Language in Society **27**, 195–219. Printed in the United States of America

Prosodic features of bad news and good news in conversation

JEREMY FREESE AND DOUGLAS W. MAYNARD

Department of Sociology
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405
jfreese@indiana.edu, dmaynard@ucs.indiana.edu

ABSTRACT

Recent work suggests the importance of integrating prosodic research with research on the sequential organization of ordinary conversation. This paper examines how interactants use prosody as a resource in the joint accomplishment of delivered news as good or bad. Analysis of approximately 100 naturally occurring conversational news deliveries reveals that both good and bad news are presented and received with characteristic prosodic features that are consistent with expression of joy and sorrow, respectively, as described in the existing literature on prosody. These prosodic features are systematically deployed in each of the four turns of the prototypical news delivery sequence. Proposals and ratifications of the valence of a delivery are often made prosodically in the initial turns of the prototypical four-turn news delivery, while lexical assessments of news are often made later. When prosody is used to propose the valence of an item of news, subsequent lexical assessments tend to be alignments with these earlier ascriptions of valence, rather than independent appraisals of the news. (Bad news, good news, conversation analysis, prosody, sequencing).*

Conversational news deliveries are rarely neutral; instead, they are usually accomplished as VALENCED, as being either GOOD NEWS or BAD NEWS. By displaying an evaluative stance toward the news, participants orient to information in terms not only of its status as news, but also of its perceived AFFECTIVE SIGNIFICANCE for the individuals involved. As shown by Maynard 1997, valence is not determined by some intrinsic goodness or badness of the news but rather is achieved by the interactants. Ascribing valence to an item of news may be done LEXICALLY, as in pre-announcement forecasts, e.g. *I have some bad news for you*, or more frequently, in post-announcement assessments, e.g. *Oh that's terrible* (Terasaki 1976, Maynard 1996a). However, valence may also be ascribed using PROSODY; the term is used loosely here to cover aspects of talk such as pitch, intonation, loudness, and speech rate, as well as more properly paralinguistic features such as voice quality. Prosodic phenomena are employed as DEVICES that propose a particular affective orientation to the news. In this paper, we explicate methodic aspects of the use of

prosody in conversational news deliveries and discuss how prosodic and lexical devices interact in achieving the valence of news.

Prosody has long been something of a neglected child in both linguistics and the sociology of language. In part, this is because prosodic research has been stunted by continual debates over foundational issues and by numerous efforts to restart inquiry from scratch. Researchers have had trouble reaching consensus on the relationship between prosody and the system of words in which it is embedded; some would like to see prosody grafted onto structuralist grammars (Liberman 1979, Pierrehumbert 1987, Pierrehumbert & Hirschberg 1990), while others contend that dimensions such as intonation are systems *sui generis*, having "more in common with gesture than with grammar" (Bolinger 1986:viii). Over the past fifteen years, some prosodologists have focused on prosody in naturally occurring social interactions, and they have turned to the well-developed techniques of conversation analysis to advance this project (e.g. French & Local 1983, Local et al. 1986, Selting 1992). The excellent volume edited by Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (1996) calls for a vigorous "cross-fertilization" between the linguistic study of prosody and the conversation analytic study of talk-in-interaction, and it is in this spirit that the present inquiry has been undertaken.

Previous work by sociologists provides a strong analytic base for investigating news deliveries: Conversation analysts have discovered that, although CONTENT varies widely, most deliveries possess a roughly similar sequential FORM. Sacks (1992:572) discusses this form in terms of the consecutive occurrence of "news announcement–surprise" and "news development–sympathy" pairs in bad news deliveries. Jefferson (1981:62) reframes the "prototype" news delivery as a four-part sequence consisting of (a) News Announcement; (b) Newsmark (*oh really*); (c) Confirmation; and (d) Assessment. More recently, Maynard 1997 has refined these observations into a more general News Delivery Sequence (NDS) that provides for instances of both good and bad news. The NDS is a four-part sequence comprised of (a) a News Announcement, (b) an Announcement Response, (c) an Elaboration, and (d) an Assessment. A News Announcement can be produced as a topic-initial utterance, or be occasioned by a pre-announcement (Terasaki 1976) or recipient query:[1]

(1) R02G [Rahman I:8][2]

1	Vera:	uRight yeh ˙hh Oh I met Jano:, eh:::m	News Announcement
2		yestihday en she'd hahdda foh:rm from the	
3		Āge Concehrn about thaht jo:b.h=	
4	Jenny:	=Oh=she=hahs?	Announcement Response
5	Vera:	So: eh she wz sending the foh:rm back	Elaboration
6		[the:n you know	
7	Jenny:	[Oh she di– aOH w'l thaht's goo:d ah'm s–	Assessment
8		↓pleased she applie:d,	

(2) H02G [Holt:X(C)1:2:2:3]

1	Leslie:	↑How's Missiz Wood↓chamber getting on:	News Inquiry
2		[. . .]	

3	Ward:	˙hh W'she's (0.2) she's doin' very well	News Announcement
4		actually um: she's inde↑pendent.	
5		(.)	
6	Leslie:	Oh she ↓is.	Announcement Response
7	Ward:	Ye:s she's walking arou::nd uh: washing	Elaboration
8		'n dressing herse:lf?	
9	Leslie:	Oh ↓good.	Assessment

(3) NB3B [NB:II:4:R]

1	Nancy:	How'r you.	Query
2	Emma:	AOH: AH'M PRETTY GOO::D I HADDA	
3		LIDDLE O:P'ration on my toe this week I	
4		had t'have (0.2) my toenail TAKEN O:FF	News Announcement
5		(.)	
6	Nancy:	↑↑Why[:	Announcement Response
7	Emma:	[˙hhh˙hh Oh::I have a fungus 'n	
8		I: had'n inf::↓ECtion,	Elaboration
9		[. . .]	
10	Nancy:	O h : : ::: E:m↓mah:.	Assessment

After news is announced, the recipient responds by confirming the prior turn as an informing, and by producing either a Newsmark that encourages further development of the delivery, or a News Receipt that discourages it (Jefferson 1981, Heritage 1984, Local 1996, Maynard 1997). If there is an Elaboration, the recipient then produces an Assessment that evaluates the news. The "canonical" four-turn NDS is subject to innumerable orderly transpositions in the course of actual conversational practice, including the condensation of the four parts into two or three turns, and the extension of the delivery sequence through a series of appended elaborations and assessments (Maynard 1997).

That a lexical assessment occupies the fourth turn of the NDS does not imply that the initial ascription of valence is performed by the recipient at the end of the sequence.[3] As we will show, deliverers regularly initiate ascriptions of valence that are displayed across the four turns of the prototypical NDS, and prosody is an especially important part of this valence-ascribing work. Below we provide a systematic description of the prosodic phenomena associated with good and bad news. We then draw on this description to specify some of the artful ways in which prosody is used to ascribe valence in each of the four turns of the NDS. Afterward, we discuss how prosodic manipulations may not only contribute to the establishment and evaluation of news, but also provide a means for reconstituting the relationship between participants and their respective relationships to the news.

PROSODIC CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD AND BAD NEWS

It is commonly recognized that certain ways of speaking "sound like" good and bad news; the focus of this section is providing a more formal description of the DISTINCTIVE AND CHARACTERISTIC PROSODIC STRUCTURES of good and bad news. The data for this project are approximately 100 good and bad naturally occurring conversational news deliveries assembled from several available corpora of Amer-

TABLE 1. *Characteristic prosodic structures of good and bad news. The features can be compared to the table of prosodic correlates of various emotions provided by Couper-Kuhlen (1986:181), especially the prosodic structures of "happiness" and "sorrow."*

	Good News	Bad News
Pitch level	High	Low, excepting displays of surprise at the start of Announcement Responses
Pitch range	Increased, wide	Narrow
Contour	Frequent, sharp, and often abrupt steps-up and rises; Announcement Responses sometimes produced with a high onset and with a sustained high contour	Stretched vowels with pronounced falling pitch
Voice quality	Normal	Often breathy or creaky
Loudness	Very loud on key words	Key words sometimes quieter
Speech rate	Fast; tending to speed up as the utterance progresses	Slow; tending to slow down as the utterance progresses

ican and British telephone conversations.[4] These deliveries were compiled by Maynard as part of a larger conversation-analytic study (1995, 1996a,b, 1997). When we compared lexically transparent good and bad news deliveries, certain prosodic patterns could be identified as recurrent within deliveries of each valence. The patterns were often pairable, such that a phenomenon prevalent in good news deliveries would have its opposite in bad news deliveries. Recurrent features were present across the course of the delivery and marked the speech of both deliverers and recipients. The orderliness of these phenomena suggested their methodic use by conversationalists.

