ/	[vɛ'sɪtʰː]	['vjesɪtʲ]	вєсɪть	hangs (adj, neuter)
18	/b/ → [b] / V_#	/jastrub/	['jastrub]	['jastrob]	Яструб	hawk
12	/d/ → [dʰ] / V_#	/jɔd/	['jɔ:dʰ]	[jɔd]	йод	Iodine
11	/k/ → [k'] / V_#	/jizak/	['ji:zak']	[ji'zak]	їжак	porcupine
11	/k/ → [kʰ] / V_#	/jizak/	['ji:zak']	[ji'zak]	їжак	porcupine
20	/b/ → [b] / # or V_/u/	/jablukɔ/	['ja:buʈkɔ]	['jabʌokɔ]	Яблуко	apple
53	/p/ → [b] / #_/u/	/pustɛlja/	[buʈstɛlja]	[pu'stɛʎɐ]	Пустеля	desert

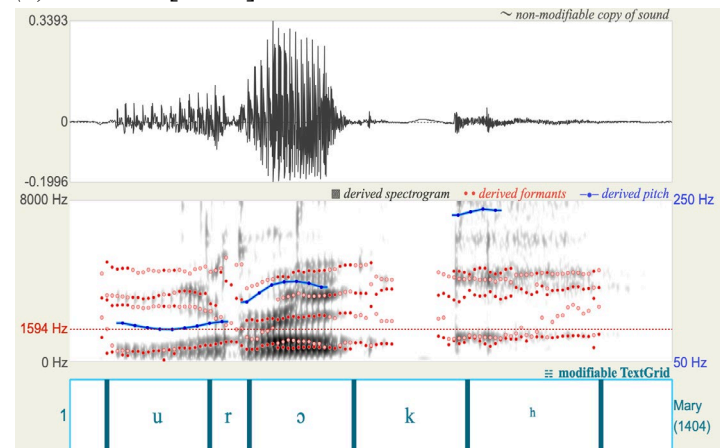
/b/ appears slightly implosive when appearing before the /u/ vowel. For this I found two possible instances. I hypothesize this is as the place of articulation is so drastic between bilabial and high back vowel, that it creates a slight implosive airflow. This is difficult to show on the spectrogram because the distinctive triangle for implosive stops is very small.

Aspiration seen in word final voiceless stops in the below spectrograms. Though Ukrainian voiceless stops are unaspirated according to Pompino-Marschall, Maksym's recordings tended to aspirate /p t k/ when they occurred word final[3]. Ukrainian also doesn't devoice word final, however, Maksym tends to devoice his voiced stops when they are word final. This may be a remnant of English as Maksym is fluently bilingual in both languages, and word final aspiration and devoicing is prominent in English. The clear voiceless aspiration broad band is visible in figures (4) and (5).

(4) /wɛsɪtʲ/ = [vɛ'sɪtʰː]

