



Prosodic modulation as a mark to express pragmatic values: The case of mitigation in Spanish



Adrián Cabedo Nebot

Universitat de València, Facultat de Filologia, Traducció i Comunicació, Departament de Filologia Espanyola, Blasco Ibáñez, 32, 46010, Valencia, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Available online 17 June 2021

Keywords:
Prosody
Mitigation
Spanish

ABSTRACT

One of the functions of prosody in discourse is to convey pragmatic values that add up to the core semantic meaning of spoken units or segments. Regarding mitigation, Caffi (1999: 890) specifically discusses “the very important prosodic and kinesic means of mitigation, such as changes in pitch prominence, rhythm, speech rate, as well as eye-contact, gaze, gaze aversion, smile, particular postures, etc.”

In this paper, I focus on some prosodic factors such as pitch, intensity, duration and speech rate that can be used in European Spanish, in combination with pragmatic meanings. The first aim is to establish a theoretical deliberation on prosody as a clear marker to convey pragmatic meaning. The second is to clarify a very complex casuistic, with mitigation being considered as an initial clue to that realizing aim. As I problematize in this paper, the lowering of prosodic expression is not the only phonic mechanism that expresses mitigated meanings; there are additional possible situations, such as mitigated segments expressed by means of phonic emphasis instead. Moreover, discourse segments can be mitigated using only phonic means (i.e. without the concurrence of verbal elements). In conclusion, this paper attempts to outline this complex panorama in which prosody, associated with non-linguistic factors such as face, can be used as a trigger to express (and later, identify) meanings that depend heavily on contextual interpretation.

© 2021 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

This paper¹ seeks to present a succinct panorama of the crossover between pragmatics and prosody.² It also focuses on mitigation as an example of a pragmatic phenomenon that can be expressed by both verbal and prosodic means in European Spanish. The presence of well-known structural principles in conversation (Briz Gómez, 2001; Sacks et al., 1974), along with the importance of face (Goffman, 1967; Laforest, 2002), will be the constant concerns throughout the paper. In addition, this study attempts to exemplify phenomena that any analyst can find frequently in daily interactions. For this reason, the present research is necessarily a corpus-based study, illustrated with examples from spontaneous spoken corpora, but it does not

E-mail address: Adrian.Cabedo@uv.es.

¹ We would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticisms and interesting comments on prosody and pragmatics, which have no doubt contributed substantially to improve the final version. It goes without saying that all remaining problems are my own responsibility.

² This study has been funded by the Spanish MINECO (Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad) through the following projects: “La atenuación pragmática en su variación genérica: géneros discursivos escritos y orales en el español de España y América” (Es.VaG.Atenuación FFI 2016-75249-P), and “Unidades discursivas para una descripción sistemática de los marcadores del discurso en español (UDEMADIS, FFI 2016-77841-P).

include frequency data analysis based on recurrence (a quantitative approach to this phenomenon can be found in (Cabedo Nebot, 2018)).

All the examples presented in this paper come from two oral speech corpora of European Spanish: the Val.Es.Co Oral Corpus (Cabedo Nebot and Pons Bordería, 2013) and the unpublished corpus compiled by Uclés and studied in (Cabedo Nebot and Uclés Ramada 2019), which contains samples of MTV's reality show *Gandía Shore*. Val.Es.Co includes 73,344 words from 29 Spanish conversations, while *Gandía Shore* includes 14 recordings (mainly conversations) and a total of 53,423 words.

The examples used in this paper come from other previous research papers in which we analysed intonational units with acoustic values superior (in a positive or negative way) to the mean of the speaker (Cabedo Nebot, 2018; Cabedo Nebot and Uclés Ramada, 2019); these values, measured in semitones (pitch range), decibels (intensity) and seconds per syllable (speech rate) were only considered if they were twice (or more) the standard deviation of the speaker. In (Cabedo Nebot, 2018; Cabedo Nebot and Uclés Ramada, 2019), descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were applied to observe the relationship between acoustic data and pragmatic data, and three categories were defined: a) only phonic mitigation, b) verbal and phonic mitigation, and c) only verbal mitigation.

The analysis of corpora samples depicts a complex casuistic involving the notions of prosody and pragmatics, focused specifically on mitigation in this paper. In this context-dependent environment, the roles of speakers and hearers are usually determining to understand the communicative set up: in everyday conversations we pay attention to other people (present [hearers] or absent). More precisely, we establish positive and negative relations with those people who could be involved directly or indirectly in our context of speaking: as individual human beings in this world, their actual presence (or absence) might affect such discourse interactions. However, communication extends further beyond this idea. Speakers conceptualize the contextual environment in cognitive roles and schemas combined with communicative obligations, restrictions and expectations (Langacker, 2008; Talmy, 2001; Albelda Marco and Estellés Arguedas, submitted). As a cognitive representation, the face of oneself or others is projected from the mental space into the conversational schema.

Face management is nuclear in conversational planning. Face, viewed as a cognitive representation of conversation participants, has a paramount importance in everyday conversation, given the nature of conversation as a social behavior and not just as a transition of asynchronous meanings (Arundale, 2013a, 2013b). Daily communication displays an important concern for preserving one's face (Figueras Bates, 2018a; Goffman, 1967; Spencer-Oatey, 2007). This care for maintaining face explains the selection of multiple linguistic elements or forms, whether verbal or non-verbal, that function as preservatives of face. Nevertheless, *face* is not a clear-cut concept to analyze. Primarily, it includes the considerations of the speakers themselves and/or the hearers. Face has been defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman, 1967, p. 7). In this context, any discourse interaction can perform an important role in the protection and preservation of social face. This concept of face, moreover, derives from an interactive construction in which the self, as a concept, is heavily negotiated among speakers (Figueras Bates, 2018a, 2018b). In this way, face becomes social and cognitive, and it also becomes a key element in every successful conversation (Benoit, 1997; Hernández Flores, 2004, 2015; Spencer-Oatey, 2007).

Just as the member of any group is expected to have self-respect, so also he [or she] is expected to sustain a standard of considerateness; he [or she] is expected to go to certain lengths to save the feelings and the face of others present, and he [or she] is expected to do this willingly and spontaneously because of emotional identification with the others and with their feelings.

(Goffman, 1955, p. 215)

Goffman's (1955) statement above handles the notion of face protection more effectively; mitigation, on which this paper focuses, would be a relevant strategy to accomplish that task (Caffi, 1999). However, most pragmatic phenomena treat face as a cognitive social stereotype. Pragmatics, as a discipline that depends deeply on contextual features, relies heavily on the notion of the participant. Phenomena such as irony, sarcasm, indirect speech acts and mitigation are, therefore, communicative procedures that are linked to social discourse, but which may also have a positive or negative impact on some speaker or hearer's face. However, the communicative procedures used to express this impact are diverse, and, as this paper shows, it is indeed possible to cause damage to the participants' face with apparently mitigated segments (typically intended to protect face), and also to enhance or protect their face with apparently sarcastic or humoristic segments (typically intended to damage face). This outcome is frequent in, although not exclusive to, certain indirect speech acts (Toplak and Katz, 2000).

