

Pitch accent realisation on focus words in Djambarrpuyŋu

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In this talk I present the latest findings from my PhD project, which investigates aspects of prosody in Djambarrpuyŋu, an Australian indigenous language spoken by approximately 3,000 people in Arnhem Land, northern Australia. This is a preliminary analysis of how intonation may be used to encode informational prominence in Djambarrpuyŋu, primarily through examining the f_0 tunes observed on focus words in Djambarrpuyŋu, post-focal f_0 patterns, and phrasing.

To date there has been a small number of studies into the intonation of Australian languages. Regarding the interaction between intonational prominence and focus, it has been found that intonation is one way focus can be encoded in Australian languages; a (rising) pitch accent is often associated with the focus word. Considering the intonation of whole utterances, post-focal pitch accents can (e.g. in Bininj Kunwok varieties) or must (e.g. in Mawng) occur on all following content words, but these are realised within a compressed pitch range. Further, phrasing also plays a role whereby the focus item is often (though not always) produced in the initial position of an IP. There does not appear to be a specific pitch accent used for prosodically encoding focus.

Using controlled data from two tasks collected in Milingimbi, N.T., Australia, in 2016, I discuss the pitch accents observed in Djambarrpuyŋu on words which are analysed as having some kind of focus. I will present a preliminary, phonetic analysis of the observed patterns, including phrasing, pitch resets, and post-focal tune patterns. To conclude, I explore what pitch accents may be pursued as phonological categories, and what may be phonetic inter- and intraspeaker variability. The preliminary findings will then be related back what we know of indigenous Australian languages, and how we might consider Djambarrpuyŋu to fit more broadly into a typology of phrase-level prosody.