Prosodic differences between good and bad news are summarized in Table 1. The prosodic characteristics of good and bad news deliveries closely resemble those that have been identified in previous research as expressive of positive and negative emotions more generally (Couper-Kuhlen 1986:173–87). As a result, the characteristic structures may be heard to display "enjoyment" in the telling and receiving of good news, and "regret" in telling and receiving bad news. This is consistent with previous observations that conversationalists asymmetrically value good news over bad (Maynard 1995), as some of the prosodic differences appear to accentuate good news and diminish bad. The prosody of good and bad news also displays iconicity with the affective referents associated with positive and negative experience. For example, the faster speech rate and increased pitch range associated with good news can be heard to indicate "eagerness" and "excitedness", while the reduced speech rate and constricted pitch range of bad news

may indicate the "reluctance" or "difficulty" with which it is presented. Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996b argue that the pervasive iconicity of intonation assists in its contextualizing function; and here prosody, in conjunction with other resources of talk, helps to enact a systematic valuation of good news over bad.

It must be emphasized, however, that none of the features listed in the table occurs in all good or bad news deliveries, or only in news deliveries; prosodic devices are highly multi-functional and achieve their significance through an interaction with lexical, sequential, and situational information. One can, therefore, never claim a deterministic relationship between prosody and meaning, but rather can only note the utility of particular prosodic structures when employed in particular sequential environments. When an utterance is a constituent of a news delivery, prosodic manipulations may act to make the utterance further recognizable as proposing the news to be good or bad. As a result, abstract descriptions of a characteristic structure cannot by themselves illuminate how prosody is used by conversationalists; instead the task requires a close analysis of real interactional data. The next section analyzes the use of prosody in the turn-by-turn accomplishment of valence in the NDS. The remainder of this section, meanwhile, further explicates the prosodic differences between good and bad news, concentrating in turn on pitch, contour, loudness, and speech rate.

Pitch level and range

In the corpus, utterances in good news deliveries are more likely than ordinary talk to be produced in the upper part of the speaker's pitch range, regardless of their position within the NDS. High pitch is not used exclusively to express positive emotion, of course; it can also be used to signal such things as deference, stress, or surprise (Cruttenden 1986). In bad news deliveries, high pitch is sometimes used at the beginning of Announcement Response and Assessment turns, perhaps as a way of displaying the recipient's surprise at the news. Otherwise, utterances in bad news deliveries are more often produced in the lower part of the speaker's pitch range. In Figure 1,[5] the possible difference in the pitch level of good and bad news is illustrated by juxtaposing the pitch contours of two news receipts by the same speaker.

Utterances in the good news collection tend to span a wider pitch range than those in the bad news collection. In Figure 1, the pitch range in the good news receipt is more than twice as large as in the bad news receipt. For both good and bad news deliveries, the bottom of the pitch range is typical of ordinary speech, although bad news deliveries are more frequently and extensively produced low in the range. In good news deliveries, however, pitch range sometimes extends upward well beyond the usual upper boundary of conversational speech (approximately 200 Hz for male speakers, and 350–400 Hz for females). The news receipt in Figure 1 produces its third syllable at almost 700 Hz,[6] which is higher than the physiological limit of many speakers. As mentioned above, bad news receipts often start relatively high (300–350 Hz for female speakers, lower for

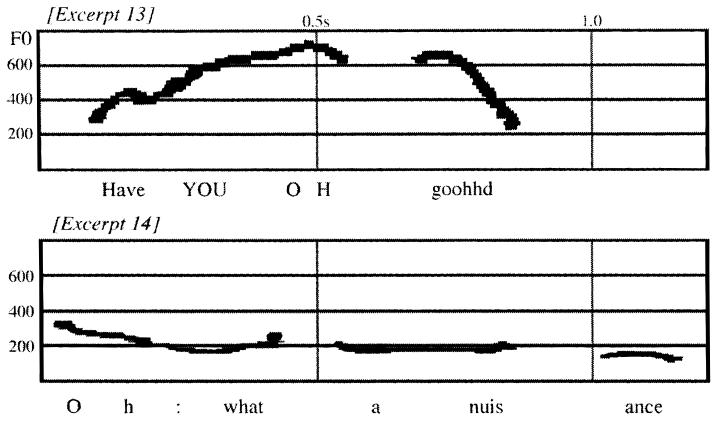

FIGURE 1: Good news (top) and bad news (bottom) receipts from the same speaker.

males), but then drop to the bottom of the voice range as the utterance progresses. Meanwhile, bad news announcements and elaborations often begin low and remain low, and these utterances regularly sound constricted or flat.

Contour

Prosodologists are becoming increasingly wary of attempts to match intonational contours with single or straightforward semiotic interpretations; thus Local (1996:202) warns strongly against "a simplistic assigning of meaning to pitch contours independently of the interactional, lexical, and grammatical contexts in which they occur." Certainly there is no pitch contour uniquely associated with good or bad news, or with the expression of positive and negative emotion generally; however, some features of contour are more frequent in good news deliveries than bad, and vice versa, and these observed tendencies are consistent with the existing literature on the intonations of joy and sorrow (Crystal 1969, Williams & Stevens 1972, Couper-Kuhlen 1986:181).

Good news deliveries are produced with an increased animatedness, including wider pitch range and more frequent and abrupt pitch shifts. Liveliness can be seen in the wide contour of the good news receipt shown in Figure 1, and it is also apparent in the three News Announcements shown in Figure 2a–c. In these deliveries, several substantial and abrupt pitch movements are made in relatively brief Announcements, and these movements are often most pronounced on the key words of the delivery. Figure 2a reveals many upward pitch movements – including an upstep and two rises on *fi::ve*, the word that carries the key contrast of this Announcement about the speaker's weight loss. In Figure 2b, the word *two*, which corrects the prior speaker's *that book*, is emphasized through a sharp upstep in pitch more pronounced than would be expected if the news were pre-

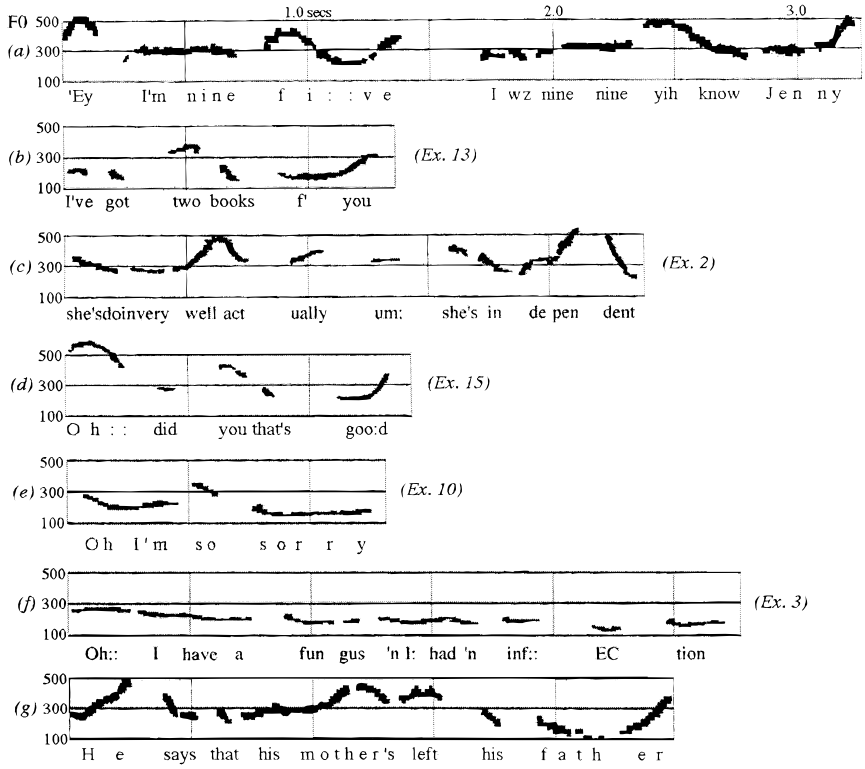

FIGURE 2: Pitch contours of selected turns of good (a–d) and bad (e–g) news deliveries. Figure 2a is taken from the Rahman corpus [Rah:A:2: JSA(9):3], and 2f is taken from the Holt corpus [Holt 86:1:4:1]. All utterances performed by female speakers.

sented neutrally (ex. 13 below). Likewise, in Figure 2c, although it is not surprising to see stress on *well* and the third syllable of *inde*↑*pendent*, the speaker carries these pitch movements well past the upper bound of normal conversational speech (ex. 19). When expressing intensity or strong surprise, responses to good news longer than a syllable or two tend to be produced with a sustained high contour that falls within the normal pitch range only in the last or next-to-last syllable (Figure 1, top). Meanwhile, multisyllabic responses to routine good news may feature a very high first syllable, but they often complete the utterance with variations in pitch sometimes associated with longer duration, i.e. stretches (Fig. 2d, ex. 15).