By way of example, this paper deals primarily with mitigation. The concept of mitigation has been extensively addressed in recent literature. One of the most recent definitions, by Briz and Albelda (2013, p. 292), presents mitigation as the “minimization of the illocutive force and the role of the participants in the enunciation in order to successfully reach the intended goal,” adding that mitigation “is used in situational contexts of less immediacy, or that require less communicative immediacy, or where less communicative immediacy is intended” (my translation). Traditionally, the analyses have highlighted the diversity of the linguistic procedures able to mitigate a piece of discourse (Albelda Marco and Estellés Arguedas, submitted). However, with a few exceptions (Cabedo Nebot, 2018; Cabedo Nebot and Uclés Ramada, 2019; Estellés-Arguedas and Cabedo Nebot, 2017; Hidalgo Navarro, 2015), the literature on this topic focuses almost exclusively on verbal elements. In contrast, the prosodic factors are usually ignored or discarded in the definitions, even though the authors frequently allude to “the very important prosodic and kinesic means of mitigation, such as changes in pitch prominence, rhythm, speech rate, as well as eye-contact, gaze, gaze aversion, smile, particular postures, etc.” (Caffi, 1999, p. 890). In fact, there is an important consensus in highlighting the significance of prosody in the study of pragmatics (Prieto, 2015, p. 371):

Language researchers agree that intonation conveys various communicative functions that range from semantico-pragmatic functions such as speech act marking (assertion, question, etc.), information status (focus, given vs new information), belief status (epistemic position of the speaker with respect to the information exchange), politeness, affective, and emotional states, to indexical functions such as gender, age, and the sociolectal and dialectal status of the speaker.

The prosodic analysis of pragmatic phenomena has traditionally been a problematic field (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 1996; Prieto, 2015; Selting, 2010). One important difficulty arises from the retrieval of segments: while verbal segments can be easily searched for and retrieved from a wide repertoire of written or transcribed texts, phonic units and phenomena cannot. Phonic data is often not (correctly) reflected or annotated in spoken corpora (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 1996), and the difference between *phonic* and *paralinguistic* is often unclear. There are further problematic aspects in the prosodic approach to pragmatics. The relation between prosodic factors and speech units is quite controversial, for instance. The variation of a given acoustic parameter (an increase in pitch, for example) can affect minimal units (phonemes, syllables) or broader ones (words, stress groups, intonational phrases, paratones, etc.) (Barnwell, 2013; Levis and Pickering, 2004; Selting, 2000). However, the limits between different types of units still need to be set consistently.

Considering all of the above factors, this paper highlights the importance of prosody as a discourse mechanism to preserve face. It also examines the correlation – or its absence – between prosody and lexical/verbal forms. In what follows, only those prosodic profiles that are clearly superior or inferior to the neutral prosodic usage (the average values of each speaker) are considered. Since the scope of the paper is mainly theoretical, it aims to outline the main communicative effects that can be achieved with prosody and that are often referred to in pragmatics, with a special emphasis on mitigation. To this end, Section 2 introduces the relationship between prosody and pragmatics by examining some recent literature on the subject. Section 3 describes and assesses different case studies illustrating the relationship presented in Section 2. Section 4 then considers the possibility of using prosodic modulations with or without utilizing mitigating verbal forms when speakers perform a face-threatening act. Finally, Section 5 discusses the previous sections from a critical perspective and outlines some theoretical positions.

2. The role of prosody in pragmatics

The prosody used in conversation displays a set of phonic procedures that cover different aspects (Quilis, 1981; Wennerstrom, 2001): the more common procedure to convey meanings in Spanish is the modification of the tone or pitch that may affect, as was just mentioned, both minimal segments (phonemes, syllables) and broader elements (words within the same unit, utterances, or even words in several contiguous linear units) (Gussenhoven, 2004). But pitch is not used in isolation: very frequently, the prosodic modulation of an expression includes the use of tempo-related elements, such as variations in the speech rate, in the phoneme length or in the duration, along with the amplification or reduction of intensity values (Ladefoged and Johnson, 2011).

Prosody may also convey semantic or pragmatic meanings, regardless of the unit being affected. For instance, stressing or not stressing the one-syllable word *mi* in Spanish is the context-free key to determine whether it means “my” or “for me.” However, together with this disambiguating meaning, there are further meanings that are not context-free. Such context-dependent meanings are triggered by the presence of altered prosodic parameters affecting the same segment. For example, in the phrase *Esta es MI casa* (“this is MY house”), uttering *MI* with emphasis (which can adopt the form of greater intensity, pauses before and after, lengthening of [m], etc.) in a context where two people are talking about a house may indicate that the speaker disagrees with some interlocutor who believes the house to be owned by others, for instance. A similar case involves discourse markers; for example, uttering the discourse marker *bueno* (lit. ‘good’) with low pitch and vowel *e* lengthening conveys a meaning mitigated acceptance of a previous suggestion (‘that’s OK’), whereas uttering *bueno* with high intensity can convey rejection or willingness to put an end to a topic of conversation (meaning ‘enough!’ or ‘stop it!’).

Recent literature has dealt with the relationship between pragmatic phenomena and their prosodic expression (Brown and Prieto, 2017; Estellés-Arguedas, 2015; Nadeu and Prieto, 2011; Prieto and Rigau, 2011). Occasionally, native intuition can indicate specific directions in this relationship that do not fully correspond with reality, especially when our hypotheses are tested against corpus data.

For instance, tempting as this inference may be, the suggestion that a low or a high pitch is related to politeness – meaning that speakers lower or raise the fundamental frequency of their voices as a mechanism to show servility to the face of others – seems not to be proven consistently by such corpus data. Indeed, variability seems to be the common factor in these studies: whereas some of them show how high pitch is related to politeness, others claim that polite utterances are expressed with low pitch values. A number of studies on several languages show a tendency towards lower F0 and pitch range, lower intensity and longer duration when speaking to a superior in Japanese (Idemaru et al., 2019), Catalan (Hübscher et al., 2017) and German (Grawunder et al., 2014). Some others depict a very different scenario; Among many others, Gussenhoven (2004) explains how the Frequency Code relates high pitch with politeness (as well as with friendliness, vulnerability, etc.); Orozco (2010, 2008) finds a correlation between high pitch range and polite utterances in her analysis on Mexican Spanish, and similar results are found in studies on politeness (Álvarez Muro et al., 2011) and mitigation (Rojas Avendaño et al., 2014) in Venezuelan Spanish, where high values of pitch were found to express polite and mitigated utterances. Trying to explain this variability on the politeness expression, other authors have put into question the univocal relationship between tonal behavior and politeness, claiming that context is the key to fully understand the meaning of speaker’s turn (see, for instance,

(Culpeper et al., 2003) or (Culpeper, 2011)); or, at least, taking into account other factors like facial expressions or gestures. For example, in a paper dealing with pitch range, gestural information, and perceived politeness in Catalan, Nadeu and Prieto (2011) stated the following:

Based on the results obtained in the rating and comparison tasks, it can be concluded that pitch height does play a role in the perception of politeness, yet this role is highly dependent on the context (both linguistic and extralinguistic) in which utterances are embedded.

(...)

It is important to stress the fact that no one-to-one relationship between prosody and pragmatic interpretation was found. The very same prosodic cues can be ambiguous between different interpretations and contextual information (such as the visual cues in our experiment) can help disambiguate.

(Nadeu and Prieto, 2011, pp. 852–853)

A considerable number of studies have also found regularities in the phonic modifications related to some other pragmatic meanings, such as humor or irony. For example, some authors suggest that humor can be directly related to a marked phonic expression (Bertrand and Priego-Valverde, 2013; Hidalgo Navarro, 2011), while others posit that the existence of a prosodic pattern L + H* or the deaccenting of certain words creates a humorous effect (Wennerstrom, 2013). The same direct relation with prosody has been posited for irony (Bryant, 2013), although it is accepted that a greater phonic variability exists in its expression, justified by the indirect speech act that usually supports the concept of irony. Moreover, there are authors who have also revealed prosodic patterns in some speech acts (Face, 2003; Rao, 2006, among others).

