

Focus prosody in Boro and Dimasa

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Tone languages use different strategies to mark focus than non-tonal languages. In this paper I will discuss the prosodic aspects of focus strategies used in Boro and Dimasa, two Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Northeast India. We have found that presentational narrow focus marking of new- information focus in Boro and Dimasa is mostly expressed by using morphological focus markers suffixed to the focused arguments. This does not result in any kind of f_0 and duration difference in the focused argument, rather the entire utterance undergo pitch range expansion. On the other hand, contrastive and corrective focus exhibit lowering of the pitch register without the use of morphological focus markers. These results bear important implication for the theory of focus prosody. The use of both register lowering and raising for prosodic purposes generates great interest for the typology of intonation since it employs neither phonological rephrasing (Ladd 1996; Hayes and Lahiri 1991; Downing 2006, 2007, 2008) nor sentence stress (Szendrői 2003; Truckenbrodt 2005, Samek-Lodovici 2005) for its focus prosody. Although Boro and Dimasa do not adhere to the focus-prominence correlation, these languages may provide an opportunity for enlarging such a theory by making it domain centric rather than constituent centric.