



# Discussion on Accent in Phonetics vs. Musicology

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# Background

- \* Accent is a word being confused with stress in phonetics and musicology in China.
- \* In phonetics, stress has two different using cases in literatures and dictionaries.
- \* On the one hand, stress, roughly speaking, it is sound intensity (Wu, 1992). This makes the stress equal to sound intensity.
- \* On the other hand, stress is prominent syllable, such as high pitch (Zhao, 2006), the length of the sound and non-reduction of the sound quality (Wang, 2004).
- \* The above prominent phenomenon of a pronunciation syllable among adjacent syllables is accent (Chen, 1986). That is to say, the stress is embodied: “sound intensity” and “accent”.



- \* However, most Chinese dictionaries define accent as stress, equal to sound intensity.
  
- \* So we discriminated accent in different using cases:
  - \* (1) to summarize the meaning of accent in dictionaries;
  - \* (2) to analyze the using cases in phonetic literatures;
  - \* (3) to analyze it in musical literatures.
  
- \* Cluster and statistics analysis are main methods.



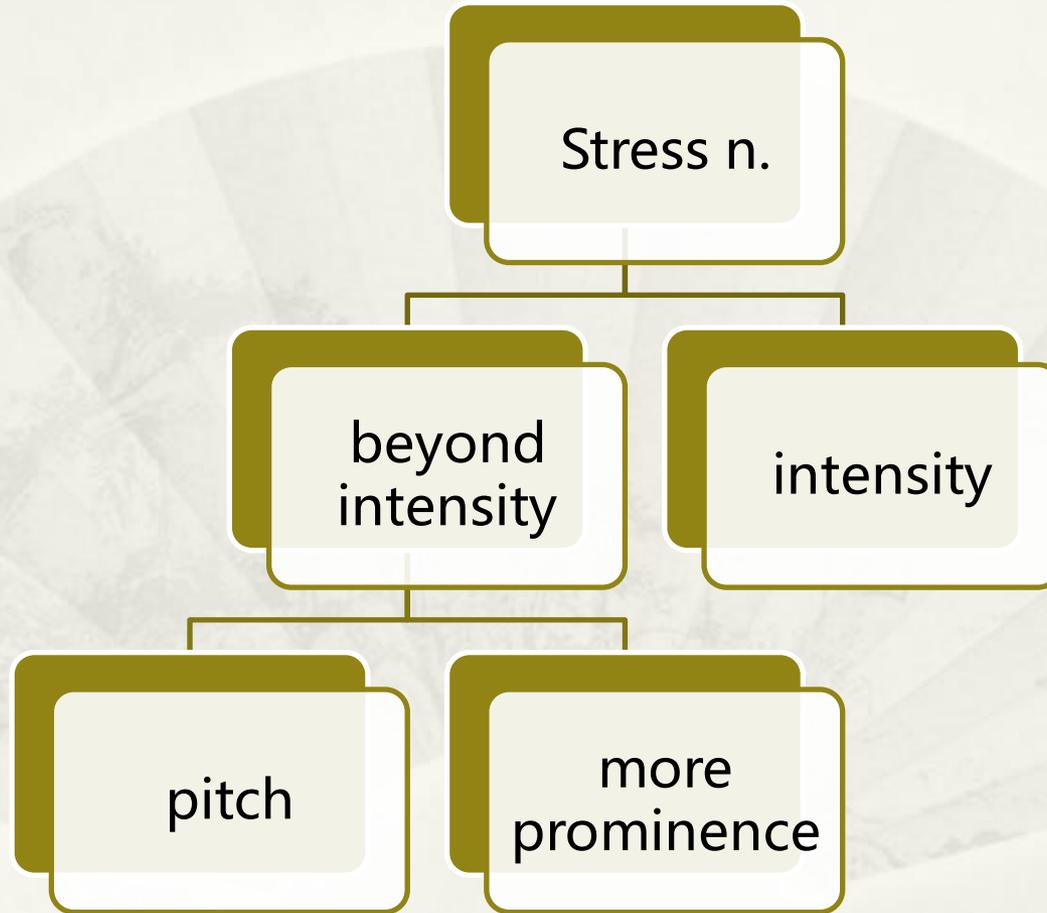
## (1) Accent in Dictionaries

Accent n.

dialect

Prominence(stress)

mark





According to the desirable seven English dictionaries, the statistics of practical situations for each sense is as follows:

Various Senses of Accent	Utilizing Frequency
a mark	7/7
the way someone pronounces the words of a language, showing which country or which part of a country they come from	7/7
the accent is on sth if the accent is on a particular quality, feeling etc, special importance is given to it	6/7
<i>Mus.</i> Emphasis on a particular note or chord	2/7
prominence ( specific usage see next page )	4/7
the part of a word that you should emphasize when you say it.=stress	1/7



- \* prominence Includes:
- \* ① prominence given to a syllable by stress or pitch.
- \* ② an articulative effort giving prominence to one syllable over adjacent syllable.
- \* ③ a distinct emphasis given to a syllable or word in speech by stress or pitch.
- \* ④ the emphasis that you should give to part of a word when saying it.



