

# Chapter 10

## The simple sentence

In this chapter I describe various functional-typological phenomena centring on the simple sentence, many of which are morphosyntactically expressed across the different structures that have been described so far. These are: (1) major speech-act-related clause types (declarative, interrogative, and imperative), (2) expressions of proper inclusion, equation, state, location, and possession, (3) negation, (4) valency changing, and (5) tense-aspect-mood systems.

### 10.1. Speech acts and clause types

As summarised in TABLE 10–1, there are three clause types that are grammaticalised for three major speech acts, i.e. statement, question, and command (Lyons 1977; Givón 1984). The encoding devices are intonation, verb morphology, and focus marking.

TABLE 10–1. Speech act and focus marking

Speech act	Clause type	Focus marking	Verb inflection
STATEMENT	Declarative	=du	– Imperative
QUESTION	Interrogative	=ru (Yes-No type)	– Imperative
		=ga (Information type)	– Imperative
COMMAND	Imperative	None	+ Imperative

There are also mismatches between clause type and speech act, e.g. the interrogative clause type may express a (polite) command. These are described in §10.1.4.

#### 10.1.1. Declarative clauses

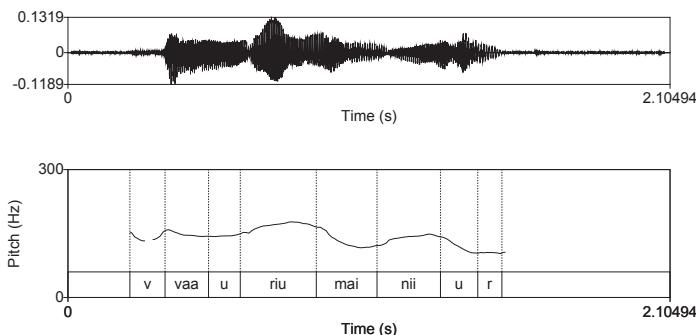
A declarative clause may be syntactically distinguished from an interrogative clause by the choice of focus marker if a focus marker is present. The focus marker for declaratives is =du, as opposed to =ru or =ga for interrogatives.

$$(10-1) \quad mm=mu=du \qquad \qquad fau-tar.$$

- potato=ACC=FOC      eat-PST  
 ‘(I) ate potato.’ [Declarative]
- (10–2) *mm=mu=ru*      *fau-tar?*  
 potato=ACC=FOC      eat-PST  
 ‘Did (you) eat potato?’ [Yes-No interrogative]
- (10–3) *nau=ju=ga*      *fau-tar?*  
 what=ACC=FOC      eat-PST  
 ‘What did (you) eat?’ [Wh-interrogative]

There is a prosodic feature that distinguishes declaratives from interrogatives and imperatives. In declarative clauses the prosodic pattern generated by the alternating rhythm (§2.9.3) is directly manifested:

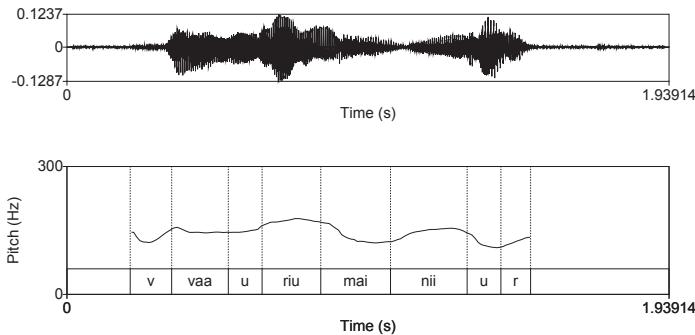
- (10–4) *vva=a*      *uri=u=mai*      *nii+ur-Ø*  
 2SG=TOP      that=ACC=too      boil+PROG-NPST  
 $(vva)_H$        $(uri)_H$   $(mai)_L$        $(nii)_H (ur)_L$   
 ‘You are boiling that, too.’ [Declarative]



Interrogative clauses often carry a rising terminal contour superimposed on the rhythmic pattern. In (10–5) and in (10–6) the rising contour occurs somewhere around the final mora of the sentence-final word(-plus).<sup>1</sup>

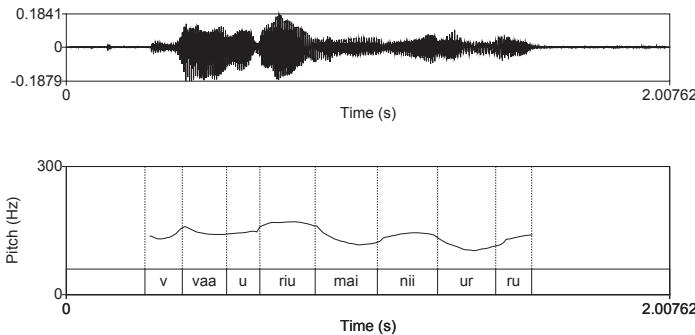
- (10–5) *vva=a*      *uri=u=mai*      *nii+ur-Ø?*  
 2SG=TOP      that=ACC=too      boil+PROG-NPST  
 ‘Are you boiling that, too?’ [Interrogative: final rising contour]

<sup>1</sup> The pitch tracks here were extracted from the speech of a native speaker of Irabu (male, age = 67 in 2006), and processed with the software application *Praat*.



Note that in (10–6) below the word-plus ends in the question marker, and the rising contour occurs on the question marker rather than on the verb (as in (10–5)).

- (10–6) *vva=a           uri=u=mai           nii+ur-Ø=ru?*  
 2SG=TOP       that=ACC=too       boil+PROG-NPST=Q  
 ‘Are you boiling that, too?’ [Interrogative (with question marker): final rising contour]



An imperative clause does not have the final rising contour observed in interrogative clauses. However, the final L-toned foot in imperatives is pronounced with a slightly higher and flatter contour than in declaratives.

- (10–7) *vva=a           uri=u=mai           nii+ur-i.*  
 2SG=TOP       that=ACC=too       boil+PROG-IMP  
 ‘Keep boiling that, too.’