

Tone inventories and tune-text alignments: prosodic variation in 'hybrid' prosodic systems

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Abstract

The “hybrid” prosodic systems described for several Caribbean Creoles challenge typologies that dichotomize between “intonation languages” and “tone languages” or between “stress” and “pitch-accent” languages. A more nuanced differentiation emerges if languages are compared in terms of questions concerning tone inventory and tune-text alignment, such as: Are the tunes of short utterances composed primarily of tone patterns specified to contrast words or of intonation patterns that are morphemes in their own right? What determines tune-text alignment at the lowest levels of the prosodic hierarchy; must tones be anchored to rhythmically prominent syllables within focused constituents? This paper explores these questions for several languages with “hybrid” prosodic systems including some where the hybrid nature cannot plausibly be attributed to language contact.