

The Intonational Interface

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This paper proposes a new semantics for intonation structure in English and some related languages. It shares with earlier work in the same framework the property of being fully integrated with semantically surface-compositional syntax, expressed using Combinatory Categorical Grammar (CCG, Steedman 2000). This theory of grammar unifies intonation structure and information structure with syntactic structure and Montague-style compositional semantics, even where intonation structure departs from the restrictions of traditional surface structure.

The central claim of the paper is that many of the diverse discourse meanings and functions that have been attributed to the intonational tunes of English, related to such dimensions as politeness, deixis, affect, commitment, and turn-taking, arise via conversational implicature from more primitive components of literal meaning distinguished along four dimensions of contrast, information-structural role, speaker/hearer supposition, and polarity. The latter elements are formalized using a dynamic modal logic of context-change.

A further claim is that conversational implicatures of all kinds arise, not from adherence to any "Cooperative Principle," of the kind proposed by Grice, nor from related rhetorically-autonomous maxims, principles, or structures, but rather from a more primitive principle of maintenance of consistency in the shared context or common ground. This idea is related to that of truth- or belief- maintenance as it is used in artificial intelligence, to which these other notions can be reduced.