## La double vie de **V**[éronique]: now dubbed in Slovenian

Alja Ferme University of Nova Gorica and alja.ferme@guest.arnes.si Sašo Živanović University of Ljubljana saso.zivanovic@guest.arnes.si

v is notoriously difficult to classify as a sonorant or fricative, both cross-linguistically and within a single language. A criterion that is often employed is whether v alternates with w (then, it might be a sonorant) or f (then, it might be a fricative) in "coda" positions, and whether it takes part it voicing assimilation processes (then, it might be a fricative). (Languages such as Russian, where v does not trigger voicing assimilation but nevertheless assimilates (Padgett, 2002), present an even greater challenge.) In a phonological theory employing Element Theory (see e.g. Ploch, 1999), such as Government Phonology, it seems plausible that one of the differences in the melodic makeup of v as a sonorant and as a fricative is the absence vs. presence of element L (cf. Cyran, 1997, 198–201). Thus, in Slovenian, v is predicted not to contain L, since it alternates with w in relevant positions.

However, there are two types of lexical sources of surface v in Slovenian. Usually, it occurs prevocalically (either as a complete onset or as the second part of a branching onset); we call v from this source sonorant v. It can, however, also arise as the result of voicing assimilation of f to the following voiced obstruent (also across a word boundary), although (sonorant) v itself does not devoice or assimilate into f; we call the latter one fricative v. (In word-final and pre-obstruent position, sonorant v changes to w.)

In this talk, we deal with the question whether the two vs have the same acoustic signatures. Specifically, we focus on the acoustic signature of "voice" element L. Since Slovenian is a language with L-voicing, we know that the phonological representation of fricative v contains L (being the result of voicing assimilation), and thus expect to find its signature (low frequency "voicing" bar) in the acoustic signal. On the other hand, phonology offers us no clue to the existence of element L in sonorant v. (It is generally accepted that sonorants are spontaneously voiced.)

However, we feel that acoustic measurements show no notable difference between sonorant and fricative v with respect to the acoustic signature of L. Admiteddly, the signature is weak, but not weaker than the signature of L in other voiced fricatives  $(z,\check{z})$  in pre-obstruent position. We further believe that it is impossible that sonorant v is spontaneously voiced, since this would imply non-existence of f. (To see this, assume for a moment that vocal cord stiffness is the same in the pronunciation of f and v. Since the other articulatory gestures required for f and v appear to be the same, both sounds should either be (spontaneously) voiced or not.) We are thus forced to conclude that both sonorant and fricative v contain element L.

Although this conclusion is bad in the sense that it puts Slovenian on the list of v-problematic languages, we feel that it still has certain positive aspects. First, with respect to v—w alternation, we observe that it takes place in exactly the same environments as obstruent devoicing. Claiming that v contains L makes this less puzzling, although the details of the phenomenon remain mysterious. This view is further supported by observing that in most dialects of closely related Croatian, which have no final devoicing, v does not alternate with w (nor with f). Second, there are Slovenian dialects where v actually alternates with f and not w. Our claim therefore makes the difference between the phonological systems of Slovenian dialects smaller and thus potentially easier to account for.

## References

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