



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM  
Faculty of Humanities

**REVIEW**

**of the foreign scientific consultant of the dissertation of Iskakova Gulnaz  
“Prosodic ‘portrait’ of academic discourse”  
submitted for the candidacy of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)  
in 6D021000 -Foreign Philology**

Gulnaz Iskakova’s dissertation “A Prosodic Portrait of Academic Discourse” presents a highly relevant and original contribution to the study of spoken academic communication. The topic addresses an area that has received limited scholarly attention in Kazakhstan—the intersection of prosody and discourse within the lecture genre. The research is grounded in a solid theoretical foundation and makes a meaningful step toward understanding how prosodic features such as pitch, intensity, pause, and duration shape the coherence and communicative effectiveness of academic speech.

The relevance of the study is undeniable. The concept of “discourse” has been extensively examined by linguists worldwide, yet it remains multifaceted and lacks a single universal definition. In Kazakhstan, however, academic discourse—particularly as it manifests in lecture delivery—has not been thoroughly explored. Iskakova convincingly argues that academic discourse represents a hybrid between scientific and pedagogical discourses, functioning primarily within higher education contexts. Her focus on prosody as a crucial marker of coherence and meaning in lectures fills an important gap in both local and international scholarship on spoken academic communication.

The purpose of the dissertation—to investigate the prosodic organization of academic discourse and identify its role in constructing coherence—is achieved through clearly defined objectives. These include a review of discourse theory, analysis of coherence mechanisms, definition of prosody as a linguistic phenomenon, and a comparative study of Kazakh- and English-medium lectures delivered by Kazakhstani lecturers. The combination of qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative acoustic measurements represents a methodologically robust and innovative approach. The use of Praat software for acoustic analysis adds precision and reliability to the findings.

The empirical base of the study is extensive and authentic. The corpus includes fifteen Kazakh-language and ten English-medium lectures, totaling over half a million words, recorded under natural classroom conditions. This authentic material allows Iskakova to capture the real prosodic and communicative strategies used by lecturers, ensuring the ecological validity of her results.

The scientific novelty of the dissertation lies in its dual focus: first, on the prosodic structure of lectures delivered in the Kazakh language—previously unexamined in this way—and second, on the analysis of English-medium instruction (EMI) lectures by non-native lecturers. The comparison reveals systematic differences: Kazakh lectures rely heavily on interrogative and repetitive coherence strategies, while EMI lectures emphasize correction and paraphrasing as tools for managing linguistic accuracy and comprehensibility. The acoustic data presented demonstrate how pitch, intensity, and timing vary across both languages, showing prosody's vital role in constructing meaning.

The theoretical significance of the research is also considerable. Iskakova successfully integrates discourse analysis, functional phonetics, and sociophonetics, developing a comprehensive model for how prosody supports coherence in academic speech. The work builds on the theories of M. Foucault, N. Fairclough, T. van Dijk, and leading Kazakh scholars, extending their insights into a new empirical domain. Her findings enrich the understanding of academic discourse as an institutional genre, linking prosodic structure with communicative intention and lecturer identity.

The practical value of the dissertation is equally strong. The detailed recommendations for lecture delivery—such as appropriate intonation patterns for different question types and strategies for marking corrections or parenthetical insertions—are directly applicable to teacher training and English-medium instruction in Kazakhstan. These insights can improve the effectiveness of university teaching, the design of online lectures, and the development of spoken academic corpora.

Overall, “A Prosodic Portrait of Academic Discourse” is a well-structured, theoretically sound, and empirically rich piece of research. It combines linguistic precision with pedagogical relevance, bridging gaps between theory and practice. Gulnaz Iskakova's work stands as a valuable contribution to discourse studies, functional phonetics, and educational linguistics in Kazakhstan and beyond. It is distinguished by methodological rigor, originality, and practical applicability—qualities that make it worthy of high academic recognition.

**Ass. Prof. M. Dorleijn PhD**  
**Foreign Supervisor**  
**University of Amsterdam**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'M. Dorleijn', written over a light blue horizontal line.