

Intonation of yes-no questions by heritage speakers of Russian

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Mittwoch,
04.03.2020
17:00–17:30
ESA1 HG HS J

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Heritage speakers' (HSs) grammars are known to differ in systematic ways from the grammars of monolingual speakers (Polinsky 2018). The present study focuses on the properties of the to-date poorly understood variability in intonational phonology of heritage speakers. This study investigates the intonation patterns of yes-no questions (YNQs) produced by twelve Russian HSs residing in the USA and Germany and compares them to productions by six monolingual Russian speakers. Specifically, the study focuses on pitch accent placement, type, and final boundary tone since YNQs in Russian show particularly insightful phonological differences compared to English and German with this respect (Rathcke 2006, Igarashi 2008).

The data for this study were elicited in a production task where the participants were asked to produce ten YNQs with different syntactic structures (subject-verb and subject-verb-object). A combined phonetic and auditory approach to labelling the heritage and monolingual intonation was implemented, i.e., the presence of pitch accent was detected auditorily and further examined with respect to local F0 trajectories and changes.

The results of the study reveal significant differences between the three speaker groups. In contrast to monolinguals, HSs generally produced more pitch accents on different syntactic constituents and showed a strong preference for an upstepped nuclear pitch accent that was infrequent in the monolingual data. Moreover, we observed differences between the two groups of HSs. Similar to monolinguals, HSs from Germany did not show a clear preference for either high or low final boundary tone in utterances with Subject-Verb structure compared to the US group that showed a tendency to place the low boundary tone.

One possible reason for the high number of pitch accents could be that HSs might distribute pitch accents following both the rules of English or German (according to which the nuclear pitch accent falls on the object) and Russian (according to which the nuclear pitch accent falls on the verb). This mixed pattern is in line with some previous findings on segmental phonetics of early bilinguals (Piccinini, Aravanti 2015). Further results of the study will be discussed with the reference to the previous findings.

All in all, HSs of both groups differed from the monolinguals with respect to the overall intonation contour. On the one hand, HSs show the intonation pattern of YNQs that is close to the monolinguals (e.g., L% in subject-verb-object utterances, rising bitonal nuclear pitch accent). On the other hand, it seems that HSs differ from the monolingual speakers in terms of some phonetic features (i.e., upstep).

References: Igarashi, Y. (2008). Russian interrogatives and intonational categories, *The Discourse Potential of Underspecified Structures*, 227–270. Piccinini, P. & A. Aravanti (2015). Voice onset time in Spanish-English spontaneous code-switching. *Journal of Phonetics*, 52, 121–137. Polinsky, M. (2018). *Heritage languages and their speakers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Rathcke, T. (2006). A perceptual study on Russian questions and statements, *AIPUK*, 37, 51–62.