Intonation and prosodic phrasing of particle '-*hii*' in Hindi/Urdu dialogues

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Abstract

The particle *-hii* in Hindi/Urdu has been claimed to mark exclusivity, contrastiveness, scalarity, and focus. This paper offers a first analysis of the intonation and the prosodic phrasing of *-hii*. We bring evidence from a corpus of movie dialogues to show that the intonation of *-hii* differs from that of narrow focus. Finally, we offer a prosodic phrasing based account of the restriction against multiple instances of *-hii* in a single clause. This analysis offers a pertinent case for investigating the prosody-pragmatics interface and illustrates that prosody can help disentangle the pragmatic import and the distribution of this particle used in an under-studied language.

1 Introduction

The discourse particle *-hii* in Hindi/Urdu has variously been described as an exclusive focus particle (Sharma, 1999), negative polarity item (Bhatt, 1994), and a scalar particle (Bajaj, 2016). All these analyses are based on the pragmatics and the syntactic properties of *-hii* to explain the distribution and the pragmatic import of this particle. There is no existing analysis of the intonation and the prosodic phrasing of *-hii* and how they differs from the intonation and prosodic phrasing of narrow focus in Hindi/Urdu. We aim to fill this gap and bring evidence from a corpus of Hindi/Urdu movie dialogues read aloud by non-professional speakers. This paper also offers evidence that *-hii* can optionally modify different components of a nominal constituent, leading to differences in prosodic phrasing based on its variable alignment.

1.1 Prosodic phrasing in Hindi/Urdu

Hindi/Urdu is an intonational 'Phrase Language' that marks prominence at the postlexical level. Jabeen and Delais-Roussarie (2020) claimed that the lexical words in Hindi/Urdu are produced with a rising F0 contour (LH) that denotes the edges of an Accentual Phrase (AP). (1) illustrates the F0 contour and the prosodic phrasing of a sentence produced in wide focus. It shows that each word is produced with a rising contour and hence parsed as an AP[1]. APs formulate Intonational Phrases (IP) whose right edge is denoted by '%' shown in (1).

(1) $\text{Noun1}_{\text{L H}} \text{Noun2}_{\text{L !H}} \text{Verb}_{\text{L(H)}}$
        [AP   AP   AP $]_{\text{IP%}}$

In wide focus, the consecutive APs are produced with downstepped (denoted by '!') peaks. Jabeen (2022) showed that the F0 contour of narrowly focused words is similar to their counterparts in wide focus as they are realised with rising F0 contour in both the contexts. She argued that narrow focus is indicated by upstepping (denoted by '∧') the F0 peak on the left edge of the focused noun as illustrated in (2). While there is no difference in the prosodic phrasing of Noun2 in wide focus (1) and narrow focus (2), the upstepped F0 peak on Noun1 preceding narrow focus leads to the insertion of a recursive 'IP boundary on its right edge.

(2) $\text{Noun1}_{\text{L ∧H}} \textbf{Noun2}_{\text{L !H}} \text{Verb}_{\text{L}}$
        $[[\text{AP }]_{\text{IP%}}$ AP $]_{\text{IP%}}$

1.2 Data description

Our data is drawn from a corpus of twenty dialogues extracted from twelve Hindi/Urdu movie scripts. The dialogues were read aloud by twenty-five speakers. These were naive speakers of Hindi/Urdu without any oratory training.

2 Analysis

2.1 Intonation and prosodic phrasing of *-hii*

The example in (3), illustrated in Figure 1, depicts the F0 of a sentence with and without *-hii*. (3-a) shows that 'ʈɑɪm', the host of *-hii*, is produced with

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[1]The intonation of sentence final words is subject to positional constraints resulting in prosodic incorporation. For details, see chapter 3 in Jabeen (2019).

a rising F0 contour carrying an upstepped F0 peak. The same word, devoid of *-hii* in (3-b), is produced with a low tone and is prosodically incorporated with the following complex predicate verb.

