How to tame your intonation: From concepts, to methods, and back

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In this talk I will provide an overview of the major findings and conclusions of SPRINT, a project whose main objective has been to develop a new approach to intonation based on the investigation of intonation variability and pragmatics.

SPRINT started from the position that intonation is not a "half-tamed savage", as the frequently used (and highly questionable) metaphor of Bolinger (1978: 475) [2] has it, but part of a language's phonology. As such, the phonetic features of intonation are as tame as any other aspect of speech production, provided a) we treat them as exponents of a phonological system (and not as intonation *per se*), and b) we employ suitable methodologies to study them (rather than adopting methodologies that are ill-suited for intonation simply because they are familiar from and appropriate for the study of segments).

Starting from this position, in this talk, I will cover three core topics: a) the main sources of variability in intonation and the methodologies employed in SPRINT to address them, so as to distinguish systematic, linguistically determined variation, from gradience and noise; b) the role that meaning can play in this process; c) the lessons learned from researching these topics, and the ways they have shaped the main SPRINT objective, namely, determining what we retain from the widely adopted Autosegmental-Metrical (AM) model of intonational phonology [8], and what we may need to revise.

These core points will be illustrated with findings from published and ongoing SPRINT research, focusing on the phonetics and phonology of the H* and L+H* pitch accents of (British) English [5], [6], [7], [9], and comparing them to their Greek equivalents [1], [3], [4]. When considered together, these findings support SPRINT's starting point, by showing that accentual categories exhibit features that are well-known from the study of segments, such as contextual, dialectal, and individual variation, as well as cue redundancy and trading. Further, the comparison of the English and Greek results illustrates how we can use the methods adopted in SPRINT to reach decisions pertaining to phonological analysis. Overall, the studies reviewed in this talk provide encouraging results on which to build a new foundation for the study of intonation.

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