Intonation of the Khakas fairytales

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Abstract

With the Khakas intonation contours having already been described on the material of colloquial speech, the purpose of the present paper is to verify their usage in the Khakas folklore. The data on the Khakas fairytales is found consistent with the previous studies. Both declarative and interrogative utterances have rising-falling tone and intensity, with difference in position of intensity peaks and distribution of tone changes. The texts include dialogues with reporting clauses, which are characterized by their own intonation patterns: in the beginning, the tone is rising, implying further continuation, while final remarks proceed with the general falling trend of the ending. This is consistent with the authors' previous studies on intonation of other Turkic languages.

Keywords: intonation, information structure, fairytales, Khakas language.

Introduction

Khakas is one of the minority Turkic languages of Southern Siberia with the majority of its speakers living in the Khakas Republic (RF). It belongs to the Yugur group of the Eastern Khunnu branch of the Turkic languages. There are four Khakas dialects: Kachin, Sagay, Kyzyl, Shor. In this research, the intonation of literary Khakas (based on Kachin and Sagay dialects) is under consideration.

There are some previous investigations of the Khakas intonation made by U. Sh. Baitchura (1978) in 1950-60s and by K. N. Burnakova (Bicheldey) (2000; 2001) in 1980–2000s. While U. Sh. Baitchura studied intonation without paying special attention to the types of the utterances and their structure, K. N. Burnakova (Bicheldey) distinguished statements, different types of questions, exclamations and imperatives. She has managed to determine main intonation constructions (in line with the Russian intonation tradition). The work was performed on the material of the colloquial Khakas speech.

The purpose of the present paper is to verify the functioning of the established intonation constructions on the material of folklore. Khakas fairytales were taken from the series «Monuments of folklore of the Peoples of Siberia and the Far East» (2014), segmented into utterances with Audacity program (233 utterances in total) and further labeled and processed manually with PRAAT.

Results and discussion

K.N. Burnakova (Bicheldey) has distinguished two main intonation patterns for declarative and interrogative utterances depending on their composition (whether they are one-component or two-component). One-component declarative and interrogative utterances are characterized by the same F0 movement (rising-falling), but differ in the position of intensity focus: in statements intensity peak coincides with the first tone rising, whereas in questions it can precede it. Two-component declarative utterances have a complex rising-falling-rising-falling intonation (Burnakova 1982).

In our research, the utterances were analyzed from two points of view: information structure and intonation. It turned out that the typical structure of a declarative utterance is theme (topic) – rheme (comment) with rising-falling tone movement and gradual declination of intensity (figure 1).
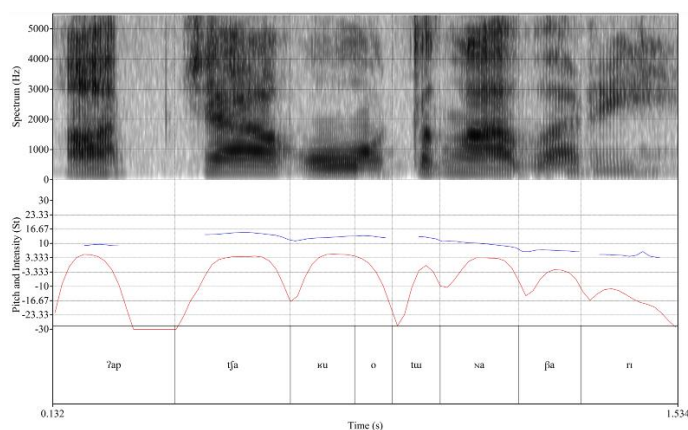

Figure 1. Spectrogram and intonogram (tone and intensity) of the Khakas utterance: *Apchagy odynga pari.* 'The old man went for the firewood.'

