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From Teaching to Learning:

Current Trends in ELT

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Perhaps most importantly, we should like to record publicly our gratitude to the participants and attendees of the conference that generated this book. Some came from as far away as New Zealand, the Middle East, and the United States, whilst others came from around Macedonia and the Balkan region. It was our pleasure to meet all of you, and we hope that you enjoyed your participation as much as we valued your presence.

All reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the academic integrity of these papers. The results and writings here are the scholarship of the individual authors, and inclusion of them in this publication does not constitute an official endorsement of their views by the South East European University. This book seeks merely to provide an impartial forum for the exchange of scholarly ideas.

Proceedings Committee

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Introduction

On April 9-11, 2010, the South East European University was honored to host an international academic conference entitled 'From Teaching to Learning: Current Trends in ELT.' This conference was the result of a collaboration between the Language Centre (Veronika Kareva, Director) and the Department of English (Benjamin Keatinge, Head of Department), both of which constitute a portion of the Faculty of Languages, Cultures, and Communications of SEEU. It was a particular pleasure for the conference organizers that scholars from around the world came to join us in Tetovo.

This book represents the proceedings of that conference. It is not exhaustive, as submission of papers to the proceedings was wholly voluntary. Some participants had already promised their work elsewhere. Others are engaged in ongoing research, and disliked to publish it in partial or incomplete form. The present collection, therefore, offers a good representative collection that amply reflects the diversity of subjects and approaches that distinguished the conference.

What is most notable about the essays in this collection is their variety and innovation. No attempted imposition of thematic unity would usefully loop together the diverse and disparate ideas presented here. Yet that is precisely their strength; some of these essays are theoretical, some practical; some assess students, others observe teachers; but all of them, in their own ways, contribute to the scholarship of the ELT field.

These submissions have been read by a voluntary Committee of Language Centre and English Department staff, who have generously donated their time and energies to ensure the high quality of the contents. Some authors represented here submitted graphics in support of their essays. Regrettably, for reasons of copyright, some of these are incapable of being reproduced here. The Proceedings Committee has made efforts to present the texts exactly as they were submitted, which accounts for occasional disparities in formatting and style. Finally, the

Proceedings Committee has checked the essays for plagiarism, and does not believe that these papers contain uncited or inadequately sourced material. All of the essays have been represented to the Proceedings Committee as original work.

There is no principle of seriation in the ordering of the essays. No priority or rank is assigned to any essay by means of its position in the text.

The acknowledgements above makes precise how many people worked to make this conference, and the proceedings, successful. Yet the Proceedings Committee would again like to take this opportunity to thank the Rector-Emeritus of SEEU, Alajdin Abazi, and the current Rector of SEEU, Zamir Dika. They would also like to record their extreme gratitude to the Embassy of the United States of America in Macedonia, in particular to the Cultural and Educational attaché, Mr. John Surface. Mr. Surface kindly addressed the Opening Ceremony of the conference, and the Embassy of the United States has generously funded this publication.

A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE PRODUCTION OF ENGLISH STRESS AND INTONATION BY MACEDONIAN LEARNERS

John Enrico and Vesna Prodanovska

The Significance of Prosodic Deviance

Prosodic deviance by non-native speakers of English appears to be more salient to native English listeners than segmental deviance (Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, and Koehler, 1992). Furthermore, prosodic deviance negatively affects intelligibility more than does segmental deviance (Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler, 1988). Therefore, it is important for teachers to be aware of students' problems with English rhythm and intonation and to be able to correct them. We report here on the discovery of such problems in the English of Macedonian university students, and we recommend both further research on how best to address them in the Macedonian context and the training of Macedonian teachers of English at all levels of the education system to deal with them.

Intonational Form: What are We Comparing?