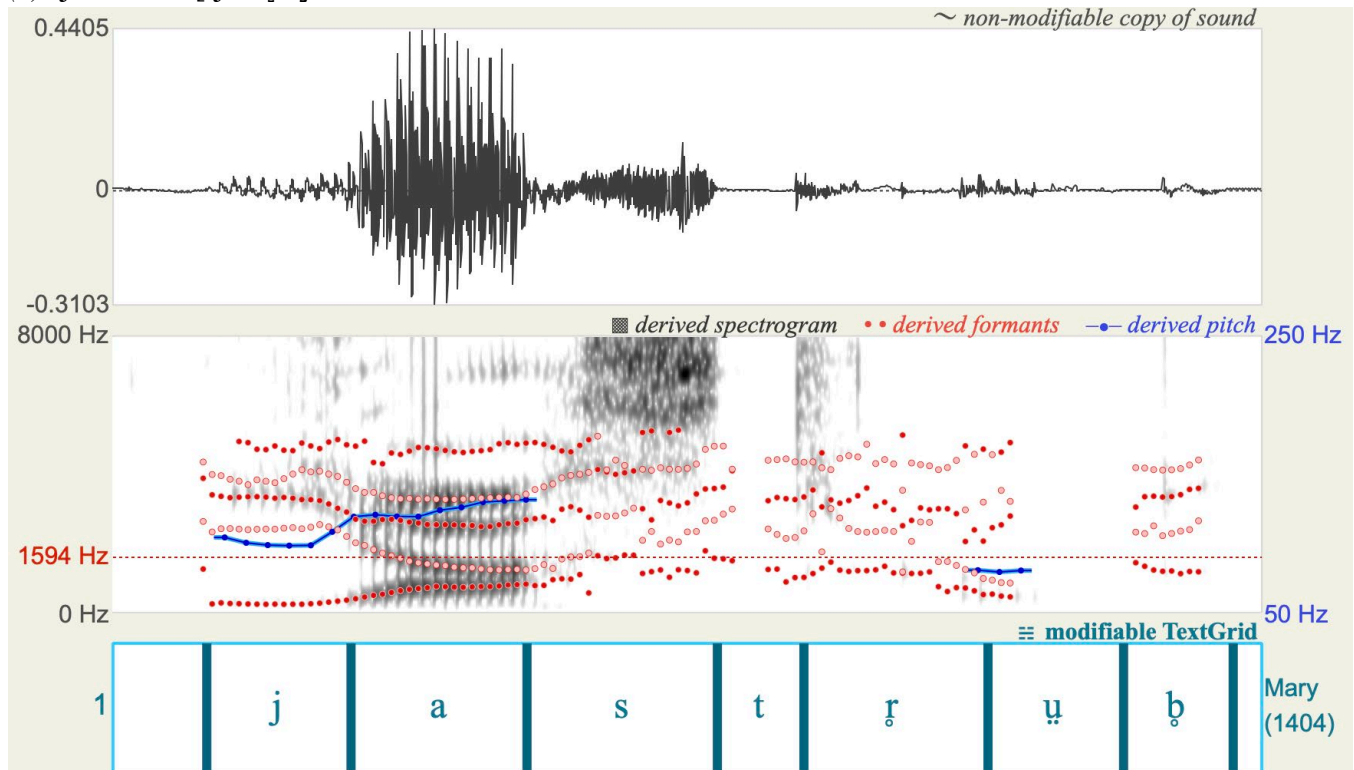


(5) /urɔk/ = [urɔkʰ]



In figure (7), the spectrogram shows the nonexistence of a voicing bar in the /b/ segment of the spectrogram. Aside from the release of the stop, this segment is barely visible because of word-final devoicing.

(7) /jastrub/ = ['jastrub]



2.4 Nasals

(8) Nasal phonemes

Number	Pho- neme	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
42	/m/	/mɔʒɛ/	['mɔʒɔ]	['mɔʒɛ]	Може	maybe/can
57	/n/	/nɛstɪ/	[nɛs'tɪ]	[nɛ'stɪ]	Нести	to carry
58	/nʲ/	/nʲɔɦɔ/	['nʲɔɦɔʰ]	['nʲɔɦɔ]	Нього	third person dative

2.5 Allophones of nasals

(9) Allophones of nasals

Num- ber	Allophone	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrain- ian Cy- rillic	English gloss
58	/nʲ/ → [ɲ] / #_V	/nʲɔɦɔ/	['nʲɔɦɔʰ]	['nʲɔɦɔ]	Нього	third person data- tive masc pronoun
28	/nʲ/ → [ɲ] / /ɛ/ or /ɪ/_#	/wɔɦɔnʲ/	[wɔ:'ɦɔɲ]	[wɔ'ɦɔnʲ]	Вогонь	fire