While good news deliveries were characterized by frequent and sharp pitch rises, the most salient feature of bad news delivery sequences was the use of

stretched vowels falling slightly in pitch, often accompanied by nasalization and/or a movement into creaky or breathy voice quality. When done with a vowel stretched and falling slightly in pitch, the use of breathy voice contributes to the hearably "soft" or "soothing" character of many bad news deliveries and responses, while creaky voice is more apt for conveying the "groaning" quality of pain or frustration. In Figure 2e, the stretched and falling vowel and breathy voice used on both *Oh* and *sorry* give a soothing cast to an assessment of a friend's mother's death (ex. 10). Meanwhile, in Fig. 2f, the use of creaky voice with falling pitch on *Oh*, *fungus*, and *infection* conveys more a stance of ANNOYANCE toward the speaker's recent operation on her toe (ex. 3). Creaky voice and two stretched, falling vowels are used in the groaning *Oh no* Announcement Response depicted in Figure 4b, which is produced in response to Kevin's news about a frustrating series of trips he needed to take for his job (ex. 14).

Many bad news deliveries in the corpus employ a fall in pitch or step-down on some of their stressed syllables. The most dramatic example is the Elaboration shown in Figure 2f, where the middle syllable of *infection* is noticeably lower in pitch, and this syllable is also made more prominent through an increase in loudness and a leading stretch on the previous syllable. It is possible that the drop in pitch provides a means of dramatizing the negative valence of the delivery; many bad news turns exhibit intonation that falls to the bottom of the voice range at various points in the utterance. The first syllable of *father* in Figure 2g features a similar, though less extreme, downward pitch movement.[7]

The ends of utterances in both good and bad news deliveries may be done with either a pitch rise or fall. Previous research has tended to focus on the relationship between terminal pitch movement and speaker transition, often with inconsistent results. For example, Oreström (1983:58) claims that downward shifts of intonation are rarely used as turn-yielding cues in English conversation, but Cutler & Pearson (1986:152) conclude from their experimental studies that "listeners found a downstep in pitch a good turn-yielding cue but a pitch upstep a good turn-holding cue."[8] Multifunctionality is most likely at the heart of this confusion; e.g., terminal rises may signal that the speaker has additional information to provide ("a continuation rise," as in Figure 2b); they may solicit a response from the other party ("question intonation," as in Figure 2a); or they may be followed by a topic shift (as in Fig. 2d, ex. 15). In any case, there appears to be no direct relationship between terminal contour and the valence of news. However, because good news deliveries and responses are often produced in the upper part of the speaker's pitch range, terminal rises in these deliveries tend to move from a mid-to-high tone to a high tone, while terminal rises in bad news deliveries (with lower pitch) may reach only mid-range.

Loudness

News deliveries, especially the News Announcement and Assessment turns, were often produced more loudly than ordinary talk. In the News Announcement turn,

increased loudness may be explained partially by its being the first turn of the News Delivery Sequence; e.g. sequence-initial utterances tend to be produced louder than surrounding talk (Goldberg 1978). In Figure 2a above, the entire excerpt is delivered more loudly than the previous or subsequent turn by the same speaker, and the key word *five* is loudest of all.

Loudness is a means of displaying affective intensity, and increased loudness may be a method of providing a more strongly positive assessment of good news. In the following example, Jeff speaks more loudly in pre-assessing (line 3) and assessing (line 17) Ellen's news that she has decided to "oust" her advisor:

(4) EJ1

1		Jeff:	Well I hope it's not bad news?
2		Ellen:	Oh no, it actually is pretty good news.
3	→	Jeff:	↑OH GOO:↑D.
4		Ellen:	I mean (0.4) well I think it's kinda good news. [.hhhh]
5		Jeff:	[Tell↑] me.
6		Ellen:	Um, I decided (.) tha:t (1.0) uhm I wanted to oust him.
7			(0.6)
8		Ellen:	And I decided I need to find out whadidit (.) is I have to
9			do.
10		Jeff:	hyehrh kidding:. He's not going to be yer advisor?=
11		Ellen:	=No.
12			(0.6)
13	→	Jeff:	°h::oh my gosh.° ((whispered))
14		Ellen:	An::d I:=
15		Jeff:	=°Wo::[:w]° ((whispered))
16		Ellen:	[Um] tch .h [if::–]
17	→	Jeff:	[GOODFER] YOU:::

This excerpt is analyzed in detail in Maynard 1997. Note that Jeff's assessment starts at a whispered level (lines 13 and 15), perhaps indicative of "shocked" surprise; but his congratulatory utterance (line 17) is much louder even than his earlier, unwhispered talk, and contrasts strongly with the whispered talk just preceding.

Bad news deliveries in the collection are not necessarily produced more quietly than ordinary talk; but as noted above, they are sometimes done with a breathy voice quality that gives them a "soothing" cast. Moreover, strongly negative and affectively loaded words in a bad news delivery, such as *died* or *sorry*, were recurrently done more quietly than surrounding talk, or else with breathy voice, which perhaps exhibits the speaker's reluctance or discomfort in using these words. In the following example, Leslie's *your mother had died* is produced more quietly than the rest of the utterance:

(5) H6B [Holt:X(C)1:1:3:2]

1	Leslie:	But we were ↑very ↓sorry to hea:r (.) that uh (.) °your
2		mother had (.) died° is that ri:ght Phi[lip?

Similarly, in the next excerpt, Leslie's voice becomes quieter as she says *cancer*:

(6) H26B [Holt: O88: 1: 8: 4] (retranscribed)

1	Joyce:	How is Gay M[artin]
2	Leslie:	[a–a–a–] Well she's (.) ↑out'v↓ hospit'l ↓no:w,
3		and uh– you know it is: it is I thin:k °↓cancer°

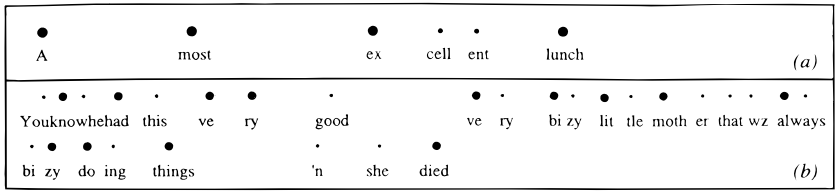

FIGURE 3: Speech rate of two News Announcements. Larger dots denote stressed syllables.

A prominent exception to the softening of key words in bad news deliveries occurs when the speaker assumes a stance of indignation toward the negative information: Here increased loudness can be used to convey the intensity of the speaker's anger or frustration. Below, Emma expresses intense displeasure as she complains that her dentist tried to charge her an exorbitant sum for treatment:

(7) NB:II:5:R:3 (simplified)
1 Lottie: Wt's new with you:.
2 Emma: Oh:: ah wen'tih th'dentis'n [uh::
3 Lottie: [Ye:ah?
4 Emma: God'e wantuh pull a tooth 'n make me a new go:ld uh:.hhhh
5 bridge fer (.) EI:GHT HUNDER'DOLLARS.
6 Lottie: Oh:: sh::i:t.

Speech rate

In the corpus, there was a tendency for good news to be said with a "lively" or even "rushed" speech rate; bad news, however, was sometimes said more slowly than ordinary talk, perhaps because its use of stretched vowels.[9] Both trends become most evident near the ends of utterances, creating the impression of a speaker speeding up or slowing down as the utterance progresses.

