

The perception of vowel-quality of the Võru dialect

Abstract

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The dialect of Võru is one of three South Estonian dialects. Long mid vowels [e, o, ø, ʏ] of Võru have split into full-long mid vowels [e:, o:, ø:, ʏ:] (Q2) and into overlong raised mid vowels [e̞:, o̞:, ø̞:, ʏ̞:] (Q3). Q3 is marked both by a quantity and quality change.

In this work all vowels of Võru were pronounced as isolated by a male informant EK (born in 1954) and wide-band spectrograms (297 Hz) of them were made using CSL 4300B.

The formant values of raised mid vowels show that they are very close to high vowels [i, u, y, ɨ]. The distance between them and high vowels does not exceed 1 Bark. Raised mid vowels [e̞, o̞, ø̞, ʏ̞] are much higher than mid vowels [e, o, ø, ʏ], but the distance between them does not exceed 1 Bark either (except [ʏ] and [ʏ̞]). The quality of isolated vowels has been compared with the quality of full-long and overlong vowels in spontaneous speech of the same informant.

A perception test was compiled, using vowels pronounced in isolation. Listeners were asked to choose between vowels of the first syllable of three words while they were listening to each stimulus. The results show that perception of the quality of raised mid vowels depends on the type of a vowel. In the case of [e, e̞, i] both [e̞] and [i] could be replaced with each other. [e] and [e̞] were replaced with each other rarely. This direction was similar in the case of [o, o̞, u]. In the case of [ø, ø̞, y] and [ʏ, ʏ̞, ɨ] all three vowels could be replaced with each other. Both [æ] and [ɑ] were perceived so as they were pronounced. The problems related to the quality of raised mid vowels and to the perception of their quality will be discussed closer in the paper.