(3) a. ʈi.kɪʈ$_{(L)H}$ bə.nɑ.ne=kɑ$_{L\,H}$ ʈɑɪm-hi:$_{L\,\wedge H}$
         ticket   make=Gen   time-HII
         nə.hi t̪ʰ-ɑ
         not be.Past-M.Sg

    b. ʈi.kɪʈ$_{(L)H}$ bə.nɑ.ne=kɑ$_{L\,!H}$ ʈɑɪm$_L$ nə.hi
        ticket   make=Gen   time not
        t̪ʰ-ɑ
        be.Past-M.Sg
        'There was no time to buy a ticket.'

(4) illustrates that the alignment of *-hii* with an upstepped F0 peak in (3-a) leads to the insertion of a recursive IP boundary on the right edge of the particle following by the dephrasing of the remaining words. Hence, the prosodic phrasing of the host of *-hii* differs from that of a narrowly focused word as reported by Jabeen (2022) and illustrated in (2). Given this, we argue that the host of *-hii* is prosodically prominent but not narrowly focused.

(4) [[ʈi.kɪʈ$_{AP}$ bə.nɑ.ne=kɑ$_{AP}$ ʈɑɪm-hi:$_{AP}$]$_{IP\%}$
     nə.hi t̪ʰ-ɑ]$_{IP\%}$

2.2 Variability in attachment of *-hii*

Existing analyses report that *-hii* attaches only to the immediately preceding word as it cannot take wide scope (Sharma, 1999; Bajaj, 2016). We argue that this claim fails to consider the potential ambiguity in the attachment of *-hii* in a nominal constituent. (5) shows the variability in the attachment of *-hii* as it can modify either the immediately preceding noun (5-a) or the possessive to the farther left of *-hii* (5-b). Their F0 contour is shown in Figure 2 in the Appendix.

(5) a. mɛ̃$_{L\,H}$ ʈʊm.hɑ.re$_{L\,H}$ **æŋ.l**=se-*hi:*$_{L\,\wedge H}$
         I   your   angle=Ins-HII
         sotʃ rə.h-ɑ hũ
         think live-M be.1st.Sg

    b. mɛ̃$_{L\,H}$ **ʈʊm.hɑ.re**$_{L\,\wedge H}$ æŋ.l=se-*hi:*
        I   your   angle=Ins-HII
        sotʃ rə.h-ɑ hũ
        think live-M be.1st.Sg
        'I am considering your angle.'

The F0 annotation of (5) shows that when *-hii* is attached to the immediately preceding noun, it carries an upstepped rising contour spanning the host and the particle (5-a). However, when *-hii* modifies the possessive in the nominal constituent, it's the possessive that carries the rising contour and the following noun and the particle carry a high

plateau (5-b). The differential attachment of *-hii* does not affect the prosodic phrasing of the possessive, but it determines if the noun immediately preceding *-hii* carries a rising contour or not. (6) depicts that the difference in the realization of the upstepped F0 peak results in the differential alignment of the recursive IP boundary with the noun (6-a) or with the possessive (6-b).

(6) a. [[mɛ̃$_{AP}$ ʈʊm.hɑ.re$_{AP}$ **æŋ.l**=se-
         hi:$_{AP}$]$_{IP\%}$ sotʃ rə.h-ɑ hũ]$_{IP\%}$

    b. [[mɛ̃$_{AP}$ **ʈʊm.hɑ.re**$_{AP}$]$_{IP\%}$ æŋ.l=se-hi:
        sotʃ rə.h-ɑ hũ]$_{IP\%}$

2.3 Constraint against multiple instances of *-hii*

Bhatt (1994) reported that the use of two instances of *-hii* in the same syntactic clause, as shown in (7), is ungrammatical.

(7) *__rɑm__=ne-hi: **si.ʈ**ɑ=ko-hi: seb
      ram=Erg-HII sita=Dat-HII apple.nom.M
      d̪i.jɑ
      give.perf.M.Sg
      'Only **Ram** gave only **Sita** an apple.'

We argue that the relevant restriction against multiple instances of *-hii* is in fact prosodic. The example presented in (3)a shows that the words following *-hii* are prosodically dephrased. As the host of *-hii* obligatorily carries prosodic prominence, this disallows two consecutive instances of the particle within a clause. However, the insertion of a pause, and hence an IP boundary, between consecutive uses of *-hii* makes (7) acceptable. The resulting prosodic phrasing is shown in (8). The insertion of a pause leads to an iterative Intonational Phrase boundary after 'Ram' instead of a recursive IP boundary following *-hii* attached to 'Sita'.

