

Details (sometimes) matter for the mental representation of intonation

Jennifer Cole, Northwestern University

A cornerstone in linguistic theory is the notion of “duality of patterning”: discrete meaningless sound elements (phones) combine to form discrete meaningful units (morphemes). Originally applied to characterize segmental sound patterning, this model of sound structure was later extended to intonation in the Autosegmental-Metrical (AM) theory (Pierrehumbert 1980) and the associated ToBI transcription system (Silverman et al., 1992). Phonological representations in this approach consist of structured sequences of discrete segmental features (e.g., [Labial] for place of articulation) or intonational features (e.g., H* for a high-tone pitch accent) which are abstract relative to the phonetic details of the spoken word or phrase. Recent developments challenge a strictly abstractionist model of segmental phonology, with evidence supporting enriched hybrid model of phonological representation in which the phonetic detail of individual words is encoded in mental representations, alongside representations in terms of abstract, discrete features. This talk takes a critical look at the status of duality of patterning in intonation systems, and presents novel evidence for hybrid models of the mental representation of intonation, from studies examining intonation in imitation, entrainment and recognition memory.