

A note on consonant strengthening at both edges in Toda

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Nasukawa et al. (2019) observe that Kaqchikel strengthens consonants at prosodic right edges (approximants are spirantized and stops are aspirated), which contrasts with the more widely attested phenomenon of *left* edge strengthening (e.g. fricative → stop in Hausa; voiced → voiceless in Pennsylvania German). They also observe that right edges are prosodically prominent (i.e. attract stress) in Kaqchikel. They hypothesize that this is not an accident, and that there are two types of language: languages with left-edge prominence, which can strengthen consonants at the left edge, and languages with right-edge prominence, which can strengthen consonants at the right edge.

Toda (Dravidian) seems to be a counterexample, judging by Emeneau's (1984) description. Toda displays right edge strengthening like Kaqchikel: "Voiceless stops and affricates are strongly aspirated when word-final before pause" (Emeneau 1984:17). But it also displays left edge strengthening like Hausa and Pennsylvania German: "The stops that occur in initial position when the word is initial in sentence or immediately following a pause are the voiceless stops p t k. In most other contexts they may appear as the fricatives f θ x respectively or as the voiced stops b d g respectively" (Emeneau 1984:34; see also p.19).¹

One might consider a weaker version of Nasukawa et al.'s hypothesis: maybe consonant strengthening can only target left edges and prominent edges – as has been claimed to be the case for reduplication and truncation (Nelson 2003) as well as infixation (Mooney 2023). This hypothesis would preserve the idea that Kaqchikel's right-edge prosodic prominence is what licenses its right-edge consonant strengthening, while still leaving room for the existence of languages with strengthening at both edges. The prediction, though, would be that strengthening at both edges is only possible in languages with right-edge prosodic prominence. This is not borne out: in Toda, "Isolated words have stress on the first syllable... Within phrases the strongest stress is usually on the first word, and successive words have a weaker stress" (Emeneau 1984:18).

References

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- Nasukawa, Kuniya, Phillip Backley, Yoshiho Yasugi, and Masatoshi Koizumi. 2019. Challenging cross-linguistic typology: Right-edge consonantal prominence in Kaqchikel. *Journal of Linguistics* 55.3:611-641.
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¹ <t> and <d> denote dental stops. (See Emeneau 1984:11-12 – but note that Table 2's columns are labeled backwards.)