Two further observations about speech rate in the news delivery should also be made. First, an apparent method of increasing the intensity of the valence of a delivery is to reduce the speech rate of a phrase and utter it with an obvious regular rhythm. For example, ex. 8 uses this technique to dramatize the merits of the cold table at an area restaurant, as shown in Figure 3a:

(8) H10G [Holt:88U:2:2:11]
1 Kevin: An:d um: (0.4) we had (.) a (.) most (.) excellent
2 lun[ch.
3 Leslie [↑Rea↓lly. The Three Horseshoes.hh

This phenomenon may be related to Uhmann's finding (1996) that the stressing of consecutive syllables ("beat clashes") is a method for increasing the intensity of informings and assessments.[10]

Other excerpts in the collection suggest the possibility that deliverers use changes in speech rate or rhythm to illustrate iconically the change-of-state that is presented as the CONTENT of the news. For instance, speeding up and slowing

down may be used to represent the relative activity or inactivity of the parties being discussed. There were not enough instances in the corpus formally to analyze this phenomenon, but a potential example of its use is the following announcement of the death of a friend's mother:

(9) H07B [Holt:X(C):1:1:6:15]
1 Leslie: D'you remember– You know Philip Cole? You ↑know 'e had this
2 u–very good ˙hhhh very busy little mother that was always
3 Mum: ↑Oh:: ↓yes
4 Leslie: busy doing thin:gs (.) 'nd (.) She die:d.
5 Mum: Ah↓:::.
6 Leslie: eh–in the week very peacefully:

The Announcement begins at an active pace (Figure 3b), but slows to emphasize the *very good* praising of Philip's mother. Afterward the rhythm of the utterance is very deliberate, as Leslie describes the high activity of Philip's mother's life. Then, when presenting the news of the death itself, Leslie disrupts the rhythm of her preceding talk, and *she died* is delivered with a stretch on *died*. The Announcement may thus use contrasting rhythmic structures to highlight the difference between the mother's busy life and her death.

VALENCE ASCRIPTION IN THE NDS

Initiating turns

Recipients may initiate news delivery sequences with inquiries that implicate a News Announcement as their preferred response (Button & Casey 1984). Prosodic ascriptions of valence in these inquiries indicate that the limited information possessed by the inquirer has led to a particular affective expectation about the news. This is particularly salient in solicitous inquiries in which the inquirer employs negative valence while eliciting news about a specific "trouble" of the other party. By producing a solicitous inquiry with the prosody associated with bad news, an inquirer displays her knowledge of and sympathy with the other's troubles, as well as her expectation that the party will have additional bad news to report (Button & Casey 1985). In the following example, Leslie uses a negatively valenced solicitous inquiry to express sympathy over the death of Philip's mother:

(10) H6B [Holt:X(C)1:1:3:2]
1 Leslie: But we were ↑very ↓sorry to hea:r (.) that uh (.) °your
2 mother had (.) died° is that ri:ght Phi[lip?
3 Philip: [Yeah. nYeah.
4 Philip: [that's right ye]sterday morning. Yeah.
5 Leslie: [Y e : : s]
6 Leslie: Oh: [yes]ter[day morn↓i[ng
7 Philip: [Mhm-] [mm- [mm: mm: [mm:
8 Leslie: [Ah:: Oh i'm so ↓sorry.

Here Leslie's solicitous inquiry (lines 1–2) is temporarily stalled by two brief pauses and an *uh*, characteristic markers of hesitancy. After this hesitation, Leslie's prosody changes: Her pace slows, her voice gets softer (as noted earlier)

and more breathy (especially on *died*), and her pitch lowers. These prosodic correlates of negative valence combine with the lexical ascriptor *sorry* to display regret over the death, and to suggest her empathetic understanding that the event is bad news for Philip prior to his reporting it as such. The negative valence is mutually established when Philip confirms the news in lines 3–4; this turn is produced below ordinary pitch, with a narrow-range, flat intonation, and a voice that becomes quieter as the utterance progresses.

News Announcements may be produced in response to another's inquiry, or they may initiate a delivery sequence.[11] By building ascriptions of valence into their first turn, deliverers can more insistently dramatize the forthcoming news and can sequentially implicate a response that aligns with their proposed valence. Ascriptions made in the News Announcement turn implicate acceptance much more strongly than ascriptions in news inquiries. Maynard 1997 describes instances of "problematic presumptiveness," in which the valence proposed in a news inquiry is rejected in the next turn by the deliverer. Conversely, nowhere in our corpus did a recipient fail to align with a deliverer's valence proposed in the Announcement turn. Indeed, it seems possible that prosodic ascriptions in Announcements provide recipients with a valuable resource for interpreting implications of the reported news:

(11) H13G [Holt:1988:2:4:1]
1 Carrie: I: ↑thought you'd like to know I've got a little
2 ↓gran'daughter
3 Leslie: ˙thlk ↑Oh: how love↓ly.

In the above excerpt, the birth of a new granddaughter is accomplished as good news, beginning with the deployment of several prosodic markers of positive valence in the News Announcement turn: rises on *thought*, *like*, and *got*, as well as increased speed near the end of the utterance. The prosody is therefore upbeat and provides for an immediate positive assessment of the news, which Leslie produces with a sustained high contour that moves from the high onset of the surprise token through the assessment, before dropping on the final syllable. Deliverers use prosody in the Announcement turn to propose a valence for the entire sequence, and these ascriptions structure the interpretation of the presented information in a way that enables recipient alignment in the next turn.

Announcement responses

Recipients can use the turn following a News Announcement to show that the presented information was "news for them" (Terasaki 1976). The token *oh* begins most Announcement Responses; Heritage 1984 describes *oh* as a "change-of-state token" that may be utilized to indicate a change in knowledge that results from an informing. To the extent that the news is unexpected, the *oh* token may also serve as an indicator of "surprise." Local 1996 demonstrates that, in contexts where there is interactional evidence for asserting that the recipient has been "surprised" by an informing, the *oh* token is typically produced with a high,

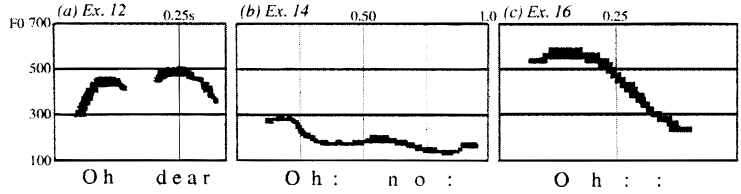

FIGURE 4: Pitch contour of three Announcement Responses.

wide-ranging, rising-falling pitch (see also Roach 1983). Local 1996 cautions that, although the rising-falling contour may be associated with surprise, the accomplishment of surprise is dependent on other features of the interactional context; e.g., a recipient may show surprise by providing an explicit account of how he or she had been previously misinformed.

Surprise is commonly considered a spontaneous emotional reaction to something unexpected, but exhibits of surprise may be done as a METHODIC response to new information. A display of surprise can be used by a party to RETRIEVE AS NEWS (Maynard 1997) information that has been introduced in the performance of some other action, such as a request. These retrievals may require artful maneuvering; when the news is embedded within the first pair part of an adjacency pair, the interactant, in subsequent talk, both completes the adjacency pair and provides for an announcement of the news. For example:

(12) H17B [Holt:88:2:3:1]

1	Steven:	↑Could you a::sk Ski:p if– ˙hmh at– when you go: to this
2		meeting tomorrow ˙hm could'e give Geoff: Haldan's a↓pologies
		through sickness?
4		(.)
5	Leslie:	❶↑Ye:s:. ❷Yes. ❸Oh ↑dea:r. ❹what's the matter with
6		Geoff.
7		(.)
8	Steven:	Well'e he's got this wretched um (0.3) he's got
9		this wretche[d
10	Leslie:	[go[ut.h
11	Steven:	[gout.

Here Leslie begins the arrowed utterance by furnishing a completion (❶) to the "request-response" adjacency pair initiated by Skip in the preceding turn . Then she repeats this response with a lowered amplitude (❷), which acts to create a space for a new sequence by EXTINGUISHING the previous topic of talk (Maynard 1980). Leslie uses this opening to retrieve and topicalize the news of Geoff's illness by producing a rising-falling *Oh dear* (❸), and the oh-prefaced assessment precedent to the further query about Geoff (❹) helps orient the parties to the illness as news. Although Leslie's *Oh dear* exhibits the high, rising-falling contour associated with surprise (Figure 4a), Leslie's POSTPONING of the surprise token until after the request has been resolved suggests method. The postponing

allows her to produce an *oh*-prefaced assessment oriented to the news and its valence, and to elicit additional information without pre-empting the trajectory initiated by Skip.

