

Morphological focus and pitch prominence in Tundra Yukagir

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Tundra Yukaghir

- Remnant of the Yukaghir language family (isolate?), spoken all over NE Siberia till 17th century
- Currently (fielddata 2010) ca. 60 speakers in the Tundra west of the Lower Kolyma River
- Eurasian type: SOV, agglutinative, non-finite subordination, residual vowel harmony



Tundra Yukaghir Focus System

- Focus on S/O: focus case, focus agreement
Kode-leŋ kewej-l. 'It is the man that arrived.'
man-FOC come-SUB.FOC
- Focus on verb: preverbal particle mə(r)=, neutral agreement
Kode mə=keweč. 'The man did arrive.'
man VF=come.NEUT.INTR.3
- Focus on non-S/O term: no focus case, no mə(r)=, neutral agreement
Kode a:wja keweč. 'It is yesterday that the man arrived.'
man yesterday com.NEUT.INTR.3

	Focus on S/O	Focus on verb	Focus on non-S/O
Foc. case/agreement			
Neutral agreement			
Particle mə(r)=			

Research Questions and Methods

General research question:

- prosody and focus in a non-tonal language with morphological focus marking
- Particular research questions:
- presence of pitch prominence on F-marked constituents
 - form of pitch movements in F-marked S/O, obliques, and mə(r)=-marked verbs.

Experiment (June-July 2010, tundra between the Kolyma and Alazea Rivers):

- question-answer pairs
 - with and without explicit contrast
 - focus on five types of constituents: S, O, non-S/O, V, VP
- 33 pairs X 4 speakers = 132 pairs, 264 sentences



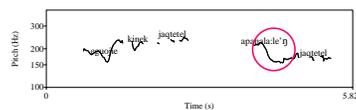
First results on focus and prosody

Pitch movements with different types of focus marking

In all types of focus marking (focus case, particle mə(r)=, zero), there is a prominent falling pitch on the focused constituent, followed by low pitch level (unless a boundary tone interferes):

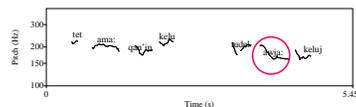
Focus case & agreement (focus on S/O)

Apanala-leŋ jaqte-te-l.
old.woman-FOC sing-FUT-SUB.FOC
[‘Who is going to sing tomorrow?’] ‘The old woman will sing.’



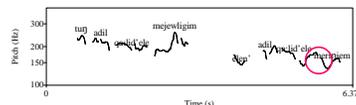
Zero marking (focus on non-S/O term)

Tudel awja: kelu-j.
he yesterday come-NEUT.INTR.3SG
[‘When did your father arrive?’] ‘He arrived yesterday.’



Particle mə(r)= (focus on verb)

Adil qa:lid'e-le mer=inje-m.
young.man wolf-ACC VF=FEAR-NEUT.TR.3SG
[‘How does that young man feel about wolves?’]
‘The young man is afraid of wolves.’

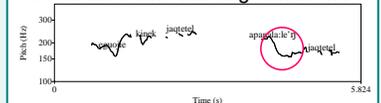


The role of contrast?

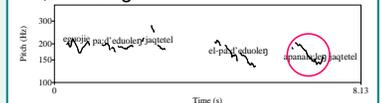
No detectable F0 differences between foci in non-contrastive and contrastive contexts

Apanala-leŋ jaqte-te-l.
old.woman-FOC sing-FUT-SUB.FOC
‘The old woman will sing.’

No contrast: Who will sing tomorrow?



Contrast: Will the girl sing tomorrow?
No, not the girl ...



Retrospects and Prospects

Retrospects:

- Morphologically marked focus on S/O is redundantly prosodically marked.
- The same type of pitch prominence is found on foci which are not morphologically marked and on focused verbs.
- Contrast plays no role in pitch prominence assignment.
 - ◊ Falling pitch followed by low pitch level accompanies focus in TY across different types of focus marking

Prospects:

- expanding analysis: duration and intensity in addition to F0
- enhancing data set: further variables, corpus data, perception experiments

