

Accent deletion and phrase formation in Fukuoka Japanese WH constructions

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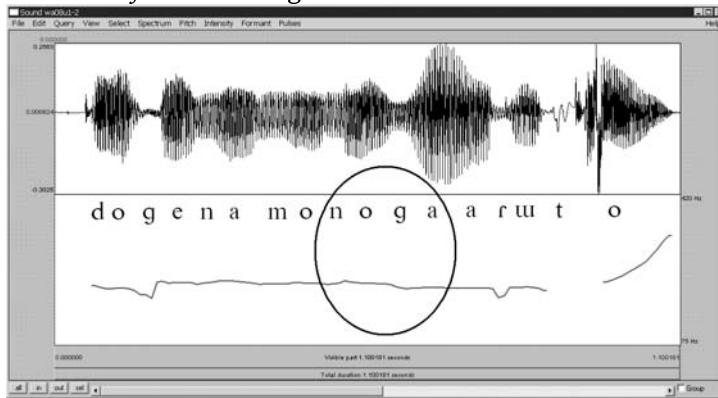
1. The WH intonational contour in Fukuoka Japanese

In the Fukuoka dialect of Japanese (FJ), WH constructions surface with a distinctive “flat high tone” contour, a phenomenon that was first noted by Hayata (1985) and subsequently described in detail in a series of papers by Kubo (1989 et seq.). Hayata’s and Kubo’s discussions have led to the following analysis of the WH intonational contour (Kubo 1990a, 2005): It is a single phonological phrase; all lexical pitch accents are deleted in that phonological phrase; and (under certain conditions) a default penultimate accent is inserted. An instance of the WH intonational contour can be observed in (1) below. This WH question, where no pitch accent is realized, contrasts minimally with the yes/no question in (2), where the lexical accent on *monó-ga* is realized as a falling F0 contour.

- (1) WH question: Subject to WH intonational contour (accent deletion); [ò] = location of unrealized accent

doge-na_[+WH] monò-ga aru to Ø_{[+WH]?}
what.kind.of *thing-NOM* *exist* *PRT* *C*

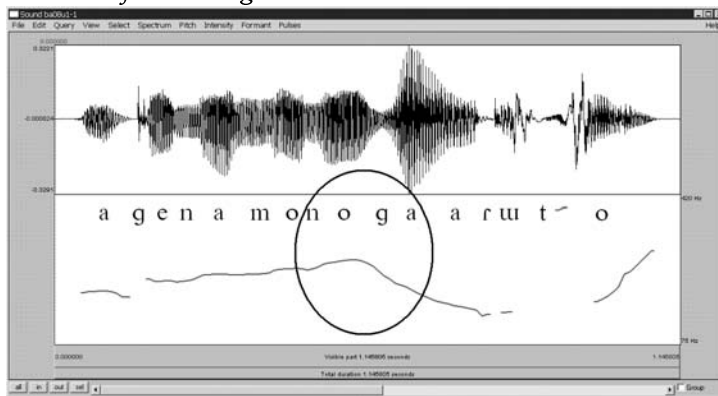
‘What kind of thing is there?’



- (2) Yes/no question: No WH intonational contour (no accent deletion); [ó] = surface pitch accent

age-na monó-ga aru to Ø_{[-WH]?}
that.kind.of *thing-NOM* *exist* *PRT* *C*

‘Is there that kind of thing?’



The Hayata/Kubo analysis of the WH intonational contour leads to further questions, however. First, previous work on this phenomenon has been impressionistic rather than instrumental. Therefore, can the descriptions concerning accent deletion and phrase formation be empirically confirmed? Second, the factors that determine the left and right edges of the WH intonational contour are complex, and seem to require reference to the syntactic/semantic relationship between a WH element and the complementizer (C) with which it is associated. This makes the FJ WH phenomenon a fruitful testing ground for models of the syntax-prosody interface.

2. Empirical investigation of accent deletion

Four native speakers of FJ were recorded producing utterances like (1) and (2) above, i.e., minimally differing _{WH} and yes/no questions with accented nouns near the midpoint of the utterance. Similar matched pairs of _{WH} and yes/no questions containing only unaccented nouns were likewise recorded. A much greater pitch fall was measured in the *yes/no-accented* condition (corresponding to (2) above) than in any of the other conditions. While these results are somewhat preliminary, they indicate that _{WH} questions containing accented nouns behave unlike their non-_{WH} counterparts, but instead like unaccented _{WH} and yes/no questions — providing empirical support for the claim that accents are deleted in _{WH} questions.

3. Phonological phrase formation and the syntax-prosody interface

The basic generalization about the placement of the _{WH} intonational contour is that it extends from a _{WH} element to its associated complementizer, which may be null in questions with matrix scope. Under the Hayata/Kubo analysis, the span of the _{WH} contour corresponds to a single phonological phrase. Therefore, a successful model of the syntax-prosody interface must be able to account for the mapping of a _{WH} element and its associated complementizer to the left and right edges, respectively, of a phrase of the appropriate type.

In this talk, the various _{WH} constructions examined by Kubo (1989 et seq.) are reviewed and categorized. I argue, based on constructions with multiple _{WH} elements and one or more complementizers, that it is the [+_{WH}] complementizer that is fundamentally responsible for driving the phonological phrase formation underlying the characteristic _{WH} contour, although _{WH} words themselves impose prosodic requirements as well. Finally, I develop a model of the FJ pattern within the edge-based Alignment approach (e.g., Selkirk 1995, 2003; Truckenbrodt 1995, 1999) and examine general implications of this phenomenon for edge-based Alignment. Certain implications of the FJ pattern for other recent models of the syntax-prosody interface (e.g., Ishihara 2002, 2004; Richards 2006; Kratzer & Selkirk 2007) are considered as well.

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