

Dwight Bolinger has significantly furthered the field of linguistics on two major fronts. This should not be read as meaning that he has worked in two areas of linguistic research — in fact he has worked in many more than two, and has done important and fundamental service to them all — but that alongside his prodigious scholarly contributions to the linguistic literature stand his equally remarkable personal efforts in encouraging individual linguists. He is famous for his inexhaustible patience. As a correspondent, a critic, a discussant, he is indefatigable. Not surprisingly, this has won him an army of friends; this volume contains essays in his honour by 22 linguists who would count themselves among that army.

The essays all deal with some aspect of language prosody. The study of stress and intonation has been one of Bolinger’s primary interests and his characteristically insightful contributions have greatly enlivened and advanced the field. Probably everyone who works in this area has had the experience of arriving at a hard-thought-out conclusion about the operation of some intonational mechanism, only to find later that that same perception appeared in a paper of Bolinger’s some twenty years earlier (in a footnote). One of his most frequently assumed roles is that of debunker; he is always ready with the counter-example which forms an immovable obstacle to the sweeping generalisation.

This volume is a Festschrift for Bolinger, then, and therefore it is not easy to review, since Festschriften are never easy to review. They must be even harder to compile. For instance, on what criteria does one invite contributors? Should quality rule, or quantity? Rare is the scientist, after all, who has exercised a sufficiently ruthless discernment to limit the circle of his friends and associates only to those whose work is consistently of the highest quality. Which would honour the recipient of a Festschrift more, a collection of high-class — and hence noticeable and marketable — contributions by a select few, or a motley assemblage of contributions from friend after friend after friend? Since compiling a Festschrift is a labour
of goodwill, and goodwill forbids risking the hurt feelings consequent upon aiming at the former goal. *Festschriften* are in the event usually of the latter type, mixed in content and mixed in quality. This one is no exception. The 22 — mostly very short — chapters are homogeneous only in sharing a broadly defined prosodic subject matter; otherwise, some are linguistic in approach, some phonetic; some are theoretical, some descriptive, some experimental; some are important, some useful, others trivial. There is a wide diversity of terminology ("sentence stress", "tonic accent", "pitch accent", *etc.*), and a bewildering variety of prosodic notational systems.

There is one fault, however, which all the contributions share: they are all more or less out of date. This is a fault to be laid at the door neither of the authors nor of the editors; the book was one of many victims caught by the collapse of its original publisher. To judge from the reference lists, all the chapters bar one were written about 1973. Not only has the volume thus managed to miss whatever Bolinger birthday it was originally intended to coincide with, but a disservice of some magnitude has been done to the contributors. Most of the chapters deal with topics on which in the last seven years other relevant work has naturally been published, and to which reference ought to be expected in a publication dated 1980. But worse, some chapters have by now a distinctly dated flavour. This is particularly the case with three linguistic contributions — by Contreras, Rando and Siertsema — each of which assumes a framework of linguistic theory which is by now superseded. Moreover, two of the essays in the book have in the 1973–1980 interim been published elsewhere: Rando’s contribution appears to be a chapter from her thesis, which appeared in 1976 in book form, while Nash and Mulac’s chapter was a preliminary study for a larger investigation, now published (Mulac and Nash 1977). Since the book contains much that is useful and interesting, the delay in its appearance is a great pity.

Despite the diversity of the essays, certain topics crop up with some regularity. Intonation and prosody are subjects of obvious pragmatic relevance; choices on this dimension are contextually determined to a greater extent than either lexical or syntactic choices. Conversely, of course, the prosodic dimension carries a large amount of pragmatic information, and it is no surprise to find that a number of the essays deal, one way or another, with the pragmatic functions of intonation. For example, there is Abe’s detailed look at the various functions of pitch; and there are several papers on the structure and function of question intonation (these are discussed in greater detail below). Nash and Mulac analyse the single utterance “I thought so” and the way different intonation patterns assigned to it are interpreted with respect to the discourse context. Ladd presents an impressive catalogue of diverse phenomena — syntactic constructions, lexical items and intonation contours — which are excluded from occurrence in subordinate clauses, and argues that they are most simply accounted for by a general pragmatic principle: points of view within a sentence must be compatible.

Another theme which runs through more than one of the essays is the notion of
intonalational universals. Bolinger (1964, 1978) has argued that there are such universals (“human speakers everywhere do essentially the same things with fundamental pitch”; Bolinger 1978: 515) and that they are of two kinds: a falling versus non-falling dichotomy for marking off utterance segments, and the use of pitch contrasts to signal accent. This view has not gone without opposition (e.g. Ladd in press); but it is not opposed in the present volume. Lieberman, for instance, presents an argument for the segmenting function of intonation as a central and innate component of language. Although Lieberman’s views on this topic are well known and have appeared elsewhere, this concise encapsulation of his position ought to prove useful, e.g. for student reading lists. Abe’s survey of the functions of vocal pitch argues for a universal rising—falling opposition. Rando also considers this opposition to be a universal. Wittmann’s discussion of the place of intonation in the origin of language (which is, as glottogonic arguments tend to be, slightly dotty, and does not fail to include a tortuous argument for the truly linguistic nature of chimpanzee communication) takes Bolinger’s universalist hypothesis as a starting-point. Leon and Martin report an experiment which addresses the question of accentual universals, and conclude that the ways in which accent signals emotion and prominence are very similar across languages.