Considering the above, it would be reasonable to believe that there is a straightforward connection between prosody and pragmatics. However, this connection is not the rule, and it is not even a tendency in some cases. Indeed, one can find scientific papers showing evidence for different results, such as a variety of patterns expressing one and the same pragmatic meaning, or even indicating the complete lack of correlation between prosody and pragmatic meanings. For example, some studies on humor have found that there are not any constant acoustic correlates to the expression of humor in conversational speech (Attardo et al., 2011), although the expected and hypothesized prosodic behavior, at least intuitively speaking, would be that jokes or humorous narrative sequences should be uttered with marked (heightened or lowered) prosodic profiles. Similar results have been obtained for the expression of irony (Attardo et al., 2003; Rivière et al., 2018), which is used both with prosodic salience and with unmarked prosody. In the latter case, of course, it is the context (the speaker's features, register, location, etc.) that serves as the key factor for interpreting a segment as ironic.

Therefore, it is not possible to assign concrete prosodic behaviors to speech elements univocally. No straightforward correlation seems to exist in real data: discourse chunks can be affected by different types of phonic modulations that are not inherently related to specific meanings (see, for instance, the different possibilities of emphasizing *MI* in the example above). Hence, some additional factors must be taken into account together with the phonic configurations.

3. Mitigation and prosody: where verbal meets non-verbal

To exemplify the complex relationship between prosody and pragmatic meanings, this section examines the pragmatic phenomenon of mitigation in European Spanish, and then considers the possible prosodic configurations that can accompany a mitigated fragment. It is suggested that although some tendencies can be identified, any marked prosody can convey mitigation, since the context has the final word in recognizing mitigation.

The relationship between mitigation and prosody is not different from what would be expected for other pragmatic phenomena such as irony, humor or indirect speech acts, among others. One might hold that marked pragmatic meanings (not just neutral or semantic, propositional ones) should be aligned with a marked expression, be it lexical or phonic. This is a commonly accepted belief in linguistic communication: a marked meaning goes hand in hand with a marked form (Levinson, 1983).

The constructions we use to communicate can consist of small lexical units, such as words or a combination of these elements, and are inserted within a context; Each of these units, taken in isolation, has semantic (relatively context-free) and pragmatic meaning. The non-verbal elements add up to the construction and, if a specific prosodic profile is applied, then the meaning of the verbal sequence may be altered. For example, it is not the same to say *Take that notebook* with a low ending tone (L*L%) or with a rising pitch (H*H%). The illocutionary force of both utterances is to order some action, but the tone H*H%, more frequent in questions with a broad focus, could also be used to convey a more polite meaning. In that case, the propositional meaning of the constructional unit (TAKE + obj) is not what is being altered by prosody. Rather, what is actually being modified by prosodic means is the potential damage to the receiver of the order and, more precisely, to his/her face, as well as the speaker's own face, for invading the hearer's territory. Being successful in this process requires contextual evaluation from the speakers involved: first, they must recognize the direct meaning of the constructional unit used; second, they must disambiguate any possible indirect added meaning. This two-way procedure is an immediate mental operation, and it appears to be performed at once (Gibbs, 1986; Wilson and Wharton, 2006). So to speak, prosody is a procedural element that, in combination with verbal segments, can convey (or help convey) specific semantic or even pragmatic meanings. In this communicative action, a specific concrete meaning (or an additional one) is put into a figure or a relevant cognitive place (Talmy, 1975). Such *figureness* is usually related to heightened or lowered perceptual prosodic profiles, whereas a neutral prosodic profile is commonly part of the cognitive background. Neutral prosody does not

necessarily mean the absence of phonic modulation: given that humans do not talk like classic robots, a prosodic fluency is expected. There is no speech without prosody, but it forms part of a scalar regulation (Cole, 2015; Couper-Kuhlen, 2011; Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 1996).

Considering the above, mitigation could be expressed prosodically either with heightened or lowered prosodic profiles. The combination of prosodic and lexical layers establishes four main categories, as illustrated in Fig. 1 below.

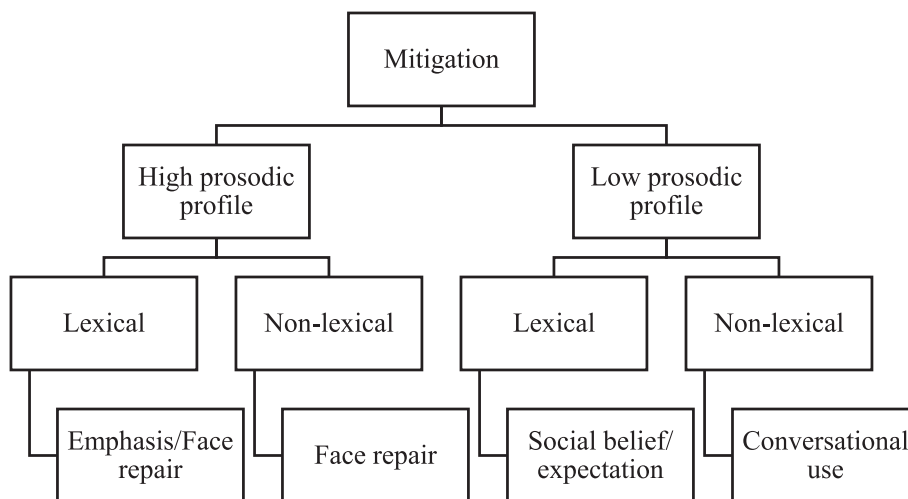


Fig. 1. Intersection of marked prosodic sequences with verbal and non-verbal elements.

Fig. 1 configures the structure for the following sections. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 examine the intuitively expected phonic behavior in mitigation, the lowering of phonic values that, consistently with the approach introduced in the preceding sections, will be studied in combination with the presence or absence of mitigating verbal elements. In Sections 3.3 and 3.4, the least expected profiles are addressed, namely the heightened prosodic profiles or amplified prosodic fragments in which, again, two options can exist in combination or without verbal mitigation. It will be shown that a) in combination with mitigating words, phrases or collocations, the function of prosody is to amplify these lexical elements even further to make them (and the mitigating meaning they convey) even more noticeable; and b) if the prosody affects broader segments with illocutionary force, such as utterances or speech acts, the prosody seems to draw the hearer's attention to the very act of speaking. This process normally results in face repairs, which have been said to be seldom (Cabedo Nebot and Uclés Ramada, 2019) or never (Albelda Marco and Estellés Arguedas, submitted) genuine acts of mitigation, but rather of intensification.

3.1. Low prosodic profile and lexical expression

From an intuitive perspective, the expression of mitigation should be clearly linked to the diminishing of the phonic material, where a lowered prosodic profile is projected onto lexical forms specialized to convey mitigation (*it seems to me that, I believe that, maybe, it could be*, etc.). To illustrate this behavior, example 1 is examined below (transcription conventions are noted at the end of the paper):

- 1)
- B: ¡la puta! el otro día vino uno a trabajar macho// vino por la mañana y por la tarde ya se fue// ¡me cago en la mar! [<unknown/>]
 C: [¿uno nuevo?]
 B: el tío llevaba una coleta/es de tu pueblo
 C: ¿de B?
 B: <low_tone>**me parece que sí me parece que es vegetariano o algo**</low_tone>
 C: ¡ah! ¡hostia! claro
- B: what the fuck! The other day came one guy to work dude// he came in the morning and he left soon in the afternoon// damn it! [<unknown/>]
 C: [another guy?]
 B: the guy wore a ponytail/ he is from your town
 C: from B?
 B: <low_tone>**I think so, I think he is a vegetarian or something**</low_tone>
 C: oh, shit! of course!

