

Dialect-specific prosodic phrasing in Japanese:
With a focus on dialects without lexical tone contrasts

Yosuke Igarashi
(Hitotsubashi University)

Abstract

In some Japanese dialects, the prosodic word boundaries are almost obligatorily marked by prosody, whereas they are frequently not signaled by prosody in the others. The Kobayashi dialect falls into the former group of dialects, in which prosodic words almost invariably have a high pitch on the final syllable. The Takahagi dialect, in contrast, belongs to the latter group, in which a pitch contour instead marks a group of prosodic words; that is, more than one prosodic words are prosodically merged into a hierarchically higher-level prosodic phrase, and, as a result, the boundary between the two prosodic words is not marked by prosody, a process called “dephrasing”. I proposed elsewhere that Japanese dialects can be dichotomized into dialects with and without dephrasing.

In this talk, I will demonstrate that the dialects with dephrasing and without lexical tone contrasts (which are called “accentless dialects” in Japanese linguistics) can be further classified into two subgroups: those with and without so-called “long-distance rise”, in which the pitch peak in the prosodic phrase is located at the non-initial prosodic word. The dialects with the long-distance rise are of typological importance, because the focused word is not always marked by the highest pitch; the pitch peak is frequently located in the phrase-final post-focal words, indicating that there is no correlation between phonetic and semantic saliencies. This type of dialects present the evidence for the non-arbitrary sound-meaning relationship, which tends to be absent with respect to intonation.