

Segmental anchoring of pitch movements:
Autosegmental association or gestural coordination?
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Abstract

Arvaniti, Ladd and Mennen (1998) reported a phenomenon of ‘segmental anchoring’: the beginning and end of a linguistically significant pitch movement are anchored to specific locations in segmental structure, which means that the slope and duration of the pitch movement vary according to the segmental material with which it is associated. This finding has since been replicated and extended in several languages. One possible analysis is that autosegmental tones corresponding to the beginning and end of the pitch movement show secondary association with points in structure; however, problems with this analysis have led some authors to cast doubt on the ‘hypothesis’ of segmental anchoring. I argue here that segmental anchoring is not a hypothesis expressed in terms of autosegmental phonology, but rather an empirical phonetic finding. The difficulty of describing segmental anchoring as secondary association does not disprove the ‘hypothesis’, but shows the error of using a symbolic phonological device (secondary association) to represent gradient differences of phonetic detail that should be expressed quantitatively. I propose that treating pitch movements as gestures (in the sense of Articulatory Phonology) goes some way to resolving some of the theoretical questions raised by segmental anchoring, but suggest that pitch gestures have a variety of ‘domains’ which are in need of empirical study before we can successfully integrate segmental anchoring into our understanding of speech production.

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