RISING CONTOURS IN SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES
TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE INTONATIONAL PHONOLOGY

BACKGROUND

• South Asia is called a “linguistic area” (ES4).
• “Typical” South Asian Igs (SALs) have:
  • Retrollexes, breathy-voiced Cs, few fricatives
  • Echo reduplication, no inflectional prefixes
  • SOV order, non-nominative experiencers
• Over time, linguists have identified exceptions and regional patterns (S12).
  • Is there a “typical” SAL intonation?
  • Are there exceptions / regional patterns?

• Féry’s comparative work proposes a single model for Bng, Hnd, Mlm, Tml (K10)
  • Very simple repetitive pattern of rising contours
  • L*, H marking the edges of each phrase
  • No effect of prominence (no pitch accents)
• The current study also finds evidence of repeating rising contours across SALs
• But, I propose that even in this property, SALs show systematic variations:
  • L tone generally aligns with prominence
  • H tone can also align with prominence
  • V length and word length can generate > 2nd H tone
  • Onset C notably raises L tone

METHODS

• Comparative work
• Tests applicability of a single model on multiple SALs (K10)
• Applies B-ToBI conventions (K08/K14)
• Adjustments as needed
  • Recordings of North Wind fable from JIPA illustrations (K12, K19, K09, K01)
  • And in Prosodic Typology II (K14, K14, n. 216)

L TONE ALIGNMENT

General pattern
• Word-initial L target
  • Marks prominence (L*), edge (al L), or both
  • Follows B-ToBI and Féry
• Hnd L* optionally shifts right to stay on prominent (K01)
  • Sounds like PA! Contra Féry
• Asm variation is unsystematic
  • Doesn’t always line up with prominence patterns (M01)

H TONE ALIGNMENT

H is phrase-final: Ha / H
• H marks edge in Indic Igs
  • Follows B-ToBI and Féry
  • Minor pattern in Tml
• H is part of PA: L*+H
  • Follows B-ToBI and Féry
  • Minor pattern in Bng, Npl
  • Possibly conveys a higher level of salience
Phrases can have both H tones
• Plateau in Tlg: L*+H…Ha
  • 2nd H target (Ha) on last long V
  • Morph. complexity suggests this is 1 AP per root (not word)

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EFFECT OF ONSET CONSONANT

• L* is raised in a with voiceless or null onset
  • Seen in all SALs studied
  • Most exaggerated with initial sibilants
  • Phonologization of f0 x voicing interaction (K11)?
• Also seen in Pnj, which had tonogenesis (prior)

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