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Indexing ‘No news’ with stylisation in Finnish

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1 Aims

- To elucidate a range of linguistic practices used in tandem with a stylised contour in naturally-occurring data (everyday conversation and institutional interaction).
- To demonstrate participants’ orientation to this figure as indexing ‘nothing special’, ‘routine’, ‘nothing to tell’—common but not very well empirically warranted glosses for stylised contours. Cf. Ladd (1978: 52): “in some sense predictable... part of a stereotyped exchange..., ‘nothing you couldn’t have predicted’.”

2 Data and method

- Everyday and institutional interaction, face-to-face and telephone data
- 130 instances in the collection, of which 69 from everyday conversation
- Auditory and, where possible, acoustic analysis; background noise filtered out where necessary and possible
- Sequential and interactional analysis conducted in parallel with phonetic analysis (cf. Wootton 1989, Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996, Pomerantz & Fehr 1997 and Hutchby & Woffitt 1998; Curl 2002, 2003, Local 1996, 2003a, 2003b, Ogden 2001, 2003, Wells & Macfarlane 1998).

3 Phonetic properties of the stylised figure

3.1 Description

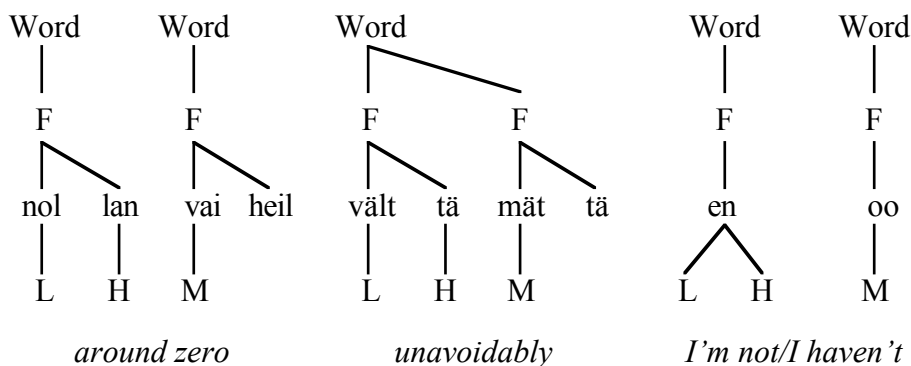


Figure 1. Association of tones to foot/word structure in the contour.

Overall pattern: L ¹⁵H ⁴⁻³M, but both wider and narrower up- and down-steps occur. The figure is generally offset from surrounding talk by micropauses, inbreaths, changes in loudness or a shift in pitch level

3.1 A canonical phonetic example

Example (1) Pelimannipoika.2.14-26

- 14 P mikäs siihen liittyy
what is it connected to
- 15 mitä:p¹ (.) mitä tu[lee mieleen]
what- what comes to mind
- 16 C [no sii]hen-
well it's-
- 17 siihen liittyy sellasta ettäp¹mh
it's connected to the fact that
- 18 mun edesmennyt mieheni on sen sovittanu ja on siinä.h
my deceased husband arranged it and is there
- 19 bassokitaransa k:aa soittamaskin ja mh .hhh
with his bass guitar playing and
- 20 se tehtihi ?h vuonna seitkytkaks tua levy
it was made in `72 that record
- 21 hj:a siitä meni kolome vuotta elikkä hh
and then three years passed in other words
- 22 vapunaatona tuli kaksy(mmen)tä viis vuo- vuatta
on May Day Eve it was twenty-five ye- years
- 23 .h tämän mieheni kuolemasta **niin**
since my husband's death so
- 24 tuntuu nyt että olis (.)
feel-3SG now COMP be-CON
it feels now like it would be

- 25 → kauhian kivaa kuulla s:e
 terrible-GEN nice-PAR hear-INF1 3SG
really nice to hear it
- 26 .hhh (0.5) hhh pit[kästä pitkäs]tä aikaa
(it's been) a long long time
- 27 P [vai nii]
I see

