

Tone-Intonation interactions in Tibeto-Burman languages: implications for description and typology

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Typological studies of tone in the languages of Asia have often been concerned with features of tone systems, independent of intonational systems, classifying languages according to the domain of tone, the phonetic correlates of tone (Hildebrandt 2007); phonological processes such as tone spreading (Evans 2008); and historical origins of tone (Michaud 2011).

In this talk, I consider some of the diversity of lexical tone systems in Tibeto-Burman languages, using data from three Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in NE India and Nepal: Sumi (Nagaland); Karbi (Assam); and Yolmo (Nepal). A brief description of the lexical tone systems of these languages will first be given, as per Teo (2014) for Sumi; Konnerth & Teo (2014) for Karbi; and Hari (2010) for Yolmo.

Importantly, I look at different ways in which post-lexical intonation might interact with lexical tone in these languages, using data from repetition tasks. A preliminary analysis from Yolmo suggests that a description of the tone system of the language must also take the intonational system into account (Teo et al 2015). Finally, it will be proposed that data from such basic repetition tasks may already indicate important typological differences in tone systems.

References

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