Introduction (5 mins)

Phonetic resources for agreeing and disagreeing in second assessments.

The box at the top of the handout gives an example of the kind of data analysed in this paper. It comes from a radio phone-in show. The caller, C, announces she is going to the Netherlands at Easter. At the turn arrowed 1, she makes an assessment of the the upcoming trip, an assessment which the presenter P refutes with his second assessment at the turn arrowed 2.

When a first assessment is made, a second assessment conveying agreement or disagreement with the first assessment is relevant. What are the resources that conversationalists have at their disposal to convey agreement and disagreement with a first assessment?

In the CA literature, attention has focused on three main issues in the design of assessments. These are (1) preference organisation, (2) lexical resources and (3) questions of epistemic access, which I won't have time to explore in this paper.

[[OVERHEAD]]

Pomerantz (1984) shows how lexical resources are used in second assessments to convey agreement or disagreement with the first assessment. Agreement of various strengths can be conveyed by tuning the choice of assessment term to that of the first assessment. Strong agreement is conveyed by upgrading the assessment term; strong disagreement by using an opposite or contrasting term. Assessments can also be classed as 'same' assessments or downgraded assesments.

The preferred responsive action to a first assessment is agreement. 'Preference' is used in the technical sense of Sacks (1986): a preferred action is a normative one, and a dispreferred action is accountable. Preference has consequences for the way that sequences of talk are built.

[[OVERHEAD]]

Preferred actions are conveyed through whole turns at talk. They are timed to come immediately after the prior turn. Dispreferred actions are delayed in a variety of ways. In assessments, one common way to delay disagreement is to build a turn that projects first agreement, then disagreement.

The aim of this paper is to look at how phonetic resources are used in tandem with sequential and lexical ones, and to make

the case that 'agreement' and 'disagreement' can be conveyed phonetically.

Section 2 on the Handout.
The data comprise approximately 80 assessment pairs which come from five different corpora of conversation. The collection consists of assessment pairs where the second assessment contains an overt assessment term. The phonetic analysis concentrates on the phonetic design of the second assessment relative to the first.

Strong agreement (2.5 mins)

Section 3.1 on the handout summarises the general organisation of strong agreement sequences. Fragments (1)-(3) exemplify the normal structure of these sequences and the turns arrowed 2→ have upgraded lexical assessment terms relative to the first assessment, marked 1→. If strong agreement is accomplished by lexical 'upgrade', then one question is whether upgrade is accomplished just lexically, or whether it has phonetic implications as well.

The phonetic characteristics of strong agreements are summarised in section 3.3 of the Handout. Typically, a second assessment which conveys strong agreement is louder than the

first assessment; has an expanded pitch span; is higher in the speaker's range; is slower; and has closer, tenser articulations.

Let's look at Fragment (1). Beth is telling Alice about when her parents came to visit her while she was in Germany. She sent them off to see a famous castle in the area. In the first assessment, *it* refers to this castle. The first assessment is receipted by a second assessment which lexically upgrades the first. {{*The oh-prefacing marks out the the turn as presenting a position which Alice had reached independently from Beth (Heritage 2002a). Is supposed to in both turns indexes both speakers' second order access to the thing assessed.*}}

The first assessment has rather level pitch, as you can see in Figure 1. The second assessment has more dynamic pitch. It also uses a wider pitch span and a change to creaky voice at the end. The articulatory seetting of the first assessment is more open than the second. For instance, compare *supposed to* which has labial approximation in the first assessment but closure in the second assessment. The velar closure portion for *gorgeous* is 225ms long and has voicing in the early part of the closure. The rate of articulation is slower: 6.6 syll/sec as opposed to 9.5 sylls/sec in the first assessment.

PLAY RECORDING ONCE

Similar patterns are found for other assessment sequences where the second assessment presents strong agreement with the first. The second assessment turn has what I will informally call 'upgraded' phonetics relative to the first assessment.