(8) [**rɑm**=ne-*hi:*]$_{IP\%}$ *pause* [[**si.ʈ**ɑ=ko-*hi:*]$_{IP\%}$
     seb d̪i.jɑ]$_{IP\%}$

3 Conclusion and future work

This paper used data from a corpus of movie dialogue to analyse the intonation and prosodic phrasing of the particle *-hii* and its hosts. This enabled us to go beyond the self-constructed examples to investigate variability in the attachment of this particle. In future, we plan to set up a perception experiment to investigate if Hindi/Urdu speakers can reliably perceive the difference in the attachment of *-hii* in a nominal constituent.

Acknowledgment

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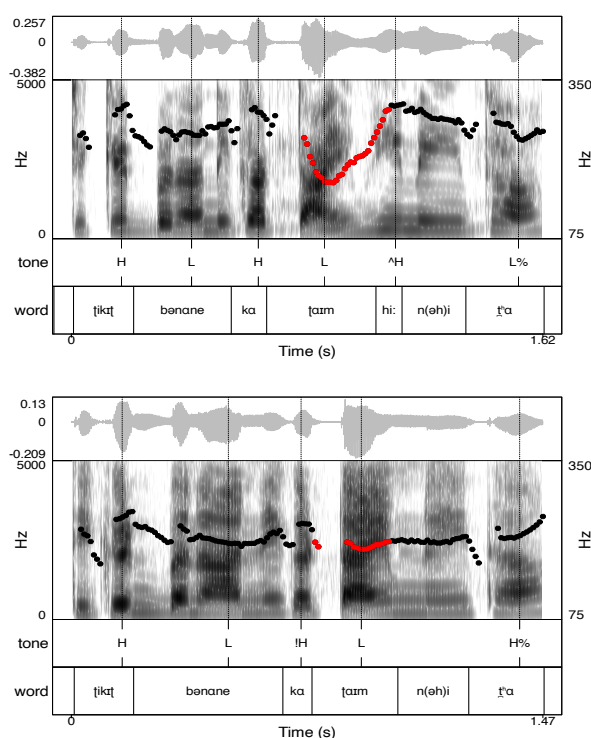
Figure 1: F0 contour of the sentences presented in (3)a (top) and (3)b (bottom panel).
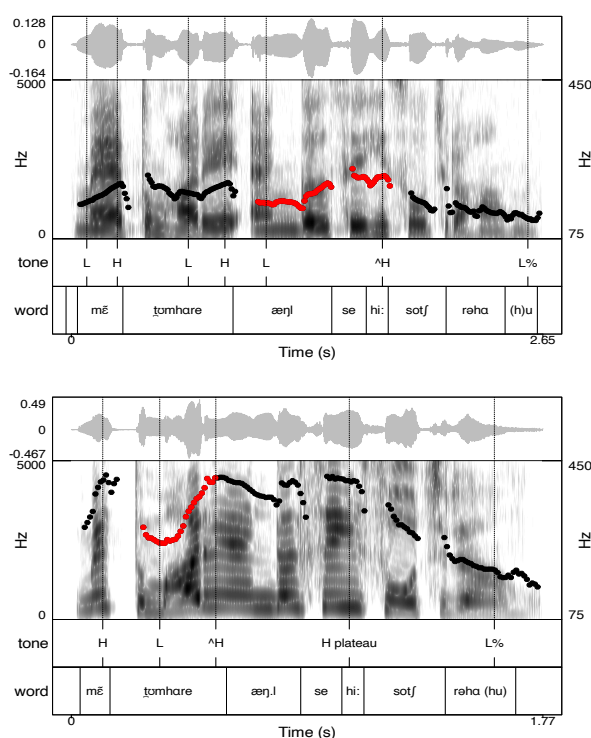

Figure 2: F0 contour of the sentences given in (5)a (top) and (5)b (bottom panel). The F0 of the host of -*hii* is shown in blue.