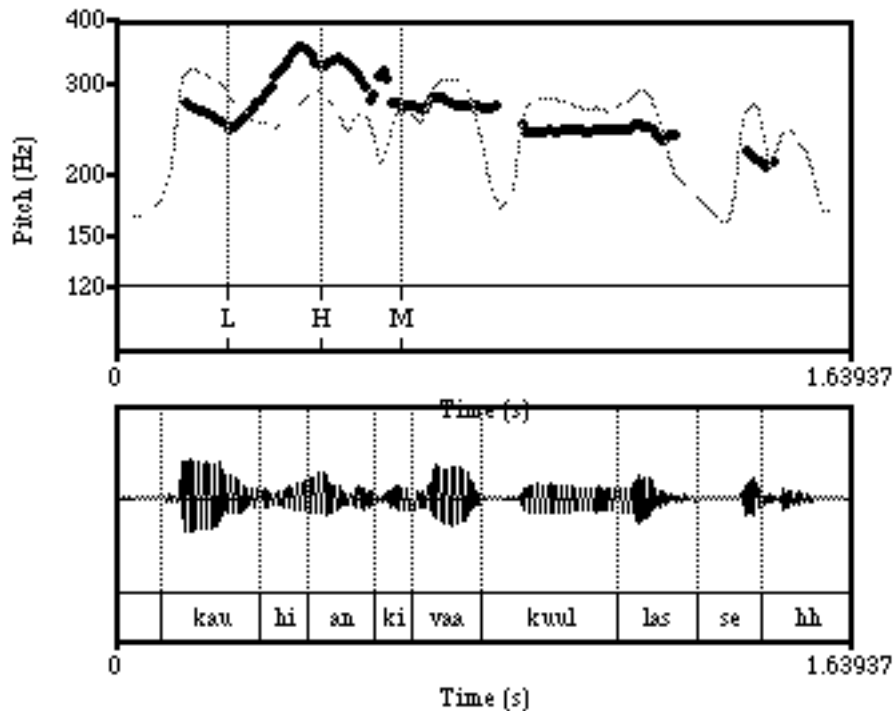


Figure 2. F0 trace (solid line), intensity (dotted line) and labelled waveform for Example 1

4 Lexical, morphological and semantic properties of the figure

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Indexes of common or shared knowledge | clitic <i>-hAn</i> , which indexes shared knowledge,
<i>joo</i> turn-initially and turn-finally
<i>semmonen</i> , a determiner which indexes shared categorical knowledge (<i>se</i> ‘that’ + <i>moinen</i> ‘kind of’+ADJ, ‘such (a)’) |
| 2 | Paraphrase of or inference to be made from something already said | <i>niin</i> , ‘so, thus’
<i>siis</i> , ‘then, thus’
<i>eli</i> , ‘in other words’
<i>että, et</i> , one of whose functions is to |

		introduce a paraphrase
3	(a) Idioms, figurative expressions	<i>katotaan ny</i> , ‘let’s see’ <i>se on ny sit sen ajan murhe</i> , ‘it’s a victim of time’ i.e. ‘we’ll have to wait and see’ <i>semmosta se</i> , ‘that’s how it is’ <i>en mä nyt tiedä</i> , ‘I don’t really know’ <i>eipä tuo mittää haittaa</i> , ‘who cares’
	(b) Routine for speaker in institutional settings	<i>postii vaan</i> , ‘just put it in the post’ <i>allekirjoitus</i> , ‘signature’ <i>samat tiedot</i> , ‘the same information’
4	Downgrade or make contents vaguer	<i>ihan</i> , ‘quite’ <i>vaan</i> , ‘just’ <i>joku</i> , ‘some (or other)’

5 Sequential properties of the figure

1. Turns which are stylised frequently recycle syntax and lexis from previous turns, and in so doing, do not convey any ‘new information’.
2. Stylised turns are commonly used in second pair parts, and at possible sequence ends; this is closely connected with the fact that idiomatic expressions and figures of speech are stylised (c.f. Drew & Holt 1998).
3. Stylised turns typically get minimal receipt, an orientation to their indexing of ‘lack of noteworthiness’, ‘no news’.

6 Example

Example (2) SGS07, 2a10, 1-2

Tiina has called Marko to ask for help. She has characterised her call as *tämmönen hätäapusoitto*, “a kind of emergency help call”.

