

Abstract: Resolving Prosodic Puzzles in Urdu

This talk will focus on the three main puzzles found in the existing literature of Urdu/Hindi prosody including (i) the role of lexical stress, (ii) the prosody of case markers and (iii) the status of alternative question as a disjunction of two polar questions. The literature on lexical stress is divided, with some authors developing algorithms for stress assignment (Kelkar 1968, Pandey 1989, Hussain 2005), while others deny its relevance for prosody (Féry 2010, Ohala 1986). We performed three experiments to investigate this issue and found that lexical stress is used systematically in Urdu. We also investigated the prosody of case clitics in Urdu, for which various different claims exist in the literature (Jabeen 2019, Urooj et al 2019, Kügler 2020). We conducted a production experiment and found that case clitics are incorporated into the prosodic phrase of the noun and become part of the overall LH contour found on accentual phrases in Urdu/Hindi. We also find some differences across case type and position which we tie to information structural effects.

Finally, we explored Bhatt and Dayal (2020) hypothesis that alternative questions (AltQs) in Urdu/Hindi are disjunctions of two polar questions (PolQs) from the perspective of prosody. We conducted two production experiments that establish evidence that AltQs in Urdu/Hindi are not disjunctions of two PolQs. Our results also illustrate that in addition to three signature properties of AltQs identified in previous literature, namely (i) a pitch accent on each disjunct (ii) a prosodic break between the disjuncts and (iii) a final fall (Bartels 1997, Pruitt & Roelofsen 2013), AltQs in Urdu use an additional cue of a hat pattern thus adding an additional cue to the crosslinguistic discussion.