

The Social Meaning of Phonetic and Phonological Variation in Declarative Intonation

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Drawing on phonological, phonetic, and conversational analyses, this paper investigates variation in declarative intonation, suggesting that social meaning is encoded in both a given variant's frequency of occurrence and its phonetic details. For unexpected variants (rising contour) subjects exhibit variation in the frequency with which the contour occurs. However, for expected variants (falling contour) stylistic variation is evident not in frequency but in the contour's acoustic character. Whereas merely using the marked rising contour is sufficient for indexing social meanings like non-hegemonic masculinity and cooperativity, doing other kinds of social work with the unmarked falling variants requires phonetic creativity.