2.6 Fricatives and Affricates

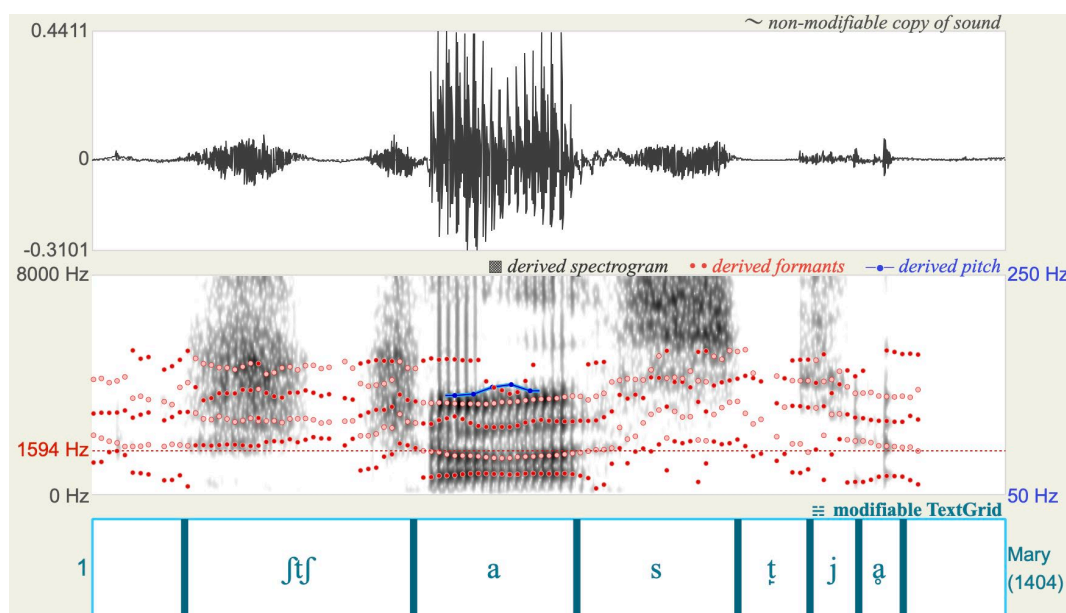
(Fig) Fricative and Affricate phonemes

Number	Phoneme	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
77	/f/	/fara/	[fa:ra]	['farə]	Фара	headlight

66	/s/	/sɔn/	[sɔ̃n]	[sɔn]	Сон	dream
69	/si/	/ɔsi/	[ʔɔs:]	[ɔsi]	Ось	here
43	/z/	/zapɔriʒa/	[ˈzaporɪ.ʒ:a]	[zəpoˈrɪʒiːɐ]	Запоріжжя	Zaporizhzhya city
80	/x/	/xɔlədɛtsʲ/	[ˌxɔləˈdɛtsʲ]	[ˈxɔlədɛtsʲ]	Холодець	Aspic
52	/ɦ/	/ɦlɪna/	[ɦˈlɛnã]	[ˈɦlɪnɐ]	Глина	clay
83	tʂ	/tʂɪbulʲa/	[tʂɪˈbulʲa]	[tʂɛˈbulʲɐ]	Цибуля	onion
79	tʂ	/xlɔpɛtsʲ/	[ˌxlɔˈpɛtsʲ]	[ˈxlɔpɛtsʲ]	Хлопець	boy
46	dʒʲ	/dzʲɔbatɪ/	[ˈdzʲɔɔbatɪ:]	[dzʲɔbatɪ]	Дзьобати	to peck
85	tʃ	/tʃɔmu/	[ˈtʃɔmu:]	[tʃɔˈmu]	Чому	why
10	ɖʒ	/pidʒak/	[piːˈdʒakʲ]	[pʲiˈdʒak]	піджак	suit jacket

In figure (10) I've provided a spectrogram to illustrate the compound consonant in Ukrainian /ʃtʃ/ which appears as a fricative followed by a combined stop and fricative affricate. [4] mentions the Cyrillic alphabet has this phoneme.

(10) /ʃtʃastʲa/ = [ˈʃtʃastʲa]



2.7 Allophones of fricatives and affricates

(11) *Allophones of fricatives and affricates*

Number	Allophone	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
29	/ɦ/ → [ç] / _i	/ɦisti/	[ˈçistʰ]	[ɦisʲtʲ]	Гість	guest
81	/x/ → [ç] / _i	/ximija/	[ˈçimiɹ]	[ˈximʲiɹ]	Хімія	chemical
9	/ʃ/ → [ɕ] / _[i]	/inʃi/	[ˈinɕi]	[ˈinʲɕi]	інші	other

/x/ and /ɦ/ become [ç] before the high front i vowel

/ʒ/ appears as [ʒ] in one instance, becoming retroflex. This is not adequately supported but I thought this was interesting as Pompino-Marschall noted that some Western Ukrainian dialects (of which, L'viv is one

such western state) manifest post alveolar fricatives and affricates as retroflex alveolar allophones, as an influence of bordering Polish assimilation.

2.8 Trills

(12) Trill phonemes

Number	Phoneme	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
62	/r/	/rɔstɪ/	['rɔstɪ]	[rɔ'stɪ]	Рости	to grow
63	/ri/	/pirjɑ/	['pi:rijɑ]	['pirjɑ]	Пір'я	feathers