Starting with structural-linguistic studies of intonation (e.g. Bloomfield, 1933; Pike, 1945), there has been general agreement that the meaningful units of intonation, the *tunes*, are composed of smaller, probably meaningless elements, *tones*, rather as morphemes are composed of phonemes. There has been much disagreement, however, about what the tones are, how many there are, and how they are put together to form tunes. We are not going to review the different

approaches here, but will straightaway give our analytical position, which is currently the scientifically most defensible one (see Ladd, 1996). First, a theory of intonation must be built upon a phonological theory of stress (or prominence). It is differences in prominence that translate into differences in the range of the speaker's voice, not differences in intonation itself, pace Sweet (1906) and Brazil, Coulthard and Johns (1980) who proposed an intonational parameter "key," or Pike (1945) who proposed an intonational "extra-high" tone, or many others. Second, tones (the phonemic units) display autosegmental behavior---they *link* to selected prominent syllables and they *spread* . Most of an intonational contour, in fact, is either spread or interpolated from a small number---three or four---tone tokens. Third, the set of tone types is minimal, consisting just of level high and low. This is the theory of Pierrehumbert (1980), which was built on earlier work by Liberman (1975). Briefly, the high (H) and low (L) tones are used in three ways. First, they make up pitch accents which can occur only on stressed syllables. Pitch accents are either simple (H*, L*) or compound (L+H*, H+L*, L*+H, H*+L), where the starred tone is the one that occurs squarely on the accented syllable and the unaccented tone is an onset or offset. Second, they occur as phrasal tones H-, L- directly after the last pitch accent in an intonational phrase; both phrasal tones and the unaligned tones in compound accents L*+H, H*+L spread rightward (not leftward) to all unaccented syllables, all the way to the right boundary of the intonational phrase. And third, the tones occur as boundary tones H%, L% on the right boundary; it is also necessary to recognize a left-boundary tone, %H, in English, but the latter occurs only occasionally. An intonational phrase---the unit between %, %---may be composed of several intermediate phrases---subunits between H-, L- tones. Both these levels of phrases, intonational and intermediate, are characterized by optional pauses before and after and by phrase-final syllable-lengthening as well as by the phrasal and boundary tones themselves. The meaningful units of intonation, the tunes, are these phrases; the only thing the formal theory

has to say about intonational meaning is that, whatever it is, it will be associated with T* T- or T* T- T% (where T is either H or L).

Data

The Dialogue

Four pairs of Macedonian L1s (P1-P4) and one fifth pair (P5) of American English speakers were instructed to perform the following dialogue as naturally as possible, and were recorded using Praat software and a good quality microphone.

1. A: Is Bill here?
2. B: No. Do you want to see him?
3. A: Of course. The only reason I came was to see him.
4. B: Sorry. Since you're here, have some coffee.
5. A: What kind?
6. B: Instant.
7. A: No thanks. I've gotta go. Bye.
8. B: Bye.

This dialogue was constructed to reveal whether subjects had control of focus in yes/no questions (Pierrehumbert, 1980), extra prominence at the initiation of a new topic (Schegloff, 1979; Lehiste, 1979; Brazil, Coulthard and Johns, 1980; Nakajima and Allen, 1992, etc.), lack of prominence on repeated material (Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert, 1986; Nakajima and Allen, 1992), common question contours (Pierrehumbert, 1980), extra drop in prominence at the end of a paragraph (Lehiste, 1979), and specific tunes on *no*, *bye*, *sorry*, *of course*, and *no thanks*. Also, we hoped to gather information on control of English stress/rhythm, keeping in mind that this forms the foundation for intonation. Macedonian subjects were selected for average proficiency

in order to produce results that have at least prima facie statistical validity, even though we had no intention of doing a statistically valid study at this point in the research.

Praat

Pitch or fundamental frequency, intensity, and duration were analyzed with Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2004). The upper wave graph in a Praat figure is of intensity (acoustic energy, in decibels) plotted against time in milliseconds. This waveform roughly corresponds to syllable structure. The intensity contour is given below as a green curve, along with the pitch curve in blue. Gaps in the pitch curve occur when the pitch analyzer encounters a (near) voiceless stretch. All of duration, pitch, and intensity were evaluated (along with auditory impression) in assigning degree of stress to a given syllable.