## In OED, accent (n.) is defined as:

- I. A mark or sign.
- II. An aspect of vocal or musical sound.
- III. In contexts not relating to sound.

### In II:

1. a. The way in which anything is said or sung; a style of pronunciation, a manner of utterance, a tone or quality of voice; a character of sound; a musical or quasi-musical intonation of the voice; a modulation or modification of the voice expressing feeling.
  - b. *literary*. A significant tone or sound, esp. in speech; a spoken word.



2. A prominence given to one syllable in a word, or in a phrase, over the adjacent syllables, independently of the means by which this prominence is produced (as pitch, timbre, stress, or, less commonly, duration). Now often synonymous with *stress*.



3. *Prosody*. Stress laid at more or less fixed intervals on certain syllables of a line or verse, the succession of which constitutes its rhythm or metre. There is some disagreement among prosodists about whether *accent* and *stress* are synonymous.



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4. a. A way of pronouncing a language that is distinctive to a country, area, social class, or individual.
- b. Without possessive or defining word or words: a regional or foreign accent. Not in technical use.



5. *Music*. A prominence given to a note or chord over adjacent ones, by means of stress, duration or pitch. Also: stress recurring at intervals of time which are generally fixed, but may be varied by syncopation and cross-accentuation



- \* According to the desirable eleven English-Chinese Dictionaries, the statistics of practical situations for each sense is as follows:

Various Senses of Accent ( n. )		Utilizing Frequency
importance given to a word or part of a word (vowel or SYLLABLE) by saying it with more force or on a different musical note ( 2 )	重音	10/11
the stronger tone or stress you give to part of a word or a musical note, to make it stand out from the rest ( 2 )		
the part of a word that you should emphasize when you say it. —see also stress ( 2 )		
an emphasis given to a syllable, word, or note in speech or music ( 2 )		
the stress on a syllable (1)		
emphasis given to a syllable or word by means of stress or pitch ( 1 )		
the way someone pronounces the words of a language, showing which country or which part of a country they come from	口音,腔调	11/11
a mark	重音符号	11/11
a special emphasis ( 6 )	着眼点在...上; 强调	7/11
stress; importance ( 1 )		



- \* What is the explanation of “重音” that in Chinese dictionaries ? The research made a statistics of practical situations for each sense from desirable seven Chinese dictionaries:

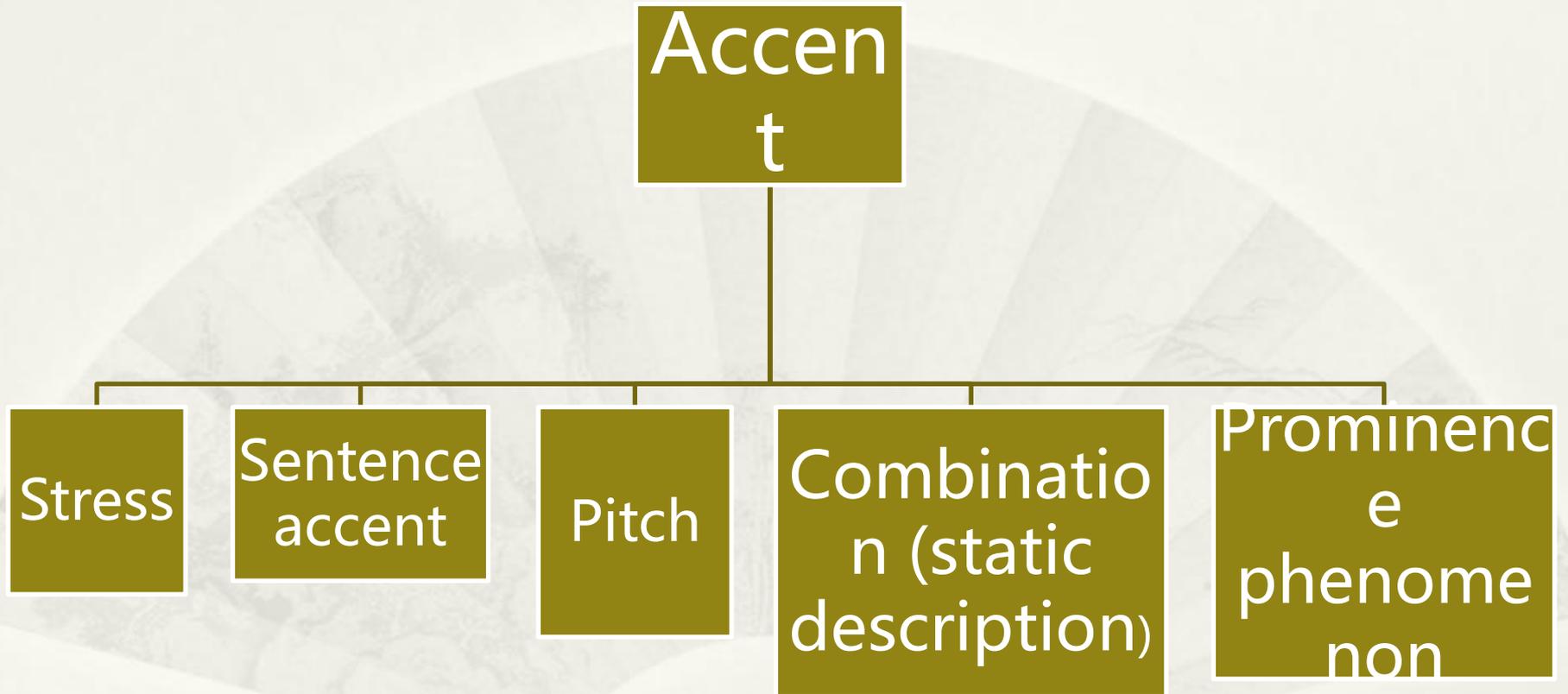
Various Senses of Accent	Utilizing Frequency
指一个词、词组或句子里重读的音。参见“重读”（把一个词或一个词组里的某个音节或语句里的某几个音节读得重些、强些。）	7/7
乐曲中强度较大的音，是构成节奏的主要因素	7/7
发音上的用力（如加强重音或改变音高），使一个词或一组词的一个音节比邻近音节显得突出	1/7



