

DanPASS - Conventions for prosodic transcription

Empty pauses are marked “+ _”, filled pauses “=_” in tier 1 (orthography).

Articulatory hesitations at the onset or offset of a word is marked with “=” directly attached to the word in tier 1, e.g. “=først_”, “men=_”.

The symbolic representation in tier 8 of the pitch relation between stressed (starred) and first post-tonic syllable is graded in seven steps: The post-tonic is much higher (H/), higher (H) or just at little higher in pitch (h) than the stressed syllable. The two may be at the same pitch (=) or the post-tonic may be a little lower (l), lower (L) or much lower (L\) in pitch than the stressed syllable. The interval is specified to such relatively fine degree, because in its magnitude lies a correlate to perceived prominence (Grønnum 1990; Jensen and Tøndering 2005). – An underscore indicates that an unstressed syllable precedes or follows the designated syllable in tier 8.

Early on I had decided that we would mark one degree of stress only, i.e. a syllable is either stressed or it is not. Distinguishing “normal” stress from “more than normal” stress was often difficult and of course to a certain extent arbitrary. – In the final stages I have decided to annotate stressed syllables with degrees of prominence perceived to be above “normal.” It was done by a student assistant and myself, in parallel. – In total we found 14 different cues to “extra prominence”, some of which often occur in combination:

A syllable may be perceived to be extra prominent through the reduction of prominence on neighbouring (generally, but not exclusively, succeeding) stressed syllables (“red”). It may be perceived to have greater loudness (“int”). The rise to the post-tonic may be relative larger than in surrounding stress groups (“h/”). Its duration may be greater (“dur”). It may be associated with greater rate of speech (“t>”). Or with a slower rate of speech (“t<”). A vowel onset may be preceded by at glottal stop (“?”). The final stress group in a phrase may be on a high pitch (without sounding like a continuation) (“hi%”). The pitch interval to succeeding stressed syllable is large (“h-l”). The post-tonic may be at a considerably lower pitch (“l”). The prominent syllable may be at a clearly higher pitch level than surrounding stressed syllables (“hi”), or it may be at a clearly lower pitch level (“lo”). There may be a clearly dynamic pitch movement within the prominent syllable (“dyn”). And, finally, the phrasal contour may not decline after the prominent syllable (“>h”). Syllables perceived with extra prominence are preceded by an exclamation mark in tier 8 (“!*”), and a characterization of the cue is found in tier 10. – Without being arbitrary, the distinction between “normal” and “extra prominence” is not always unambiguous, of course. We have perhaps been rather conservative when assigning “extra prominence” to a stressed syllable.

There are no objective measures to determine the boundaries of prosodic phrases. The guiding principle has been that the segmentation should result in domains which are perceived as internally coherent and uniform as regards their rhythm and intonation. Conversely, the boundaries between them are perceived as ruptures in the rhythm and intonation contours. Pauses are not necessarily coincident with prosodic phrase boundaries.

When a prosodic phrase is interrupted (for instance by a parenthetical clause), the two parts on either side of the parenthesis are marked with a “_>” (at the end of the first part of the phrase) and a “<<_” (at the beginning of the second part of the phrase).

The symbolic representation in tier 9 of phrasal intonation has two components: pitch at the edges (no matter whether the edge is a stressed or an unstressed syllable), and the global contour established by the way the stressed syllables within the phrase are scaled:

At the onset and offset of the phrase pitch may be high (%h and h%, respectively), mid (%m and m%, respectively), or low (%l and l%, respectively). If that syllable is stressed, the symbol is repeated, e.g. “%mm” is a stressed syllable at mid pitch level at the onset of the phrase. On a coarse scale, stressed syllables may be high (h), mid (m) or (l) relative to each other and – to a certain extent – also relative to the speaker’s pitch range. However, the means also exist to a finer gradation within a succession of stressed syllables in a given range (between high and mid, high and low, or mid and low). E.g., h_>_>_>_m designates a succession of five stressed syllables which descend gradually from high to mid.

A prosodic phrase may contain only one syllable. If it is unstressed, it has two pitch symbols, e.g. “%mm%”, if it is stressed it will have three, e.g. “%hhh%”. If such a syllable has a clear pitch movement, it will be annotated accordingly, e.g. “%lmh%”.

We have made no attempt to relate intonation contours in successive phrases in an utterance to each other. Inter-phrasal intonation relations may be added at a later stage.