

Towards a description of the rhotic sounds of Northern Tosk Albanian

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Introduction

- Preliminary acoustic data for the rhotics of Northern Tosk Albanian
 - Intended to inform a more targeted future study
- Traditionally described as having two phonemes, written ⟨r⟩ and ⟨rr⟩
 - We found that ⟨rr⟩ was all but invariably an alveolar trill
 - Whereas ⟨r⟩ had a range of non-trill realisations
- Current data from a wider project which includes an IPA Illustration



<https://osf.io/mb2hg/>

Albanian and (Northern) Tosk



Consonant phoneme inventory

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar		Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
					Apical	Laminal				
Plosive	p b			t d					k g	
Affricate				ts dz	tʃ dʒ	ʈ ɖʒ				
Nasal	m			n				ɲ		
Trill				r						
Flap							ɾ			
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z		ʃ ʒ				h
Glide								j		
Lateral			ɬ ɮ	l						

Rhotics of Northern Tosk

- Traditionally described as having two rhotic phonemes (e.g. Gjinari et al. 2007)

⟨r⟩	<i>rashë</i>	‘I fell’
	<i>peri</i>	‘thread’
	<i>puro</i>	‘cigar’
	<i>por</i>	‘but’
⟨rr⟩	<i>rrapi</i>	‘oak tree’
	<i>korrik</i>	‘July’
	<i>arra</i>	‘the walnut’
	<i>zjarr</i>	‘fire’



- However, previous work does not agree on their phonetic realisation





Rhotics of Northern Tosk

- Simpson (1996) and Dodi (2004):
 - Normative pronunciation for ⟨r⟩ is an alveolar tap [ɾ]
 - For ⟨rr⟩, this is an alveolar trill [r]
- Belluscio (1994, 2014), Jubani (2005), Hysenaj (2009):
 - Tosk speakers tend to realise *both* either as a retroflex flap [ɽ] or as an alveolar approximant [ɹ]
- Belluscio (2014) also describes ⟨r⟩ as tending to be realised as tapped/flapped pre-consonantly and as [ɹ] elsewhere
- We are not aware, however, of any discussion of voicing

Research question

What are the **place** and **manner** of articulation of the consonants ⟨**r**⟩ and ⟨**rr**⟩ in Northern Tosk Albanian?

