

*This handout is designed as a resource for people not attending the talk. All the content below except the references are presented on my slides. For a copy of my slides, please contact me: [esmith49@u.rochester.edu](mailto:esmith49@u.rochester.edu)*

## Definitions

**Prosodic dissonance:** mismatch between the linguistic stress of a word and its metric placement

**Stress discrepancy rule:** The stronger the metric position coupled with a weaker syllable, or the weaker the metric position coupled with a stronger syllable, the more prosodically dissonant an event will sound.

Associated phenomena:

- **Vowel reduction:** schwas on musical strong beats or schwas on accented syllables in the text can increase the feeling of prosodic dissonance
- **Syncopation:** phenomenal accents / syncopation affect whether and how much a lyric is prosodically dissonant
- **Parallelism:** we assume that a repeated musical pattern will correspond to a repeated prosodic pattern
- **Rhyme creation:** prosodic dissonance is commonly used to create or force a weak-syllable rhyme scheme
- **Syllable length:** altering the relative duration of syllables as spoken can enhance the sense of prosodic dissonance

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## Transcribed Examples

**Katy Perry, "Unconditionally" (2013), chorus**

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of the following notes: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4. The lyrics are: Un-con- di- tio - nal, un-con- di- tio - nal - ly. The syllable 'di-' is placed on a weak metric position (the second quarter of the first measure), while 'tio-' is on a strong position (the first quarter of the first measure). This creates a stress discrepancy.

**Taylor Swift, "...Ready For It?" (2017), bridge**

ba-by let the games be-gin let the games be-gin let the games be-gin (ah ah ah)

**Lady Gaga, "Applause" (2013), second verse**

5 I've o - ver - heard your theo - ry\_\_ no - stal-gia's for geeks

9 I guess sir if you say\_\_ so some of us just like to read

one se- cond I'm a\_\_ Kunst then. sud-den-ly the Kunst is me

13 pop cul- ture was in\_\_ art\_\_ now\_ art's in pop cul- ture in me

**5 Seconds of Summer, "Easier" (2019), prechorus**

I love. you so much that I hate you, right now it's so hard to blame you 'cause you're so damn beau-ti- ful\_\_ so damn beau-ti- ful\_\_

**Lady Gaga, "Applause" synthesizer during second verse**

**Janelle Monáe**, "Make Me Feel" (2018), second half of first verse

you keep on as - king me the same ques-tions and se-cond gues - sing all my in - ten-tions  
should know by the way\_ I use my com-pres-sion that you are the an - swer to my con-fes-sions

The image shows two staves of musical notation in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The first line of music corresponds to the first line of lyrics, and the second line of music corresponds to the second line of lyrics.

**Taylor Swift**, "You Need to Calm Down" (2019), first verse

you are some-bo - dy that I don't know but you're ta - kin' shots at me like it's Pat-ron

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in a key signature of two sharps (F#, C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes.

**Zedd and Kehlani**, "Good Thing" (2019), first verse

I book my-self ta-bles at all the best rest - 'rants, then eat a - lone  
I buy my-self fast cars just so I can drive 'em real fuc-kin' slow

The image shows two staves of musical notation in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 12/8 time signature. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes.

**Rebecca Black**, "Friday" (2011), bridge

Yes-ter-day was Thurs- day,\_ Thurs- day\_ To-day it is Fri - day, Fri- day\_

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes.

# Bibliography

\*n.b. To reference this talk, please use she/her pronouns and cite the author by first name.

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