

# The Prosody of Ojibwe Discourse Markers

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### Research Questions

- What are the prosodic properties of Ojibwe Discourse Markers?
- How do these properties function in a narrative context?

### The Ojibwe Language

- Ojibwe is a Central Algonquian Language spoken throughout the Great Lakes Region by Anishinaabe people.
- The language is also known as Anishinaabemowin, Ojibwa, Chippewa and many other names.
- The data used for this project is from a book titled *Dibaaajimowinan; Anishinaabe Stories of Culture and respect published by the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission*.
- The specific text and audio used is of a story by Ogimaawigwaebiik (Nancy Jones) called *Gakina Dibaaajimowin Gwayakwaawan* (All Teachings are Correct). This analysis is based on the first four paragraphs of this story.

### Discourse Markers

- Discourse Markers are optional, sequentially dependent sentence-initial items (Schiffirin, 1987) that are used to bracket units of talk (e.g. *oh, well, because, y'know, now*).
- They operate above the sentence level.
- Discourse Markers in Ojibwe occur as the first or second element of an utterance. These positions are known as position 1 and position 2 (Fairbanks, 2016).

### Method

- Audio was cleaned using *Audacity*.
- *Praat* was used to identify utterance boundaries.
- Audio recording was transcribed according to IPA conventions.
- The Max Pitch and pitch prominences were identified for each utterance:  
Max Pitch = \*\*  
Pitch Prominence = \*

### Data



minik ge\*\*go gaa-izhi-dibaaajimot awe

na\*\*sh-ke o\*maa ge-niin \*gaa-izhi-\*gikinoo'amaagowaan

#### Page 11, Paragraph 3, Sentence 3a

minik ge\*\*go gaa-izhi-dibaaajimot awe |  
minik gego. gaa-izhi-[dib|aaajim]o|t a|we  
adv\_qnt neg pv\_prf\_ic|thus|vmeasure|mouth\_tal|ai|3sg\_cj na\_sg|dem  
much not. thus measured with mouth, s/he this one  
'There are not many things that this one doesn't thus speak about,...'

#### Page 11, Paragraph 3, Sentence 3b

na\*\*sh-ke o\*maa ge-niin gaa-izhi-\*gikinoo'amaagowaan  
nashke o|ma ge|n|jin gaa-izhi-[gikinoo']|amaa|go|waan  
pc\_disc\_ inter here foc\_add|prn\_1 pv\_perf\_ic|pv\_rel|stem\_tal|3'>3pl\_cj  
look here and me thus taught for, he/her\_OBV acting on them  
'...such as I was also taught here'

### Analysis

3a:

- This utterance does not have a DM, but the max pitch occurs on the negation *gego*.
- Overall, the pitch throughout this utterance does not change much.
- This indicates that the speaker is not calling attention to any particular part more than another.

3b:

- The DM *nashke* has the max pitch for this utterance.
- This DM is an attention grabber similar to English 'look!'
- This element holding max pitch suggest that the speaker is drawing the hearer's attention to watch comes after *nashke*.
- The 'I was also taught here' is what the speaker is calling attention to. It occurs across the utterance boundaries in 3a and 3b.
- The pitch on *nashke* is much higher than *gego*, further indicating that the important content is located in 3b.

### Results

- DMs have distinctive prosodic features, specifically they attract the most prominent pitch in the sentence.
  - DMs in Ojibwe differ from many others in more researched languages because not only are they restricted in their position (can only occur on the far left of a structure), but always have prominence.
- DMs structure the relationship between the narrative, the speaker and the hearer.
  - DMs are used by the speaker to attract the hearer's attention; in this sense they are interactional (Franks-Job, 2006).
  - DMs are used by the speaker to structure the narration; as such they interact with topic changes and emphasis (Lenk, 1998).

### References

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