

Urdu Approximants

Abstract

In phonetics, approximants are “vowel-like segments that function as consonants” (Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996). Ladefoged was the first person who coined the term approximant in the study of West African Languages and defines approximants as: ‘The approach of one articulator towards another but without the vocal tract being narrowed to such an extent that a turbulent airstream is produced’. Approximants are also known as Semi-vowels as their features are the amalgamation of consonants and vowels. (Carol Y. Espy-Wilson, 1992) English language has four approximants ([r], [l] .[j], [w]) and they call them semi vowels (Carol Y. Espy-Wilson, 1992). Korean language has three approximants ([w], [j], [l]) (C. Kim and A. J. Lotto (2004)). [r] approximant, in Korean language, comes only when [l] approximants deletes (C. Kim and A. J. Lotto (2004)). This study investigates the presence of approximants in Urdu language and also analyzes these approximants acoustically. Urdu language has also three approximants ([r], [j], [l]). Phonemic properties (Intensity, waveforms, duration and formants) of Urdu approximants have been analyzed for this research by using PRAAT software. In Urdu language, [l], [r] approximants are present at word initial, word final and word medial positions whereas, [j] approximant does not exist at word final position but exist at other two positions.