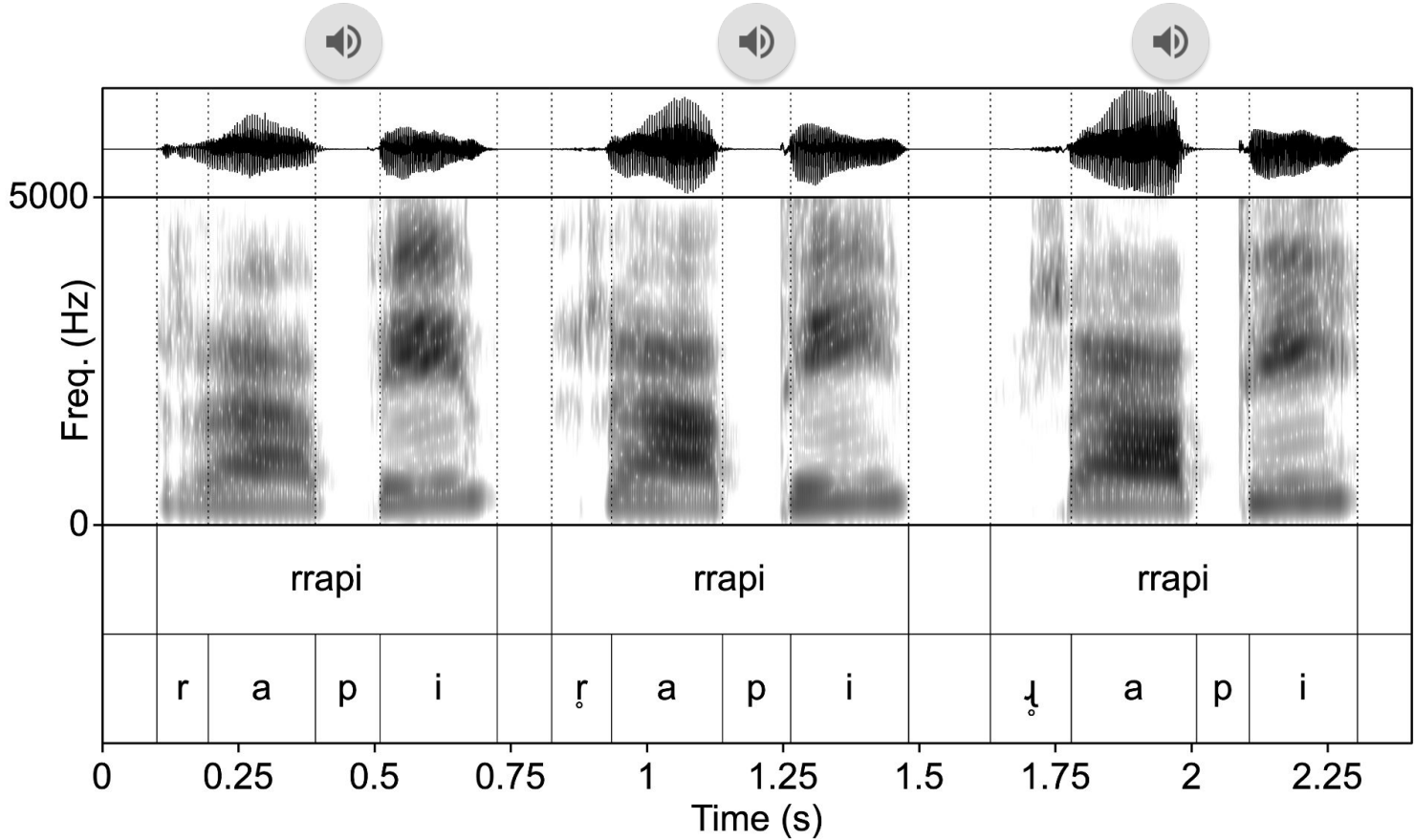
Methodology

-  5 native speakers of Northern Tosk (3F, 2M; aged 25–33)
-  Word list, sentence list, short text
-  Elicited items also included words without target consonants
-  Target consonants coded for place and manner by 3 analysts based on visual inspection of the spectrogram and waveform and auditory judgements

⟨rr⟩esults

- In our data, ⟨rr⟩ was all but invariably a voiced alveolar trill [r]
 - There were two instances of devoicing
 - One of which, also shows a more approximant-like realisation

