

The Long and the Short of It: What Word Duration Tells Us about Language
Freshman Seminar (Proposal)
Arts & Sciences 1138.xx
Autumn 2014

Instructor: Dr. Cynthia Clopper
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Office Hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30pm, and by appointment

Day and Time: TBD
Location: TBD

Course Goals and Description

Every utterance of human speech is acoustically distinct from every other utterance. This course provides an introduction to this infinite variation through the lens of word duration. We will explore variation in word duration through readings in the primary speech science literature and hands-on acoustic analysis. The reading assignments will allow students to develop foundational knowledge in phonetics, the scientific study of human speech, and consider its connection to other areas of linguistic inquiry, including phonology, semantics, and pragmatics. The hands-on acoustic analysis will give students the opportunity to record and analyze their own speech and consider how linguistic context impacts word duration variation within and across different speakers.

Course Components

Carmen: All of the reading and recording assignments will be posted electronically on Carmen. In addition, Carmen will be used for announcements related to the course. Please be sure to check it regularly.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments are listed on the weekly schedule below. Electronic copies of all of the readings will be posted on Carmen and each reading will have an associated Carmen discussion board for questions. Class meetings on days when reading assignments are due will be devoted to discussion of the assigned reading. You are therefore expected to read the assigned reading in preparation for those class meetings and to post at least one thoughtful question about the reading to the Carmen discussion board by 5pm on the day before class.

Recording Assignments: Recording assignments are listed on the weekly schedule below. Instructions for each recording assignment will be posted on Carmen and each recording assignment will have an associated Carmen Dropbox for electronic submission. Class meetings on days when recording assignments are due will be devoted to hands-on acoustic analysis and discussion of the assigned recordings. Recording assignments must therefore be submitted electronically by 5pm on the day before class.

Class Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in reading assignment discussions and hands-on acoustic analysis activities.

People's Choice: The last two weeks of the course will be dedicated to a relevant topic identified by the students in the class. Suggestions for the People's Choice topic can be submitted at any time to the People's Choice Carmen discussion board. We will vote on the suggested topics in Week 11 to determine the winner.

Grading

Final grades will be either Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U), with an S grade corresponding to at least 75% of the possible points:

Reading assignment questions:	35%	(5% each)
Recording assignments:	30%	(5% each)
Class participation:	35%	

Policies

Accommodation: If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614 292 3307 or in Pomerene Hall 150 to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Conduct: Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), and copying the work of another student. I am obligated by University Rules to report suspected cases of academic misconduct to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: The Speech Chain

Introduction to human speech production, perception, and comprehension

Week 2: The Sound of Speech

Introduction to the acoustics of speech

READING: Chapter 3 of P. B. Denes & E. N. Pinson (1993). *The Speech Chain*. New York: W. H. Freeman.

Week 3: Visualizing Speech

Introduction to waveforms as a visual representation of speech

READING: Chapter 1 of P. Ladefoged & S. F. Disner (2012). *Vowels and Consonants*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Week 4: No Two Utterances are Identical

Using acoustic analysis tools to compare utterances of the "same" word

RECORDING: Cat Recordings

Week 5: A Stitch in Time Saves Nine (Part 1)

Exploring the role of meaning in word duration

READING: P. Lieberman (1963). Some effects of semantic and grammatical context on the production and perception of speech. *Language and Speech*, 6, 172-187.

Week 6: A Stitch in Time Saves Nine (Part 2)

Exploring the role of meaning in word duration

RECORDING: Proverb Recordings

Week 7: I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato (Part 1)

Exploring the role of repetition in word duration

READING: C. A. Fowler & J. Housum (1987). Talkers' signalling of "new" and "old" words in speech and listeners' perception and use of the distinction. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 26, 489-504.

Week 8: I Say Tomato, You Say Tomato (Part 2)

Exploring the role of repetition in word duration

RECORDING: Story Recording

Week 9: Time for Thyme (Part 1)

Exploring the role of frequency in word duration

READING: S. Gahl (2008). "Thyme" and "time" are not homophones: Word durations in spontaneous speech. *Language*, 84, 474-496.

Week 10: Time for Thyme (Part 2)

Exploring the role of frequency in word duration

RECORDING: Time Recordings

Week 11: Buzzing Busses (Part 1)

Exploring the role of consonants on vowel duration

READING: D. H. Klatt (1976). Linguistic uses of segmental duration in English: Acoustic and perceptual evidence. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 59, 1208-1221.

Week 12: Buzzing Busses (Part 2)

Exploring the role of consonants on vowel duration

DUE: Bus Recordings

Week 13: People's Choice

Exploring another dimension of duration variation in speech

READING: TBA

Week 14: People's Choice

Exploring another dimension of duration variation in speech

RECORDING: People's Choice Recordings