

Harvard PhonLab Talk

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Date/Time: Monday, September 11th, 10:00 AM

Location: 90 Mt. Auburn St., Room 020 (basement)

A prosodic-phonetic approach to intervocalic lenition

This talk reviews cross-linguistic evidence that some common lenition processes such as spirantization, intervocalic voicing, and flapping take place in a component of grammar that governs the fine-grained temporal dynamics of speech sounds and their interaction with prosodic structure. I argue that these lenition patterns are different from other processes sometimes referred to as ‘lenition’; that they do not manipulate phonological features; that they lie on a broader continuum of prosodically-driven phonetic variation; and that they are implemented primarily through subphonemic adjustments to duration and the temporal separation between prosodic units. With data from Campidanese Sardinian, I illustrate a schematic approach to modeling lenition as a language-specific property of phonetic implementation, operating on prosodic structure and the output of narrow phonology.