

Intonation of Tuvan and Teleut narrative statements

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Abstract

We study the intonation of the Teleut and Tuvan folk statements. In the study, audio-visual methods of computer processing of the speech signal in Praat are used. The material under study is simple two-part sentences and simple statements as a part of complex sentences with the topic and focus. In the Teleut and Tuvan languages, a rise-fall contour of the fundamental frequency tone is realized in narrative statements. On predicates in simple statements, the fundamental frequency tone declines. In compound sentences, the incompleteness of the utterance fragment is marked by the raising fundamental frequency tone on the predicate. There are not only similarities, but different intonation features when comparing these two Turkic South-Siberian languages. The Tuvan intonation is influenced by pharyngalization, which is phonologically relevant in this language.

Keywords: Tuvan language, Teleut language, phonetic processes, intonation

Introduction

Universal phenomena play the significant role in phonetics study, and in suprasegmental phonetics as well. For instance, the syllable is the minimal pronunciation unit occurring in any language (Bondarko 1998). By analogy, the declination, the tendency of an intonation contour to fall down at the end of an utterance is known to be a universal feature (Toivanen 1999). When studying the intonation of Tuvan and Teleut we have noticed that not only declination, but slight inclination can also occur in the final part of an utterance. So, it was suggested that in non-European area declination may reveal in a modified form.

Method and material

We study the intonation of Teleut and Tuvan folk statements. Tuvan is a means of communication on the territory of the Republic of Tuva, Russian Federation; and Teleut is spoken by a small ethnic group, living on a compact rural territory in the Kemerovo region, Russian Federation. The material under study is simple two-part sentences and simple statements as a part of complex sentences. For each statement (depending on context), it is decided individually whether the predicate (simple or compound verb) represents the topic or focus.

As Teleut and Tuvan have the fixed word order (subject – object – predicate), it was the phrase intonation that was expected to mark the focus.

Results

The intonation of the Teleut isolated and folk statements has been analyzed and compared with that of Tuvan. The following features have been stated.

Declination regularly marks the final part of a complete phrase or the logically completed part of a folk text. But in isolated statements in Tuvan (and in some cases in Teleut) this regulation was not true. Such intonation deviation can hardly be explained by the incompleteness of a thought, because only complete statements were under consideration. So, the influence of folk genre on the intonation of the utterance stays now open.

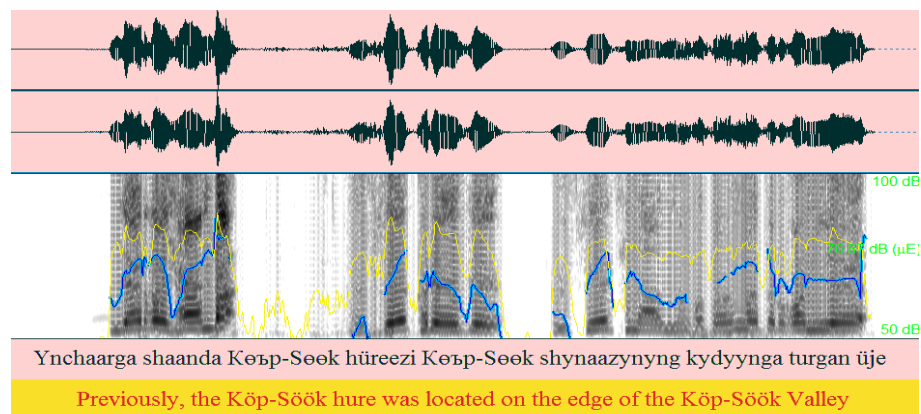


Figure 1. Tuvan statement *Ynchaarga shaanda Kөр-Sөөк хүreezi Kөр-Sөөк shynaaznyng kydynga turgan üje* ‘Previously, the Kөр-Sөөк hure was located on the edge of the Kөр-Sөөк Valley’.

