

A Prosodic Glossary

Below are given rough and ready descriptions of the meanings of various terms used in the prosody literature. Note that I have shyed away from calling these ascriptions 'definitions'

Accent. Accenting indicates a mechanism used to pick out some unit of speech as more prominent than its neighbors. Most of my experience with the term deals with **pitch accents**, uses of pitch as a marker of prominence. Hence, any use of pitch to mark off a syllable or mora as more prominent than its neighbors is an example of pitch accent.

Stress. Stress is another mechanism which is associated with a unit which is more prominent than its neighbors. The particular mechanism is a very complicated one which I believe is best described as an apportionment of higher attention in production. The usual result of this is an increase in duration and an amplification of phonemically marked aspects of the speech. Normally, stress is used to describe such effects at the level of the syllable, though similar sorts of effects are found at smaller and larger domains.

Prominence. Prominence is a general term for properties indicating headedness in a particular domain. Generally, headedness indicates a situation where one unit within a larger unit is picked to bear certain features, and such a unit is the only required unit within the domain. When there are phonetic and phonological mechanisms to indicate which unit this is, these mechanisms mark prominence.

Quantity. The phonemic use of duration.

Length. A general term indicating duration. However, unlike 'duration', which is measured in milliseconds, length can be measured in terms of number of syllables or in terms of whatever other linguistic mechanisms seem likely.

Juncture. A general term indicating effects which happen at the edge of units which often indicate mechanisms used to help parse the speech into interpretable prosodic units.

Tone. The phonemic use of pitch. Often, phonemic is used to restrict the use of 'tone' to cases in which there are lexical differences which are signaled (primarily) by pitch. However, I've often heard the extension of the term 'tone' to also cover the use of pitch to mark grammatical function or discourse function, in which case English would have tone.