

Prosodic Constructions

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In conversation, people use prosody to do many things: cue action, signal turn-taking intentions, show interest, ground referents, concede points, express attitudes, mark asides, and so on. Accurately describing how this all works has been difficult, but analysis in terms of “prosodic constructions” is enabling us to work out the details. Prosodic constructions involve specific temporal configurations of diverse prosodic features, they can be present to greater or lesser degrees, and they frequently appear superimposed and aligned with other prosodic constructions. Prosodic constructions are conceptually very similar to grammatical constructions, and the prospects for unified modeling seem good.