(Corpus Val.Es.Co, conversation 12)

The utterance *I think he is vegetarian or something* is phonically marked in that the pitch is reduced, compared with other turns. In this fragment, both *I think* and the particle *or something* would usually function as mitigating elements by themselves, which means that the mitigated value of the utterance in bold could have been activated anyway with a neutral or

default prosody. To ensure that the segment is mitigated, Villalba's (2017, in press) corresponding tests are applied to detect mitigation, showing that a) if the lexical elements suspected to be mitigators are eliminated, the effect is much harsher and more face-threatening:

B: the guy wore a ponytail/ he is from your town

C: from B.?

B: **Yes. He is a vegetarian**

It is also evident that b) three mechanisms (*Me parece* [x2] and *o algo*) that are frequently used as mitigators are found in the same turn. According to Villalba, this co-occurrence is a (weaker) sign that the fragment under analysis is mitigated, since mitigators often accumulate to ensure that the mitigating intention of the speaker is clearly perceived (a similar process to what occurs when heightened prosodic profiles are added to mitigating lexical expressions, as mentioned above). In this case, with the first *I think* speaker B is protecting his own face prior to confirming that the person whose behavior has just been censored comes from the same town as speaker C. Note that the interpretation of the first *I think* as a mere epistemic mark is less likely, considering that in his prior turn, speaker B stated *he is from your town*, without any lexical or phonic reductions. The fact of “being vegetarian,” besides, is surrounded by two mitigating mechanisms: another *I think* and the diffuser *or something*. The mitigation here is twofold: first, it indicates a pretended ignorance concerning this person's identity, thus allowing speaker B to be the one who identifies him (since he is from the same town, the identity of this person belongs to C's territory). Thus, speaker B avoids being considered as interfering in C's territory and, by doing so, protects his own face (while also protecting C's face). Moreover, “vegetarian” is meant as a criticism towards the person (a characteristic that adds up to the fact of being a lazy worker and wearing a ponytail), but speaker B still tries to protect his own face in case someone would think ill of him for considering vegetarianism as something worthy of censure.

A similar explanation can be proposed for example 2:

2)

A: [y que] ella no sabía lo que era// pues yo/ dándole vueltas/ a lo que era/ ¿sabes? porque si a mí se me pone una pulga [me CAGO ENCIMA]

C: [unknown/ >]

A: [total que-// total que/ me paso todo-ahí hasta las cua- hasta las seis está la gente estudiando/ y yo así en el estudio/ ras// ras/ **<low_tone>pero poquito ¿sabes?</low_tone>**/ o sea/ de vez en cuando se rascaba una/ y yo ((ya)) emparanoyada

A: [and that] she didn't know what it was// well I/ thinking about it/ about what that was/ you know? because if a flea jumps onto me, I SHIT MY PANTS]

C: [unknown/ >]

A: [in conclusion// in conclusion/ I'm there all- there are people studying until fou- until six// and I was in the study room like this// scratch// scratch/ **<low_tone>but just a little you know? </low_tone>**/ I mean/ from time to time one of them began to scratch/ and I was freaking out

(Corpus Val.Es.Co, conversation 26)

Example 2 shows the correlation between a lower tonality and two verbal elements: a reductive expression (*but just a little*) and a question tag (*you know?*). Contextually, speaker A is narrating an episode about people studying in a library where, supposedly, there was a flea infestation. When someone began to scratch, A thought that it was due to the bite of a flea and could not help but feel the itch, so she was constantly scratching herself (onomatopoeic *ras ras*). The fragment *but just a little you know?* displays a low pitch and low intensity; with this speech segment, phonically and verbally minimized, speaker A is aiming to protect her face, since the fact of scratching oneself in public can be seen as an exaggerated behavior that is not very flattering for her own image in the eyes of her interlocutors. Consider the fragment without the elements suspected to be mitigators:

A: [total que-// total que/ me paso todo-ahí hasta las cua- hasta las seis está la gente estudiando/ y yo así en el estudio/ ras// ras/

A: [in conclusion// in conclusion/ I'm there all- there are people studying until fou- until six// and I was in the study room like this// scratch// scratch

In fact, immediately after the fragment in bold in example 2, speaker A elaborates the meaning of “just a little, you know?” in the sense that she scratched herself whenever someone else in the room scratched him/herself, thus avoiding responsibility for this action. In this way, she attempts to dispel the perception of her behavior as unreasonable before her interlocutors can arrive at such a judgement.

3.2. Low prosodic profile and non-lexical expression

This section presents prosody as a powerful resource to convey mitigation. The situation is similar to that considered in Section 3.1 but this case involves an initial difference: mitigation is already expected to be related to low prosodic profiles. Some studies have recently discovered that the presence of a lowered prosody in the absence of lexical expression is very common in the conversational schema to convey mitigation (Estellés-Arguedas and Cabedo Nebot, 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to note that prosody guides participants to infer that *something* is going on in the fragment affected, meaning that not every instance of prosodic lowering should be treated ineludibly as a mitigated sequence (Cabedo Nebot, 2018). The reduction of prosodic salience only qualifies as mitigation if it is acting in combination with other contextual factors. To determine whether these fragments with lowered prosodic profile and no verbal mitigation correlates are instances of mitigation, the aforementioned tests by Villalba (2007, in press) can be applied. If the results are positive, prosody is a marking

function, namely the formal mark affecting a segment that otherwise would not be interpreted as expressing a mitigating intention.

3)

A: tengo ese examen/ el día- el lunes tengo otro/ aparte leer los artículos

B: <unknown/>

A: siguiente lunes tengo otro / que me acaban de decir que no es tipo test que es de desarrollo lo que- por lo que tengo que estudiar muchísimo más// que es el mismo del que/ <low_tone>**el que me preguntaste la otra vez**</low_tone>/ pero: esta vez me lo tengo que/ currar más/porque además quiero sacar nota

A: I have this exam/ on- I have another one on Monday/ I also have to read the papers

B: <unknown/>

A: next Monday I have another one/ someone just told me that it's not a multiple choice test but an essay and- that is the reason why I have to study a lot more/ is the same (professor) that/ <low_tone>**he is the one you asked me: about the other time**</low_tone>/ b:ut this time I have to work harder/ because I want high marks

(Corpus Val.Es.Co, conversation 28)

In example 3, the fragment in bold uttered by speaker A shows pitch values 60 Hz lower than her usual average. Moreover, a clear decrease in the speech rate is observed. If one examines the utterance of A, *the one you asked the other time*, the words do not convey direct mitigation. It is the presence of a lowered prosody (tone and speech rate combined) that explains the activation of mitigation. In any case, if the contextual environment was not accessible to the conversational participants or even listeners to the recording, that is, if anyone was able to comprehend the teacher reference, anyone listening to this fragment would be alerted about something meaningful occurring in this sequence. This effect is the specific action of prosody even in cases where non-lexical resources are available. In this exchange, the speaker is also the person recording the conversation; at this point in the example, she realizes that her face could be compromised, since she is about to tell her mother that she must work much harder if she wants to pass Professor X's exam. This professor happens to be the one to whom speaker A will be sending the recording, and she does not want to highlight the fact that she has been describing him to her mother in somewhat unpleasant terms. This concern can be inferred from speaker A's statement that *esta vez me lo tengo que currar más* ('this time I have to work harder'), which implies that there were prior occasions when her marks were unsatisfactory.

3.3. High prosodic profile and lexical expression

Incremented or heightened phonic values typically correspond with emphasis situations: the speaker attempts to magnify a part of their speech for some reason. With reference to mitigation, some mitigating verbal forms can be phonically amplified to enhance their mitigating meaning. Such meaning is already conveyed by these forms alone, but it gains in strength when prosody is used to make these mitigating elements more prominent.