A transcription in ordinary spelling is given below the pitch and intensity curves, with word onsets matched to the latter. The core of our analysis is the tone tier below the transcription. This information is the basis of our comparison of the Macedonian and English speakers.

It must be emphasized that the analysis of intonation used here is purely for scientific purposes and has no pedagogical value whatsoever. It would be absurd to try to teach intonation in terms of H*s, L*s, H%s and the like.

Results

General Remarks on Pitch Range

Our female American English speaker's mean pitch range of 127 Hz fell right in the middle of the mean pitch ranges of the Macedonian female subjects. Our male American English speaker's mean pitch range, however, was about 10 Hz higher than the highest Macedonian male's average range. Not much weight can be put on this because we collected data from only one American male. But even if further data were to go in the same direction, it would not be very noteworthy---Gibbon (1998), for example, notes that German males have a lower pitch range than English males.

Word Stress and Vowel Reduction

Instant was the only polysyllabic word that appeared with inappropriate stress (in pairs P1, P2; the other two pairs were fine). The inappropriate pronunciations used an unreduced vowel in the second syllable and gave it about as much prominence as the first syllable. The problem, it seems, is not so much with word stress here as it is with vowel reduction, and we would recommend that more attention be paid to lexicalized vowel reduction. See Figure 1 for Praat analysis of sentences P1-6 (Macedonian) and P5-6 (American).

Phrasal Stress

Phrasal stress was another matter. All Macedonian pairs but one inauspiciously began the dialogue with stress on the auxiliary *is*. P1 also wrongly stressed *was*, *you're*, *some,* and the second *see*. P2 wrongly stressed *is*, *do*, *only*, second *see*, *you're*, and *some*. P3 wrongly stressed *is*, *him*, second *see*, *you're*, *some*, and *what*. P4 wrongly stressed *him*, *only*, second *see*, *you're*, *some*, and *what*. Most of these mistakes are function words; therefore, cliticization of function words needs more work. The common mistake on the second *see* actually has a pragmatic origin

that we'll get to in a moment. See Figure 2 for Praat analysis of sentences P2-4 (Macedonian) and P5-4 (American).

Question Contours

All four pairs displayed an incorrect tune on the yes/no question in sentence 2. *Want* should be a stressed L* or unstressed L and *see* should be a stressed L* realized even lower than *want*. Pair P4 also displayed lack of control of the yes/no question contour in the beginning question of the dialogue, using the wrong tones on *Bill*, *here*. There were no significant problems with the fragment question-word question in sentence 5; pairs P3 and P4 did place a little too much prominence on *what* but the contours were fine. See Figure 3 for Praat analysis of sentences P4-2 (Macedonian) and P5-2 (American).

Spreading L- over Repeated Material

No Macedonian pair was aware that repeated material (*to see him* in sentence 3) is unstressed and given L- by spreading. The consequence of this destressing is that nuclear stress has to fall on *came* or perhaps on *was*, which therefore becomes emphatic since it is not in the normal position for nuclear stress. See Figure 4 for Praat analysis of sentences P4-3 (Macedonian) and P5-3 (American).

Extra Rise with Topic Shift

Similarly, no Macedonian pair was aware that a new topic is begun with an extra rise, which should fall on *since* in sentence 4. See Figure 2 again.\

Extra Drop in Prominence at the End of a Paragraph

If we take the farewell *Bye* to be paragraph end, all pairs displayed the pre-boundary lengthening and lower pitch noted by Lehiste (1979), and at least one pair also seems to have shown the laryngealization that she discussed for that position.

Other Tune Problems

Besides the contour problem for yes/no questions, inappropriate tunes were observed on *have* in P1-4 and on *no* in P2-2.

