

Harry van der Hulst
University of Connecticut

Typology of pitch accent systems

This paper deals with the typology of *word prosodic systems* and, specifically, discusses the notion ‘pitch-accent (language)’, asking whether there is such a class of languages as distinct from the notions ‘stress (language)’ and ‘tone (language)’. Several issues will turn out to be crucial. Firstly, there is the issue of recognizing (or not) a notion of *accent* which could be said to underlie both pitch-accent and ‘stress’ (or indeed stress-accent). Secondly, there is the question as to whether we wish to distinguish between pitch as a non-distinctive and thus perhaps strictly phonetic property (arising in *phonetic implementation*) and pitch as the exponent of a phonological category (namely *tone*). Thirdly, there is the possibility of having tone, stress and accent (in various combinations) ‘side by side’ within the same language which raises the question how these notions interact in any given language.

My main conclusions are as follows. If we do *not* take *distinctivity* as a necessary criterion for speaking of *tone*, *all* alleged ‘pitch-accent systems’ *can* be analyzed as falling within the class of tone languages which differ among each other in various ways. This is the position most clearly advocated in Hyman (2007), and also assumed in much other work since Pulleyblank (1986). In response to this view, I will play the (devil’s) advocate of a different approach in which pitch-accent systems form a real subclass of a class of *accentual languages* (which also includes stress-accent languages). In fact, just like Hyman pushes the tonal approach to its limits, I will demonstrate how one might push the accentual approach to its limits, such that it even might cover languages that have typically not even been regarded as (pitch-)accented, but rather as indisputably tonal (because they are normally analyzed as using pitch distinctively). Taking the notion accent to be a phonetic-free property of words, I will present the view, as an alternative to Hyman’s, that accent is sufficient (i.e. tone is not needed) as long as pitch properties are not distinctive (by any standard), and perhaps even in cases where we merely find a distinction between ‘high pitch’ and ‘low pitch’, i.e. where a tonal contrast is strictly binary (so that the contrast *can* be analyzed in terms of presence versus absence of accent). In this context, it will be important to ask whether accents are necessarily both *obligatory* (‘at least once per word’) and *culminative* (‘at most one per word’), or whether these characteristics can be ‘violated’. This leads us to providing an explanation for the intriguing observation that accent in pitch-accent languages can violate these constraints, whereas in so-called stress-accent languages it would appear that accents are apparently at least obligatory and most often also culminative. I will propose the idea that the notion ‘accent’ is recognized as distinct from ‘stress’ and that both ‘modules’ are separate computational systems, taking the view that accents can be lexically specified or be due to an accentual rule component, whereas ‘stress’ is always due to a prosodic (‘metrical’) computational system that is derivationally speaking more peripheral (perhaps part of the phonetic implementation module). In this view, accents can function as prespecified prosodic heads (in stress-accent system), while they can also function as attractors of tonal association, or, in the absence of both stress and tone, as the locus for phonetic pitch cues (as in the proto-typical pitch accent systems such as found in many Japanese dialects).