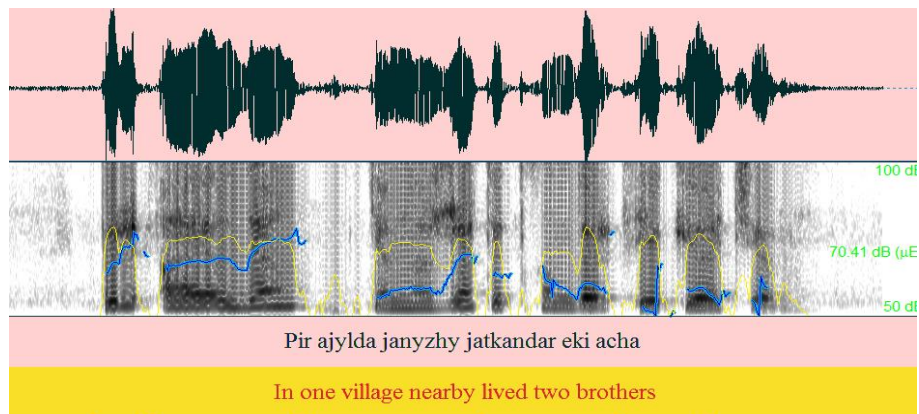


Figure 2. Teleut statement *Pir ajylda janyzhy jatkandar eki acha* ‘In one village nearby lived two brothers’.

The phrasal stress is not clearly identified. In the Turkic languages, in which the law of syllabic harmony operates, word stress is excessive and hence, it is controversial (Bondarko, Verbitskaya, Gordina 2004). However, the intonation of an utterance with the focus characterized by pitch, intensity peaks, with declination found in the post-nuclear part, is not always confirmed by the examples from the Teleut and Tuvan folklore texts. Quite often, slight inclination was realized on the predicate in the final part, and sometimes the minimum F0 value did not correspond to the intensity parameter, which increased on the verb, unlike the pitch.

In addition to common features, differences between Tuvan and Teleut were found. In Tuvan, more pharyngealized and, as a result, tense vowels with fall-rise pattern (Pharyngalization... 2014) affect the global contour of intonation, which becomes more monotonous and realizes declination to a lesser extent.

The phenomenon of pharyngealization is stated for many different Turkic Southern Siberian vocal systems (Selutina 2008: 49–51). Recently the researchers identified pharyngealized settings of the Teleut consonants (Selutina, Dobrynina 2019) as well, which allows us to talk about pharyngealization as a productive phenomenon in the Southern Siberian Turkic languages. On the other hand, V. V. Mazepus distinguished different types of pharyngealization (Mazepus 1995), and the different articulatory nature of similar auditive and acoustic phenomena can be explained for Teleut and Tuvan by different pre-Turkic substrates. Thus, pharyngealization in Teleut may not affect intonation in the same way as in Tuvan: we can observe different types of pharyngealization, or pharyngealization does not influence on the intonation contour in this language.

In Teleut, there are local tones that overlap on the global F0 contour; so, they create more diverse intonation patterns. Thus, it should be emphasized if

some «tones» can be attributed to a certain pre-Turkic substrate, then, perhaps, along with them, original Turkic accent features reveal as well.

Conclusion

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that, if we consider intonation as a universal, F₀ may not play the essential role in Tuvan and Teleutian (or only in Tuvan) that it usually plays when describing the majority of Indo-European languages, or languages of European area. Traditionally, among the intonation parameters, we consider F₀, intensity, length, but maybe the timbre characteristics are no less important because the phenomenon of pharyngealization mostly depends on overtones of speech production. Thus, this work is preliminary and raises more questions for future research than it answers any questions. In most cases, the focus of the utterance is highlighted by the F₀ and intensity maxima, then there is a gradual declination; often a predicate is highlighted in the utterance (especially having the meaning of action) – these phenomena can be called universal, apparently; but the more vivid are the cases that represent a deviation from this picture.

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