

Linguistics 452: Prosody and Intonation

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"Prosody" refers to patterns of rhythm, grouping, and prominence in speech at time scales from the syllable up through the utterance. "Intonation" refers to aspects of speech melody controlled at the phrase or utterance level. Prosody and intonation are closely related, because intonational events tend to dock on prosodically strong syllables and boundaries.

The goal of this seminar is to update the coverage of prosody and intonation in Wikipedia. We will work together to organize the subject area into a small set of projected Wikipedia entries. We will identify key works and researchers. Each student will then become an expert in the area of a planned entry. He or she will study the major references, present the core concepts in class, draft the entry and circulate it for review, and then post the finished work. In addition to advancing our understanding of the subject area, the course will serve as a vehicle for students to practice writing the background & significance sections of fellowship applications, grant applications, honors theses, and dissertations.

Topics will be finalized after determining student interest. Topics that I especially hope to cover include:

Speech processing: How do listeners use prosody and intonation as a source of information about lexical and syntactic structure?

Acquisition: How do infants, who are already sensitive to the prosodic and intonational patterns of their native language at birth, exploit this information in constructing their language systems?

Atypical populations: How do the prosodic and intonational patterns of atypical speakers, such as autistic speakers or second language learners, differ from typical patterns? How can understanding prosody and intonation help with either diagnosis or training?

Speech and language technology: What is the state of the art for dealing with prosody and intonation in dialogue systems and automatic speech recognition systems? What challenges remain and why?

Prerequisites: Graduate standing. Undergraduates with relevant 300-level coursework in Linguistics, CSD, EECS, or Cognitive Science will be admitted by permission of the instructor. This course can be repeated for credit even if you took the same course last year.