

Prosodic typology in Japanese dialects from a cross-linguistic perspective

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Abstract

In the typology of prosodic phrasing in Japanese dialects that the author has proposed previously, the dialects are categorized into those in which an accentual phrase (AP) generally contains only one word, and those in which it can contain two or more words. This paper shows that this typology can be applied to languages that have the same sort of AP as in Japanese, such as Seoul Korean, French and Northern Bizkaian Basque. It is also shown that the cross-linguistic difference similar to that in AP-level prosodic phrasing can also be observed in languages in which AP is difficult to define, such as English and Spanish. In order to describe these languages in a unified framework, it is proposed that they be divided according to how densely pitch events (such as post-lexical pitch accents and AP boundaries) are distributed with respect to the number of words. This division may hold a clue to language-specific mapping between prosody and syntax/focus.

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1. Introduction

One of the functions of prosodic features is to mark the division of an utterance into smaller linguistic units, or conversely, the grouping of multiple linguistic units into the larger units that form the utterance. This process is generally called prosodic phrasing. Languages differ in what suprasegmental features such as pitch, duration, and/or amplitude they employ for the realization of prosodic phrasing. In Japanese, for example, pitch plays a predominant role in marking prosodic phrases (Pierrehumbert and Beckman, 1988).

In the typology of prosodic phrasing in Japanese dialects that I proposed previously (Igarashi, forthcoming), the dialects are categorized into those in which an accentual phrase (see section 2.2) generally contains only one word, and those in which it can contain two or more words. As will be shown in this paper, this typology can be applied to several other languages, such as Seoul Korean, French, and Northern Bizkaian Basque. Without further elaboration, however, it is impossible to apply this *phrasing-based* typology to languages in which accentual phrases are not readily identified. They include most of the European languages, such as English, German, and Spanish. On the other hand, recent work suggests a prosodic typology for these languages (Ladd, 2008) that classifies languages into those in which almost every (lexical) word receives a post-lexical *pitch accent*, and those in which only some of the words in the utterance receive the accent. This dichotomy of languages resembles the one proposed for prosodic phrasing in Japanese (Igarashi, forthcoming). The *accenting-based* typology, however, cannot be applied to languages such as Japanese and Korean

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because a universally applicable notion of pitch accent has not been proposed. The similarities that may present within the diversity of the prosodic systems of languages cannot be described unless the phrasing-based and the accenting-based frameworks are integrated.

This paper aims to extend the framework proposed by Igarashi (forthcoming). Section 2 provides an overview of the typology of prosodic phrasing in Japanese dialects. Section 3 discusses the applicability and inapplicability of my typology to other languages, and explores a possible prosodic typology that can be applied to not only languages such as Japanese and Korean, but also to languages such as English, German, and Spanish. Section 4 concludes the discussion.

2. A typology of prosodic phrasing in Japanese dialects

2.1. Two binary parameters

A pioneering study on prosodic phrasing above the word in Japanese dialects was carried out by Uwano (1984), which briefly describes the prosodic phrasing of nearly twenty dialects. After this short, seven-page description, almost no attempt has been made to form a typology of prosodic phrasing in Japanese dialects, while several preliminary notions that concern prosodic phrasing above the word have been sporadically proposed in studies on word-level prosodic typology (e.g. Uwano, 1989, 1998a,b). Igarashi (forthcoming) continues this line of research and proposes the classification of Japanese dialects by means of two binary parameters. One of them is the [\pm lexical tone] parameter, which is defined as (1).

(1) [\pm lexical tone]

The presence or absence of a lexically specified tone in a given dialect.¹

Dialects with the [+lexical tone] parameter coincide with what Uwano (1998a) refers to as dialects with 'distinctive accents.' They include, for instance, the Tokyo, Fukuoka, Osaka, and Kagoshima dialects. Dialects with the [–lexical tone] parameter, on the other hand, are the same as what Uwano (1998a) calls dialects with 'non-distinctive accents.' The [–lexical tone] dialects consist of two traditionally recognized groups of dialects, the 'accentless' dialects such as the Kumamoto and Koriyama dialects, and the 'one-pattern accent' dialects such as the Miyakonojo and Kobayashi dialects. This traditional division of the [–lexical tone] dialects will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.

The other parameter, i.e., [\pm multiword AP], dichotomizes dialects with respect to prosodic phrasing and is defined as (2).

(2) [\pm multiword AP]

The presence or absence of accentual phrases (AP) containing more than one Word in a given dialect.

AP is one of the prosodic phrases in Japanese, while Word is a word-sized morpho-syntactic unit (both will be defined in section 2.2). The [\pm multiword AP] parameter, therefore, categorizes dialects based on whether or not the AP in a given dialect can contain more than one 'word.'² This word-like unit, therefore, serves as the reference point for the description of cross-dialectal differences in prosodic phrasing.

2.2. Word, accentual phrase, and intermediate phrase

The word-like unit as the reference point should not be defined in reference to prosody, so that circularity in the definition can be avoided. Thus, the word-like unit in Igarashi (forthcoming) is defined morpho-syntactically as (3) and is identified as Word, with the first letter capitalized.

¹ The term 'lexical tone' used in Igarashi (forthcoming) may be misleading. Specifically, the term may mislead some readers to consider so-called 'one-pattern accent' dialects to have a parameter [+lexical tone], on the basis of the idea that the pitch contour with a final high found in these dialects (see sections 2.2 and 2.3) is a lexically specified tone pattern. By lexical tones, I do not mean the tones for which the domain is the word, or word-sized prosodic unit. Rather, I mean those tones that are listed in a lexicon. A lexicon here is defined as a list of representations corresponding to words or morphemes, and importantly, all the regular aspects of a representation are removed from a lexicon. Those regular aspects, or redundant features, are derived by a rule. In the one-pattern accent dialects, all the lexical words are regularly realized with the final high. This pitch feature (i.e. the final high), within the framework adopted here, can be derived by a rule, and thus it is removed from a lexicon. Therefore, the one-pattern accent dialects have no lexical tone, and have a parameter [–lexical tone]. In contrast, in a different framework those redundant pitch features, which are derived by a rule in the formation of a (prosodic) word, may also be called *lexical tones*. To avoid terminological confusion, the parameter [\pm lexical tone] in Igarashi (forthcoming) should instead be called [\pm lexically contrastive tone], or [\pm underlying tone].

² In Kori's framework for Japanese prosodic structure (Kori, 2004), an AP always consists of a single Word in any dialect. The framework does not capture the cross-dialectal difference in prosodic phrasing at the AP level postulated in Igarashi (forthcoming).

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