Intonation and its meaning: Beyond essential differences
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Introduction
Which properties of intonational form encode which meaning distinctions? Each domain has complex theories and analytic frameworks, but with little cross-talk, researchers in one domain rely on simplified “essential” differences in the other. This fundamentally limits the development of an explanatory theory.

Take-Homes
Our experiments testing pragmatic interpretation support category-level edge tone and durational form distinctions, with additional graded interpretative effects related to within-category phonetic variation. These findings are made possible by rejecting essentialism and embracing complexity in both domains.

Contrastiveness versus Intensification
Prosodic prominence is associated with Information Structure through the location and tonal type of pitch accent.

The phonetic parameters associated with accents are also linked to Semantic Intensity. Are these the same type of prominence?

Take-away: Prominence effects on different acoustic parameters cue different kinds of pragmatically enriched meaning, distinguishing interpretations related to Information Structure vs. Intensity.

Rise-Fall-Rise and Scalar Inference
Pragmatics literature offers many competing proposals for how “the” rise-fall-rise tune interacts with higher alternatives. But AM theory predicts three RFR-shaped tunes that differ in the pitch accent used (H*, L+H*, L*+H).

Do different functions map onto different RFRs, or does a similar function hold for a broad class of RFR tune shapes? We look at RFR through the lens of scalar inference (SI).

Auditory materials with varied RFR and falling contours:

Q: Did someone leave a window open in the office overnight?
A: The office feels \( \text{cool} \)

Would you conclude that the office does not feel cold?
Yes (SI: cool but not cold)
No (SI not calculated)

Take-away: RFRs overall encourage SI calculation relative to falls, suggesting a broad class of RFRs with small graded distinctions.

In priming with lexical decision, RFR shows an asymmetry when probing a higher (cold) or lower (cool) alternative. The RFR with the smallest pitch range shows additional facilitation for cold, but the RFR with the largest pitch range leads to less facilitation.