

## *Central Franconian tone and language change*

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The binary lexical tone contrast in the dialects of the former *Rheinland* and the Limburgish area in the Netherlands and Belgium is phonologically and phonetically incorporated in the intonation systems of these dialects. From a practical point of view, this makes it hard to study the tones ('Accent 1' vs. 'Accent 2'). Taken as surface contours, phonological and phonetic distinctions between them vary drastically with the position of the relevant syllable in the sentence, the presence of a focus marking pitch accent on that syllable and the intonation melody. From a more general linguistic perspective, this structural complication has a significant advantage. Time and again, the dialects reveal in their tonal grammars and in the dialect-specific implementation rules that in the face of so many f<sub>0</sub> contrasts, their phonetic resources have been stretched to the limit. As such, their structure and the ways in which they evolved constitute revealing comments on how human language develops when contrast preservation is making an ultimate stand against neutralization.

Based on data from eleven dialects, the following phenomena can be identified:

1. Atrophying intonation systems. Where West Germanic languages may have ten or more intonation contours, the number of such contours in the tonal dialects varies from four to one.
2. Abandonment of the lexical tone contrast in some (less salient) positions in the intonation contour.
3. Enhancement of the lexical tone contrast by:
  - a. Duration, whereby Accent 2 is generally longer than Accent 1.
  - b. Degree of diphthongization, where Accent 1 is more diphthongal than Accent 2.
  - c. Vowel height, where Accent 2 is higher than Accent 1.
  - d. Phonetic patching, the reproduction of a distinguishing phonetic feature from a frequent context in a context in which the lexical tone contrast is particularly non-salient.

Enhancements 3abc have parallels in English. Case 3d is without precedent in any language, as far as I'm aware. Two cases of 3d will be presented.

The dialects share the privative tone contrast (Accent 1=∅ and Accent 2= T), the locus of the contrast (the stressed syllable of the word) and some interaction between T and intonation tones (T\*, T%), minimally in the way they are ordered in the syllable. I will present a reconstruction of what can be regarded as the core dialect, that of Roermond/Mayen, and indicate general ways in which some of the other dialects differ from it. Also, I will show how the Arzbach dialect, formerly believed to have reversed the tone classes, differs from the core dialect by a single sound change.

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