

Kashubian is spoken in some parts of the Pomeranian Voivodship in northern Poland by ca. 100,000 people. It displays a great variety in its prosodic systems. Northern Kashubian varieties are characterized by free and partially mobile stress, the stress in central varieties is free but its position generally cannot change in inflected forms, whereas stress in southern varieties is fixed and falls on the first syllable in a word. Some researchers point out that the stress in some parts of southern varieties tends to fall on the penult (as is the case in Polish).

The main objective of the project is to establish the so-called acoustic stress correlates in Kashubian, i.e. features that distinguish a stressed syllable from an unstressed one. The main stress correlates are: duration (measured in milliseconds), intensity (measured in decibels), pitch change, and formant frequency (both measured in hertz).

The project will be the first acoustic description of Kashubian stress. In the scope of the project, fieldwork in the areas where the three main Kashubian varieties are spoken is planned. Additionally, interviews with Kashubian new speakers will be carried out. New speakers are people who have learned Kashubian as a result of schooling (so it is not their first language). Language revitalization efforts made in the last years have resulted not only in an increasing number of new speakers but also in the introduction of Kashubian into schools and administration. Kashubian is the only recognized regional language in Poland.

Audio recordings in the project will be done using a high-quality voice recorder and microphone. Appropriate acoustic conditions will be ensured. Strict criteria will be applied in order to choose speakers and locations where the research will be conducted. The aim of these criteria is to ensure a good quality of recordings, as well as to find speakers for whom Kashubian is one of the main means of everyday communication.

Audio recordings will be analyzed using phonetic software PRAAT and statistic tools. Acoustic stress correlates will be established for each of investigated locations and groups of speakers. The project allows us to understand whether the acoustic nature of Kashubian stress varies among language varieties and is related to ways of language transmission.

The results of the project may be useful not only for Slavonic Studies but also for the prosodic typology. Last but not least, the research analyses the newly created Kashubian standard and will contribute to the documentation of this endangered language.