ABSTRACT

JONATHAN R. INSCOE. Sorority Talk: An Intonational Study. (Under the direction of Professor Erik R. Thomas.)

Intonation has historically wavered in terms of analytical techniques, and as a result has largely been avoided as an object of sociolinguistic study separate from semantic value. The most popular movement in the past two decades has been Beckman et al.'s (2005) Tone and Break Index (ToBI) system, an autosegmental approach branching from historical level-based models in intonational analysis. Barnes et al.'s (2008) recent work on Tonal Center of Gravity (TCoG) has attempted to reconcile level-based models with their configurationist counterparts, unifying analysis of pitch turning points or TPs (represented by the former) and F0 contours and contour-shape (represented by the latter). TCoG was initially constructed to more accurately represent perception of pitch contours (Barnes et al. 2011; Veilleux et al. 2009), and has been used as a comparative measure against solely TP-based models (Barnes et al. 2012); TCoG, however, has yet to be applied to social-situation-dependent areas of sociolingusitics (e.g., style-shifting). This study attempts to apply Tonal Center of Gravity to the study of style-shifting in hopes of piloting this measure's application in a field that has largely been ignored by intonation research.

The subject of the study is a 21-year-old female student at North Carolina State University. The subject was asked to carry a microphone and recording equipment to record natural speech in various environments. Due to lack of extensive data, limited quantitative analysis was conducted and supplemented with qualitative analysis of variation within the data. It is found that much of the variation in Tonal Center of Gravity lies in a home setting with the subject's roommates; this variation can be quantitatively attributed to intonational phrases over time and pitch peak range. These factors are discussed qualitatively.