

Evidence for a Semantics and Pragmatics of Intonation

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The paper presents a new information-structural semantics for intonational tunes in English. The bewildering plethora of descriptive generalizations that have been presented in terms of topic, focus, continuation, politeness, turn-taking, other-directedness, and so on, are treated as in the main arising as conversational implicatures of literal meanings defined in terms of four semantic factors, namely theme/rheme, kontrast/background, Speaker/Hearer supposition, and common ground. The paper discusses some empirical problems with the datasets and empirical claims about them that might be used to test this theory.