

Pitch Accent and Tonal Alignment in Japanese

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Recent work (Kubozono 2009, Ito and Mester 2016, among others) has established that the metrical foot plays an irreducible role in the accent pattern of Japanese and its dialects. Here we make a complementary point: Some features of pitch accent systems are irreducibly tonal in nature, and follow from the constraints aligning tonal melodies with prosodic structure. We present some results of the Santa Cruz Accent Project Team (Adler/Ito/Kalivoda/Mester) on the microvariation in the pitch accent systems of the dialects of Kagoshima Prefecture: the main Satsuma dialect, and the separate dialects of Koshikijima island and the southernmost Kikaijima island (close to the Ryukyu archipelago). All these dialects, except for the main Satsuma dialect, are in serious decline in terms of numbers of speakers. We show that the accentual microvariation in Kagoshima Japanese is due to a simple reranking of the basic constraints aligning the accentual melodies HL and H. The difference in TBU between dialects (syllable- vs. mora-counting behavior), difficult to analyze as a parameter setting, follows from the ranking of constraints against tonal contours on moras and syllables.