Interactions between Lexical and Post-lexical Tones in Japanese

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Abstract:
This talk analyzes how post-lexical tones interact with lexical tones in pitch-accent systems of Japanese with particular reference to post-lexical tonal neutralizations. Its main focus is on Kagoshima Japanese, a southern Japanese dialect with two lexical tonal patterns (Types A and B), and specifically, on its question and vocative (calling) intonation. This dialect does not show any tonal neutralization at the lexical level, but the lexical distinction is lost in some phonological contexts at the post-lexical level. This paper demonstrates how these post-lexical tonal neutralizations occur and, more generally, how and to what extent post-lexical tonal patterns can deviate from lexical ones in lexical pitch accent systems of Japanese.

The two lexical tonal types (Types A and B) can be distinguished from each other in terms of the position of a High-toned syllable (penultimate vs. final) or the presence or absence of a L tone (or a pitch fall) in word-final position and are not neutralized at the lexical level. We examine how the two types of post-lexical processes change the lexical tonal patterns, and discovered that they share two features: (i) they both involve a pitch fall in word-final position, not only in Type A but also in Type B words, and (ii) they produce pitch patterns that deviate from those determined at the lexical level. As for the second point, the post-lexical processes employ a new strategy of tonal assignment whereby a H-L sequence is associated with the final syllable rather than the final two syllables. This new type of tonal assignment deviates from the tonal assignment at the lexical level, where the H and L tones are linked to different syllables.

Question and vocative prosody are similar in showing tonal neutralizations, too, but to different degrees. The former process yields tonal neutralizations only in monosyllabic words, while the latter shows the same phenomenon in much more general ways. This difference in the extent of neutralization comes about primarily because the two tonal types (A and B) both admit two prosodic patterns—Pattern I and Pattern II—in vocative prosody, whereas they admit only one pattern—Pattern I (for Type A) or Pattern II (for Type B)—in question prosody. In vocative prosody, in other words, native speakers permit one and the same prosodic pattern for both Type A and Type B.