

THE ROLE OF PROSODIC MEANS IN DISCOURSE

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Annotation: Human communication is mostly accomplished through language, which has distinct phonetic features when spoken. Meaning expression and information transmission in oral conversation rely on prosodic devices in addition to grammatical and lexical elements. Phonetic components including intonation, pauses, stress, pace, and melody are all considered prosody. These components guarantee that communication is impactful, expressive, and comprehensible from a semantic and pragmatic standpoint. This article is devoted to the role of prosodic means in discourse.

Key words: Prosody, phonetic elements, intonation, pauses, stress, tempo, melody.

Language is the primary means of human communication, and its spoken form has unique phonetic characteristics. In oral discourse, meaning expression and information transmission depend not only on grammatical and lexical units but also on prosodic means. Prosody refers to phonetic elements such as intonation, pauses, stress, tempo, and melody. These elements ensure that speech is semantically and pragmatically comprehensible, expressive, and impactful.

During communication, intonation indicates how a thought is conveyed, while pauses structure speech logically, helping the listener comprehend the message. Stress and tempo highlight key information and shape the overall tone of speech. Within discourse analysis, studying the role of intonation, pauses, and other prosodic means from a scientific and theoretical perspective is crucial to understanding their impact on communication effectiveness.

In linguistics, discourse is not merely a collection of individual words or sentences; it is a speech unit shaped by context in the process of communication. In discourse, linguistic units function not only grammatically and lexically but also through prosodic means (intonation, pauses, stress, and tone) to facilitate understanding and influence communication participants.

Research in linguistics has demonstrated that prosodic means play a significant role in ensuring speech clarity and impact. Scholars such as David Brazil, Peter Roach, and Halliday have extensively studied the communicative role of intonation and the linguistic and functional properties of prosodic elements.

These phonetic factors are practically significant in public speaking, acting, speech therapy, translation, and second-language learning. Incorrect or unclear use of intonation and pauses can lead to misunderstandings in communication. Therefore, conscious use of prosodic means is essential for improving speech competence.

Prosody and its role in oral discourse are of great importance. Prosody is a phonetic category that encompasses the acoustic characteristics of spoken language, including:

- **Intonation** (tone, pitch variation)
- **Pauses** (breaks between words or sentences)
- **Tempo** (speech speed)
- **Stress** (emphasizing specific words or syllables)
- **Melody** (musicality of speech)

These elements determine speech content, emotional impact, and directly influence the listener's

perception process.

Prosody consists of components such as pauses, accent (dialectal influence), tone, tempo (speech speed), speech duration, domain language, abbreviations, noise, volume variations, and more. Many scholars, including S.V. Kodzasov and O.F. Krivanova¹, emphasize that prosodic elements play a crucial role in linguistic communication and carry semantic significance. For instance, even from a distance, prosody alone can convey information. In discourse linguistics, prosody is studied as a key channel for transmitting information.

In addition to verbal communication, prosody interacts with non-verbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, and proxemics, which form the visual aspect of oral communication. According to English linguist McNeill², gestures should not be considered a separate system from language but rather an integrated system that contributes to speech production.³

As noted earlier, prosody and its role in oral discourse have been extensively explored in linguistics. For example, Daniel Hirst analyzed the universal and language-specific aspects of prosodic means, studying how intonation and pauses function across different languages.⁴ His research is significant for understanding intonation systems in various languages. Similarly, in 1993, Hirst and R. Espesser published an article titled *"Automatic Modelling of Fundamental Frequency Using a Quadratic Spline Function,"* discussing methods for automatically analyzing prosodic patterns.⁵

Another linguist, Albert Di Cristo, published *"La Prosodie de la Parole"* in 2013, a comprehensive work on the formal, functional, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of prosody.⁶ This book is considered the first introductory work on prosody in French linguistics.

The overall impact of prosodic means can be explained through the following examples:

Means	Function	Example
Intonation	Differentiating meaning, expressiveness	adding "You are leaving" (neutral) vs. "You are leaving?!" (question)
Pause	Structuring speech, creating emphasis	"Today... (pause)... we won!"
Stress	Highlighting important words	"I will come today" vs. "I will come today"
Tempo	Controlling speech rhythm and expression	Fast speech – confidence, slow speech – drama
Melody	Adding musicality to speech	The intonation in reciting a lyrical poem

These examples illustrate that prosodic means (intonation, pauses, stress, tempo, and melody) enhance speech clarity and effectiveness in communication. They influence not only

¹ Кодзасов С.В. Кривнова О.Ф. *Общая фонетика*. – М.: Изд-во Российского государственного гуманитарного университета, 2001. – С. 592.

² Neyl Mc. *Linguistic Disorders and Pathologies: An International Handbook*. – P. 296.

³ Сапарбаева Г. Оғзаки мулоқот акти ва унинг лексик-грамматик хусусиятлари: Фил.фанлари б-ча фалсафа доктори дисс. – Урганч, 2022. – Б.61.

⁴ Hirst D. *Intonation Systems: A Survey of Twenty Languages*. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

⁵ Hirst D., Espesser R. Automatic modelling of fundamental frequency using a quadratic spline function//Travaux de l'Institut de Phonétique d'Aix. Volume 15, 1993. – P. 75-85.

⁶ Cristo A.D. *La prosodie de la parole*. France: – De boeck sup, 2013.

grammatical and lexical structures but also the semantic, pragmatic, and expressive dimensions of speech.

Comparing Uzbek and English, we find that although each language has its own intonation and prosodic rules, their communicative functions remain universal. Proper use of these phonetic elements enhances communication efficiency.

Analyzing prosodic means and their role in discourse remains a relevant area of study for linguists and public speakers.

In summary, an in-depth understanding of intonation, pauses, and prosodic means in oral speech, along with their conscious application, contributes to the development of speech competence. Therefore, these elements are crucial not only in linguistic research but also in practical communication.

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