Consider example 4:

4)

A: a mí me pareció en el mapa que es como Alemania más o menos de norte a sur bueno de norte a sur Alemania <unknown/>/ [(es que es muy alargada)]

B: [estos kilómetros nada]// Noruega [es <unknown/>]

A: [pero más pe-]// ¿más de mil kilómetros? ¿más que España por ejemplo de norte a sur es Noruega?

B: mm yo creo que no pero no lo sé ¿eh?/ no sé/ no tengo [ni idea]

A: [bueno] pues **POR LO VISTO** era curioso porque en el norte// era- era al revés ¿no?/ y yo [me-] todos menos él

B: [claro]

A: me han debido ver la cara diciendo <reported>¿y con quién? </reported>

B: [(RISAS)]

A: <reported>¿con quién son infieles? </reported> por- porque yo pensaba [bueno ¿allí en el norte?

A: it seemed to me on the map that it was like Germany more or less from north to south/ well from north to south Germany <unknown/>/ it is very elongated

B: [these kilometers nothing]// Norway [is <unknown/>]

A: [but more bu-]// more than one thousand kilometers? More than Spain? For example from north to south/ it is Norway

B: §mm I don't think so/ but I really don't know eh?/ I don't know/ no idea

A: [well] **APPARENTLY** it was a curious thing because on north// it- it was the other way around / and I [my-] all but him

B: [sure]

A: they should see my face saying <reported>and with who</reported>?

B: [(LAUGHING/>)]

A: <reported>with whom they are unfaithful?</reported> Bec- because I thought well <reported>out there on north? </reported>

(Corpus Val.Es.Co, conversation 4)

Example 4 introduces a case in which the speaker pretends to protect her face while she makes a statement about the infidelity of Norwegians. This kind of protection is expressed by means of phonic emphasis (a tone higher than the average tone of the speaker), but it also involves an evidential marker such as *por lo visto* ('apparently'). Similarly to example 1, the

motivation to maximize the perception of the segment could be justified if the aim of the speaker to be fully pragmatically decoded is kept in mind.

For this reason, examples 1 and 2 are related with higher prosodic profiles linked to verbal elements in mitigated sequences for repairing or preserving social face. In other studies (Cabedo Nebot and Uclés Ramada, 2019), the frequency of example 1, higher prosodic profiles used to signal a restitution of the face of others, has been found to be greater than the frequency of Example 2, which implies a protection of the self.

In example (4), heightened prosody affects one word, not a wider segment. This is the case in (5), where the whole intervention “AH BUENO/ PERDÓN // ee / Xavi” is affected.

5)

MJ: ¿y de Xavi?/ ¿qué?// ¿qué tal?

M: ¿Xavi? ¿Xavi / Xavi?/ ¿quién es Xavi?

MJ: ¿quién es Xavi?/ eel- el de gafas

M: ¿ese es el que te estoy hablando!

MJ: ¡aah!// ¿XA:VI?

M: sí

MJ: es que como me has dicho Jorge

M: **AH BUENO/ PERDÓN (L*L%)// e:/ Xavi**

MJ: and what about Xavi?/ how?// how is he?

M: Xavi? Xavi ? Xavi?/ who is Xavi?

MJ: who is Xavi / the: the one with glasses

M: this is the one I am talking about!

MJ: a:h!// XA:AVI?

M: yes

MJ: but you told me Jorge

M: **AH WELL/ SORRY (L*L%)// e:/ Xavi**

(Corpus Val.Es.Co, conversation 28)

Examples like (5) qualify as instances of mitigation according to Briz and Albelda (2013), for instance, as a case of face repair. Below, in line with Albelda and Estellés, we will question this example as a case of mitigation. For now, let us explain that in this fragment, the damage to MJ's face does not derive from an explicit act of disapproval, but from a questioning about the relationship of MJ's words with the context in which they are framed. In this example, two participants, MJ and M, converse about a boy who likes M. In intervention 15 (Xavi? Xavi Xavi? / Who is Xavi?), M questions MJ's knowledge of the person being talked about, until MJ indicates who they are referring to (*the: the one with glasses*) and, finally, echoes the error of, in this case, M (*but you told me Jorge*). At this moment, M realizes her mistake and repairs this aggression to MJ's face (*ah! well!// sorry [L*L%] // e:/ Xavi*). In this sequence, the correction is not only verbal, but it is accompanied phonically by marked descending tones (*ah L*L% / sorry L*L%*) and emphasized expressions (**AH! WELL! SORRY**). This pitch variability comes along with other factors such as the proliferation of pauses and of a hesitation in form of elongation (e:). It is, therefore, a marked or emphasized repair of the discursive image of speaker MJ.

Here, the illocutionary act, the excuse, consists in a lexical form such as *perdón* and also a rephrasing, correcting the name of the person that speaker M was discussing. The whole turn by M is, indeed, a global excuse. This whole-turn excuse is enhanced by prosodic means to protect the face of several interlocutors: the face of MJ, who performed a previous threatening act, but also M's own face, as she attempts to apologize and recognizes her mistake. Cases such as example 1 show that this type of prosody aid could be utilized strategically to securely emphasize sequences.

Note, however, that according to Albelda Marco and Estellés-Arguedas (submitted), example (5) is not an instance of mitigation. Following this approach, the fragment in bold definitely shows a face-protecting strategy, but it is an instance of intensification, not of mitigation. Thus, heightened pragmatic profiles appear to be correlated with intensification procedures in cases where the scope covered by prosody is a whole utterance or speech act (such as excuses or repairs), rather than one word or phrase lacking independent communicative meaning *per se* (such as *por lo visto* in Example 4 above). Considering this perspective on mitigation, it could be posited that mitigation can only be expressed with a heightened prosodic profile when this profile is combined with verbal mitigating elements smaller than the utterance itself (words, collocations, etc.).

3.4. High prosodic profile and non-lexical expression

There are cases connected to the protection of face and related to mitigation where a high prosodic profile is used in the absence of lexical forms. If contextual factors do not adequately explain why the prosodic component is made prominent, the same fragments could be wrongly understood as rude or impolite. Accordingly, the need to preserve a participant's face could explain this mechanism, which is somewhat uncommon in conversation. Either way, such a mechanism could appear in the expression of justifications, excuses or apologies, as we can see in example 6:

6)

E: ¿Quién es?

B: Soy Belén.

E: **O:ye, ¿qué pasa?** <high_speech_rate>Antes era un amigo. </high_speech_rate>

E: Who is it?

B: It's me, Belén.

E: **He:y, what's up?** <high_speech_rate>The one speaking before was a friend. </high_speech_rate>

(Gandía Shore, episode 2)

The context of example 6 is as follows: one of the participants in the program, L, pretends to be another participant, E, and telephones B. During this exchange, L's words are not especially flattering towards B. Soon afterwards, the real E calls B to repair the offence. This is an example in which phonic emphasis, materialized in a high speech rate and a broad vocal lengthening, is observed. Example 6 can be understood as a justification since, roughly speaking, the threatened face is protected or repaired, thereby justifying the way in which, under the protection of friendship, the issuer of the offense, L, has acted with a certain license that is expected to be understood by the offended person.

As we stated above, examples such as 6 do not seem to occur very frequently in conversational schemas. In any case, the contextual features could also activate these sequences where there are no specific lexical forms to express apologies or justifications for previous actions. These are cases in which the speaker simply explains past situations to protect themselves or the face of others. On this occasion, however, the speaker is not employing common verbal mechanisms to achieve this objective (*What really happened was..., I want to say..., I apologize for that*, etc.), but relies instead on amplified phonic variations.

