

Does Chácobo have word-level stress?

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In a number of analyses Chácobo's prosodic system has been analyzed as one which combines tone and stress (Iggesen 2006, 2007; Tallman 2014, 2016). In the latest analysis, word stress falls on the first syllable by default and on the second syllable if this syllable contains an underlying high tone. This analysis has the advantage of accounting for two facts simultaneously: (i) that high tone appears on the first syllable by default as in *βi-ro* 'eye' in (1a); (ii) that otherwise the first syllable is a mid pitch level, rather than low tone as in all other syllables which do not have an underlying high tone as in (1b) and (1c); (iii) except when an underlying high tone is present on the second syllable as in (1c).

(1)		STRESS	HIGH/LOW TONE	SURFACE PITCH/TONE
a.	<i>βi-ro</i>	' <i>βi-ro</i>	' <i>βírò</i>	[<i>βírò</i>]
b.	<i>panabí</i>	' <i>panabí</i>	' <i>pànàbí</i>	[<i>pànàbí</i>]
c.	<i>poróma</i>	po' <i>róma</i>	pò' <i>rómà</i>	[<i>pòrómà</i>]

The analysis is uncertain because different authors contradict one another in terms of the presence vs. absence of mid level pitch in certain prosodic patterns (compare Iggesen 2006 with Tallman 2016). Furthermore, it is unclear whether the apparent cases of word-level stress which is dissociated from tone as in (1b) should actually be regarded as instances of sentence level prominence. The problem is that current descriptions are based primarily on words in isolation and have not undertaken detailed phonetic investigations to answer these questions.

This paper attempts to address these questions through the phonetic analysis of production data from seven Chácobo speakers (four men and three women). Speakers were asked to produce Chácobo sentences with trisyllabic noun roots of a MLH pitch shape (as in (1b)) in non-sentence initial position. The word list was constructed such that the first two vowels are the same. According to the word-level stress theory sketched above, we should find a systematic difference between the first and second syllables in some phonetic correlates associated with stress. We measure duration and pitch of the first two vowels of MLH noun roots in 26 sentences in order to determine whether Chácobo does in fact have word-level stress or whether the apparent mid pitches are in fact due to sentence level prominence.

References

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