

Focus and phrasing

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In Mandarin Chinese, both focus and phrasing are realized prosodically via F0 and duration. It has been found that focus not only raises F0 in the on-focus words, but also lowers F0 in the post-focus words while pre-focus F0 is mostly intact (tri-zone focus realization). For phrasing, it shows that a larger pitch reset correlates with a stronger boundary. The question then is whether post-focus compression (PFC) will apply after a strong prosodic boundary. Furthermore, will the newness of post-focus part give rise to another pitch accent after a strong boundary? With a carefully controlled experiment, we found that focus and phrasing are largely independently encoded in intonation. Prosodic boundary and newness do not change the tri-zone realization of focus. On the other hand, pre-boundary lengthening together with optional silent pause are sensitive for signaling different prosodic boundaries, which are robust regardless of focus locations. Functional perspectives on intonation will be discussed.