<rr>results



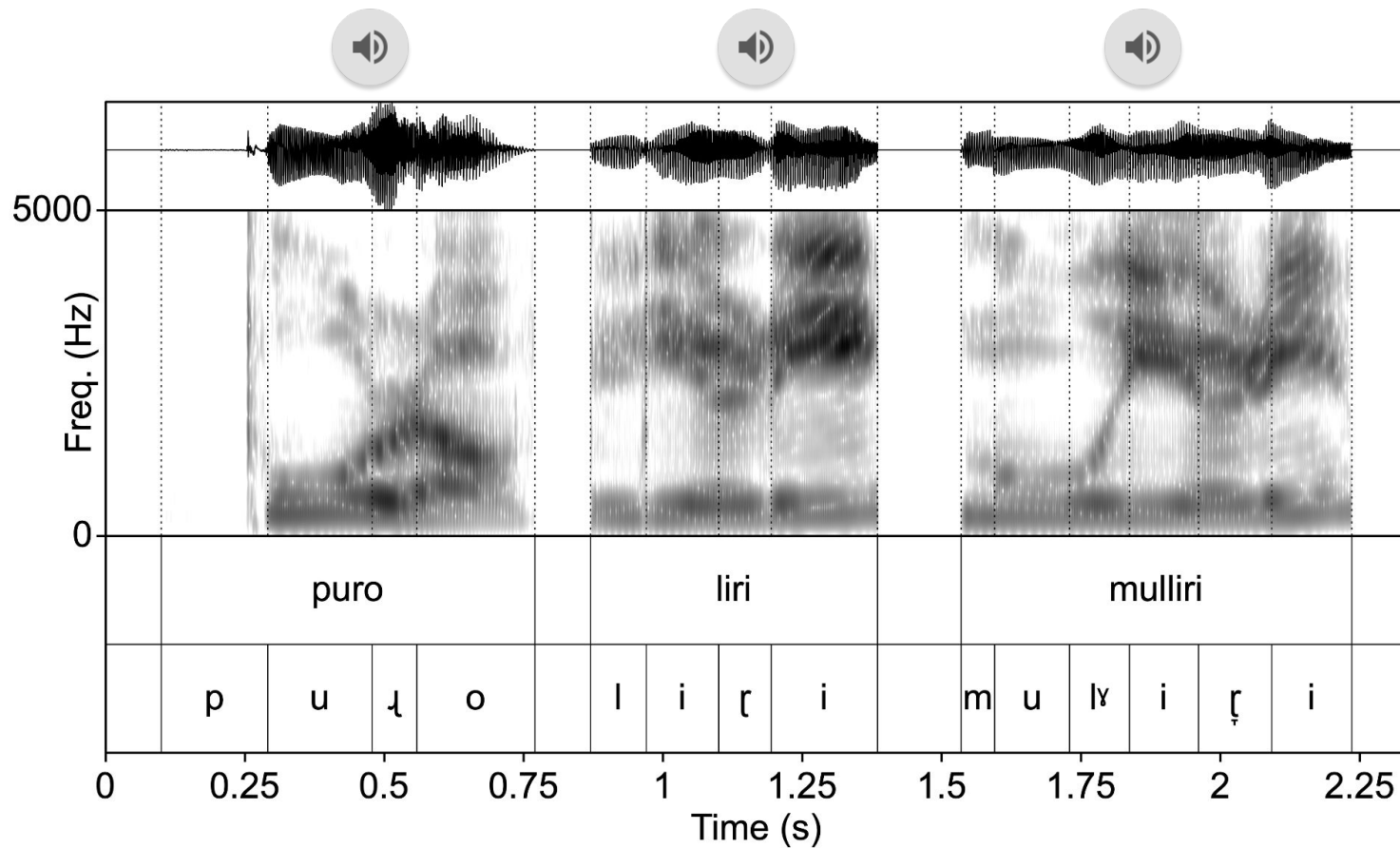
⟨rr⟩esults

- It has been reported that the opposition between ⟨rr⟩ and ⟨r⟩ is becoming neutralised among younger speakers (Jubani 2005; Hysenaj 2009; Jubani-Bengu 2012; Belluscio 2016)
 - We do not see this in our data
 - This may in part be due to a task effect
 - Recall that ⟨rr⟩ is prescriptively a trill and distinct from ⟨r⟩
 - However, this could also be an artefact of an unbalanced corpus

