

Prosody in language description: Taking spoken language seriously

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Writing spoken language

When describing unwritten languages, linguistic analysis generally proceeds from written representations (transcripts) of the language being investigated (major exception: phonetics, to some extent also sign language research).

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Writing spoken language

To what extent is spoken language taken seriously when communicative events are written down in field work/descriptive linguistics?

► Ideally, transcripts should reflect the prosodic structure of spoken language, inasmuch as this has repercussions for the analysis. (Transcripts necessarily are reductive.)

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Writing spoken language

Transcription of communicative events (texts, conversation) as widely practiced involves segmentation on four levels

- sounds
 - words
 - clause/sentence
 - paragraph/turn
- } consistent?? based on what evidence?

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Mismatches between prosodic and orthographic structure

grapheme	segment/phoneme
	syllable
orthographic word	phonological word
	phonological phrase
clause	intonation unit
sentence	utterance/declination unit
paragraph	unit

Writing clitics

Ayayaténaka

ILOKO

Ay-ayat-én=na=ka.

CONT-love-PV=3s.ERG=2s.ABS

'He loves you.'

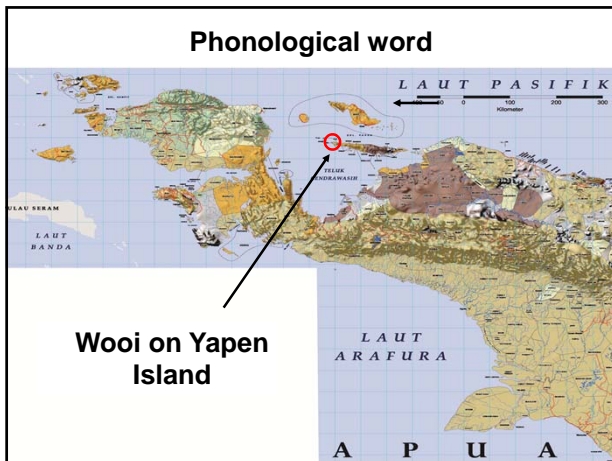
Mahal ka ba niyá?

TAGALOG

love=2s=Q=3s.GEN

'Does s/he love you?'

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ra-serialisation

humbia ra hundahahi na maria vaney
 hu- bia ra hu- rahahi na maria vaney
 3d- go.down GO 3d- look.for.seafood LOC water DEM
 they searched food in that river

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ra-serialisation

hurong **ra** huntapiri va payna inte [huronda]
 hu- ong ra hu- tapiri va payna interi
 3d- make GO 3d- able NEG so then
 they were unable to remove it, so

hurena ra husokondoya [hurenda]
 hu- ena ra hu- hokondoya
 3d- sleep GO 3d- snore
 they fell asleep and snored

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ra-serialisation

tatong ra tatonanuhari
 ta- ong ra ta- onanuhari
 1pi- make GO 1pi- make.carefully
 (if/when) we do it (open a garden),
 we must do it carefully

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Phonological structure of IUs in many Indonesian languages

$$T - T\%$$

$$\downarrow \downarrow$$

$$[\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma]$$

i.e. **only edge tones**
 T% = boundary tone
 T- = phrase accent

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Example from Waima'a

H- L%

↓ ↓
ne de kara haru lumu
 3s NEG like shirt green
 's/he doesn't like the green shirt'

Santina into26a

English with edge tones only

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A note on stress in Indonesian languages

Stress in the east??

papUUUa

papua bAArat

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Phrase level within IU: i(ntermediate) p(hrase)

L\$ H\$ L\$ H\$ T-T%
 ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
 [[σσσσ]ip [σσσσσ]ip σσσσ]IU

T\$ = ip-boundary tone
 T% = IU boundary tone
 T- = IU phrase accent

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Accentual Phrase in Korean (Jun 2005, Chap. 8)

