Revista Letras Raras

ISSN: 2317-2347- v. 14, n. Especial – e6721 (2025)

Intonation of Evaluative Utterances in Guatemalan Spanish: Data from PRESEEA corpus /

Entonación de enunciados evaluativos en el español de Guatemala: datos del corpus PRESEEA

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Received: March, 17th, 2025**. Approved:** April, 19th, 2025.

How to cite:
VELÁSQUEZ-UPEGUI, Eva Patricia. Intonation of Evaluative Utterances in Guatemalan Spanish: Data from PRESEEA corpus. *Revista Letras Raras.* Campina Grande, v. 14, n. Especial, e6721. 2025. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17010093

ABSTRACT
This article analyzes intonation in evaluative utterances from PRESEEA Guatemala corpus, aiming to identify the distinctive characteristics of this type of utterance in comparison to declarative or representative utterances, which primarily serve to refer to reality. To achieve this, utterances were collected from sociolinguistics interviews involving six participants-three men and three women-belonging to the second generation and representing three different levels of education. The data were analyzed following the parameters of the Autosegmental-Metrical Model and annotated using the *Sp*_ToBI system. The findings indicate that, despite the evaluative nature of the utterance examined, they follow the same nuclear configuration as declarative utterances.
KEY WORDS: Intonation, Declarative Utterances, Evaluative Utterance, PRESEEA, Guatemala.

RESUMEN
En este artículo se presenta el análisis de la entonación, en enunciados con contenido evaluativo del corpus PRESEEA Guatemala, con el objetivo de establecer las características particulares de este tipo de enunciados, en comparación con enunciados declarativos o representativos, que tienen como finalidad referir la realidad. Para ello se reunieron enunciados provenientes de la entrevista sociolingüística, pertenecientes a 6 informantes, 3 hombres y 3 mujeres, de la segunda generación y de tres grados de instrucción. Los datos se estudian de acuerdo con los parámetros del Modelo Métrico Autosegmental y se etiquetan según el sistema *Sp*_ToBI. Los resultados permiten reconocer que, a pesar del contenido evaluativo de los enunciados estudiados, se emplea la misma configuración nuclear de los enunciados declarativos.

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PALABRAS CLAVE: Entonación; Enunciados Declarativos; Enunciados Evaluativos; PRESEEA; Guatemala.

1 Introduction

One of the challenges in prosody research is understanding how suprasegmental resources are distributed in the communication of intentions by interlocutors, i.e., how they are expressed in different speech acts within communicative interactions. With this goal in mind, this study aims to analyze utterances with evaluative content in interview speech from the PRESEEA-Guatemala corpus, as part of the "Usage-Based Prosody (PBU, in its Spanish acronym)" project, which investigates prosody in oral corpuses pertaining to more realistic speaking situations (Martin Butragueño and Velásquez-Upegui, 2023).

Within the framework of the PBU project, a previous analysis was conducted on declarative utterances—also known as representative or assertive utterances— in the Spanish spoken in Guatemala City (Velásquez-Upegui, [no date]; Martin Butragueño and Velásquez-Upegui, 2023), which aim to refer to reality. Thus, in this document, the goal is to describe intonation in utterances that express a subjective assessment of a state of affairs , i.e., assertions that reflect the speaker's point of view rather than a representation of reality. For example, speaking about a rainy afternoon, the formalization of a representational declarative utterance would be "It is raining," while a subjective evaluative utterance would be "The rain is so beautiful," since it conveys an emotional state or an evaluative stance toward the rain.

Accordingly, this study aims to carry out a descriptive comparison between these types of utterances, in order to determine whether the prosodic configuration changes depending on their pragmatic content, thus expanding the understanding of intonation in this variety of speech.

The exploration of utterances with diverse pragmatic content underlies the hypothesis that such diversity leads to variations in intonation, given that intonation is one of the main indicators of an utterance's illocutionary force (Félix-Brasdefer, 2019). It is therefore necessary to identify the degree of dependence between prosody and the illocution of utterances, so that it can be determined whether the utterance's intention modifies its intonation, or whether intonation is less affected by pragmatic aspects. There is evidence that intonation is indeed susceptible to changes based on the speech act (Velásquez-Upegui et al., 2020) and emotional content (Villalba Camacho

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and Velásquez-Upegui, 2024). Nonetheless, further research is needed to determine how systematic these changes may be.