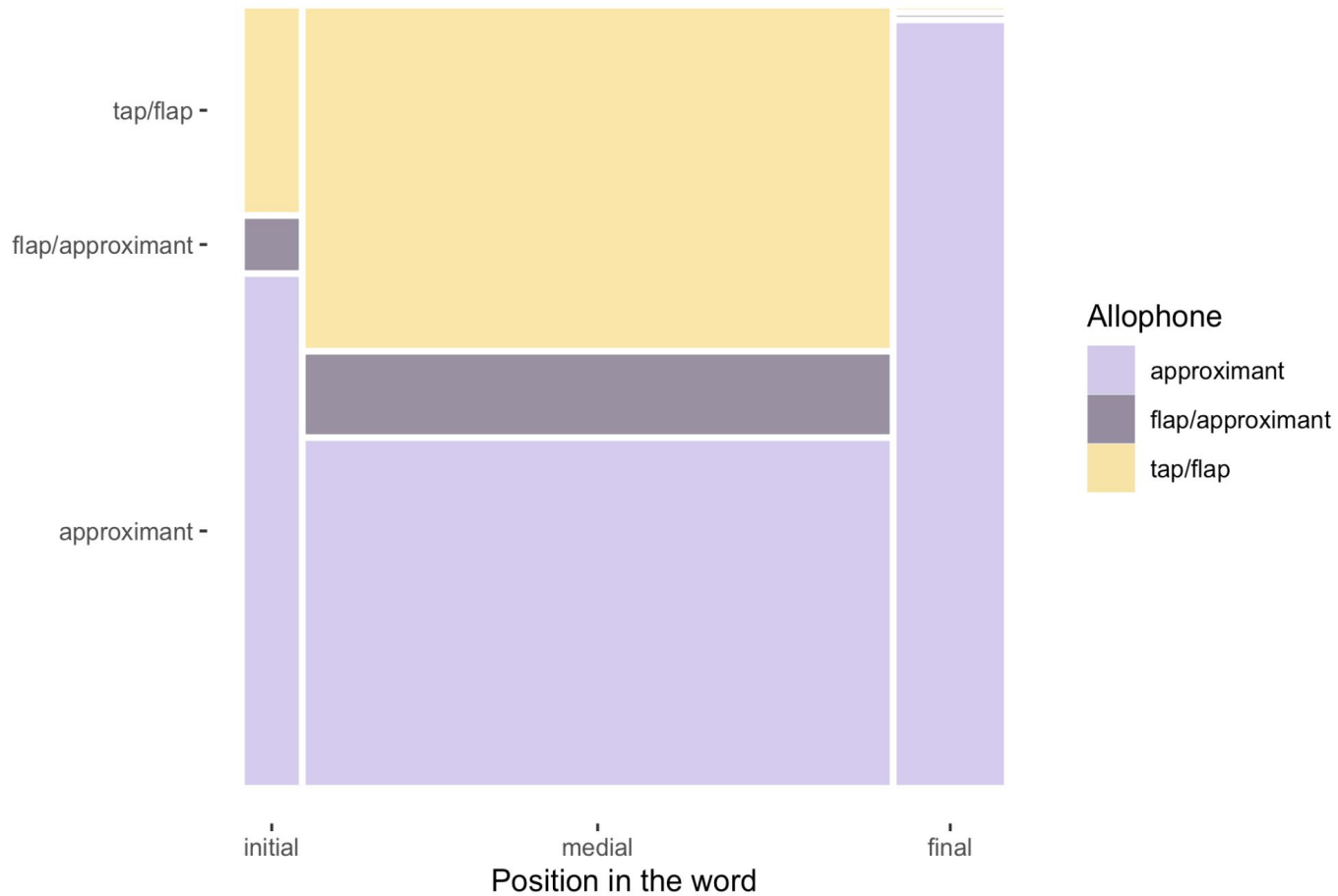
<r>results

- <r> showed a great deal of variation (see also e.g. Belluscio 2014)
 - Retroflex flap [ɽ]
 - Retroflex approximant [ɻ]
 - (Post-)alveolar approximant [ɹ]
 - Alveolar tap [ɾ]

<r>esults



<r>results



<r>esults

- Despite the variation, there was a general trend towards complementary distribution:
 - [r] was found mostly in the onset
 - [ɹ] tended to be appear in the coda
 - However, in a small number of repetitions, word-medial onset and word-medial coda <r> were realised as [ɹ] and [r] respectively

⟨r⟩results

- A further tendency observed was for an alveolar tap [r] to occur before [i]
 - Cf. a similar observation by Myers (2015) regarding the liquid in Luganda
- [r] was also sometimes encountered directly preceding [d]
 - This could be interpreted as assimilation of a sort
- No significant degree of devoicing was noted for ⟨r⟩

Summary

- We found that the traditional contrast between ⟨r⟩ and ⟨rr⟩ was maintained
- ⟨rr⟩ showed little to no variation, being almost variably a trill
- In contrast, ⟨r⟩ showed much more variation, with a tendency for [r] in the onset and [ɹ] in the coda
- However, with such limited data/contexts (especially for ⟨rr⟩), we cannot take any firm conclusions or definitive generalisation
- Nevertheless, the present results with help inform future work

Ongoing and future work

- More extensive investigation of rhotics in Northern Tosk
 - Inclusion of acoustic **analysis** (e.g. formant measurements)
 - Collect **articulatory** (e.g. UTI) as well as acoustic data
- Similarly for other aspects of phonetics (e.g. affricates)
- Branch out to other varieties of Albanian
 - IPA Illustration of Gheg
 - Perceptual studies
 - Sociolinguistic aspects

Faleminde[r~r]it!

Thank you!