

Intonation of noun compounds and genitives in Turkish

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Much work has been done on the phonological properties of lexical accent in Turkish, but virtually no study of Turkish intonation exists. In this presentation, I report on an investigation of Turkish intonation in noun phrases. Because Turkish is a pitch-accent language (Levi 2002), beginning at the smallest level of intonation ensures that we will not overlook any effects of or interactions with word level accent.

Noun compounds and genitive noun phrases (GNP) behave differently with respect to semantics, syntax, and phonology. Compounds act like other lexical items in only retaining one lexical accent. GNPs, on the other hand, behave as two different lexical items, allowing modifiers to intervene between them and also in retaining their own lexical accent (Underhill 1976). Therefore, it is natural to expect that compounds and GNPs will have different intonational properties. In particular, we expect that compounds will form single Accentual Phrases (AP), but that GNPs will act as two independent APs because they are two NPs.

Evidence from the metrical phonology strengthens the prediction that compounds should behave as a single unit. Word level accent in Turkish consistently shows the pattern of promoting the leftmost site of the lexical accent (Barker 1989, Inkelas 1999). Compounds, like affixed words, also promote the accent of the leftmost member of the compound (e.g. *ayák-kabí* 'shoe', cf. *ayák* 'foot' and *kabí* 'cover').

Levi (2002) shows that the primary phonetic correlate of word level accent is pitch, where lexical tonal contours have the form H*+L (H* in final position). Because one of the tones is deleted, we have evidence against tonal crowding. All three speakers behaved as expected on the compounds, retaining accent on only the leftmost lexical item.

The GNPs, on the other hand, did not always surface as expected. Speakers 1 & 2 consistently dephrased the second noun and deleted its accent, treating the GNP as one AP. Furthermore, the pitch tracks of these speakers' GNPs gave evidence for a phrasal L- at the end of the AP. However, when these same speakers pronounced simple nouns with final accent, the L- did not surface. From this we conclude that when H* and L- compete for placement on a single syllable, the H* dominates. Again, we have evidence against tonal crowding.

Speaker 3, on the other hand, did produce the GNPs as two separate APs, as predicted. This was evident in his pitch tracks where we clearly see a H* or a H*+L on the lexically accented syllable of the second NP. His speech also provided evidence for a phrasal H- between the first and second members of the GNPs.

Thus, Turkish speakers vary in whether they treat the GNPs as one AP, where the second is dephrased, or as two separate APs. A similar type of dephrasing can occur in Japanese Adj.+N constructions where the N can be dephrased when the adjective is focused (Pierrehumbert & Beckman 1988).

The pitch contours in the carrier phrase can be summarized by the following features. First, lexical tones consist of H*+L assigned to the leftmost accent. When this accent is word final, the accent surfaces as H*. Compounds can be accounted for with only this pitch accent. The GNPs, however, can either surface as two APs with a H- between them, or they can surface as one AP with the second member of the GNP losing its pitch accent. In the context of the carrier phrase, the target word also must have a L- after the final pitch accent of the AP. Turkish exhibits a ban on tonal crowding and allows only one tone to surface per syllable.