Discussion

The issues with phrasal stress might seem trivial, but remember that prominence is the foundation of intonation, and indeed, the unfortunate effects on intonation can be seen in these data. The lack of control of the contour for yes/no questions is surprising, since this sentence type is very common and taught from the very beginning of English instruction. But most important for clarity of communication are the pragmatic errors in Sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.6. Wennerstrom (1998) found that, among several pragmatic functions of intonation that she had listeners rate for their contribution to communicative effectiveness, rises at topic shifts were the most important. Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert (1986) did a fairly detailed study of the use of intonation to segment and structure discourse and also noted the importance of this function---for example, understanding intended referents of pronouns depends on discourse structure.

Conclusion

English intonation is an important component of comprehensible speech. The errors that we have observed in our small exploratory sample warrant a larger sample and statistical analysis, plus some recommendations for improving instruction if the results are anything like what we have found here.

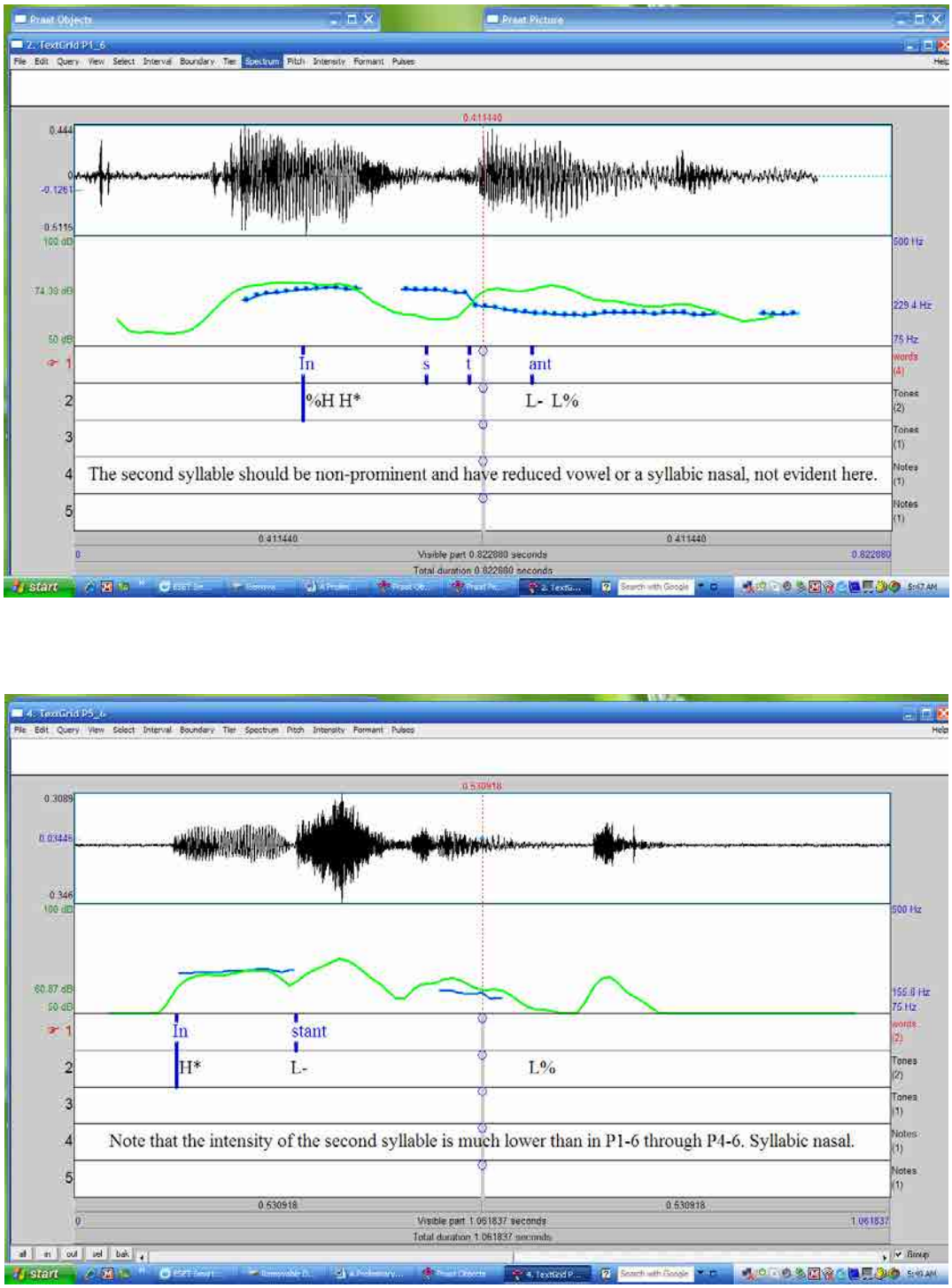
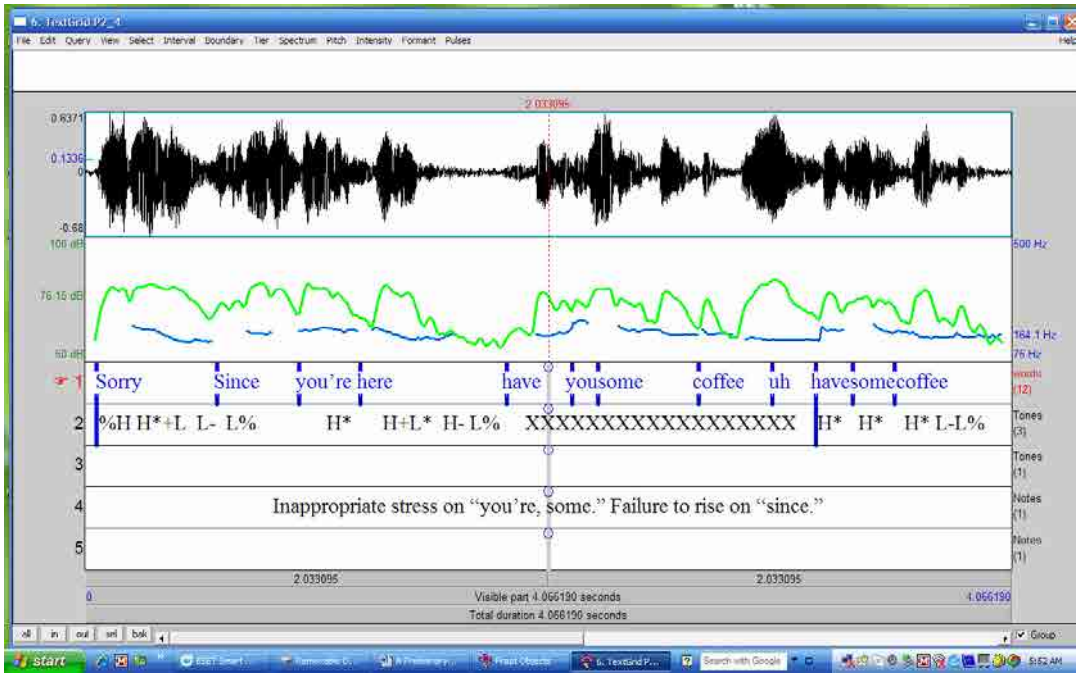