In this sense, the above description of declarative utterances within the same discursive context—such as the sociolinguistic interview, in this case—is a task that allows for the understanding of variation in utterances associated with other speech acts.

One possible way to identify this pragmatic variation is by comparing the nuclear configuration, i.e., the nuclear pitch accent and the terminal juncture, since these contain linguistic information that allows us to distinguish between utterance types (Navarro Tomás, 1948). Another advantage of using nuclear configuration as a point of comparison is that it allows us to explore whether the occurrence of a nuclear accent is restricted solely to that position in the utterance or whether it does not seem to be conditioned by that factor. For this reason, the *Sp*_ToBI system (Estebas-Vilaplana and Prieto, 2008; Sosa, 2003), within the framework of the Autosegmental-Metrical Model (Hualde, 2003; Ladd, 1996; Pierrehumbert, 1980), is a useful tool for identifying the series of tones used and comparing their frequencies of use while tonal accents are transcribed using the same criteria, facilitating comparability.

The following section is a background on the study of Guatemalan Spanish, followed by a theoretical framework that defines what speech acts are and the different types of speech acts (Searle, 2010), as well as an exploration of the features of the *Sp*_ToBI model and its usefulness in describing different types of utterances. Subsequently, the results are presented, based on the tonal accents linked to the stressed syllables of the utterances, with special attention on the L+H* tonal accent, since it is the most frequently used nuclear accent in the Spanish of Guatemala City. Lastly, the study concludes with the findings of the analysis.

2 Background

The need to expand the description of Guatemalan Spanish to more subjective utterances stems from a previous study on Guatemalan intonation (Martín Butragueño and Velásquez-Upegui, 2023; Velásquez-Upegui, [no date]), in which the general intonational characteristics of declarative, representative, or assertive utterances were determined (Searle, 2010). In that study, 90 utterances produced by 18 Guatemalan speakers were analyzed, stratified by sex, age, and level of education. The retrieved utterances were part of the PRESEEA-Guatemala corpus (Verdugo, 2002), and for

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each one, the frequency of tonal accents was analyzed for both the prenuclear segment and the nuclear configuration.

For the prenuclear segment, it was found that the most frequent tonal accent (TA) in the first stressed syllable was the sustained H*, followed by the rising tonal accent L+H*. For the second stressed syllable, the most commonly used TAs were the sustained H* and the displaced L+>H*. As for the nuclear configuration, the results showed that the most frequent pattern was a circumflex movement with a falling final pitch, represented as L+¡H* L%, with nuclear rises exceeding 1.5 st.

These results appear to align with previous studies on the Spanish of Guatemala City, such as that of Utgård (2014), in which the circumflex pattern is reported. In that work, the author studies absolute declarative and interrogative utterances from a geoprosodic perspective, which considers five dialectal areas. The so-called Central Zone corresponds to the Spanish spoken in Guatemala City. The methodology used for data collection follows the AMPER[1]-Spain project and it was adapted to the Guatemalan sociolinguistic context. Ten monolingual female speakers of Guatemalan Spanish aged 25-55 with a medium[2] level of education, from both rural and urban areas, were surveyed. The data analyzed was from the reading of an utterance with a paroxytone final pitch.

In terms of intonation in declarative utterances produced by women in the urban area, Utgård (2014) explains that there are two tonal peaks in the body of the utterance, in the post-tonic syllables, and a final tonal peak is found on the nuclear syllable, ending with a falling movement. This pattern could be represented by the following sequence: L+<H* L+<H* L+H* L%, according to the *Sp*_ToBI system notation.

Using the same methodology from the AMPER project, Congosto Martín (2020) studies the intonation of four Guatemalan women who have lived in Los Angeles (United States) for more than 20 years. This data is compared to the speech of women from Guatemala City, where they have lived all their lives. Declarative and interrogative phrases collected through a reading task were analyzed. For declarative utterances, the author finds that in the Guatemalan Spanish spoken in Los Angeles, the pattern corresponds to L+>H* L* L* L%, whereas in Guatemalan Spanish it is L+>H* L* (L*+H, L+>H*) L+H* L%. For interrogative utterances, the patterns found were L+H* L+>H* L+H* H% in Los Angeles and L+>H* L+>H* L+H* H% in Guatemala.

