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THE PROSODY OF IMPERATIVE SENTENCES IN EVENKI AND OROCHON: PITCH

Abstract

Imperative sentences in Evenki and Orochon are undoubtedly a challenging issue of their grammar and phonetics. The aspects, on which researchers' opinions diverge, include grammar tense, neutral and inverted word order and prosodic arrangement of the sentences. It is the only type of sentences with the verb in sentences-initial position. Among 14 imperative verb forms (they change in 2 tenses with varying names, 3 persons and 2 numbers; some of them have inclusive and exclusive forms), 2nd-person forms in the Present Tense are characterized by the highest frequency of occurrence. This paper reports the results of an acoustic study of pitch movement in Evenki and Orochon imperative sentences depending on the number of words, syllables and the word order. The following results were obtained. In the Evenki material, two- and three-word syntagmas were characterized mostly by rise-fall pitch pattern while one-word syntagmas could have both rise-fall and fall patterns. Four-syllable-one word syntagmas' pattern was pitch declination while two- and three-syllable-one-word syntagmas could have both rise-fall and declination patterns with similar frequency of occurrence. Phrase-final syntagmas had only declination. Word order did not produce a considerable effect on the pitch slope. Both in Evenki and Orochon, each syllable had its own pitch pattern. However, while the Orochon used only declination, the Evenki besides declination exploited inclination and level tone as a part of step-like pitch contour. Finally, the Evenki material demonstrated greater inter-speaker variability than the Orochon one while inner-speaker variability turned out quite similar.

Keywords: frame sentences, pitch slope, declination, inclination, step-like pitch contour, sentence-length-dependent variability, inter-and-inner-speaker variability.

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