Overt disagreement (2.5 mins)

Another possible action in the second assessment is to display disagreement with the stance proposed in the first. The cases I examine here are ones where the second assessment presents a stance which is already in the air, having been made explicit in a prior turn, or being implicit in it. In these cases, the second assessment does not just present disagreement with the first assessment, but also re-presents a prior stance.

The linguistic format of these turns is that they contain an antonym of the assessment term in the first assessment, or a direct refutation of it. These turns are often *no*-prefaced. Fragments (4)-(6) in section 4.2 on the handout provide illustrations. 0→ marks the place in the sequence where a stance is presented; 1→ marks the first assessment, and 2→ the second assessment.

Phonetically, these turns are upgraded in the same kind of way as strong agreements are. Section 4.3 summarises their characteristics. The pitch span is wider in the second assessment than in the first; and the pitch span in the second assessment is regularly over one octave.

Let's listen to fragment (4). Beth and Alice have just been left in the recording studio, and are discussing the relative merits of Diet Coke and Pepsi Max. The pitch trace is presented in Figure 2. Notice the high pitch and the wide pitch span.

Why should these disagreements have the same characteristics as strong agreements? One possibility is that these second assessments are re-assertions of a prior stance; and Goodwin, Goodwin & Yaeger-Dror have argued that in some cases disagreement is a preferred response because it promotes sociability. All the examples of these cases come from radio phone-ins or students talking in the lab, both situations where disagreement generates talk, which is the aim of the ongoing activity.

[agree + disagree] (2.5 mins)

Pomerantz notes that disagreements are often prefaced by agreements, which delays the action of disagreement. These

second assessment turns which present token agreement contrast with those of the previous two sections in a number of ways. Firstly, their lexis provides no more than a 'same' assessment as the first, but often a weaker assessment. Secondly, having delivered token agreement, the speaker continues at some early opportunity to produce a turn which contains a disagreement. These are marked with 3→ in fragments (7)-(9) on the handout.

Phonetically, these second assessments are 'downgraded' as compared to the first asssessments. They have a narrower pitch span; they are regularly faster than the first assessment; they are done with more open articulations; they are produced low in the speaker's pitch range.

Intonationally, these turns are also interesting, because they often contain fall-rise contours. This is consistent with observations by Ward & Hirschberg and Kadmon that fall-rise contours project an upcoming turn which provides some kind of contrast with the current turn.

Fragment 7 contains an example of the [agree + disagree] format. Beth and Alice are talking about the difficulties of finding accommodation for the autumn term during the summer vacation. Alice is American, which presents her with

particular problems. Her first assessment is built as a syntactic continuation of Beth's immediately prior turn. In the second assessment, Beth presents a 'same' assessment to Alice's first assessment. Her next action, at the third arrowed turn, is to provide counter-evidence for the assessment she has just given.

The second assessment is produced at 7.7 sylls/sec, faster than the first assessment, which is done at 4.7 sylls/sec. The pitch span is narrower. The articulatory setting is more open: note that while the first assessment has several V-initial words which are done with glottal stop, and a lengthened lateral in *lot*, in the second assessment, the articulations are relatively more open and all are faster. So relative to the first assessment, the second assessment comes off as 'downgraded' phonetically.

[[PLAY EXTRACT]]

So here we have a case where a turn is designed to do token agreement which prefaces a disagreement. Thus the turn projects a dispreferred action, and it has downgraded phonetics, in contrast to strong agreement, where the phonetic design is relatively 'upgraded'.

Deviant cases (2.5 mins)

So far, the data I have shown have suggested a possible correlation between the lexical design of a turn and its phonetic properties. What I will show now is that phonetic resources are separate from lexical resources, and it is possible to use lexis to do one thing while at the same time using phonetic resources to do another.

In fragment (10), Skip reacts to some news that Freddie delivers with a first assessment, a negatively formatted interrogative, which strongly prefers an agreeing response. The second assessment contains a lexical upgrade of the first assessment, *good → very good*. It comes in in overlap with the first assessment. These two things are properties of turns that promote a preferred action, which in this case would be to agree with the first assessment. So we might expect the phonetics of the second assessment to be like those of the fragments in Section 3 on the Handout.