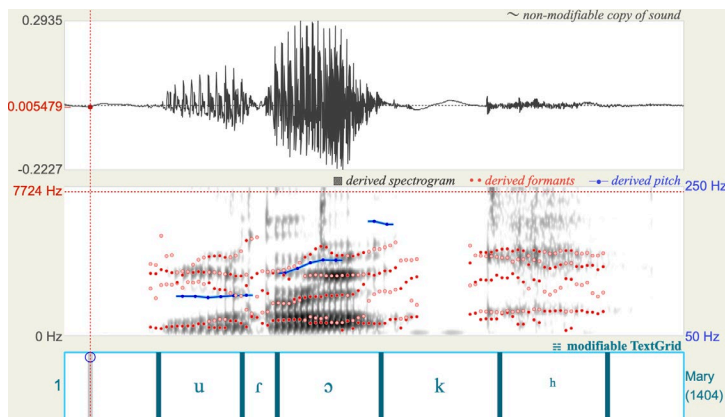
2.9 Allophones of trills

(13) Allophones of trills

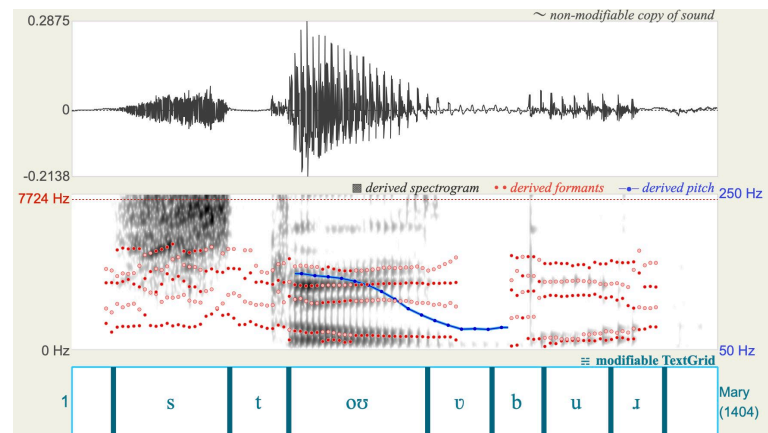
Number	Allophone	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
65	/r/ → [r] / V_V	/starɪj/	['stareɪ]	[stɐ'ri]	Старий	old (adj, masc)
63	/ri/ → [ri] / V_V	/pirjɑ/	['pi:rijɑ]	['pirjɑ]	Пір'я	feathers
22	/r/ → [ɾ] / V_#	/stɔwbur/	['stou:vbur]	['stɔubɔr]	Стовбур	tree trunk/stump
22	/r/ → [ɹ] / u/_#	/stɔwbur/	['stou:vbuɹ]	['stɔubɔr]	Стовбур	tree trunk/stump

Rolled r's in Ukrainian are the perceived underlying phoneme in all rhotic utterances. However, the allophones of /r/ vary greatly. Most commonly, it surfaces as a alveolar tap/flap especially in unstressed syllables, as the trill shortens to a single unit (14). This is shown in the gap between the vowels in the spectrogram. Word finally, /r/ is sometimes realised as [ɹ] (15). You can see the formants pinch together from the [u] vowel to the [ɹ].

(14) /urɔk/ = [urɔk^h]



(15) /stɔwbur/ = ['stou:vbuɹ]



2.10 Approximants and lateral approximants

(14) Approximant phonemes

Number	Phoneme	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
35	/v/	/wɔda/	[wɔ'd:a]	[wɔ'da]	Вода	water
12	/j/	/jɔd/	['jɔ:d ^h]	[jɔd]	йод	Iodine

lower-mid	
low	a
glides	(ɪ)
voiceless vowels	(ə)

3.1 Vowel phonemes

(19) Vowel phonemes

Number on recording	Phoneme	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
9	/i/	/injɪ/	[ˈinjɛɪ]	[ˈinjɪ]	інші	other
50	/ɪ/	/lɪst/	[ˈlɪstʰ]	[lɪst]	Лист	letter
7	/ɛ/	/wɛsɪtɪ/	[vɛˈsɪtʰɪ]	[ˈvjesɪtɪ]	весить	hangs (adj, neuter)
1	/a/	/apɛlɪsɪn/	[ˈapɛlɪsɪn]	[ɛpɛlɪˈsɪn]	апельсин	orange (the fruit)
15	/ɔ/	/slɔwɔ/	[ˈslɔwɔː]	[ˈslɔwɔ]	Слово	word
31	/u/	/ɦarɒuz/	[ˈɦarɒusː]	[ˈɦarɒuz]	Гарбуз	pumpkin