Announcement Responses also often align with the proposed valence of the preceding turn. By incorporating aligning ascription into responses, recipients display that their understanding of the news is consistent with that of the deliverer. Figure 1 above juxtaposes responses to good and bad news from the same speaker. The good news receipt is an Announcement Response taken from the following segment:

(13) H05G
1 Leslie: ↑Did um (.) 'tch (.) ↑Did uh you get that ↓book back↓
2 Robbie: ↓I've got two books f'you:,
3 Leslie: Have ↑↑YOU: OH goohhd

As noted, the middle two syllables of Leslie's response (line 3) are produced at a pitch that is much higher than ordinary female speech. Additionally, the utterance is performed with raised amplitude and a faster speech rate. Leslie's response is clearly produced with a prosodic structure indicative of good news, and it includes a lexical assessment of positive valence as well. In the prior turn, Robbie's Announcement also features markers of positive valence: Her Announcement has a rushed speech rate, raised amplitude, and a sharp upward movement on *two* (Fig. 2b). Leslie's response is thus a more exaggerated alignment of a valence trajectory initiated by Robbie in the previous turn.

The bad news receipt in Fig. 1 is taken from the Assessment (fourth) turn of the following segment:

(14) H20B [Holt SO88:1:11:2]
1 Kevin: I had to: do a: an exhibition I: (0.5) uh: had laid on:: u–
2 a: sho:w at lunch time in Winchester,
3 Leslie: Yes.
4 (0.7)
5 Kevin: An' then I had to do a:nother one in the evening in
6 Bri[stol.
7 Leslie: [ˑhhhh hOh: ↓no:.
8 (.)
9 Kevin: 'N I 'adtuh (.) double back f'm one t'the other you=
10 Leslie: =Oh: what a nuisance.hh

In this example, Kevin recounts recent difficulties involving the travel requirements of his job. Prior to the start of the segment, Kevin and Leslie had discussed how the business of their schedules forced them to cancel a planned get-together, and Kevin leads into the News Announcement with the description of his day as *a bit naughty altogether*. While this provides a lexical indication of bad news forthcoming, the stress on *another* and *evening* (line 5) also underscores the burdensomeness of his itinerary. Leslie's Announcement Response (line 7) aligns her immediately to the negative valence proposed by Kevin. The response is done with a much lower pitch than surprised responses to good news by Leslie (cf. Figures 1a and 2d); the utterance is also performed with creaky voice and two stretched vowels, with a downward movement in pitch (Figure 4b). Leslie thus combines the

contour associated with surprise with other prosodic correlates that give her surprise a decidedly negative cast. Leslie's alignment assures Kevin that he has a sympathetic audience for the subsequent production of his Elaboration turn (line 9).

While prosodic ascriptions in the Announcement Response turn are very common in the corpus, lexical ascriptions are much less so. Of 89 deliveries, 61 feature a hearable prosodic ascription of valence in the Announcement Response, while only 32 employ some sort of lexical ascription. Lexical ascriptors of valence, such those occurring in *oh*-prefaced assessments (i.e. *Oh good* or *Oh how terrible*) or assessments preceded by a Newsmark (i.e. ex. 15), appear to help organize the preceding information as a POTENTIALLY COMPLETE item of news (Heritage 1984). Although more details can be (and usually are) provided in subsequent Elaboration turns, no more is needed for the information to be assessable in its own right, and the deliverer may choose to move on to another topic or item of news:[12]

(15) H3G [Holt:X(C)1:2:7:8]

1		Leslie:	We had a ↑very nice evening at the(k) (0.3) Ditchit– (0.2)
2			Old Time Musi[c Ha:ll.]
3	→	Mum:	[↑O h : :] ↓did ↑you ↓that's goo↑[:d
4		Leslie:	[ˑhhh An'
5			Gordon went to watch Big Country las' week at um the Sharring
6			Pavillion (Chetsham Mallet)?

When prosodic ascriptions in the Announcement Response turn are not accompanied by a lexical assessment, they can have a more provisional character. While an alignment is made, the recipient indicates her understanding that the deliverer will provide more information before the sequence is complete.[13]

(16) H15B [Holt:M88:1:5:28]

1		Leslie:	ˑhh[h ↑Well: th:this ↑is eh why I'm not ↑quite ↓so well at
2			th'moment I'd thought I'd got t'the: bottom a'my ↑allergies
3			but I came out'n most ↑terr↓ible rash last week hhh[hh
4	→	Robbie:	[↑Oh:[↓:
5		Leslie:	[An'
6			I wz telling th'm all at school how m'ch better I wa:s but I:
7			think it might have been: um primulas I touched.
8			(.)
9		Robbie:	↑Oh you poor ↑↑thi::ng.

The announcement response above (arrowed) follows an announcement in which Leslie reveals a discrepancy between the expected improvement of her allergy condition and the actual outcome. Robbie's *Oh* (line 4) returns the floor immediately to Leslie, who moves without delay to her Elaboration. Here the *Oh* displays the high onset and rising-falling contour indicative of "surprise" (Figure 4c), and may thereby help occasion Leslie's Elaboration (lines 5–7), after which Robbie produces a lexical assessment (line 9).

Elaborations

By the first Elaboration turn, an ascription of valence has sometimes been offered by one party and ratified by the other. Consequently, an ascription in the Elabo-

ration can be more an AFFIRMATION of a valence that has already been mutually established, rather than an independent appraisal in its own right. However, this is not interactionally redundant; by providing the same ascription as the recipient in the previous turn, the deliverer also confirms that the recipient's displayed understanding of the news and its valence were satisfactory. In the corpus, ascriptions of valence are done in the Elaboration turn using the same collection of prosodic devices that are used to ascribe valence in other turns of the delivery sequence; but there are no instances in which a lexical ascription was made in a first Elaboration.

A news delivery often has more than one Elaboration-Assessment pair. These pairs may all reiterate the valence established in the News Announcement and Announcement Response:[14]

Excerpt 11 (continued)

1		Carrie:	I: ↑thought you'd like to know I've got a little
2			↓gran'daughter
3		Leslie:	˙thlk ↑Oh: how love↓ly.
4	→	Carrie:	↓Ye:s bo:rn th's early hours'v this ↓morning.
5		Leslie:	˙k↑Oh: joll[y goo:d, [h
6	→	Carrie:	[↓Ye:s [↑Christi:ne ↓Ru[th.
7		Leslie:	[˙hhhhh ↑hOh:: that's
8			↓ni::ce:.h What a nice name.

The positive valence of this delivery is established in the first two turns, as shown above. Although Carrie does not provide her own lexical evaluation in the first Elaboration turn (line 4), her *Yes* aligns with Leslie's positive assessment; and the Elaboration also provides a positive prosodic ascription through the use of wide-ranging, animated pitch, with an almost song-like quality. Carrie also provides a confirming *Yes* at the beginning of her second Elaboration (line 6), which is produced with an intonation highly similar to the first, and the positive trajectory is sustained by Leslie's third lexical assessment in lines 7–8. Thus elaborations are each heard as assessable in their own right, while preserving the strongly positive valence of the delivery as a whole.