The intonation of Khakas questions has been thoroughly investigated by K.N. Burnakova (2001; 2014). The modal (general, yes/no) questions in Khakas are formed by the interrogative particle **ma** (with variants **me**, **ba**/**be**, **pa**/**pe**), which is also typical for other Turkic languages. As attested by K.N. Burnakova, in colloquial Khakas such interrogative utterances are typically characterized by rising-falling intonation contour (Bicheldey 2001). In our data on Khakas folklore, F0 in questions is usually rather high with declination at the very end of the utterance (starting from the last syllable of the predicate) with intensity having a similar contour (figure 2). This is in contrast to declarative utterances, where the tone decreases more gradually.
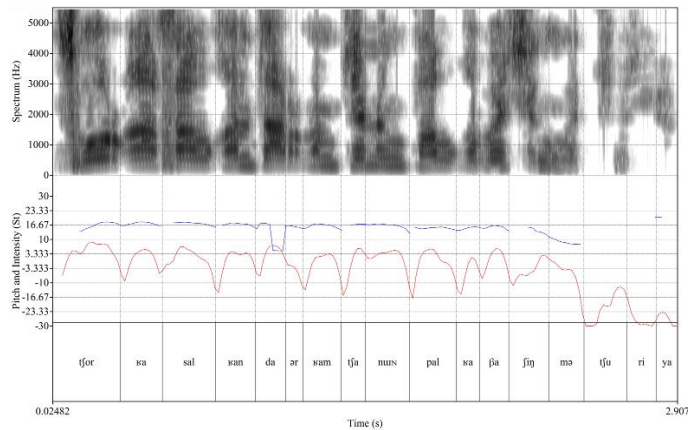
Figure 2. Spectrogram and intonogram (tone and intensity) of the Khakas interrogative utterance: «*Soorga salganda, argamngynang palgabangang ma?» – tipche.* '«Having put [it] in the sleigh, [why] don't [you] tie [it] with a rope?» – [the fox] says.'

In the fairytales under consideration there are also a lot of dialogues that are represented by the typical question–answer structure with author remarks. Reporting clauses are formed by such verbs as *tirge* 'say, tell', *chookhtirga* 'say, tell', *surirga* 'ask' and are often found both before and after the direct speech. When found at the beginning of an utterance, the tone is typically rising, which implies further continuation, in contrast to the ending, where the remarks are characterized by falling F0 and intensity (figure 3), denoting the end of a thought.
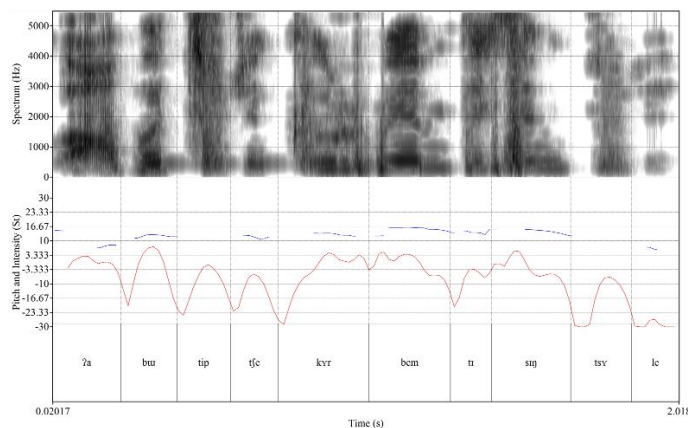

Figure 3. Spectrogram and intonogram (tone and intensity) of the Khakas utterance with direct speech: *Aba tipche: «Korbeem tizeng» – tipche.* 'The bear says: «Haven't seen, say» – says.'

The idea that incompleteness of a thought correlates with the fundamental frequency rising while intensity remains rather high is consistent with our findings on intonation of the Tuvan folklore texts (in print) and T. Yanko's (1999) works on intonation of the Russian coherent text.

Conclusion

The analysis of the Khakas fairytales showed that the intonation constructions distinguished by K.N. Burnakova (Bicheldey) for the colloquial speech are also used in folklore. Both in declarative and interrogative utterances, the intonation contour is rising-falling with different distribution of intensity and pitch movements. The idea of thought incompleteness being marked by rising tone has also been verified on the Khakas material and proved to coincide with our previous results for other Turkic languages.

Acknowledgements

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