4. Prosody and face beyond mitigation

Prosodic lowering or heightening can convey further semantic and pragmatic meanings beyond mitigation. In some cases, prosody is related to information structure (incidental comments are usually uttered with a lowered pragmatic profile due to the informative subordination of the fragment). In other instances, prosody signals the presence of a reported speech (Estellés-Arguedas, 2015; Estellés-Arguedas and Cabedo Nebot, 2017), or it recovers previous content uttered by others in a polyphonic manner (García Negroni and Caldiz, 2014). Frequently, however, altered prosodic profiles are related to face management. Mitigation is an example of face protection, but prosody can also intentionally damage face. And, again, even though one would intuitively assume that face damage would be expressed by heightened prosodic values, real-world data indicates a much more complex situation.

Contradictory as it may seem, one can sometimes threaten the face of others by utilizing sequences that include the typical forms used in mitigation, whether the lowered prosodic profile or even the verbal elements that are typically catalogued as mitigators. If only the form, not the context, is considered, it is difficult to disentangle cases such as example 7:

7)

A: ¡cómo te has pasado nano!

C: mogollón

A: me has hecho dañoito ¿eh?

(...)

B: ¡ay dañoito!

A: you have been really harsh dude!

C: very

A: I have owie, you know?

(...)

B: Ouch, owie!

(Corpus Val.Es.Co, conversation 23)

In 7, the fragment in bold is echoic. The direct and conscious purpose to damage A's face can even be understood as sarcasm (Toplak and Katz, 2000). In this case, speaker B is repeating the word *dañoito* previously uttered by A; the first time A utters the word, it has a mitigating intention (A is accusing someone else of having hurt him). On this first occasion, the utterance is mitigated verbally but not prosodically (note the difference here between *Me has hecho dañoito, ¿eh?* [lit. "you caused me a little pain, you know?"] vs. *me has hecho daño* ["you've hurt me"]). What is interesting here is that speaker B is trying to be sarcastic because Speaker A uses *dañoito*, which could be regarded as childish or fussy. B thus repeats the word with a marked prosodic pattern, transforming something that was initially meant to mitigate into an aggression, a sarcastic expression that directly attacks A's face. Note that, without this particular prosody (and probably without certain kinesic mechanisms to which the audio recording does not provide access), the segment *¡ay dañoito!* could be interpreted as an empathic alignment with A. It is evident, however, that this interpretation would be inaccurate here, considering the combined features of the prosody and other contextual factors (the interlocutors are adults, not children; they know that the pain caused is not that serious and that A is exaggerating, etc.)

Example 8 involves a case inserted within a fragment of reported speech (the relevant fragment is indicated by italics):

8) A: salió un día - el tema ese// y la tía dice que- d- que toma la píldora que no sé qué que no sé cuántos/ y yo <reported> *bueno ¿cómo que te tomas la píldora? bueno y- la píldora y algo más ¿no? </reported> (...) se fue a Cuba se enrolló con no sé quién/ muy bien me parece muy bien/ pero la tía diciendo que (...) que toma la píldora y yo <reported> pero Piedad **POR FAVOR**/ pero-/ que no hace de eso cinco años o seis todavía/ ¿cómo se puede ser así/ de irres[ponsable?] </reported>*

A: one day that topic came up // and the girl says that- that she takes the pill and this and that / and I was like <reported> wait/ what do you mean you take the pill?/ well, the pill and something else, right? </reported> (...) she went to Cuba/ she hooked up with somebody/ very well, I think it's great/ but the girl keeps saying that (...) that she takes the pill and I was like <reported> but Piedad **PLEASE**/ but-/not even five or six years ago yet / how can one be this irresponsible? </reported>

(Corpus Val.Es.Co, conversation 4)

The form *por favor*, which commonly functions as a mitigator of orders and of directive speech acts in general (Compton, 2016), is affected by the special prosodic configuration of the reported speech mentioned above, but it is also affected by an additional prosodic emphasis that maximally distinguishes it from the surrounding words (a higher pitch than the contours and higher intensity). The sequence *pero Piedad POR FAVOR* is emphasized verbally and phonically to convey extra recrimination towards the behavior of Piedad. The alternative without prosody reads as follows:

pero Piedad, por favor, pero-/ que no hace de eso cinco años o seis todavía.

Rendered without the verbal element *por favor*, it is

pero Piedad, pero-/ que no hace de eso cinco años o seis todavía.

Both variations are, in fact, interpreted as less injurious for Piedad's face. In sum, in this case, *por favor* does not mitigate the reproach; conversely, it highlights the seriousness of Piedad's irresponsibility in not using contraception. Here, the heightened prosody foregrounds the element *por favor* and, consequently, also highlights the pragmatic function this element conveys, which is not mitigation in this context.

5. Discussion

The previous sections present prosody as a mechanism applied to words and utterances to express an array of semantic and pragmatic values. The kind of prosodic modulation applied (heightened or lowered tones, heightened or lowered speech rate, etc.) apparently correlates with the speaker's need to express specific values that could produce an impact, positive or negative, on extralinguistic elements, such as the face of those people involved contextually in the immediate discourse (Biber and Conrad, 2009; Sacks et al., 1974).

The whole process of illocution revolves around the concept of face (Arundale, 2013a, 2013b), as Fig. 2 depicts.

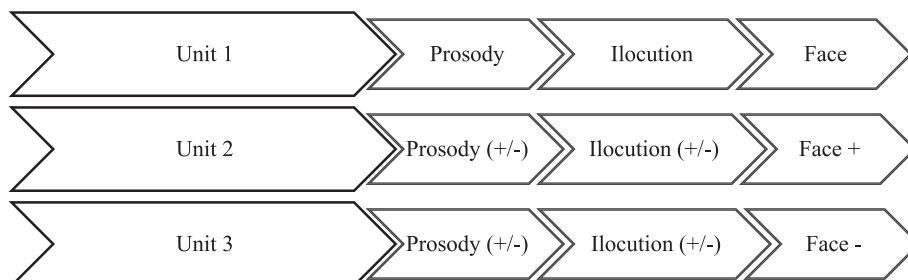


Fig. 2. Constructional linguistic units projected on discourse.

Fig. 2 illustrates three different situations, depending on the type of face management. First, a given segment can convey information, attitude towards the content and so forth, but nothing significant about face, as illustrated in Unit 1. In this case, prototypically, one finds a neutral prosody, which is neither too high nor too low in comparison to the participant's average values. The positive influence on face, represented in Unit 2, can use either heightened or lowered prosodic profiles, but only in combination with a reduction of the illocutionary act or even intensifying it. Finally, a third category can be delimited: in this case, it is the negative influence on face that is sought, and prosody and illocutionary acts function in the same way as depicted in Unit 2.

This paper's theoretical proposal is that face protection or face damage activates different mapping configurations between prosody and speech acts. This activation relies heavily on contextual factors, especially the participants' social or functional roles and their respective relationships (mutual [lack of] knowledge, hierarchical position, etc.). This process, however, does not invalidate the function performed by prosody itself. As seen in Section 2, some prosodic recurrences have been identified that speakers tend to use to convey general pragmatic meanings, generated from very general prosodic modulations, such as circumflex tones, downstepping sequences, lower speech rate and others (Brown and Prieto, 2017; Prieto, 2015), in addition to more specific patterns, such as particular tonal configurations (Wennerstrom, 2013). That is to say,

although there are multiple possibilities, some prosodic structures could be prototypically associated to express particular meanings. In mitigation, for example, lowered profiles are utilized more frequently when the speaker protects face, whereas higher prosodic profiles tend to be used to repair previously damaged faces (Cabedo Nebot and Uclés Ramada, 2019; Estellés-Arguedas and Cabedo Nebot, 2017). Nevertheless, prosody cannot trigger anything by itself; it needs contextual interpretation, taking into account situational factors such as the topic, the place and time of speech, or the mutual knowledge of the speakers (Biber and Conrad, 2009; Briz Gómez, 2001).

