

Abstract

This study focused on the characteristics of speech melody of Czech as spoken by native speakers of Ukrainian. Samples of read-out speech were obtained from 18 Ukrainian respondents. A number of long-term frequency measures was extracted in order to compare the Ukrainian respondents with a sample of native Czech speakers. Other possible factors such as age, gender, exposure and motivation to learn the target language were also investigated. Ukrainian female speakers reached lower values of pitch level measures relative to Czech female speakers. At the same time, Ukrainian male participants reached higher values for the same measures compared to Czech male speakers. A possible explanation of the disparity between the native Czech and Ukrainian speakers lies in different cultural stereotypes in the two language communities. Ukrainian speakers demonstrated a narrower pitch span, suggesting uncertainty or anxiety associated with speaking a foreign language. Of the sociolinguistic parameters, moderate correlations with the investigated frequency measures were found for the attitude towards the majority population and the length of residence in the target language area. The analysis of individual utterances has revealed a high level of agreement between the two language groups, indicating that the linguistic content of an utterance has a significant influence on the chosen frequency measures.

Keywords: prosody, speech melody, fundamental frequency, foreign accent, interference