However, the speaker, Freddie, goes on to produce talk at 3→ which actually presents a disagreement with Skip's assessment at 1→; and in fact the phonetics of this second assessment turn out to be like the phonetics of the [agree + disagree] format, that is, the turn has a narrower pitch span, at 6 st, whereas 1→ has a span of 8 st. It is lower in the speaker's range, and is quieter and faster than the first assessment.

In this example, the upgraded lexis can be seen as a product of the preference organisation: Heritage has shown that the preference is for negative interrogatives to be treated as statements to be agreed with. So the second assessment is a fitted, type-conforming response, but has the phonetics of an [agree + disagree] formatted turn; thus the phonetic design conveys the action of the turn.

Fragment 11 shows an example of agreement in the second assessment. The agreement is only a weak agreement, done by a 'same' assessment, but the claim to authority to assess is upgraded with the change from *sounds*, which indexes second-order access, to *was*, which indexes first-order access. In this case, agreement is a dispreferred response, because in conveying agreement with the first assessment, the second assessment proposes a complaint about the behaviour of the speaker of the first assessment. This turn is delayed, a typical property of a dispreferred action; and its phonetic design has more in common with the [agree + disagree] formatted turns than with the assessments that convey agreement. The pitch span in the second assessment is narrower than that of the first assesment.

So these two pieces of data show that the phonetic design of a second assessment is related not to the propositional content of the turn, but to the action which that turn promotes. Where the turn promotes a dispreferred action, this dispreferredness is reflected in the phonetics.

Conclusions (5 mins)

A key problem for linguistic phonetics is to work out how phonetic parameters are used to convey meaning. In working on so-called segmental phonology, the focus of attention is usually the lexical item; but in working on so-called non-segmental phonology, especially in work on conversational data, the focus of attention is the turn at talk.

What I have done in this paper is to look at how one aspect of meaning, 'agreement' and 'disagreement', is conveyed in a well-understood adjacency pair, the assessment sequence. Conversation analytic work on these sequences has related lexis and syntactic form on the one hand to the sequential and interactional organisation of preference on the other. In this paper I have shown how phonetic resources are used by conversationalists to convey preferred and dispreferred actions in assessment sequences. In doing a preferred action, the second pair part of the adjacency pair is phonetically 'upgraded'

relative to the first pair part. In doing a dispreferred action, the second pair part is phonetically downgraded. 'Agreement' and 'disagreement' do not have unique phonetic properties associated with them: disagreement can be done with what I have loosely called phonetic 'upgrading' or 'downgrading', depending on the sequential organisation of the turn which conveys disagreement.

The phonetic parameters implicated here are typically thought of for instance by Laver, Cruttenden and Ladd as paralinguistic: for instance tempo, loudness, pitch span, and pitch register and articulatory setting. This is because they are gradient, not categorial properties, and they don't relate straightfowardly to propositional content. Such parameters are thought conventionally to convey meaning which is usually associated with a speaker's "attitude" or "emotional state": but it is not a trivial task to know what a speaker's "attitude" or emotional state" is. And in the case of assessment sequences, it's not even clear that such terms are relevant to understanding participants' ongoing interaction on a moment-by-moment basis. We *can* though talk more concretely in terms of preference and sequence organisation: linguistic forms are recurrently mapped on to the actions projected by a turn at talk, and the details of these forms are systematically related to the design of a prior turn.

A second issue is that the phonetic design of the second assessment turns is in a consistent syntagmatic relation to the prior turn. This means that rather than saying that e.g. narrow pitch span, *globally*, projects disagreement, a more accurate statement would be that a pitch span in a second pair part turn that's narrow relative to the first pair part projects disagreement in an [agree + disagree] formatted turn. So the data considered here provide evidence that in order to work out the meaning of phonetic parameters it is necessary to elaborate a sequential and interactionally warranted analysis of data *in situ*.