01 M	mitä pitäs tehdä. what-PAR must-CON-3SG do-INF1 <i>what’s got to be done.</i>
02 T	homma on sellanen et meille tulee lava thing is such COMP 1PL-ALL come-3SG skip <i>the thing is that we are getting a skip</i> perjantaiamuna Friday morning-ESS <i>on Friday morning</i>
03 M	mikä what-NOM <i>A what?</i>

04 T lava, [semmonen siirtolava,=
skip such removal skip
A skip one of those removal skips=

05 M [nii,
PRT
right

06 M =nii, [(just)
PRT PRT
yeah right

07 T [ja tota:, .hhhh sit ne ka:mat pitäs ne (.)
and uhm then 3PL junk-PL must-CON 3PL
And uhm:, .hhh then the stuff should the (.)

08 seinän jämät pitäs siirtää sinne lavaan.
wall-GEN remnant-PL must-CON move-INF1 that-ILL skip-ILL
remnants of the wall should be moved to the skip.

09 (0.4)

10 M aha.
oh

11 T nJoo.
yes

12 M just.
right

13 T Mm:.

14 M .hh tota noin nin, no ↓joo. khrm khrm (0.6) eli ne
PRT PRT PRT PRT PRT PRT 3PL
Uhm erm so, Ok right. so they

15 pitää siis kantaa.=
must-3SG then carry-INF1
have to be carried then.

16 T → ne pitää kantaa
L H M
3PL must-3SG carry-INF1
They have to be carried.

17 M joo.
right.

--- 5 lines omitted ---

23 M okei siis perjantaina mun pitäs tulla
OK PRT Friday-ESS 1SG-GEN must-CON-3SG come-INF1
OK so on Friday I should come

kantaa.
carry-INF1
and carry

24 T joo:.
PRT
yes

--- approx. 100 lines omitted ---

--- M considers alternative ways of removing the junk ---

- 125 M juu, (.) ei ku mä aattelin et l- jollain
 PRT NEG PRT 1SG think-PST-1SG COMP l- some-ADE
yes, no but I was thinking that l- with some rope
- 126 köydel latkis- e laskis niit saaveja
 rope-ADE *lower-CON e lower-CON those-PAR bucket-PL-PAR
(one) would love- e lower those buckets
- mut ei se onnistu.
 but NEG-3SG 3SG succeed
but that won't work
- 127 T ei se varmaa onnistu
 NEG-3SG 3SG probably succeed
no I guess it won't
- 128 M juu [ei se onnistu]
 PRT NEG-3SG 3SG succeed
no it won't work
- 129 T [Joo .joo:,
 PRT .PRT
- 130 M → joo no sit L H M
 PRT PRT then must-3SG just carry-INF1
right well then some carrying just has to be done.
- 131 T nii.=
 PRT
yeah

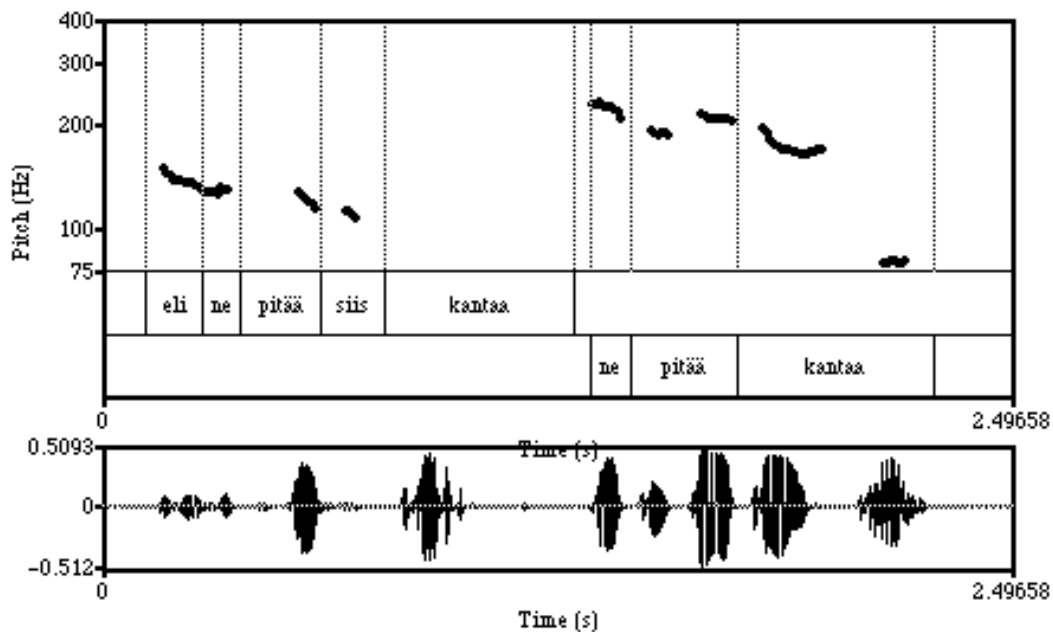


Figure 3. f_0 from l.14-16. Y-axis scaled to T's range (including creak).