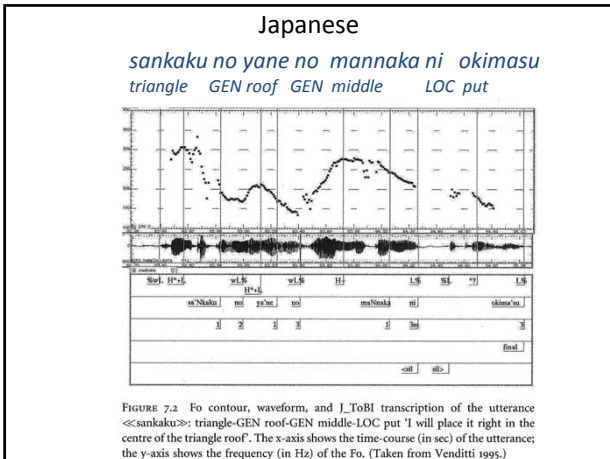
FIGURE 8.1 Intonational structure of Seoul Korean.
 IP: Intonation Phrase AP: Accentual Phrase
 w: phonological word σ: syllable
 T=H, when the syllable initial segment is aspirated/tense; otherwise, T=L
 %: Intonation Phrase boundary tone

Accentual Phrase in Korean (Jun 2005, Chap. 8)

words	hyEQmiNinenIN				yEQarIR				miwEhAyo			
Utones	LH _h				LH _h				L%			
Stones	H	+H	L+	H _h	L	H _h	L	+H	L+	L%		

FIGURE 8.2 An example utterance, hyEQmiNinenIN 'Hyungmin's family-top'+ yEQarIR 'Younga-acc'+miwEhAyo 'hate' => 'Hyungmin's family hates Younga', illustrating how to label AP-initial tones. The first AP begins with an H tone, and the second and the third APs begin with an L tone. +H is shown in the first and the last APs.

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Syllable reduction in Waima'a

- disyllabic:
laka 'go, walk' -> lak lka ka la
- tetrasyllabic:
hana-husu 'bow' -> hana-hus,
hanhusu, nahusu, hanasu/hanusu
- trisyllabic:
serbisu 'work' -> sersu sibisu serbis

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Where does reduction occur?

ne kara data naha
3s want alight if

barse ne whaka ige la rihu ne wake nini
seem 3s fly PTL LOC fog PRX below POSS

if it were about to land, then it should fly below the clouds

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Where does reduction occur?

LS HS LS HS H-H%

ne kara data naha barse ne whaka ige la rihu ne wake nini
3s want alight if seem 3s fly PTL LOC fog PRX below POSS

if it were about to land, then it should fly below the clouds

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Totoli: Prosodic evidence for VP constituent

L% HS H-L%

mo-boli-mo kami
AV-buy-CPL 1pe
We buy (them) (AV)

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Totoli: Prosodic evidence for VP constituent

H-L%

kana koto-i kami
because know-UV2 1pe
because we know (UV)

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Morphosyntactically both examples are ambiguous

a) $[[[_{VP} [_V \textit{kotoi}] [_{NP} \textit{kami}]]]$ 'we know (it)'
 (*kami* = nonsubject-ACTOR)

b) $[[[_{VP} \textit{kotoi}] [_{NP} \textit{kami}]]]$ 'we are known'
 (*kami* = subject)

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Totoli: Prosodic evidence for VP constituent

L_S HS L-H%
lau mogipu taatarus sia
 presently AV:pick RDP2:continue 3s
 (while) he keeps on picking (fruits)

Word: lau mog ipu taar rus si a
 Tone: L_S HS L-H%

140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
-20
-40
-60
-80
-100
-120
-140
-160
-180
-200

0.4 0.5 0.6 0.7 0.8 0.9 1 1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9

samples
Time (s)

Conclusion: What is practically feasible?

Ideally, the general principle would be to indicate in transcripts all prosodic units which are NOT predictable from the segmental presentation.

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Conclusion: What is practically feasible?

Predictable	Not predictable
syllable	intonation unit
phonological word (?)	paragraph/declination unit
phonological phrase (??)	

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