An issue emerges here as to whether it is possible retrospectively to cast bad news as something different – as good news, for instance. Holt 1993 uses the term BRIGHT-SIDE SEQUENCES to describe positively valenced exchanges that sometimes follow a bad news delivery. In analyzing death announcements, Holt reports that, after the news delivery, participants tend to perform an exchange in which they assume a positive stance toward some aspect of the event:

(17) H07B (Holt 1993)

1	Leslie:	˙hhh Well I'm– I'm s:– (.) proba'ly going to a funeral on
2		Tuesday
3		(0.4)
4	Mum:	↑Oh ↓dea:r
5	Leslie:	D'you remember– You know Philip Cole? You ↑know 'e had this
6		u–very good ˙hhhh very busy little mother that was always

7	Mum:	↑Oh:: ↓yes
8	Leslie:	busy doing thin:gs 'nd (.) She die:d.
9	Mum:	Ah↓:::.
10	→Leslie:	eh–in the week very peacefully:
11	Mum:	Yes.
12	Leslie:	She just didn't recover from a stroke, she just sort'v fell
13		asleep.
14	Mum:	Oh:.
15	Leslie:	A:nd uh
16	Mum:	Well that's a nice ↓way t'go↓ isn't it?
17	Leslie:	Yes, that's right.
18	Mum:	( )
19		(0.6)
20	Leslie:	An' an' ↑people had a chance to say cheerio t[o her
21	Mum:	[Yes
22	Leslie:	='n the vicar came 'n you know 'n i– it wz all very peaceful
23	Mum:	Yes,
24		(.)
25	Mum:	How nice
26		(0.3)
27	Leslie:	So they're ↑not going to have a dis↓mal funeral↓ they said
28		they're goin't' have r::eally a thanksgiving for her=
29	Mum:	(That's)
30	Leslie:	=li[:fe
31	Mum:	[for her ↓life. Yes that's [right.]
32	Leslie:	[Mm:]
33		(0.5)
34	Mum:	↑Hm:
35		(0.6)
36	Mum:	That's ni:ce

In this example, the first move toward a bright-side sequence appears at line 10 – an utterance that builds on the report of the death (line 8), giving the timing and a positive characterization. The preference for contiguity (Sacks 1987) encourages a response to the latter of these items, and the stress placed on the second half of the utterance (line 10) also encourages a response oriented to *very peacefully* rather than the death. Mum provides for continuation (line 11) with a narrowed pitch range consistent with bad news, maintaining the mournful stance established earlier in the sequence. Leslie again proposes a bright-side (lines 12–13), which fits with the *very peacefully* component emphasized before. This time, however, Mum produces an *oh* token (line 14); and after Leslie's start at another turn, Mum affirms the proposed valence with a positive assessment (line 16). With the bright-side trajectory mutually established, the remaining pronouncements in this delivery are all positively valenced, and all receive affirmations from Mum, including the additional lexical Assessments *How nice* (line 25) and *That's nice* (line 36).

One might then wonder if the delivery is properly characterized as bad news at all, or if the bright-side sequence organizes a cooperative revision in which the news is transformed from bad to good. When the prosody is examined more closely, however, it becomes clear that the positive prosodic ascriptions are con-

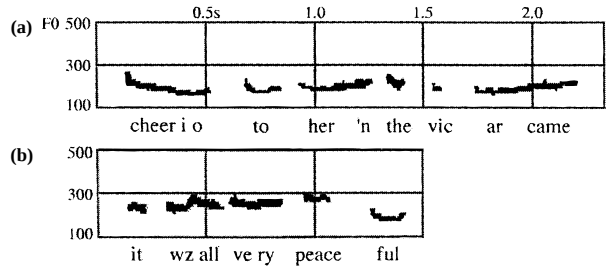

FIGURE 5: Utterances from "bright-side sequence", Ex. 17.

tinually tempered in a way that preserves the original negative ascription – even while, lexically, a positive stance is constituted toward the elaborating details. The turns are produced at a pitch that is markedly lower than in good news deliveries between these same parties; fragments of two of Leslie's utterances in this delivery are shown in Figure 5. Leslie also makes ample use of the breathy voice quality and of the stretched, falling vowels that are more characteristic of negative valence. The entire segment of Figure 5a is done with a softened voice, and the turn also has a very constricted pitch range compared to that of the good news deliveries presented in this article. In Figure 5b, one can see that the intensifier *very* is said with a flat contour, while in a good news delivery one might expect to see a sharp upstep between the two syllables.

The utterances are also produced with a reduced speech rate that is more consistent with bad news. Although the lexical ascriptions of positive valence are perhaps more prominent, the presence of clearly negative features shows that bright-side sequences are not transformations of valence. It is not that Leslie and Mum have changed their minds and are now pleased by the death of Philip's mother, but that they have collaboratively found positive aspects to focus on, while sustaining an overall display that the event is an unfortunate one – i.e., it is bad news. Consequently, the sequence better evinces an asymmetrical valuation of good news over bad, rather than a reversed sentiment toward the news (see Maynard 1995). Prosody can be used to temper lexical ascriptions of valence, and to accomplish news as having positive parts within a negative whole.

Assessments

In the collection, the majority of first lexical ascriptions are made either in the Assessment turn or in a combined Announcement Response/Assessment turn (53 of 75 deliveries,[15] or 61%). As noted, prosodic ascriptions are initiated earlier in the NDS, and participants regularly establish a mutual orientation to valence by the time a recipient produces a lexical assessment. There were no instances in the corpus in which the valence of the previous turn was contradicted in the Assess-

ment.[16] Although the valence that a recipient exhibits in the Assessment turn thus appears strongly determined by preceding utterances, this slot still features the most intense prosodic ascriptions, and often the only lexical ones, in the entire delivery. Excepting "bright-side sequences," Assessments CONCRETIZE the valence of the original News Announcement. The character of the Assessment turn as a final confirmation of valence may partially explain the more exaggerated prosody, as the explicitness of the attribution may mark the movement from a provisional to an accountably confirmed valence.

However, the exaggerated nature of Assessment turns is part of a more general trend: Recipients' turns in news deliveries tend to employ more dramatic prosody than deliverers'. This difference may be attributed partially to differences in the shapes of the turns; deliverers' turns are constructed as sentential units that evaluate the news as it is reported, while recipients' turns are compact phrases (or even single words) that are more exclusively dedicated to the task of evaluating the news. Because deliverers are producing information-as-news, they have more complex turn-organizational tasks, whereas recipient turns can attend more narrowly to emotive displays. Yet this explanation is necessarily partial in that it does not account for an important pattern among the cases – the differences in intensity between deliverers' and recipients' prosody are most extreme when deliverers present news about themselves. This issue is addressed in the following section.

DIFFERING INTENSITIES OF DELIVERERS AND RECIPIENTS

Although deliverers are often more influential than recipients in determining the valence of a delivery, recipients use more intense prosody in ascribing valence. That is, both deliverers and recipients employed the prosodic conventions for attributing valence to news as summarized in Table 1, but recipients appeared to use the conventions more strongly in 49 out of 71 cases in the corpus.[17] The disparity between the prosody of deliverers and recipients appears to be greatest when the deliverers are presenting good news about themselves, i.e. when the deliverer is the main consequential figure (and often the nominal subject) in the delivery (Maynard 1996b). In these instances, valence markers used by the deliverer are subdued (if not absent), while the recipient's assessment is stronger than usual. For example, in ex. 18, Gordon is responding to a news inquiry from Susan about his efforts to study in France. Although his response has several different parts, each of which could be construed as good news, Gordon presents his news with the prosody of positive valence only after several opportunities for recipient assessment are bypassed:

(18) H19G [Holt:SO88:1:5:3]

1	Gordon:	= ˙p An:d e–she wrote– (0.2) back well she eshly phoned ˙hh
2		a:n' said h ˙hhh (.) that uh she wz very impressed by the
3		letter, hhh ❶So thank your dad for that an' uh:° that–
4		(0.4) she actually had somebody over there this ↓year

5 unfortunately↓ but uh: ˙hhh she wanted me to come over
6 another yea:r ❷(.) ˙hhh u–uh ’nd she said if:: it wasn’t
7 possible that (0.3) you know I c’d stay with her. she c’d
8 always find ˙hhh friends’v hers:: who could (.) put me up.
9 hhh ❸An’ al↓so: ˙hhh her: (0.3) u– husband i:s an
10 architect.hh °hhhhhh A:n:[:d uh
11 Susan: [You’re kidding [me.
12 Gordon: [nNo: ↓n[o.
13 Susan: [O h_: :
G[od.
14 Gordon: [An’
15 she said that uh (.) if I (.) if I decided after the third
16 year that I wanted to do: my year of practice in–: ↓Paris
17 ’hhhh then it (0.2) would be completely acceptable b’cz all
18 the family speak about half a dozen languages, hh ˙hhh So: I
19 c’d work for hi:m.
20 Susan: Oh brillian:t. Oh that’s good news.
21 Gordon: It’s really good.

