

Hieber, Daniel W. 2016. The cohesive function of prosody in Ékegusií (Kisii) narratives. Talk presented to the Discourse Workshop, University of California, Santa Barbara, Nov. 15, 2016.

The cohesive function of prosody in Ékegusií (Kisii) narratives

Abstract

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This talk shows how various prosodic features of Ékegusií (Kisii, Great Lakes Bantu; Kenya) narratives function to create discourse cohesion, by signaling the transitions from one unit of discourse to the next, the relations that hold between those units, and their relative prominence. I demonstrate that these prosodic features – pause, vowel elision, prosodic accent, pitch reset, isotony (intonational parallelism), and intonational contour – are primarily motivated by their function in the discourse, rather than by syntactic constituency. I conclude that an understanding of prosody as a means of signaling discourse cohesion provides a language-independent definition for examining prosody crosslinguistically.