

Shoshoni Intonational Phonology: Some Initial Observations

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Previous work on Central Numic phonology (Crum and Dayley 1993, Dayley 1989, Elzinga 1999, Miller 1996, among others) has dealt primarily with segmental alternations—in particular the consonantal processes and final features—and secondarily with stress patterns. But there has been no discussion of the intonational properties of Shoshoni or its close relatives.

In this talk, I present preliminary intonational analyses of two short narratives: one in Shoshoni and one in Goshute. For the analysis I adopt an autosegmental model of intonation inspired by Ladd 1983, Ladd 1996, Pierrehumbert 1980, and Pierrehumbert and Beckman 1988. In this model, significant peaks and valleys in the fundamental frequency curve are represented by sequences of tones, H and L. These tones are anchored to key points in the utterance to provide evidence for large-scale prosodic structures.

The narratives used in this analysis are examples of spontaneous speech (more or less) and contain mostly declarative sentences, so the results are of necessity rather limited. In future work, I hope to extend the investigation of intonation in Shoshoni to other clause types and to conduct more controlled, laboratory studies.

References

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