Figure 1. Lexicalized Vowel Reduction



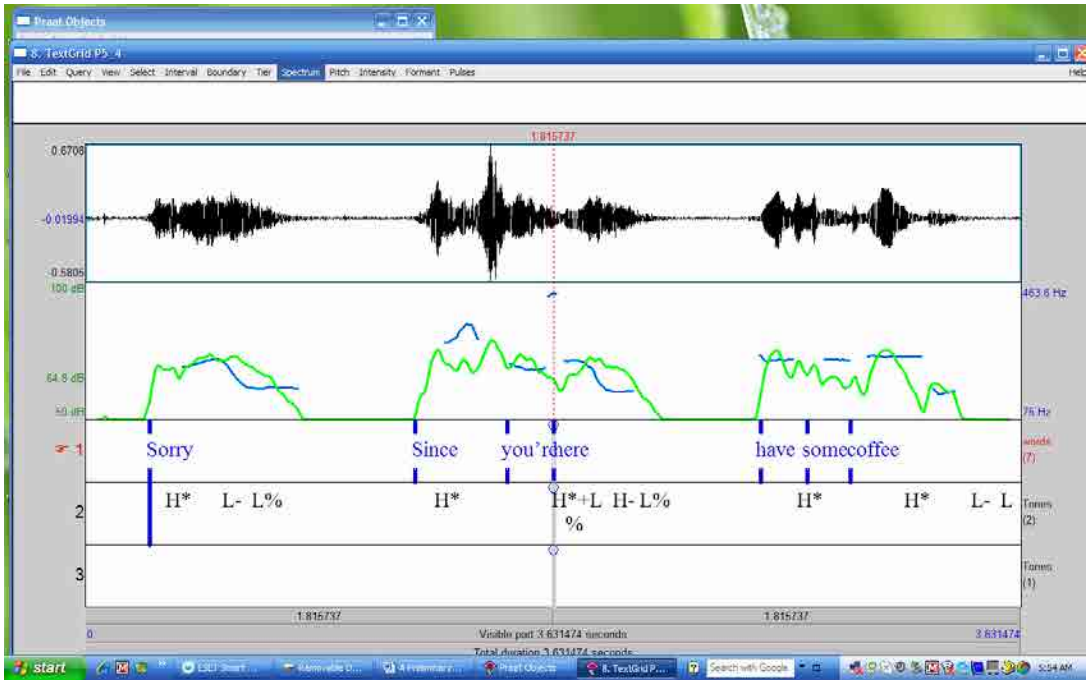
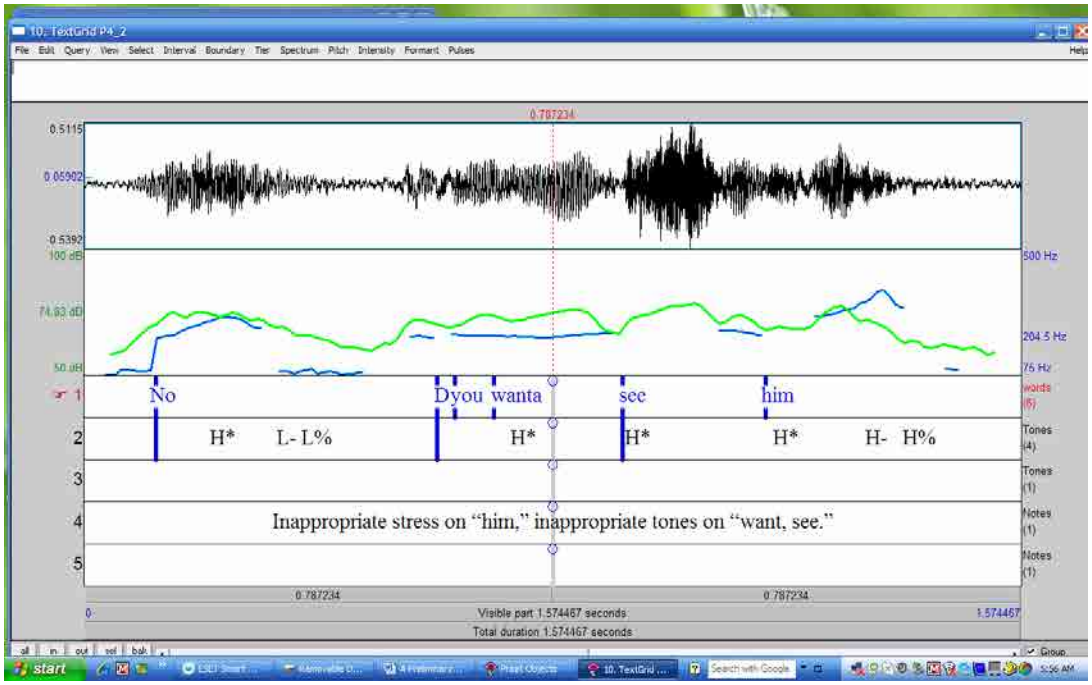