Lowered prosodic profiles and verbal marks of mitigation, in contrast, are typically but not necessarily used to mitigate, to protect face, as it is commonly accepted (Albelda Marco et al., 2014). Both elements can be also used indirectly to attack face. This latter usage is more difficult to identify and requires more processing effort, since speakers find themselves trying to understand what was really uttered by other speakers. This complete meaning can only be recovered contextually, accepting specific assumptions about what is occurring in a given discourse (Rivière et al., 2018; Albelda Marco and Estellés Arguedas, submitted).

To sum up, the main idea beyond all the above analysis is that prosody mostly functions as a trigger to mark the form of utterances and, therefore, to express specific semantic or pragmatic meanings. Sometimes these meanings are related to face management, either to protect or to attack the face of discourse participants. The pragmatic meaning analyzed in more depth in this paper, mitigation, is just one piece of this puzzle. The objective of protecting face can be reached more directly by using mechanisms such as mitigation, whereas other pragmatics procedures, such as irony or critical humor, tend to attack the participants' face. Nevertheless, as demonstrated above, indirect speech acts, as usually happens, can invert these general tendencies.

6. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to focus theoretically on the hypothetical correlation of some prosodic factors (pitch, intensity, duration and speech rate) with the expression of a pragmatic value such as mitigation. Some casuistic complexities have been presented in Section 3, which outlined and examined the different options used by the speaker in a prototypic conversational schema. The examples analyzed showed that mitigated values correlate with lower prosodic profiles in cases where there are not any concrete verbal elements present that could express mitigation without the aid of prosody (diminutives, syntactic dislocations, evidential markers, etc.). In contrast, high prosodic profiles were found to correlate better with verbal elements emphasized with the purpose of mitigation.

The theoretical proposal introduced in Section 3 and further developed in Section 4 has attempted to describe prosody as a contextual and physical mechanism for signaling particular segments of speech: broader units that could convey a pragmatic meaning and that are not forcefully related only to mitigation. Any particular pragmatic meaning that derives from the evaluation of propositional meaning or topic, but which is also produced by the influence of other contextual factors (participants' role, physical place, formality, etc.), could be marked with the special modification of prosody.

This paper's claim is precisely that face, understood as a cognitive representation of people, is nuclear in the conversational planning of meanings beyond the words. This element is a key feature of conversational schemas; all other factors, whether verbal or non-verbal, are like satellites orbiting a planet. All of the specific mechanisms used in conversation, even the reduction or amplification of illocutionary forces, have no sense if face is not established as one of the components with the most explanatory value. The same happens with gestures, that have not been considered in this paper due to the nature of the corpus (only audio recordings), but are crucial to understand and identify pragmatic phenomena and should therefore be incorporated in future works.³

Declaration of competing interest

There is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

This work was funded by two projects: the Spanish MINECO (Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad) Project FFI 2016-75249-P, "La atenuación pragmática en su variación genérica: géneros discursivos escritos y orales en el español de España y América" and the Spanish MINECO Project FFI 2016-77841-P, "Unidades discursivas para una descripción sistemática de los marcadores del discurso en español".

References

- Albelda Marco, M., Briz Gómez, A., Cestero Mancera, A.M., Kotwica, D., Villalba Ibáñez, C., 2014. Ficha metodológica para el análisis pragmático de la atenuación en corpus discursivos del español (es.por.atenuación). *Oralia Análisis del discurso oral* 7–62.
- Albelda Marco, M., Estellés-Arguedas, M., n.d., Mitigation revisited. An operative and integrated definition of the pragmatic concept, its strategic values and its linguistic expression. *J. Pragmat.* Submitted for publication.
- Álvarez Muro, A., Blondet Serfaty, M.A., Rojas Avendaño, D., 2011. (Des)cortesía y prosodia: una relación necesaria. *Oralia Análisis del discurso oral* 437–450.

³ I would like to thank Reviewer #2 for calling my attention to this last idea.

