

Abstract

The Phonological Annotation of Prosody: Past, Present, and Future

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A prosodic transcription or annotation system is a set of symbols necessary to describe the *meaningful* prosodic events in speech. Whether a certain prosodic event is meaningful or not would depend on the type of task and the level of linguistic representation. For a phonological representation of prosody, meaningful prosodic events that should be transcribed would be distinctive pitch targets or shapes that could change the meaning of an utterance, or define its prosodic structure. In this talk, I will provide the theoretical motivations, strength, and limitations of the prosodic transcription system at the phonological level, particularly the Tones and Break Indices (ToBI) system, which is based on the autosegmental-metrical model of intonational phonology (Pierrehumbert 1980, Beckman & Pierrehumbert 1986, Beckman & Hirschberg 1993, Ladd 1996/2008). The principles of the original ToBI system, based on American English intonation, have been adapted to numerous typologically diverse languages (Jun 2005, to appear; Prieto and Roseano 2010), allowing us to test the system and evaluate its strength and weakness, as well as helping us to study prosodic typology. Time permitting, I will compare ToBI with other transcription systems and propose future directions for prosodic annotation.

Keywords: ToBI, intonational phonology, distinct pitch targets, prosodic typology.