The interaction of tone and stress in Kashibo-Kakataibo (Panoan)

In this talk, we attempt to describe and analyze some salient features of the prosodic system of Kashibo-Kakataibo (Panoan, Peru). This prosodic system is noteworthy because it combines characteristics of a prototypical stress system with those of a tonal system in a way not yet discussed either in the literature on mixed stress-tone systems or in the literature on the prosodic systems of other languages of the Amazonia.

Prosodic systems with similar properties to the ones found in Kashibo-Kakataibo have usually been labeled as pitch accent systems. In fact, the term has been widely applied to Amazonian languages, including members of the Arawak (Aikhenvald 1999: 79), Jivaroan (Payne 1990), Tukanan (Barnes 1999: 212, Gomez-Imbert and Kenstowicz 2000) and Tupían families (Rodríguez 1999: 114, Storto and Demolin 2005), among others; and Aikhenvald (1999: 406-407) also indicates that pitch-accent systems are an feature of the Vaupés Linguistic Area. However, the term ‘pitch accent’ has in recent years become the focus of increasing debate, and there is increasing doubt about its nature as a typological concept (Hyman 2009). In this talk, we attempt to look at Kashibo-Kakataibo data in light of this discussion. Based on a careful examination of the data, we will argue that the prosodic system of this language should be understood as a mixed stress-tone system (i.e. a system with exhibits both properties of tone and stress systems) and not as a third prosodic type (namely, pitch accent).

Stress in Kashibo-Kakataibo (which has as its phonetic correlations both vowel lengthening and increment of pitch) exhibits a number of complexities, including a different treatment of non-finite and finite words; weight-sensitivity; and extrametricality. In turn, tone in this language is restricted to a closed set of bound (final) suffixes, which carry a lexical feature of high tone. The prosodic behavior of these suffixes is totally independent of the metrical principles found in association with stress.

Stress is obligatory and it can coexist with tone in the same word if this word carries one of the tone-bearing suffixes. This produces interesting cases in which pitch peaks associated with both stress and tone are found in the same word. In principle, it is possible to distinguish between pitch peaks of different natures, but, as we will show in this talk, there are difficult cases associated with processes of pitch interpolation, irregular stress and minimal word requirement. In this talk, we will present and discuss some important methodological considerations previously implemented in Michael (2012), which reveal useful for an adequate description of the prosodic system of Kashibo-Kakataibo and all its complexities. These considerations may satisfactorily be applied to the study of other languages with prosodic systems that combine both stress-like and tone-like properties.

Kashibo-Kakataibo is a Panoan language spoken by approximately 3000 - 3500 people in the Peruvian departments of Huánuco and Ucayali. The Kashibo-Kakataibo people live in some eleven communities and anexos along the Aguaytía, San Alejandro, Shamboyacu and Sungaroyacu Rivers, where the language remains vital despite intense contact between Kashibo-Kakataibos and non-indigenous populations.


Guillaume, Antoine. xxx


Zariquiey, Roberto. 2011a. A grammar of Cashibo-Cacataibo. La Trobe University, PhD dissertation.