- \* **From what has been discussed above, generalized accent should contain mark and prominence (stress); also means dialect.**



## (2) Accent in Phonetic Literatures





Various Senses of Accent	Original text
Stress	Accent、 stress, refers to a syllable in a speech sequence, the pronunciation organic is relatively tensed, the intensity of the sound is huge
Sentence accent	In Chinese, the emphasis on a word in a sentence is called sentence accent
Pitch	Pitch-accent, which refers to the pitch playing the first role in an accent position, specifically refers to a higher scale
Combination (static description)	Accent, it is always a combination of sound duration, loudness and pitch

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Various Senses of Accent	Original text
Prominence phenomenon	<p>The main meaning of accent is the prominent phenomenon of a pronunciation syllable among syllables. The prominent phenomenon of a pronunciation can be expressed by using the method of changing sound pitch, increasing sound intensity, extending sound length and purifying sound quality, and also can be displayed by these methods comprehensively</p>
	<p>Accent generally refers to the prominence of some components in words, phrases and even sentences. Accent related to sound intensity, pitch and duration, and sometimes also link to the vowel quality</p>
	<p>Accent refers to the prominence on the rhythm, this the definition from perception, the corresponding acoustic performance could be varied, for instance, the intensity of sound, the duration of sound, the non-reduction of the sound quality and so on</p>



- \* It is worth mentioning that in Chinese, it is syllable-timed rhythm rather than stress-timed rhythm.



### (3) Accent in Musical Literatures

# Accent

Tendentiousness

The stimulating events that are perceptive

Prominence

On several layers of accents ,  
prominence on structure

The type of  
prominence

The production of  
prominence



Various Senses of Accent	Original text
Tendentiousness	John Graziano speaks of the accentual tendencies of melodic intervals
	By structural accent we mean an accent caused by the melodic/harmonic points of gravity in a phrase—especially by the cadence, the goal of tonal motion
The stimulating events that are perceptive	Accent is a stimulus which is a <i>marked for</i> consciousness in some way
	Accent is an event that stands out and captures a listener's attention

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Various Senses of Accent	Original text		
Prominence	in several layers of accents, prominence on structure	Accent is a point of emphasis; accents are points of initiation	
		Accents may also serve as initiation points for groups	
		Existence of an accent structure used to shape music over time	
	The type of prominence	Accent-types covered a change to a faster tempo, approach by leaps in lines, and a change to more intense timbre	
	The production of Prominence	Many musicians assume accent to mean increase in dynamic level on a given timepoint, <i>as an accent mark</i>	
		The most common factors that contribute to accent : 1.Long Durations 2.New Events( pitch change, harmonic change, textural change) 3.Textural Accents(voice entrance, new registers) 4.Contour Changes 5.Dynamic Changes 6.Articulation 7.Pattern(Motive) Beginning	



From the research of music literature, it is obvious that accent not only refers to static state but also dynamic process.



# Conclusions

- \* In the context of Chinese, accent is mark and prominence (stress);also means dialect.
- \* In the context of aesthetic music, accent includes tendentiousness ,the stimulating events that are perceptive and prominence.



# Further study

This study defined *accent* in Chinese context. It is also the first step to prove that Chinese accents, as a syllable-timed rhythm, tightly relate to eathetical principle of looseness.



# Thank you!

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