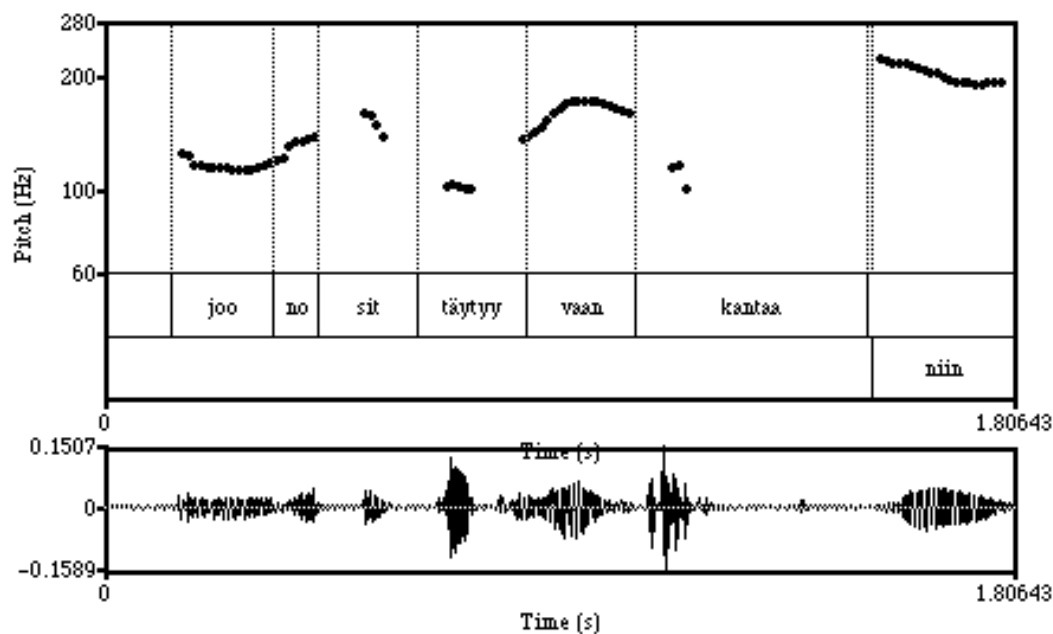


Figure 4. f_0 from l.130-131. Y-axis scaled to M's range (including creak).

7 Conclusions

This stylised contour in Finnish has many semantic/pragmatic properties like those claimed for English (Ladd 1978). It indexes an affective stance roughly glossed as 'not worth talking about', 'this is obvious', 'no news'.

This is corroborated by (1) co-occurring internal evidence, (2) external evidence in the form of participants' orientation and sequential organisation.

By working on empirical data, a wide range of sequential and interactional environments demonstrate some of the semantic and pragmatic subtleties for which stylisation can be used.

Selected references

A much fuller version of this paper is due to be published as:

Ogden, Richard, Auli Hakulinen & Liisa Tainio (2004). Indexing 'no news' with stylization in Finnish. In Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen & Cecilia Ford (eds), *Sound patterns in interaction*. Amsterdam, Benjamins.

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8 Principles of glossing.

Conventions adapted from Marja-Leena Sorjonen's work, eg. Sorjonen 1996.

CASE	ABBREVIATION	APPROXIMATE MEANING	
adessive	ADE	at, on; instrumental 'with'	
allative	ALL	on to, to, for	
essive	ESS	as; temporary current state	
genitive	GEN	possession, object, subject	
illative	ILL	into, for	
nominative	NOM	subject, object	
partitive	PAR	'some', subject, object	
1	first person	PL	plural
2	second person	PRT	particle
3	third person	PST	past tense
		SG	singular
COMP	complementiser		
CON	conditional		
INF(1-4)	infinitive (one of four forms)		
NEG	negation (= auxiliary verb)		