At each of the numbered points, Gordon completes the production of a turn-constructional unit in which the content is hearable as candidate good news. At each point he pauses, breathes in or out, or produces some other perturbation in talk; these provide sequential positions for continuers and possibly positive assessment of the news. Susan bypasses each opportunity, leaving Gordon to resume his narrative. At line 9, though, the next narrative component has increased amplitude and rising pitch on *al* in the word *also*. Both syllables of *also* are stressed; Uhmann 1996 identifies this configuration as a “beat clash” which increases intensity when done in the context of a news delivery. The token may act as a pre-news marker that signals good news; grossly put, it sounds “upbeat.” Gordon completes the Announcement (lines 9–10), with an emphasis on *architect*. Susan responds with a newsmark (line 11), and following Gordon’s confirmation at line 12, she produces an *Oh:: God* appreciation of his news (line 13). The newsmark and appreciation both have sustained high pitch, dramatic emphases, and a “gasping” voice. Accordingly, whereas Susan forgoes previous opportunities for turn transition, Gordon’s prosody at lines 9–10 may be more strongly implicating a response, and specifically soliciting the positive display of appreciation that Susan subsequently produces at line 13. After this, Gordon further elaborates the news (lines 14–19), whereupon Susan produces a strong lexical assessment. Gordon then agrees, although in a mitigated fashion.

Intensity is more equal when the deliverer presents news about a third party. Below, Leslie and a nursing home employee provide comparably intense ascriptions in discussing the health of one of Leslie’s distant relatives:

(19) H2G [Holt:X(C)1:2:2:3]
1 Leslie: Well ↑how’s Missiz Wood↓chamber getting on:
2 [. . .]
3 Ward: ˙hh W’she’s (0.2) she’s doin’ very well actually um: she’s
4 inde↑pendent.
5 (.)

6 Leslie: Oh she ↓is.
7 Ward: Ye:s she's walking arou::nd uh: washing 'n dressing herse:lf?
8 Leslie: Oh ↓good.

In answering Leslie's news inquiry, Ward precedes her announced news *she's independent* with a pre-assessment of this information: *she's doing very well actually* (line 3). Above, we noted that this Announcement also employs intonational devices indicative of good news, most conspicuously the sharp rises on *well* and *inde*↑*pendent* (Fig. 2c). Ward's combination of lexical and strong prosodic ascription assumes a much more overtly positive stance toward the news she delivers than did Gordon's Announcement in Ex. 18. Meanwhile, Leslie's response, while positive, is not emphatically so: The Announcement Response is slightly delayed, and both it and the Assessment turn (line 8) are produced at normal amplitude with mid-range pitch. Compared to Susan's *You're kidding me* and *Oh God* responses in ex. 18, Leslie's reaction may be characterized as tepid.

The increased intensity of deliverers when giving news about others suggests that they may be SUPPRESSING their use of valence markers in news deliveries about themselves, which we noted above to be prosodically subdued. Similarly, the decreased intensity of recipients in deliveries about third parties suggests that they may be EXAGGERATING their use of valence markers when assessing news about the deliverer. Pomerantz 1978 identifies a system of SELF-PRAISE AVOIDANCE within conversation, in which parties tend to minimize praise of their own feats and maximize praise of their fellow interactants (see also Leech 1983:131–38, Freese 1997).[18] As for deliverers, insofar as presenting good news about themselves may be hearable as "bragging," they may orient to the system by presenting news neutrally or with minimal positive valence. Gordon's Announcement in ex. 18 contains only minimal markers of positive valence in the production of his good news narrative. Meanwhile, recipients upgrade the valence, using more exaggerated prosody to do so (Pomerantz 1978). In ex. 18, Susan's strong appreciation and assessment of the news may be the proper counterpart to Gordon's exhibited "modesty." Even after her *Brilliant. Oh that's good news*, Gordon's agreement is tempered.

While Pomerantz's observations on constraints against self-praise are here only applicable to instances of good news, the data suggest that a similar injunction may exist against strong displays of regret when presenting bad news about oneself. Whereas self-praise avoidance can be seen as preventing the appearance of the sanctionable behavior known as "bragging," subdued deliveries of bad news about oneself may ward off potential accusations of "whining." Moreover, just as recipients exhibit an orientation toward making sure that the prosperity of others is properly recognized, so, too, they display a concern for others' woes. Examples of bad news about the deliverer, as in Ex. 16, feature stronger displays of sadness by the recipient than by the deliverer. In deliveries of either valence, the prosody of valence ascriptions displays a sensitivity to the relationship of the

parties to one another and their relationship to or as the consequential figures of the news (Maynard 1996b).

CONCLUSION

Conversation analysts have been accused of slighting the role of prosody in the social organization of talk (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996), and this study is intended as one step toward redressing this neglect. Previous research has identified a strong connection between prosody and the expression of emotion; thus Bolinger (1989:1) argues that "even when it interacts with such highly conventionalized areas as morphology and syntax, intonation manages to do what it does by continuing to be what it is, primarily a symptom of how we feel about what we say." Here we have found that there are systematic differences in the prosody of good and bad news deliveries and responses, and that these differences are consistent with those associated with the expression of joy and sorrow. At the same time, our goal has not been to identify correlates of prosody and emotional display, but to show how participants use prosody as a semiotic resource for converging on a shared evaluative orientation toward an item of news. We find that parties make prosodic ascriptions of valence throughout the four turns of the prototypical News Delivery Structure (Maynard 1997), and that explicit lexical ascriptions in a delivery are often only concretizations of a valence that has already been mutually established prosodically. Moreover, by noting differences in the intensity with which participants use prosody in displaying their orientation toward a reporting, we suggest that prosody also serves the reconstitution of parties' relationships to one another and to the news.

The work that prosody performs in the establishment of the valence of news supports the more general argument that news is something that is DONE in conversation, rather than merely conveyed. In conversation, Maynard (1997:126) argues, "Whether news is good or bad is not inherent in events and instead is something that is, relative to the exhibited concerns, perspectives, and identities of co-participants, their own interactional production." Prosodic manipulations provide only one set of resources available to participants in the interactional production of the valence of news; we have attempted to demonstrate their importance and embeddedness within organized sequences of actions. This paper underlines the necessity and value of attending closely both to sequential organization for an understanding of prosody, and to the role of prosody in conversational sequences.

NOTES

* The research reported in this paper was supported by a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship for the first author, and a research grant from the College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University, for the second author. The authors would like to thank Bill Corsaro, Karen Lutfey, Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, and John Local for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the paper.

[1] Among types of news inquiry, Itemized News Inquiries direct attention to a specific domain about which the other party is presumed to be more knowledgeable, while Topic-Initial Elicitors provide a much more open environment for reporting news (Button & Casey 1985).

[2] Transcription symbols are drawn from the notation system developed by Gail Jefferson. More details on these conventions may be found in Atkinson & Heritage 1984.

[word]	Brackets indicate the points at which overlapping talk begins and ends.
word	Underlining indicates some form of prominence (via pitch and/or amplitude).
↓word	A downward-pointing arrow precedes syllables produced with a downstep or pronounced fall in pitch.
word.	A period indicates falling pitch on the last syllable of a turn-constructional unit.
↑word	A upward-pointing arrow precedes syllables produced with an upstep or pronounced rise in pitch.
word?	A question mark indicates rising pitch on the last syllable of a turn-constructional unit.
word,	A comma indicates nonterminal intonation at the close of a possible turn-constructional unit.
WORD	Capital letters indicate parts of utterance that are spoken much louder than surrounding talk.
°word°	Degree symbols demarcate syllables spoken more quietly than surrounding talk.
Wo::rd	Colons indicate a stretching of the immediately preceding sound.
.hhh	Hhh's preceded by a period represent hearable inhalations. Hhh's preceded by a raised period (˙hhh) represent hearable aspirations. The number of h's indicates length of in/outbreath.
–	An en dash indicates a cut-off sound (i.e. a glottal stop).
=	Equal signs indicate that speakers' utterances are performed without any gap.
[. . .]	An ellipsis in brackets indicates omitted talk.
(0.5)	Numbers in parentheses indicate duration of silences in tenths of a second. A dot in parentheses indicates a silence of less than two-tenths of a second.
(word)	Words inside single parentheses indicate transcriber doubt as to what was said.
((word))	Double parentheses contain authors' comments and/or descriptions.

[3] Sacks (1992:572–3) seems to imply that ascribing valence is recipients' work, and that it is done only at the end of delivery sequences.

[4] Differences between British English and American English intonation are sketched by Bolinger (1989:28–32), but none of these differences are considered consequential for the discussion here. That is, episodes could not be distinguished in terms of their prosodic patterning in the delivery or receipt of news.

[5] All episodes of bad and good news were transferred from analog tape recordings to digital computer files. Figures were created using SoundEdit 16 and Adobe Photoshop 3.0 on an Apple Macintosh 8100/80AV.

