

**The Department of Linguistics
is pleased to present**

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speaking on

**Exploring the trigger of prosodic boundaries: The role of word prosody and
phrase-level prominence in marking phrase edges**

Friday, May 12, 2023

1:20 - 3:00 PM

in HUM 1 - 202

Abstract:

Phrase-final lengthening, also called *pre-boundary lengthening*, is one of the most widely-attested phonetic effects of prosodic structure, according to which articulatory movements lengthen at the end of phrases. The phenomenon is so prevalent in both oral and signed speech modalities that it is considered a language universal. Yet, despite the effect's prevalence in marking prosodic boundaries and the fundamental role of the latter in language processing, acquisition, and communication, the scope of the effect, i.e., the stretch of speech affected, remains understudied. The limited findings on this issue are ambiguous as to whether the effect is determined by a grammatical domain, such as the final mora, rhyme, or word, or by a fixed interval at the boundary. Another point of debate stems from the unclear role of prominence (word- and/or phrase-level) in defining the scope of the effect. The issue becomes more problematic because current research has mainly focused on a typologically restricted set of languages – i.e., lexical stress, head-prominence languages. In these languages, the functions of word-level and phrase-level prominence as well as word identifying dimensions merge in the structural position of stress.

In this talk, two studies will be presented, which directly explore the factors that determine the scope of pre-boundary lengthening, thereby informing us about what triggers prosodic boundaries, and ultimately about the basic nature of the phonological component of grammar. The first study is on Tokyo Japanese, a lexical pitch accent, head/edge-prominence language; the second study is on Seoul Korean, an edge-prominence language with no word prosody. Both languages offer important insights on the factors that define the scope of the boundary effect. The candidate domains of mora, syllable, and word for pre-boundary lengthening can be disentangled from each other in Japanese. Likewise, in Japanese, the role of word prosody can be assessed independently from phrase-level prominence, since the former is manifested through lexical pitch accent and the latter through phrasing. As for Korean, word prosody is missing completely and phrase-level prominence can be separated to an extent from word demarcation dimensions. We demonstrate, by the means of electromagnetic articulography (EMA), that articulatory control for boundary-marking is sensitive to specific grammatical domains as well as to markers of word demarcation and focus location. This work reveals systematic ways in which prosodic levels interact, and proposes an integrated dynamical model of prosodic structure that captures significant dimensions of typological variation and speech planning.