The word prosody of Zwara Tamazight (Berber)
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While the word prosody of Tashlhiyt Berber may still be controversial, recent work would appear to converge on the view that its syllable structure is (C)V(C) and that there is no word stress. At the phrasal level, a pitch peak is observed, which is higher in questions than in statements, located opportunistically in a sonorant section towards the end of the intonational phrase (Grice et al. 2011; Ridouane 2014; Röttger et al. 2014).

Zwara Tamazight differs from Tashlhiyt in its segmental and word prosodic phonology. Strikingly, its syllable structure is (C)V(C)(C) and it has word stress. Penultimate stress occurs in 84% of its words, other positions being final (11%) and penultimate (4%). (Near-)minimal pairs are found due to the fact that final stress marks a preterite, for instance /ˈnq.qəɾ/ ‘I am killing’ - /nq.ˈqəl/ ‘we agreed’.

Like Tashlhiyt, Zwara Tamazight has an atypical distribution of segments over syllabic positions. In addition to its four vowels /i a u/, all consonants except /w j/ can appear in the nucleus of the syllable, including the syllable with word stress. Also, all consonants may occur as geminates in all positions in the word, while there is no vowel quantity contrast. As expected, many words are typologically unremarkable, like /ˈa.mɑn/ ‘water’, /i.ˈdˤu.dˤan/ ‘fingers’, or marginally atypical, like /ˈə.tˤitˤ ‘eye’, which has a geminate in word-final position. However, when the stress occurs in a syllable with a voiceless obstruent, as in /a.ˈdf.fu/ ‘apple’, /a.ˈbˤk.kuʃ ‘dumb’, a conflict arises between the requirement to place the stress-related pitch configuration in the stressed syllable and the phonetic realization of that pitch configuration. In those words, speakers may ‘clip’ the pitch peak as used in declarative intonation, leaving a rising flank before it and a falling flank after. Some speakers add a brief vocoid between onset and rime, and use it for a rapid pitch rise. Another way in which such words reveal the normally obliterated pitch peak is by adding the stress-attracting interrogative clitic /ə/, in which case stress moves to the last syllable, as in /a.əˈχu.ʃa/ ‘An insect?’ (cf. /a.ˈbˤχuʃ/).

Apart from durational effects, the location of stress is mainly signaled by pitch. There are at least three pitch accents, provisionally HL (declarative), HLH (interrogative) and LH (pre-final). These pitch accents have been elicited from seven speakers on 40 targets words on the basis of three conversational gambits represented symbolically with the help of powerpoint slides. Selective results showing pitch peak clipping and rime lengthening as a function of tonal crowding will be presented to illustrate the point that word stress rather than phonetic opportunism constrains the location of pitch accents.
