

Exploring the prosody-syntax-focus interface in Yanbian Korean

Sun-Ah Jun

UCLA

(jun@humnet.ucla.edu)

This paper examines the interface between prosody, especially prosodic phrasing, and syntax and focus in Yanbian Korean, a lexical pitch accent dialect spoken in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Mainland China, which is near the Hamgyung province of North Korea. It is well-known that prosodic phrasing, though not isomorphic to syntactic structure, is strongly influenced by syntactic structure, with the edges of major syntactic constituents matching the edges of prosodic units (Selkirk 1986, 2000, 2011; Nespor & Vogel 1986/2007; Jun 1993, 1998; Truckenbrodt 1999). It is also well-known that narrow focus affects prosodic phrasing in various languages, overriding the default prosodic phrasing of an utterance produced in broad focus condition. In other words, prosodic phrasing marks major syntactic groupings and prominence relationship among words (Shattuck-Hufnagel & Turk 1996; Beckman 1996; Jun 2005).

Jun (2011) showed that prosodic phrasing in Seoul Korean, especially an Intermediate Phrase (ip), is sensitive to syntactic structure and focus, and ip's marking syntactic structure have different prosodic properties from those marking focus. In this paper, production data from twelve speakers of Yanbian Korean is examined to explore if prosodic phrasing of this variety can be defined by intonation, and if so, whether the prosodic phrasing shows similar interaction with syntax and focus as in Seoul Korean.

The results show that Yanbian Korean has the same prosodic structure as the revised model of Seoul Korean (Jun 2004, 2007, 2011), i.e., Accentual Phrase (AP) < Intermediate Phrase (ip) < Intonational Phrase (IP). But, as a lexical pitch accent dialect, the AP in Yanbian Korean is not sensitive to the laryngeal feature of the AP-initial segment as in Seoul Korean, and an AP can have only one lexical accent, i.e., lexical H tone. When an AP has more than one word, only one lexical accent can survive, and which lexical accent survives depends on the syntactic head of the AP. When a Noun Phrase forms one AP, the lexical accent of the rightmost word, i.e., head of NP, survives, but when a Verb Phrase forms one AP, e.g., (Obj+V), the lexical accent of the leftmost word, i.e., AP-initial word, survives. In addition, when a word is narrowly focused, the focused word starts a new AP (and ip) with its lexical accent survived and all following words' lexical accents are deleted (or weakened), thus similar to the verbal APs. These results will be discussed in terms of the typological difference in prominence marking across languages.