A third recurring topic, though not in this case one which represents a major theme of Bolinger’s work, is the question of questions, their intonation and function. Rando, again, is concerned with the difference in intonation between yes—no and wh-questions, which, she argues, reflects a difference in underlying structure. Hadding and Naucler examine the permissible variation in pitch patterns across statements and questions; not surprisingly, it turns out that the equation of terminal rises with yes—no questions, terminal falls with statements and wh-questions is too simplistic. Lee is concerned with the particular question of when yes—no questions end in a fall; his investigations lead him to abandon the hypothesis that falling yes—no questions are more likely when they occur among many other yes—no questions. (Lee’s paper is not impressive. Unless I misunderstand the following passage, he appears to claim that there is a difference between his two corpora of yes—no questions: “Where yes—no questions occurred very close together . . . about 42% of them ended in a fall intonation, while the rest ended in a rise intonation. On the other hand, where yes—no questions did not occur close together . . . nearly half of the occurrences had a fall-ending” (p. 167). The proportions are 42% to 58% in the first case, and 44% to 56% in the second.) Fonagy and Berard report a — very thorough — cross-language investigation of the intonation of disjunctive statements versus questions. Siertsema discusses English tag questions and their functional equivalence in certain instances with modal particles in Dutch.

Some differences of opinion exist among the authors, it is clear, on the question of whether it is appropriate to make the generalisation that yes—no questions usually end in a rise whereas wh-questions end in a fall. This is not the only point of disagreement. In contrast to Wittmann’s belief that language abilities are not unique to humans, Wode, in his description of his son’s acquisition of a basic into-
national repertoire, makes it clear in passing that he does not believe that sub-human primates are capable of language. Siertsema points out that her equation of function between English tag questions and Dutch modal particles is in contrast to Schubiger’s well-known equation of English intonation patterns with modal particle distribution in German. Her article is directly preceded by Schubiger’s latest contribution on this topic, dealing specifically with English rise-fall intonation.

Rather than attempt to evaluate each of the disparate contributions individually, I have tried to point up some similarities and contradictions between them. But I will not close without mentioning two specific experimental findings reported in the book. First, Faure, Hirst and Chafcouloff report that judgements of English compound stress patterns (“blackbird” versus “black bird”) cannot be reliably made in the absence of pitch information. Secondly, Lehiste demonstrates that the duration of syllables in sentence context is a function of the overall sentence duration and not solely of the syllable’s position in the sentence. Both of these findings are in disagreement with other data in the phonetic literature, and should therefore be given some attention by those who work on the perception and production of prosody. Another potentially useful inclusion in the present compilation is Jassem and Kudela-Dobrogowska’s normalisation procedure for controlling out fundamental frequency variation due to individual voice quality. And besides the summary of Lieberman’s views on the physiological basis of intonation, there are also potted versions of C.-J. Bailey on English syllable boundaries and Crystal on the classification of nuclear tones.

The melody of language is, in conclusion, a fairly typical Festschrift. It is a handsomely produced volume — despite the occasional typographical error, three full pages of inserted errata for one chapter, inexplicable changes of typeface in the first chapter, and a few more annoying errors (e.g. the duplication of sub-headings in ch. 10, and the mislabelling of ch. 5’s fig. 2). It is patchy in the quality of its contents, but contains a number of papers which should prove useful and interesting to researchers in prosody. What it was primarily intended to be, it certainly is: a warm and sincere display of appreciation of a great scholar and generous friend.

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References

Anne Cutler is a psycholinguist whose research has concerned sentence comprehension and production in general, the processing of prosody and the implications of speech errors in particular. A Ph.D. at Texas and a stint at M.I.T. preceded her current research fellowship at the University of Sussex.


Although the title of the book refers to a ‘logic’ of commands, it is important to stress at the outset that Adler is not directly concerned with the validity of arguments having commands either as premisses or conclusion, or with consequence relations between commands. Rather, he defines his enterprise as an attempt to characterize what he calls the institution of commands, that is to say, the constitutive rules (in the sense of Searle 1969, one may guess) determining not only which speech acts are to count as commands, but also how commands are used and what reactions they elicit.

This enterprise divides into five main subtasks: (i) to find the necessary and sufficient conditions which enable a speech act to qualify as a command; (ii) to identify those features of commands which must be represented in their formal logical structure; (iii) to construct a formal syntactic system of commands; (iv) to show that the surface sentences used to give commands can be generated from their logical (deep) structure; and finally (v) to give an interpretation of these logical structures of commands in terms of flow charts. Unfortunately, none of these is successfully achieved.

The two initial tasks are of a preliminary nature and occupy the first part of the book (up to p. 44). This is an informal and analytic work, which consists mainly of a revision of Searle’s (1969) account of commands and of a discussion of some of the distinctions made by Rescher (1966).

While Searle required that the propositional content of a command predicated a (possible) future action of the addressee, Adler has no propositional content rule. He rejects (p. 10) Searle’s analysis of an illocutionary act as consisting of an illocutionary force plus a proposition. This attitude is based on an undue assimilation of this analysis with the so-called performative hypothesis of generative semanticists, and a justified belief that it has been proven untenable. Adler does not realize that one can accept Searle’s analysis while dismissing the main thesis of generative semantics, that surface sentences are generated from their logical structure by rules of syntax alone. To the contrary, he commits himself to a version of generative semantics which does not incorporate the performative hypothesis. Adler modifies Searle’s analysis in two further respects. He argues (p. 22) that an utterance can count as a command even when the addressee is not able to do the required action.