

International Linguistic Association

Monthly Lecture Series

Saturday, February 1, 2025. 11 AM – 12:00 PM (EST) on Zoom

Dr. Lisa Davidson
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Competing influences of prosody, pitch, and gender in the detection of creaky voice

Abstract:

Creaky phonation in American English has been observed both in a prosodic role as a phrase-final marker (Kreiman, 1982; Slifka, 2006), and as a sociolinguistically conditioned element (Henton & Bladon, 1987; Mendoza-Denton, 2011). While creaky phonation has been discussed both in the linguistic literature and in the popular press, it is unclear how accurately naïve listeners can detect creaky voice, and what factors facilitate or hinder its identification. Three possibilities are considered: (1) listeners' identification of creak in American English may be modulated by acoustic properties of speakers' voices not related to their gender, (2) listeners may be biased to attribute creaky phonation to women even when it is also present in male speakers, or (3) they may identify creak equally among all speakers. In this research, American listeners are presented with two experiments containing stimuli from both high- and low-pitched male and female speakers. Other manipulations include whether or not the utterance is a full sentence, and whether the utterance is completely modal, completely creaky, or partially creaky (final 40-50% of the utterance). A robust finding is that listeners are least accurate on partial creak, suggesting that creaky phonation is least salient when it serves as an utterance-final marker. There are no strong effects of gender aside from a weak tendency to identify creak more often for females than males in the whole creak condition in one experiment. Overall results indicate that rates of identifying creak in male and female speakers are relatively similar, but prosodic properties and pitch interact with how well listeners can recognize creaky speech.

Date & Time: February 1, 2025 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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About the Speaker

Dr. Lisa Davidson



Lisa Davidson is a Silver Professor of Linguistics at New York University. Her research interests include Hawaiian, the phonetics of voice quality, the production of connected speech, and second language acquisition. Her current research on the phonetics of the Hawaiian language is funded by the National Science Foundation. She received her PhD from Johns Hopkins University. She is currently the co-general editor of *Laboratory Phonology*, a member of the permanent council of the International Phonetic Association, and the director of the Phonetics and Experimental Phonology Lab at NYU.

More information about Lisa Davidson [here](#).
You can also follow her on X [@lisa_b_davidson](#)