[6] This is an EXTREMELY high pitch for human speech, even for parties' reactions to good news. The pitch levels reported in the graph were verified using another speech analysis program, as well as by viewing the waveform within SoundEdit 16 and dividing the frequency of several small segments by the elapsed time. A reviewer suggested that reported pitch levels might be biased upward because the data are taken from telephone calls, in which lower frequencies are sometimes not transmitted; such a bias is possible, but not impressionistically available in the authors' listening to the data. Our gratitude goes to Kenneth DeJong for his assistance in using speech analysis software and measuring frequency.

[7] In both examples, the downward movement is on the next-to-last syllable of the utterance; it could be that the downward movement is part of a falling-rising terminal contour that serves a variety of interactional functions unrelated to valence (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996:42).

[8] This contradiction is noted in a searing criticism of turn-taking research by O'Connell et al. 1990. Meanwhile, Wells & Peppé 1996 compare turn-ending cues in three different varieties of English, and suggest that the prosody of turn delimitation may vary considerably by dialect. Auer 1996 also provides an excellent discussion of the prosody of turn continuation and relinquishment.

[9] In this paper, SPEECH RATE is used to refer to the PERCEPTION of speech as faster or slower. While Table 3 in this paper uses actual duration between syllables for illustrative purposes, there is good documentation of the indeterminate relationship between actual speech rate (as measured by, e.g., beats per second) and perceived speech rate, even if the results on this topic have been somewhat

contradictory. For example, Kohler 1986 reports that higher-pitched speech is heard as faster than lower-pitched speech, which would be consistent with good news being hearably more rapid and more high-pitched; but Uhmann 1992 provides evidence for the opposite conclusion. Uhmann also gives an excellent overview of issues in the measurement and analytic treatment of speech rate and tempo, as well as a cogent discussion of the contextualizing functions of speech rate.

[10] Uhmann 1992, it should be noted, finds these beat clashes to occur more on second assessments than on first assessments.

[11] Terasaki 1976 shows that news deliveries may also begin with a pre-announcement sequence, but such sequences are not analyzed in this article.

[12] This excerpt is analyzed in detail by Maynard 1997.

[13] Heritage 1984 and Local 1996 provide evidence that "freestanding" *oh*-tokens also routinely terminate informing sequences.

[14] This delivery actually goes on much longer than the excerpt provided. One can count at least eight positive Elaborations and Assessments in the entire delivery.

[15] This number counts only those deliveries that follow the two- or four-part structure described by Maynard 1997.

[16] In cases of "problematic presumptiveness" described by Maynard 1997, the valence proposed by the projected recipient in a news inquiry is contradicted by the valence with which the subsequent delivery is performed. When this happens, recipients invariably align themselves with the new valence, revealing an asymmetry in which deliverers exert a greater influence than recipients over the valence ascribed to news. However, as Maynard 1996b demonstrates, this priority over valence may not be so much a consequence of the deliverer role as it is of being the party more directly concerned by the news.

[17] This number does not count instances in which the party using the stronger prosody could not be discerned.

[18] The phenomenon of self-praise avoidance implies that the system is primarily self-enforced; but Pomerantz 1978 provides evidence that the system is also other-enforced if self-enforcement breaks down. Braggarts are sanctioned by their fellow interactants.

REFERENCES

Atkinson, J. Maxwell, & Heritage, John (1984), eds. *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Auer, Peter (1996). On the prosody and syntax of turn-continuations. In Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (eds.), 57–100.

Bolinger, Dwight (1986). *Intonation and its parts*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

——— (1989). *Intonation and its uses*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Button, Graham, & Casey, Neil (1984). Generating topic: The use of topic initial elicitors. In Atkinson & Heritage (eds.), 167–90.

———, ——— (1985). Topic nomination and topic pursuit. *Human Studies* 8:3–55.

Couper-Kuhlen, Elizabeth (1986). *An introduction to English prosody*. London: Arnold.

———, & Selting, Margret (1996a), eds. *Prosody in conversation*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

———, ——— (1996b). Towards an interactional perspective on prosody and a prosodic perspective on interaction. In Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (eds.), 11–56.

Cruttenden, Alan (1986). *Intonation*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, David (1969). *Prosodic systems and intonation in English*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Cutler, Anne, & Pearson, Mark (1986). On the analysis of prosodic turn-taking cues. In Catherine Johns-Lewis (ed.), *Intonation and discourse*, 139–55. London: Croom Helm.

Freese, Jeremy (1997). Politeness and the introduction of positive information about self. Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Midwest Sociological Association, Des Moines.

French, Peter, & Local, John (1983). Turn-competitive incomings. *Journal of Pragmatics* 7:17–38.

Goldberg, Jo Anne (1978). Amplitude shift: A mechanism for the affiliation of utterances in conversational interaction. In Schenkein (ed.), 199–218.

Heritage, John (1984). A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In Atkinson & Heritage (eds.), 299–345.
Holt, Elizabeth (1993). The structure of death announcements: Looking on the bright side of death. *Text* 13:189–212.
Jefferson, Gail (1981). The abominable 'Ne?': A working paper exploring the phenomenon of post-response pursuit of response. Occasional Paper no. 6, Department of Sociology, University of Manchester, England.
Kohler, K. J. (1986). Parameters of speech rate perception in German words and sentences: Duration, F_0 movement, and F_0 level. *Language and Speech* 29:115–39.
Leech, Geoffrey N. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
Liberman, Mark (1979). *The intonational system of English*. New York: Garland.
Local, John (1996). Conversational phonetics: Some aspects of news receipts in everyday talk. In Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (eds.), 177–230.
———; Kelly, John; & Wells, W. H. G. (1986). Towards a phonology of conversation: Turn-taking in Tyneside English. *Journal of Linguistics* 22:411–37.
Maynard, Douglas W. (1980). Placement of topic changes in conversation. *Semiotica* 30:263–90.
——— (1995). The benign order of everyday life: Asymmetries between good news and bad news in conversational interaction. Paper presented at EPOS (Ethnomethodological, Phenomenological, and Observational Studies) Program, Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles.
——— (1996a). On "realization" in everyday life: The forecasting of bad news as a social relation. *American Sociological Review* 61:109–31.
——— (1996b). Consequential figures and relationships in conversational episodes of bad and good news. Unpublished MS, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington.
——— (1997). The news delivery sequence: Bad news and good news in conversational interaction. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 30:93–130.
O'Connell, Daniel C.; Kowal, Sabine; & Kaltenbacher, Erika (1990). Turn-taking: A critical analysis of the research tradition. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 19:345–73.
Oreström, Bengt (1983). *Turn-taking in English conversation*. Lund, Sweden: Gleerup.
Pierrehumbert, Janet (1987). *The phonology and phonetics of English intonation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
———, & Hirschberg, Julia (1990). The meaning of intonational contours in the interpretation of discourse. In Philip R. Cohen et al., (eds.), *Intentions of communication*, 271–312. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Pomerantz, Anita (1978). Compliment responses: Notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints. In Schenkein (ed.), 79–112.
Roach, Paul (1983). *English phonetics and phonology: A practical course*. Cambridge & New York: University Press.
Sacks, Harvey (1987). On the preferences for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation. In Graham Button & John R. E. Lee (eds.), *Talk and social organization*, 54–69. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
——— (1992). *Lectures on conversation*, vol. 2. Oxford: Blackwell.
Schenkein, Jim (1978), ed. *Studies in the organization of conversational interaction*. New York: Academic Press.
Selting, Margret (1992). Prosody in conversational questions. *Journal of Pragmatics* 17:315–45.
Terasaki, Alene (1976). Pre-announcement sequences in conversation. Social Science Working Paper 99, School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine.
Uhmann, Susanne (1992). Contextualizing relevance: On some forms and functions of speech rate changes in everyday conversation. In Peter Auer & Aldo Di Luzio (eds.), *The contextualization of language*, 297–336. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
——— (1996). On rhythm in everyday German conversation: Beat clashes in assessment utterances. In Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (eds.), 303–65.
Wells, Bill, & Peppé, Sue (1996). Ending up in Ulster: Prosody and turn-taking in English dialects. In Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (eds.), 101–30.
Williams, Carl E., & Stevens, Kenneth N. (1972). Emotions and speech: Some acoustic correlates. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 52:1238–50.