Notes on prosodic headedness and tone in Tokyo Japanese, Standard English and Northern Bizkaian Basque

Gorka Elordieta and Lisa Selkirk

Abstract

This paper explores how the notion ‘prosodic head’ comes into play in providing an account for certain facts concerning the distribution of tonal pitch accents in Tokyo Japanese, Standard American and British English, and Northern Bizkaian Basque. Building on evidence from Ito and Mester (2016) on Tokyo Japanese, it is argued that there is a class of violable phonological markedness constraints on the headedness of prosodic constituents. A class of markedness constraints calling for a prosodic head/abstract prominence to be associated with tone is also motivated. Together, these constraints play a role in accounts of tone epenthesis on prosodic heads or displacement of lexical tone to prosodic heads that are found in both ‘pitch accent languages’ and in ‘intonation languages’. These two prosodic headedness-related constraint types also play a role in accounting for the disappearance of expected phonological phrasing in cases of the absence of tonal ‘accent’ and the related absence of word-level prosodic headedness.