Translating Diacritics
A Comparison of Historic Transcriptions of Karuk Accent

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Overview

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Introduction

The Karuk language

• Highly endangered Hokan isolate of Northern California
• 6-12 first language speakers, 20-50 second-language speakers
• Prosodic system: two types of accent, at most 1 per word
• Historic linguistic documentation
  • 1920s: John P. Harrington
  • 1949-1950: William Bright

Making use of Harrington’s materials

• Segmental transcriptions: phonetically precise, over-differentiated
• What about suprasegmental transcriptions?
• Can we make sense of his notations of Karuk accent?
Example of Harrington’s Orthography

3 word accents in Karuk:

- Acute: *chavúra* ‘finally’
- Circumflex: *kachakâach* ‘bluejay’
- Unaccented: *upiip* ‘he said’

Diacritics in Harrington’s writing:

- Arch
- Acute
- Lowering T
- Tilde-acute
- Low arch
- Low circumflex
- Grave

Beginning of ‘Bluejay Myth’ in ‘Transcriptions of Karok Texts Recorded with Franz Boas’ Northern and Central California: Karok/Shasta/Konomihu, John Peabody Harrington papers
Data

Harrington materials:

- 1929 recording of Phoebe Maddux on aluminum disc
  (PHM-24-343, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology)
- Harrington’s transcription with translation
  (John Peabody Harrington papers, National Anthropological Archives,
  Smithsonian Institution)

For comparison:

- 1949 recording of Nettie Reuben
  (LA 78.1, Berkeley Language Center)
- William Bright’s transcription
  (Archives, American Philosophical Society)
- Translation by Karuk elder Vina Smith (2013)
Correspondences Between the Writing Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JPH</th>
<th>Corresponding Accent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>́ä’  âa  Circumflex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>á’  áa  Acute (in polysyllabic word)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>á̂’  áa  Acute (underlying unaccented monosyllable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>ˆa’  aa  Unaccented (prepausal, final stress)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>a’́  aa  Unaccented (underlying acute monosyllable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPH</td>
<td>Corresponding Unaccented Syllable</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><code>a</code>(^{\wedge}) aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><code>a</code>(^{\prime}) a(^{a}) aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>(\bar{\jmath}) a(^{\prime}) aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>(\grave{a}) a(^{\prime}) aa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Circumflex Accent

Harrington diacritic 1:
High/middle falling tone plus high pitch mark: 
\textit{kachakà'chich}
‘bluejay-DIM’

Circumflex accent:
“strong stress plus falling pitch, without glottalization (Bright 1957)”
\textit{kachakâach}
‘bluejay’
Acute Accent on Long Vowels

Harrington diacritic 2:
High pitch mark: 'uthá·n’niv
‘she was lying there’

Acute accent:
“strong stress and high level pitch, without glottalization (Bright 1957)”
kíik’uummih
‘go ahead (and doctor)’
Acute Accent on Short Vowels

Harrington diacritic 2:
High pitch mark:
\(\text{kunpíkk}{\text{'}}\text{a’}\text{r}\)
‘they went to get her’

Acute accent:
“strong stress and high level pitch, without glottalization (Bright 1957)”
\(\text{kiikpíkkaan}\)
‘go get her’
Acute Accent in Monosyllabic Words

Harrington diacritic 3:
High pitch mark plus “inlaut form” of low falling tone mark if long: 
\( k´a^n \) ‘there’

Acute accent:
Underlyingly unaccented monosyllabic words receive acute accent except prepausally (Bright 1957):
\( káan \) ‘there’
‘Unaccented’ Words Before Pause

**Harrington diacritic 4:** Low falling tone: ‘’u’ ŋm
‘she got there’

**Unaccented words:** Receive strong stress with low pitch on final syllable prepausally: *kun’uum*
‘they got there’
Unaccented Monosyllabic Words

Harrington diacritic 5:
“Inlaut form” of low falling atonic: 
'ūm ‘3SG’ ∈

Unaccented:
Underlyingly acute-accented monosyllabic words lose their accent except in isolation (Bright 1957):
'uum ‘3SG’ ∈
Example of Diacritic on Unaccented Syllable

Harrington diacritic 8:
Mid pitch mark:
\[*\text{unaccented syllable}^{\text{'}}\]
\[kun\acute{\text{a}}\text{rá rahitihi}n\text{i}k\] ‘they were living (there)’

Unaccented:
A non-final long vowel directly following an acute-accented syllable receives mid pitch (Bright 1957)
## Correspondences Between the Writing Systems

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<tr>
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<td>ţ́    ţã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>á´    áã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>á´    áã</td>
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<tr>
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<td>â´    aa</td>
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<td>a´    aa</td>
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Correspondences Between the Writing Systems

<table>
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<th>Corresponding Unaccented Syllable</th>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>a’  aa                                               Unaccented (non-prepausal final unstressed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>a’ a       aa                      Unaccented (prepausal final unstressed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>ò        aa                       Unaccented (mid pitch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>à’        aa                       Unaccented (low pitch)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discrepancies and Points of Interest

- Discourse Markers
- Other Anomalies
- Abstract Representation
Discourse Markers

Phoebe Maddux transcribed by Harrington: *karixas* ‘then, so’

Nettie Reuben transcribed by Bright: *kári xás* ‘then, so’

Some words we would write with acute accent
Harrington writes unaccented

- All discourse markers or function words
- Can have low or high pitch, but low intensity
Unusual Pronunciation of *imshíinaavish* ‘may you shine this way upriver’

- Expected accent: acute on long *ii*
  
  *imshíinaavish* ‘may you shine this way upriver’

- Harrington writes: high falling tone (=circumflex)
  
  ‘*imshíⁿnaʹvish*’ ‘may you shine this way upriver’

- Falling high on second syllable
Unusual Accent in $uknî́́$ ‘once upon a time’

Harrington transcribes low falling tone: $'uknî́$ ‘once upon a time’

Bright transcribes falling-rising accent: $'uknî́́$ ‘once upon a time’
Two Pronunciations of *kaan* ‘there’

- **Expected:**  
  *káan* ‘there’
  - Harrington writes:  
  *ká*’*n* ‘there’
  - Level high pitch

- **Expected:**  
  *káan* ‘there’
  - Harrington writes: low falling tone  
  *kâ*’*n* ‘there’
  - Rising pitch
Two Pronunciations (?) of pay ‘this, that’

- Expected: *páy* ‘this, that’
- Harrington writes: *páy* ‘this, that’
- High in context

- Expected: *páy* ‘this, that’
- Harrington writes: low pitch
- *pày* ‘this, that’
- High in context
Discrepancies Between the Writing Systems

- Harrington writes unaccented where we would expect acute
  - All discourse markers or function words
  - Can have low or high pitch, but low intensity
- Words with unusual pronunciations or accent
  - Anomalous pronunciation - Harrington writes accurately
  - Unusual accent - Harrington writes in a surprising way
  - Normal pronunciation - Harrington writes in a surprising way
Level of Representation

- Harrington generally concerned with surface phonetics
- Instance where he appears to be making reference to an abstract level of representation
  - Notation for underlyingly unaccented acute monosyllables - distinct from other acute accent, though phonetically same
  - Example: \textit{kān} ‘there’ vs. \textit{'uthá'n'niv} ‘she was lying there’
Discussion

John P. Harrington’s suprasegmental notation

• Like segmental notation: precise, over-differentiated
• Phonetically accurate
• Corresponds to phonemic categories we recognize
• Describes same phonological system in Karuk
Bibliography


