First class: Role of prosody for sentence comprehension

The course begins with a discussion of data illustrating the role of prosody for sentence comprehension. Models of sentence comprehension are traditionally syntax-oriented, but adding prosodic constraints to lexical constraints, contextual constraints, locality and phrase-level constraints (see Gibson & Perlmutter 1998 for anice overview of these constraints) is very useful.

1. Attachment
   - Anna met the teacher who shouted at her yesterday
   - Peter looked at the hunter with the binoculars
   - The soccer fan who the player insulted was drunk/The soccer fan who insulted the player was drunk.
   - Flying kites is great/flying kites are great

2. Scope ambiguities
   - Scope inversion in German
   - Beide sind nicht gekommen.
   - ‘It is not the case that both came (but maybe just one of them came)’
   - ‘Both of them did not come’
   - It is not because Mary worked all night that she is tired (but because she also jogged three hours/in fact she is full of energy)

3. Severe garden path sentences
   - The horse passed the barn fell…
   - While Anna was knitting the socks fell down

4. Gapping
   - Anna is riding and Peter is fixing a bike
   - Anna took the children to the zoo and Peter to the swimming-pool.

When is it possible to disambiguate these sentences? What does the prosody do exactly? Experimental results will be presented and generalizations drawn.

Readings:

Additional literature:
Second and third classes

Once it is understood that prosody divides sentences into smaller chunks of speech, some algorithms of syntax/prosody mapping will be looked at. The emphasis of these models is that syntax is decisive for prosodic phrasing. Four big classes of algorithms have been proposed in the literature. We will look at how they differ, and which one(s) make(s) the best predictions for which aspect of the prosodic structure:

1. Relation-based models (Nespor & Vogel 1986): syntactic categories map prosodic categories (small to small, large to large).
2. Edge-based models (Chen 1987, Selkirk 1986): edges of syntactic constituents correspond to edges of prosodic constituents.

Readings

Additional literature:

Fourth class: The role of information structure on prosody
This class will start with a short review of Gussenhoven’s Sentence Accent Assignment Rule SAAR (1992) and Cinque’s (1993) model of prosodic constituency as a consequence of sentence accents. But then it will be shown that not only the syntax is playing a role for the placement of accent, but also information structural notions, like focus and givenness. This more semantico-pragmatic component of grammar is highly relevant for prosody. Phenomena like Second Occurrence Focus (Beaver et al. 2004), and the expression of Givenness (Schwarzschild 1999) have improved our understanding of prosody.

Readings


Additional literature:

Fifth class: The distinction between prosodic phrasing and pitch accent scaling
New models have studied more systematically the accents’ pitch scaling. Selkirk (2002, 2006) proposes two different focus markings, F which corresponds to narrow focus and f standing for informational focus. Second Occurrence Focus and more phonetically oriented works show that pitch scaling is an important component of prosody which requires extensive experiments.

Reading

Additional literature:

Sixth class and seventh classes: Typological issues
The issues addressed in the previous classes are put into a typological perspective. In these classes, we will look at well-studied languages, like Chichewa, Japanese, Hungarian, Italian and Mandarin Chinese. It will be shown that languages have different strategies as how to use prosody in phrasing and pitch scaling. Some even do not use prosody at all for focus and givenness. Some generalizations will be drawn.

Readings:
Büring, Daniel (2006) Towards a Typology of Focus Realization. Ms. UCLA. (www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/buring/webpage/basics.html#papers)

Additional literature:

**Eighth class: Processing again**

On the basis of the material of the class, the question will be asked again of the role of prosody in the processing of language. Which kinds of experiments can reveal us what prosody does to facilitate sentence comprehension? Is Fodor’s Implicit Prosody theory on the right track?

**Readings:**

**Additional literature:**

**Requirements for credits**

Either a classical study of the relevant literature or a small experiment to be discussed with me.