

# HS 133: Introduction to Phonetics

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# Beyond segments: Suprasegments

# Suprasegmental Features

- Segments = Individual Sounds
- Suprasegmentals = Features added to segments
- Length
  - In many languages, vowel length is very important
  - Finnish [tapa:n] “I meet” vs. [tapan] “I kill”

# Stress

- Stress is a property of syllables, not segments
- A stressed syllable is more prominent

# Suprasegmental Features

- Intonation
  - The pattern of rises and falls in pitch across a stretch of speech
  - Question or command?
- Tones
  - The pitch at which syllables in a word are pronounced
  - Tones make a difference in the word's meaning

# Suprasegmentals: intonation

- Pitch contours that signal the function of the sentence.
- Rising- falling - level

# Suprasegmentals: intonation

- Rising contours are used in:
  - Asking yes/ no questions
    - **Are you going to class?**
  - Doubt on speaker's mind
    - **You understand it?**
  - Listing things
    - **I like one, two and three.**

# Suprasegmentals: Focus

John saw Mary in the morning



# Suprasegmentals: Length

- Some languages contrast on duration and some don't
- **German**
  - [bi:tə] 'offer'
  - [bitə] 'request'
- **Hindi**
  - [mil] 'to meet'
  - [mi:l] 'a mile'

# Suprasegmentals: Length

- Three types of durations are attested in languages:  
Short - long – intermediate
- Consonants can also demonstrate duration distinction  
[khatta] ‘sour’

# Suprasegmentals: Tone

- Using pitch to distinguish meanings

## Mandarin:

- [ma] 'high' 'mother' 妈
  - [ma] 'rising' 'hemp' 码
  - [ma] 'fall-rise' 'horse' 马
  - [ma] 'falling' 'scold' 吗
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- Origin of tones

# Suprasegmentals: Tone

- Contour Tones vs. Register tones