

## Russian Palatalized Consonants: Acoustic Properties of L2 Learners' Productions

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This project examines how advanced proficiency learners of Russian produce (or fail to produce) the crucial phonemic contrast between two pairs of palatalized and unpalatalized consonants in Russian (/t/<sup>i</sup>/t/ and /l/<sup>i</sup>/l/). For example, the words for 'mother' *mat* and 'checkmate' *mat* are differentiated by their final consonant: palatalized /t/<sup>i</sup>/ for 'mother' and unpalatalized /t/ for 'checkmate'. Previous research has shown that even learners of Russian with advanced level speaking proficiency cannot reliably produce the contrast, that is, native speaker listeners have difficulty identifying the learner's intended target, particularly when the learner is trying to produce a palatalized consonant in word final position (Hacking 2011). Here we focus on the acoustic properties of NS and NNS productions of word final /t/<sup>i</sup>/t/ and /l/<sup>i</sup>/l/. These two pairs were selected based on the earlier perception study which showed the /t/ /t/<sup>i</sup>/ contrast was among the least successful for NNS, while the /l/ /l/<sup>i</sup>/ contrast was the most successfully produced. Using acoustic measures such as preceding vowel duration, F2 VC transitions, and consonant closure and release burst durations, we show how NS and NNS productions differ. Second, we examine whether NNS productions of /t/<sup>i</sup>/ and /l/<sup>i</sup>/ differ systematically from their productions of /t/ and /l/, that is, is there evidence of an attempt to produce a contrast, even if these are not consistent with L1 phonetic norms?