Prominence in Seoul Korean Intonation: topic and focus marking example

Inyoung Kim

Université Paris Diderot – Paris 7, CLILLAC-ARP, France
Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), France
in-young.kim@inalco.fr

Korean has nominative marker <-i/ka> and accusative marker <-(l)ul> which coincide with syntactic right boundary. They are also considered as focus marker. These morphemes can be omitted for semantic or/and pragmatic reasons. They are also omitted when the constituent gets the topic marker. A grammatical morpheme <-(n)un > is so called a topic marker but it's role can be a contrastive topic marker also. Lee (2006) reports that the contrastive topic marker <-(n)un > does show intonation prominence, but the (non-contrastive) topic marker <-(n)un > does not show intonation prominence. In a Korean sentence, it is possible to have several arguments with an identical morpheme, and some of these phenomena are known as double subject or double object construction. Furthermore the choice between the topic marker and the nominative case marker plays a role on thetic and categorical judgment for all-rheme utterance in Korean (Roberts 2010).

In read speech, Korean Seoul intonation has three prosodic domains; Accentual Phrase (AP), Intermediate Phrase (ip) and Intonation Phrase (IP). Each domain has its own prosodic definitions. AP has an underlying form (/LHLH/), ip is a focus and downstep domain and IP has final lengthening with a pause. When there is a focus in the sentence, dephrasing comes after the focus word (Jun 1998, 2006).

As Korean permits relatively free word order with non-realized constituent in a discourse, we assume that intonation plays a central role in discourse representations when it is a real life speech, showing more phonetic pitch variation than in read speech. The study shows examples from a professional speech (politician) in a debate context where speaker has to convey the message clearly and has persuasion as a goal for the utterance.

- First we show three utterances from a speaker in a discourse where (i) the first utterance has 'all-rheme' with a focus; (ii) the following utterance takes the issue introduced by the first utterance and shows 'topic-comment' structure; (iii) the third has an initial 'contrastive topic' followed by a quoted sentence. We observe pitch prominences on the grammatical morphemes identifying the intonation units reflecting the information flow in the discourse.
- Second speech has two <-(n)un> markers in the utterance. The first constituent is a topic and the second is a contrastive topic which are followed by a complex predicate. These two topic markers show pitch prominence, but in an acoustically different way of prominence so that the different role in the discourse should be perceived. Identifying the intonational prominence in an utterance remains a complex task, and we observe combination of more than two acoustic parameters playing a role to make prominence. The selected example shows that two main acoustic parameters, F0 and duration make relative prominence in a phonetically *contrastive* way. We observe pitch prominence within an utterance organizing the discourse and it identifies topic-comment, rheme and focus.

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