Figure 2. Phrasal Stress and Rise on New Topic



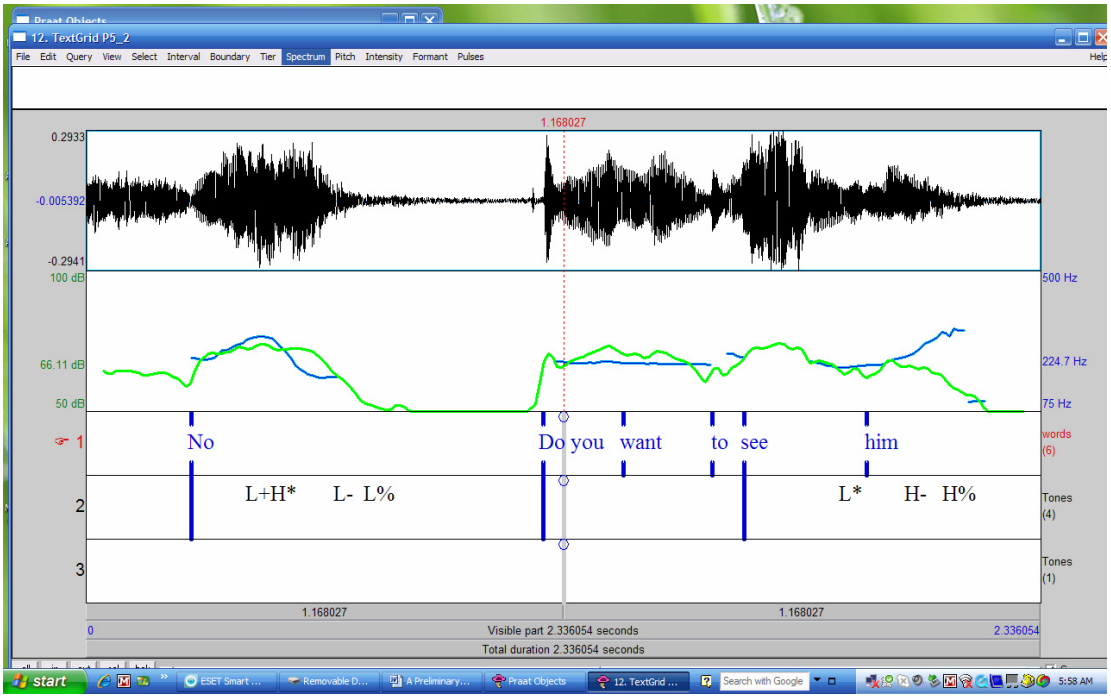
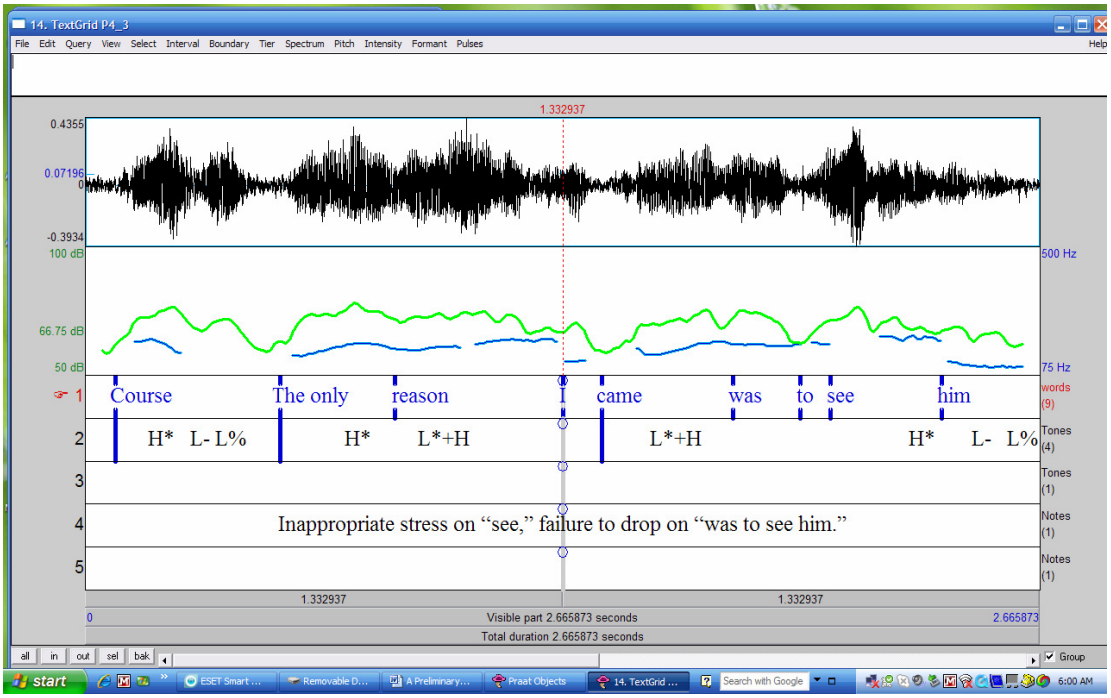


