

Typology of Prosodic Phrasing in Japanese Dialects

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop an intonational typology of Japanese dialects with focus on dialect-specific prosodic phrasing. While there is a tremendous amount of literature on word-level dialectal prosody in Japan, only few attempts have been made so far at describing the intonation of Japanese dialects. Since the dialects in Japan present a surprisingly rich variety of prosodic systems, the typological comparison between dialects would have as much value as that between different languages, contributing to intonational research in general.

In the proposed typology, the dialects are categorized into five groups based on three features, two of which are defined by reanalyzing past works on word-level prosody. One of the typological features is [\pm lexical tones] defined as the presence or absence of lexically contrastive pitch. The second feature [\pm accent] concerns whether or not the lexicon specifies a particular syllable/mora for the lexical tones. The third feature [\pm dephrasing] can be defined only after we examine the intonation of the Japanese dialects. It concerns the presence or absence of accentual phrase, a prosodic phrase immediate above the word in a prosodic hierarchy. One of the main claims of the present work is that some dialects exhibit intonational grouping of words at the level of accentual phrase ([+dephrasing]), whereas the others do not ([-dephrasing]).

The typology propounded in this work makes it possible to capture similarities and differences across the boundaries of previous categorizations based on word-level prosody. Specifically, it permits the inclusion of those dialects without lexically specified tones ([-lexical tones]), which have virtually been excluded from typological consideration in the past. For example, Fukushima Japanese ([-lexical tones]) and Tokyo Japanese ([+lexical tones, +accent]) are common in that they have a feature [+dephrasing]. Also, Kobayashi Japanese ([-lexical tones]) shares a feature [-dephrasing] with Osaka Japanese ([+lexical tones, +accent]) and Kagoshima Japanese ([+lexical tones, -accent]). It is also suggested that dialects with common typological features behave similarly both in morphological prosodic processes (word compounding) and in phrase-level prosodic processes (prosody-syntax mapping).