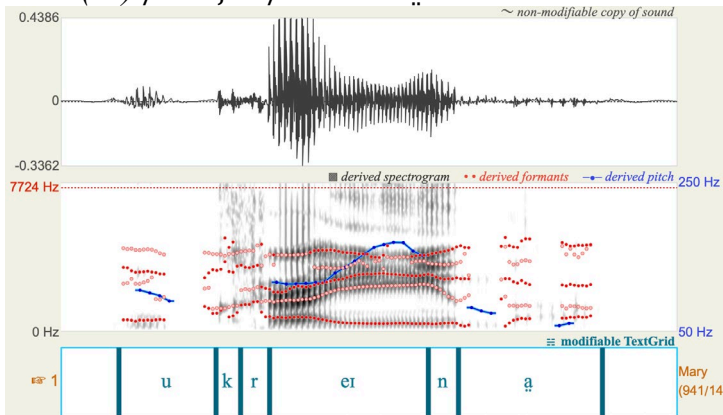
3.2 Allophones of vowels

(20) Allophones of vowels

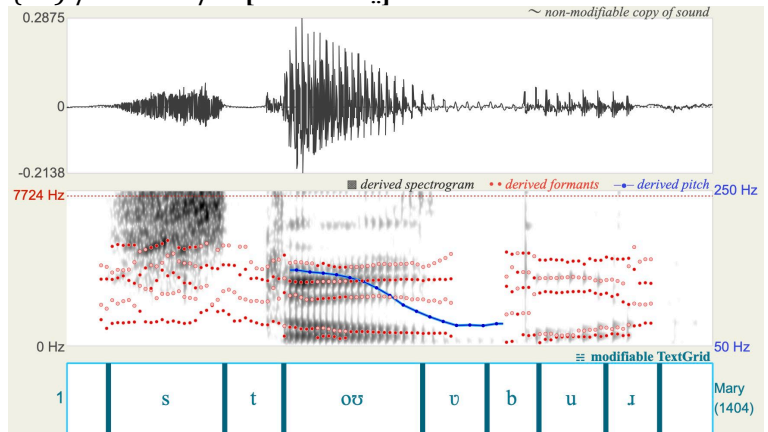
Number	Allophone	Broad	Narrow	Source	Ukrainian Cyrillic	English gloss
55	/V/ → [V̥] or [V̥] or [V̥] / _#	/mjakɪj/	[miˈjakɪ]	[mjɛˈkɪj]	М'який	soft
65	/ɪ/ → [eɪ̯] / C_j	/starɪj/	[ˈstareɪ̯]	[stɛˈrɪj]	Старий	old (adj, masc)
91	/ɪ/ → [ɛ] / _#	/ʃtʃɛbetatɪ/	[ʃtʃɛbeˈtatɛ]	[ʃtʃɛbeˈtate]	Щебетати	bird chirp
84	/a/ → [æ] / _#	/tʃʌtskɑ/	[ˈtʃætʃskɑ]	[ˈtʃatʃskɛ]	Цяцька	toy
22	/ɔ/ → [oʊ̯] / /u/ _#	/stɔwɒur/	[ˈstoʊ̯:vɒur]	[ˈstɔʊ̯ɒur]	Стовбур	tree trunk/stump
56	/i/ → [ɪ] / unstressed	/rɛmɪnɪ/	[ˈrɛmɪɪ]	[ˈrɛmɪnɪ]	Ремінь	belt
42	/ɔ/ → [ɔ̃] / /nasal/ _C	/mɔʒɛ/	[ˈmɔʒɔ̃]	[ˈmɔʒɛ]	Може	maybe/can
71	/u/ → [ʊ] / /t/ or /d/ _C	/tjulɛnɪ/	[tʰʊˈlɛnɪ]	[tjulɛnɪ]	Тюлень	seal

Here, I provide evidence for allophonic diphthongs. In the spectrograms (21) and (22), the spectrograms show the diphthongs eɪ̯ and oʊ̯. You can see F1 and F2 move to form the vowels forming up the diphthong.

(21) /ukrajina/ = u'krema:



(22) /stowbur/ = ['stou:vbu:]



According to Pompino-Marschall, Ukrainian does not have final devoicing, however Maksym devoices final vowels to varying degrees, often with variations of creaky, breathy, or devoiced. This may also be attributed to English phonetic influence.

4. Suprasegmentals

Ukrainian has no contrastive suprasegmentals such as phonemic tones or pitch accents. While stress is not usually contrastive, Pompino-Marschall mentions that there are restrictions on how stress may be placed in utterances. For words of at least four syllables, there may be secondary stress, but it cannot be adjacent to the primary stress. For words with less syllables, there exists only primary stress. The article concludes with the observation that stress position doesn't follow any pattern.

