Prosodic Prominence in Persian

Mortaza Taheri-Ardali[1,2]

[1]Department of English, Shahrekord University, Iran
[2]Senior Research Fellow at CRC Prominence in Language, Universität zu Köln, Germany

It has been recurrently reported that focus considerably changes the sentence prosody in many languages. Persian is no exception in this regard. A number of experimental studies addressed the effect of prosodic prominence on Persian sentence prosody. However, the findings are conspicuously inconsistent. This matter is probably rooted in the controversial methodologies used to trigger focus constituents. From writing the focal items in bold-faced to reading the context sentences for the speakers from a booklet, the methodologies are questionable. Moreover, there is no systematic study to check the effect of various focus types including contrastive, narrow and broad, on Persian prosody. From a wider perspective, in addition to the common phonetic cues such as f0, duration and intensity, speakers can use multiple cues in different combinations to express the same degree of prominence. The study of such numerous cues is also lacking in Persian. In the present talk, I will argue the key literature on Persian word and sentence prosody in particular the studies on prosodic prominence. Then, I will embark on addressing our ongoing project. Using Electromagnetic Articulography (EMA), this study is a fully-fledged investigation of the laryngeal (intonational f0 movements) and supralaryngeal articulations (lingual and labial articulation of consonants and vowels) in both unaccented and accented (background vs. broad focus, narrow focus, and contrastive focus) and within accentuation (broad, narrow, and contrastive focus). Additionally, this project intends to model the results by proposing a dynamical systems approach for prosodic prominence in Persian.

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