- Arundale, R.B., 2013a. Face as a research focus in interpersonal pragmatics: relational and emic perspectives. *J. Pragmat.* 58, 108–120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.05.013>.
- Arundale, R.B., 2013b. Conceptualizing 'interaction' in interpersonal pragmatics: implications for understanding and research. *J. Pragmat.* 58, 12–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.02.009>.
- Attardo, S., Eisterhold, J., Hay, J., Poggi, I., 2003. Multimodal Markers of Irony and Sarcasm. *Humor*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/humr.2003.012>.
- Attardo, S., Pickering, L., Baker, A., 2011. Prosodic and multimodal markers of humor in conversation. *Pragmat. Cognit.* 19, 224–247. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pc.19.2.03att>.
- Barnwell, B., 2013. Perception of prosodic boundaries by untrained listeners. In: Szczepiek Reed, B., Raymond, G. (Eds.), *Units of Talk – Units of Action*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 125–166. <https://doi.org/10.1075/slsi.25.05bar>.
- Benoit, W.L., 1997. Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Publ. Relat. Rev.* 23, 177–186. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(97\)90023-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(97)90023-0).
- Bertrand, R., Priego-Valverde, B., 2013. Does prosody play a specific role in conversational humor? *Pragmat. Cognit.* 143–165. <https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.55.08ber>.
- Biber, D., Conrad, S., 2009. *Register, Genre, and Style*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jhp.13.1.07leh>.
- Briz Gómez, A., 2001. *El español coloquial en la conversación: esbozo de pragmatología*. Ariel, Barcelona.
- Briz Gómez, A., Albelda Marco, M., 2013. Una propuesta teórica y metodológica para el análisis de la atenuación lingüística en español y portugués. La base de un proyecto en común (ES.POR. ATENUACIÓN). *Onomázein* 28, 288–319. <https://doi.org/10.7764/onomazein.28.21>.
- Brown, L., Prieto, P., 2017. (Im)politeness: prosody and gesture. In: *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)Politeness*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, pp. 357–379. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-37508-7_14.
- Bryant, G.A., 2013. Verbal Irony in the Wild, pp. 103–120. <https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.55.06bry>.
- Cabedo Nebot, A., 2018. Atenuación con disminución prosódica significativa en géneros con distinto grado de planificación discursiva. *Spanish Context* 15 (2), 218–236. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sic.00012.cab>.
- Cabedo Nebot, A., Pons Bordería, S., 2013. *Corpus Val.Es.Co. 2.0*. Grupo Val.Es.Co. www.valesco.es.
- Cabedo Nebot, A., Uclés Ramada, G., 2019. Reparación de imagen y comportamiento prosódico: entre la atenuación y la intensificación. *Cultura, Lenguaje y Representación* 21, 23–39. <https://doi.org/10.6035/CLR.2019.21.2>.
- Caffi, J., 1999. On mitigation. *J. Pragmat.* 31, 881–909. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(98\)00098-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00098-8).
- Cole, J., 2015. Prosody in context: a review. *Lang. Cogn. Neurosci.* 30, 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23273798.2014.963130>.
- Compton, J., 2016. Sorry sorrys: image repair after regretted apologies. *Publ. Relat. Rev.* 42, 353–358.
- Couper-Kuhlen, E., 2011. Pragmatics and prosody: prosody as social action. *Foundations of Pragmatics* 491–510.
- Couper-Kuhlen, E., Selting, M., 1996. Towards an interactional perspective on prosody and a prosodic perspective on interaction. *Prosody in Conversation*, pp. 11–56. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511597862.003>.
- Culpeper, J., 2011. 'It's not what you said, it's how you said it!' Prosody and impoliteness. In: *Discursive Approaches to Politeness*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 57–83.
- Culpeper, J., Bousfield, D., Wichmann, A., 2003. Impoliteness revisited: with special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *J. Pragmat.* 35, 1545–1579. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(02\)00118-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00118-2).
- Estellés-Arguedas, M., 2015. Expressing evidentiality through prosody? Prosodic voicing in reported speech in Spanish colloquial conversations. *J. Pragmat.* 85, 138–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2015.04.012>.
- Estellés-Arguedas, M., Cabedo Nebot, A., 2017. La atenuación fónica en entrevistas (proyecto PRESEEA) y en conversaciones (corpus Val.Es.Co): un estudio de campo. *Linred* 1–16.
- Face, T.L., 2003. Intonation in Spanish declaratives: differences between lab speech and spontaneous speech. *Catalan J. Linguist.* 2, 115. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/catjl.46>.
- Figueras Bates, C., 2018a. Performing the self in illness narratives: the role of evidentiality. In: *Perspectives on Evidentiality in Spanish*. Explorations across Genres. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, pp. 73–106.
- Figueras Bates, C., 2018b. Atenuación, género discursivo e imagen. *Span. Context* 15, 260–282.
- García Negroni, M., Caldiz, A., 2014. Prosody, polyphony and politeness. A polyphonic approach to prosodic configurations common to French and Spanish. *J. Politeness Res. Lang. Behav. Cult.* 10, 63–96. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2014-0004>.
- Gibbs, R.W., 1986. On the psycholinguistics of sarcasm. *J. Exp. Psychol. Gen.* <https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.115.1.3>.
- Goffman, E., 1955. On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry J. Study Interpers. Process.* 18, 213–231.
- Goffman, E., 1967. *Interaction Ritual*, vol. 48, p. 282. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25604869>. New York.
- Grawunder, S., Oertel, M., Schwarze, C., 2014. Politeness, culture, and speaking task - paralinguistic prosodic behavior of speakers from Austria and Germany. In: *Paper Presented at the Proceedings of the International Conference on Speech Prosody*. Dublin.
- Gussenhoven, C., 2004. The phonology of tone and intonation tone. *Phonol. Tone Intonation* 71–96. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616983>.
- Hernández Flores, N., 2004. La cortesía como búsqueda del equilibrio de la imagen social. In: Bravo, D., Briz Gómez, A. (Eds.), *Pragmática Sociocultural: Estudios Sobre El Discurso de Cortesía En Español*, pp. 95–108.
- Hernández Flores, N., 2015. La actividad de imagen en el discurso oral: localización y delimitación en la interacción comunicativa. In: Bravo, D., Bernal, M. (Eds.), *Perspectivas Socio-Pragmáticas y Socio-Culturales Del Análisis Del Discurso*. Dunken, Buenos Aires, pp. 23–48.
- Hidalgo Navarro, A., 2011. Humor, prosodia e intensificación pragmática en la conversación coloquial española. *Verba Anu. Galego Filol.* 271–292.
- Hidalgo Navarro, A., 2015. Prosodia y partículas discursivas: sobre las funciones de atenuación, intensificación como valores (des)cortes en los marcadores conversacionales. *Círculo lingüística Apl. A la Comun.* 76–104.
- Hübscher, I., Borràs-Comes, J., Prieto, P., 2017. Prosodic mitigation characterizes Catalan formal speech: the Frequency Code reassessed. *J. Phonetics* 65, 145–159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wocn.2017.07.001>.
- Idemaru, K., Winter, B., Brown, L., 2019. Cross-cultural multimodal politeness: the phonetics of Japanese deferential speech in comparison to Korean. *Intercult. Pragmat.* 16, 517–555. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2019-0027>.
- Ladefoged, P., Johnson, K., 2011. *A Course in Phonetics*. Language (Baltim). <https://doi.org/10.2307/412918>.
- Laforest, M., 2002. Scenes of family life: complaining in everyday conversation. *J. Pragmat.* [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(02\)00077-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00077-2).
- Langacker, R., 2008. *Cognitive Grammar, Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195331967.001.0001>.
- Levinson, S.C., 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Levis, J., Pickering, L., 2004. Teaching intonation in discourse using speech visualization technology. *System* 32, 505–524. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.09.009>.
- Nadeu, M., Prieto, P., 2011. Pitch range, gestural information, and perceived politeness in Catalan. *J. Pragmat.* 43, 841–854. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.09.015>.
- Orozco, L., 2008. Peticiones corteses y factores prosódicos. In: Herrera, Z.E., Martín Butragueño, P. (Eds.), *Fonología Instrumental. Patrones Fónicos y Variación*. El Colegio de México. , pp. 335–355. México D.F.
- Orozco, L., 2010. Estudio sociolingüístico de la cortesía en tratamientos y peticiones. *El Colegio de México, Datos de Guadalajara*.
- Prieto, P., 2015. Intonational meaning. *Wiley Interdiscip. Res. Cogn. Sci.* 6, 371–381. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1352>.
- Prieto, P., Rigau, G., 2011. Prosody and pragmatics. In: Payrató, L., Cots, J.M. (Eds.), *The Pragmatics of Catalan*. Mouton de Gruyter, The Hague, pp. 17–48.
- Quilis, A., 1981. *Fonética acústica de la lengua española*. Biblioteca Románica Hispánica. Gredos, Madrid.
- Rao, R., 2006. On intonation's relationship with pragmatic meaning in Spanish. *Selected Proceedings of the 8th Hispanic Linguistic Symposium*. Cascadilla Press, Somerville (MA), pp. 103–115.

- Rivière, E., Klein, M., Champagne-Lavau, M., 2018. Using context and prosody in irony understanding: variability amongst individuals. *J. Pragmat.* 138, 165–172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.10.006>.
- Rojas Avendaño, D., Blondet Serfaty, M.A., Álvarez Muro, A., 2014. Configuración tonal de la atenuación en el habla de Mérida. *Leng. y Habl.* 93–106.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E.A., Jefferson, G., 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50, 696. <https://doi.org/10.2307/412243>.
- Selting, M., 2000. The construction of units in conversational talk. *Lang. Soc.* 29, 477–517. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500004012>.
- Selting, M., 2010. Prosody in interaction: state of the art. *Prosody Interaction* 3–40.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., 2007. Theories of identity and the analysis of face. *J. Pragmat.* 39, 639–656. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.12.004>.
- Talmy, L., 1975. Figure and ground in complex sentences. In: *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, pp. 419–430.
- Talmy, L., 2001. How spoken language and signed language structure space differently. In: *Lecture Notes in Computer Science (Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics)*, pp. 247–262. https://doi.org/10.1007/3-540-45424-1_17.
- Toplak, M., Katz, A.N., 2000. On the uses of sarcastic irony. *J. Pragmat.* [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(99\)00101-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00101-0).
- Wennerstrom, A., 2001. *The Music of Everyday Speech: Prosody and Discourse Analysis*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Wennerstrom, A., 2013. Rich Pitch, pp. 121–142. <https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.55.07wen>.
- Wilson, D., Wharton, T., 2006. Relevance and prosody. *J. Pragmat.* 38, 1559–1579. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.04.012>.

Dr. Adrián Cabedo is Lecturer in Spanish Linguistics at the University of Valencia, Spain. His main research interests are pragmatics and prosody, and has devoted most of his work to the study of the ways in which they interact. Dr. Cabedo is also interested in the compilation, design and analysis of oral corpora. He is a member of the Val.Es.Co research group (www.valesco.es) and participates in the sociolinguistic macro-project PRESEEA.