5. Passage

Lastly, as a demonstration of Ukrainian allophones in regular performance, I've recorded an excerpt of "My Thirteenth Year Was Wearing On", a poem by Taras Shevchenko, as read by Maksym. A narrow transcription of Maksym's reading as well as the Cyrillic orthography and the English translation of the meaning [5]. While phonetic utterances of words do not usually have pauses between words as words are a mental construct, I've spaced it out so readers could notice the predictable prosodic stress that emerges, as well as orient themselves within the poem using the indentations and punctuation.

(23) My Thirteenth Year Was Wearing On

Narrow phonemic transcription

'mɛ:ni tri'naʃtɨj mɪ'naʃɔ:
 ja 'pas ja'ɦpata za selom:
 tʃɪ 'tak, tʃɪ 'tə tak 'sə:netʃk sijaʃɔ:,
 tʃɪ 'tak' mɛ'ni tʃɔɦɔ 'buʃɔ?
 mɛ'ni ta kɨjubɔ, 'ɦjubɔ staʃɔ,
 'nɛnatʃɛ v 'bɔɦa.....
 u'zɛ prɔ'klɪkaɦɪ dɔ 'paju:,
 a 'ja sɔ'bɪ buɦjani:
 'mɔɦusɪa 'bɔɦu:... 'ɦi nɛz 'naju,
 'tʃɔɦɔ 'malɛn'kɔmɔ mɛɦni
 'tɔɦɔd tak 'prɪjaznɔ 'mɔɦɪʃɪ,
 'tʃɔɦɔ tak 'vɛsɛʃɔ buʃɔ:.

'hɔspɔ 'dnjɛ nɛbɔ, i sɛlɔ,
 'jahnja, 'zdajetsja, 'wɛsɛɦlɔs!
 'isɔntɕɛ 'ɦrɪlɔ, nɛ pɛ'klɔ!
 'ta nɛ'dɔwɦɔ sɔntɕɛ ɦrɪlɔː,
 'nɛdɔwɦɔ 'mɔlɪlɔs!
 za'pɛklɔ, 'pɔtʃɛrwɔnɪlɔ
 i 'raj za'palɪlɔː.

Orthography

Мені тринадцятий минало.
 Я пас ягнята за селом.
 Чи то так сонечко сіяло,
 Чи так мені чого було?
 Мені так любо, любо стало,
 Неначе в Бога.....
 Уже прокликали до паю,
 А я собі у бур'яні
 Молюся Богу... І не знаю,
 Чого маленькому мені
 Тойді так приязно молилось,
 Чого так весело було.
 Господнє небо, і село,
 Ягня, здається, веселилось!
 І сонце гріло, не пекло!
 Та недовго сонце гріло,
 Недовго молилось...
 Запекло, почервоніло
 І рай запалило.

Translation [5]

My thirteenth year was wearing on —
 Grazing the lambs, one day I was
 Beyond the village. The sun shone
 Perhaps? or was it without cause?
 Such joy, such joy, as at the throne
 Of God I felt...
 They'd called already for our food,
 But I, among the weeds, remained
 Alone, and prayed to God. Indeed,
 Why I, a small boy, wished to pray
 So eagerly, I do not know,
 Nor how my happiness was caused.
 Around, the village and the Lord's
 Sky, the lambs, it seemed, rejoiced,
 The sun shone warm—yet did not scorch.
 Not long the sun shone fair and warm,

Not long my prayers I murmured,
The sun blazed fiery red above
And set this heaven burning.

Here are some phenomena that appear in this reading:

- velarized l [ɫ] appears only when Maksym is on stressed or slower portions of the poem. Otherwise, the velarization is skipped and it appears as a "light" l [l].
- stress becomes predictable in the prosodic recitation of the passage. The first stress and second stress set a sort of beat which I've marked with syllable marks instead of tonal marks as I felt it represented the utterance and perception of the poem better, as Ukrainian isn't a tonal language.
- word final aspiration did not occur as frequently as before as words were influencing each other across word boundaries and not existing as discreet entities such as in the word list.
- nasalization occurred more commonly as the flow of the phrase became more of a focus than the precision of enunciation. Thus, as a result nasals affected the neighboring vowels more.
- devoicing of the phrase final vowels and consonants only occurred at certain phrase types, such as those which pitched downwards overall, as they were declarative. For those that had overall raising pitch did not display these allophones.

6. References

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