Figure 3. Yes/no Questions



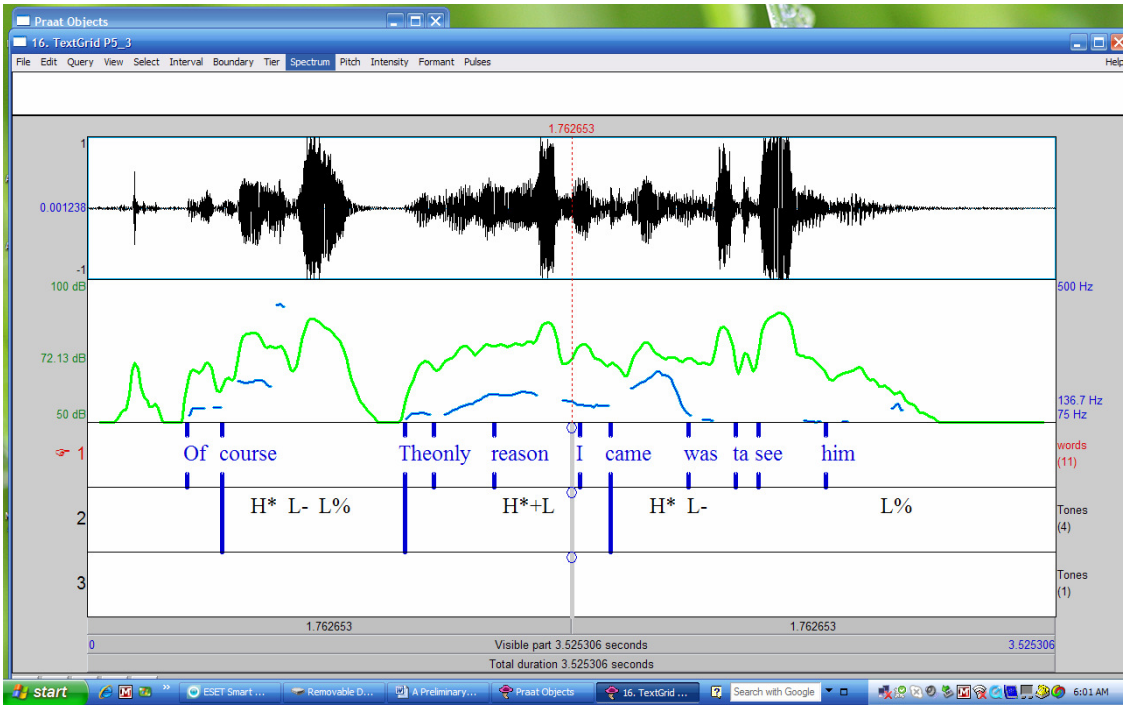


Figure 4. Spreading L- Over Repeated Material

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