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**WCCFL practice talk**  
**April 18 @ 5:15 pm**  
**Boylston Hall Room 303**

**Pretonic prominence and vowel neutralization: evidence from Aŭciuki Belarusian**

This paper addresses unusual acoustic prominence found on a low pretonic vowel in the context of a high stressed vowel in Aŭciuki Belarusian (East Slavic). Based on a phonetic analysis of novel data, I show that pretonic prominence manifests itself as increased duration and intensity, as compared to the corresponding properties of low pretonic vowels in the context of low stressed vowels. Contrary to previous accounts, I show that pretonic prominence is not associated with a high pitch target. At the same time, pretonic prominence is distinct from sonority-driven stress retraction, since the etymologically stressed vowel in pretonic prominence contexts (i) is not subject to posttonic reduction and (ii) is the locus of intonational pitch accents.

The immediately pretonic syllable is known to have special prosodic properties in Slavic, such as vowel neutralization patterns distinct from those of other unstressed vowels. I show that the Aŭciuki Belarusian phenomenon can be accounted for in Optimality Theory in a similar way to Slavic vowel neutralization, by redistribution of moras in the iambic foot headed by the stressed syllable, driven by the relative sonority of the two vowels.

The main advantage of the current account is that it derives pretonic prominence from the same properties of the pretonic syllable that vowel neutralization accounts are built on, thus allowing the two diachronically related processes to be formalized in a similar way.