

Latvian is a member of the Baltic branch of Indo-European and is spoken by about 1.55 million people (1986). Most speakers are in the Latvia, but there are also communities in Russia, Lithuania, the Ukraine, and Estonia. The speaker in this recording is a man in his 30's who was born in Canada but spoke Latvian in the home.

Latvian Phonemic Consonants:

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-----|----|----|------------------|-----|
| Stops: | p | t | | k ^(j) | |
| | b | d | | g ^(j) | |
| Affricates: | | ts | tʃ | | |
| | | dz | dʒ | | |
| Fricatives: | (f) | s | ʃ | (x) | (h) |
| | v | z | ʒ | | |
| Nasals: | m | n | | ɲ | ŋ |
| Liquids: | | l | r | | |
| Glides: | | | | j | w |

Those sounds in brackets occur only in loan words. Palatalized /k & g/ have also been analyzed as /c & j/

Latvian Vowel Phonemes:

Vowels Encountered:

| | | |
|------|------|--------|
| i | | u(:) |
| ɪ | | ʊ(:) |
| e(:) | ʌ | |
| ɛ(:) | | ɔ |
| | a(:) | ɑ(:) ɒ |

Diphthongs: /aj, aw, ej, ew, iw, iə, uə, uj, je/ and /ɔj/ in borrowings.

The Central dialect which acts as the literary standard distinguishes 3 tones: even, broken, and falling.

I. Word List

Palatalized Consonants and Long vs. Short Vowels:

1. 'oneself'
2. 'fawn coloured'
3. 'duck' (n)
4. 'drop'
5. 'that'
6. 'how'
7. 'loud'
8. 'sour'
9. 'to bend'
10. 'to put'

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| 11. | 'lap' |
| 12. | 'cough' |
| 13. | 'mound' |
| 14. | 'battle' |
| 15. | 'valley' |
| 16. | 'downwards' |
| 17. | 'part' |
| 18. | 'lady' |
| 19. | 'water' |
| 20. | 'autumn' |
| 21. | 'to hum' |
| 22. | 'slime' |
| 23. | 'law' |
| 24. | 'bend' |
| 25. | 'ship' |
| 26. | 'cat' |
| 27. | 'to conduct' |
| 28. | 'because of' |
| 29. | 'brick' |
| 30. | 'nephew' |
| 31. | 'skin' |
| 32. | 'needle' |
| 33. | 'deep' |
| 34. | 'road' |
| 35. | 'railway' |
| 36. | 'to laugh' |
| 37. | 'to take off' |

Long vs Short Vowels:

| | |
|-----|---------------------------|
| 1. | 'hair' (nom. pl.) |
| 2. | 'mother' (acc. sg.) |
| 3. | 'fly' (nom. sg.) |
| 4. | 'lifetime' (gen. sg.) |
| 5. | 'well' (nom. sg.) |
| 6. | 'abuse' (nom. pl.) |
| 7. | 'house' (nom. sg.) |
| 8. | 'month of May' (gen. sg.) |
| 9. | 'dog' (gen. sg.) |
| 10. | 'moss' (nom. sg.) |
| 11. | 'river' (nom. sg.) |
| 12. | 'lip' (nom. sg.) |
| 13. | 'mass' (nom. sg.) |
| 14. | 'sister' (nom. sg.) |
| 15. | 'mouse' (nom. sg.) |
| 16. | 'game' (nom. sg.) |
| 17. | 'hedgehogs' (nom. pl.) |
| 18. | 'knit' (3rd. pres.) |
| 19. | 'blanket' (nom. sg.) |

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| 20. | 'hedgehog' (nom. sg.) |
| 21. | 'both' (masc. pl) |
| 22. | 'skim' (nom. sg.) |
| 23. | 'stomach' (nom. sg.) |
| 24. | 'woman' (nom. sg. derog.) |
| 25. | 'flax' (nom. pl.) |
| 26. | 'braided' (pl. past ppl) |
| 27. | 'hit' (2nd sg. past) |

Tones:

| | |
|-----|--------------|
| 1. | 'pig' |
| 2. | 'to ferment' |
| 3. | 'to climb' |
| 4. | 'shovel' |
| 5. | 'building' |
| 6. | 'son' |
| 7. | 'quickly' |
| 8. | 'skin' |
| 9. | 'beet' |
| 10. | 'rain' |
| 11. | 'cold' |
| 12. | 'ear' |
| 13. | 'boat' |
| 14. | 'star' |
| 15. | 'apple' |
| 16. | 'language' |
| 17. | 'bridge' |
| 18. | 'market' |
| 19. | 'hour' |
| 20. | 'bed' |

II. Spontaneous Speech

References:

- Bright, William (ed.) 1992. International Encyclopedia of Linguistics. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- Fennell, T.G. and Gelsen, H. 1980. A Grammar of Modern Latvian. New York: Mouton.