Hana-bana (花々): A Festschrift for Junko Ito and Armin Mester

Foreword

We are honored to present this Festschrift to celebrate the remarkable careers of Junko Ito and Armin Mester, two of the world’s leading theoretical phonologists and one of the most productive, enduring research teams in our field. It is impossible to do justice to the variety and depth of their work, or to adequately express our regard for them as colleagues and friends. But we hope this volume goes some way toward doing both.

One salient feature of Junko and Armin’s research—already visible in their dissertation work in the 1980s—is the explanatory depth of their analyses. Consider their research on Lyman’s Law and Rendaku in Japanese, for example, which began in the 1980s and culminated in their widely-cited 2003 *Linguistic Inquiry* monograph *Japanese Morphophonemics*. Before their work on these topics, analyses of Rendaku made use of a very general rule of compound voicing, combined with ad hoc ‘conditions’ blocking that rule in certain highly specific environments. At best, these analyses merely restated the basic empirical observations, without explaining why these patterns have the particular shape they do.

Junko and Armin’s work entirely refashioned the field’s thinking on this topic. By connecting the language-particular aspects of Rendaku to more general principles like underspecification, the Obligatory Contour Principle, and prosodic recursion, they achieved a remarkable degree of explanatory success in a domain that had already been extensively studied.

Armin and Junko’s early work influenced the inception of Optimality Theory—take for example Junko’s proposal that an Onset parameter could be ‘strong’ or ‘weak’ but never ‘off’, which was a clear precursor to the notions of constraint ranking and violability. Junko and Armin then became early pioneers of Optimality Theory, applying its insights to problems that had previously seemed intractable. Over the years their work within that framework led to new discoveries about underspecification, derivational opacity, co-occurrence restrictions, all areas of prosody, and the ‘core-periphery’ structure of the lexicon, among many other topics.

In their work on the core-periphery structure of the lexicon, which focuses particularly on Japanese, Junko and Armin defined and developed an entirely new area of phonology. At the heart of this program is the idea that a language’s vocabulary is organized into a hierarchy of ‘strata of foreignness’ that are in a subset-superset relationship. This claim, captured by means of articulated faithfulness constraints and constraint ranking, imposed structure and predictive power in an area of phonology that had little of either. This work has been pioneering, defining an agenda for everything that came after.

Their work in the area of prosody has been so wide-ranging and sustained that it is difficult to sum up or do right by. They have repeatedly combined the insights of constraint ranking and violability with insights specific to prosody, bringing a level of sophistication and nuance to our understanding of prosody that has been rarely matched by anyone. Their insights about ‘weak layering’ were an early example of this. Their more recent work on recursion in prosody can be seen as complementary to
this, violating expectations of strict layering in the opposite direction, as it were. With this work, they defined new research areas in phonology and provided new and revealing generalizations about prosodic structure.

What is so enduring about their work? First, it is always dedicated to theoretical elegance. Second, it clarifies the issues involved. It doesn’t just put known issues clearly, although it does that outstandingly—there are no better papers to assign for class reading. Rather, their work makes clear what the issues are, essentially helping to define problems for the field. Third, their work provides beautiful empirical case studies based on a deep understanding of individual languages, most often Japanese. Armin and Junko have often joked about how well they fit the UC Santa Cruz Linguistics mold, since they work on ‘understudied’ languages like German and Japanese. Joke taken. But their work really is of a piece with the department, advancing theory at the highest level based on empirical analyses of specific languages that are scrupulously authoritative. They have been by far and for decades the most influential researchers in the area of Japanese phonology.

Junko and Armin are beloved advisors, and have inspired several generations of undergraduate and graduate students. As mentors, they are supportive and encouraging, but they also demand and cultivate in their students the same theoretical and empirical sophistication they display in their own work. Their legacy as teachers and mentors includes scholars around the world. The breadth of this impact can be seen in the many linguists who have shared their gratitude in the Congratulations section of the Festschrift web site.

As a colleague Armin has always brought his excitement about research and his practical, giving, and refreshingly honest contributions to department life and business. More than many, Junko has shaped the department and held it together. We appreciate their openness, their good humor, and their ambition. The UC Santa Cruz linguistics department has thrived in good part because of their renown and their desire that it be the best.

We chose Hana-bana, the title of this Festschrift, for both semantic and phonological reasons. Semantically, it means something like ‘lots of flowers’ in Japanese, implying different sorts of colors and kinds. It metaphorically represents Armin and Junko’s work throughout their career: each piece is beautiful on its own, and only more striking when their body of work is taken as a whole. Phonologically, the word hana-bana involves reduplication, compounding, Rendaku voicing, and a synchronically unusual (and potentially opaque) [h]∼[b](←/p/) alternation—all topics Junko and Armin have worked on over their illustrious careers.

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