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VOWEL HARMONY IN THE EASTERN DIALECT GROUP OF THE EVENKI LANGUAGE

Abstract

Structural feature uniting the Turkic, Mongolian and Tungus languages is vowel harmony (assimilation of vowels within a single word). Phonetics of the Evenki language, which belongs to the Manchu-Tungus group, according to the current classification of the languages of the world, is characterized by the vowel harmony law, when all the vowels of the Evenki language are divided into two harmony groups, and a neutral one. Group 1 (hard): /e:/, /a/, /a:/, /o/, /o:/; Group 2 (soft): /ɜ/, /ɜ:/; Neutral Group: /i/, /i:/, /u/, /u:/. In accordance with vowel harmony law, within a single word, the distribution of hard and soft vowels in the word suffix is strictly determined by the vowel in the word root. We conclude that vowel harmony in Selemdzha local accent of the Evenki language is of mixed type: palatal harmony (that regulates not only vowel distribution but the distribution of hard and soft allophones of the previous consonant within the syllable) accompanied by labial harmony functioning for the short phoneme /o/. Vowel harmony violations characteristic for Standard Evenki can be eliminated by the phenomenon of Eastern a-type accent.

Keywords: the Tungus-Manchu group, vowel harmony, the Evenki language, Selemdzha local accent, hard and soft vowels, open and narrow vowels.

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