[1] Multimedia Atlas of the Ibero-Romance Spanish Prosody. Available at: http://stel3.ub.edu/labfon/amper/cast/index_internacional.html
[2] Completed high school

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According to the studies reviewed, declarative utterances in Guatemalan Spanish are characterized by displaced and low peaks in the prenuclear segment, and by a nuclear configuration with a rising nuclear accent and a paced final pitch, which could be represented as L+>H* (H*) L*(H*) L+H* L%.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Speech Acts

Speech acts are considered communicative actions that convey a communicative intention expressed by a speaker to their interlocutor, i.e., information that underlies the propositional form and constitutes the basis of communicative interaction. The diversity of social interactions gives rise to different speech acts that, rather than being fixed and absolute forms, have the capacity to be renewed, transformed, and enriched. Nonetheless, classifications have been created to help distinguish between speech acts. One of the most widely used, due to its effectiveness in understanding communicative processes from a pragmatic perspective, is that of Searle (2010), who classifies speech acts into five general types:

- Assertive: The speaker refers to reality; in other words, they affirm or deny something through the utterance.
- Directive: These speech acts are used by speakers to get the listener to carry out an action.
- Commissive: Through these acts, the speaker commits to an action that they will perform in the future.
- Expressive: These express the speaker's psychological state about an event.
- Declarative: These convey a statement that changes the world of the speaker or the listener through the utterance (Félix-Brasdefer, 2019).

In the field of prosody, the study of unmarked utterances has been prioritized as a starting point for identifying dialectal particularities and for describing pragmatic and meaning-related variations. These utterances are prototypically assertive speech acts, as they refer to reality and are largely devoid of subjectivity, such as affirming, denying, or concluding. They are thus associated with the truth value of the utterance and follow the word-to-world direction of fit[3], since the speaker seeks to represent the world through their utterances.

[3] The direction of fit refers to the relationship between words and the world, i.e., whether it is the speaker who adapts to the world—such as describing something that already exists (e.g., making an assertion) (words to

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In contrast to assertive speech acts, expressive speech acts convey the speaker's point of view, i.e., their subjective assessment of reality. These may be subject to lexical, grammatical, and prosodic variations, since the priority is to assess reality and reflect it in the speaker's expression. Examples include acknowledgements, apologies, commendations, and psychological states in relation to a situation, such as feelings, emotions, like, dislike, approval, or disapproval. In these types of speech acts, the direction of fit is not relevant, since it involves the speaker's subjective perspective, where the goal is not to tailor words to the world or vice versa. An expressive utterance can therefore take the form of a question, a statement, or an exclamation.

According to Caso (2015), evaluative expressions depend, in very general terms, on the value-based perspective of an individual or a community, as they cannot occur outside the system that produces them. In evaluative utterances, the speaker's point of view is imprinted—in other words, their voice emerges in connection with their experiences, beliefs, and ideologies. Thus, the evaluation is based on a system of values shared by the speaker and the community to which they belong (Thompson & Hunston, 2000).

3.2 *Sp*_ToBI Notation

The ToBI system is a set of conventions designed for the transcription of intonation in several languages, developed based on the Autosegmental-Metrical (AM) Model (Pierrehumbert, 1980; Ladd, 1996; Hualde, 2003). In this model, intonation is considered an autonomous suprasegmental component of language, comprised of a series of tonal accents associated with the prominent syllables of utterances, pauses, and the last syllables of such melodic sequences. These systems have been adopted for the transcription of intonation in different languages. In the case of Spanish, it is represented as the *Sp*_ToBI system (Beckman et al., 2002); *Sp* because of the English abbreviation for Spanish, and "ToBI", which refers to Tones and Break Indices (Sosa, 1999; Prieto & Roseano, 2009).

Within the *Sp*_ToBI conventions, a range of tonal accents has been described, including monotonal accents, bitonal accents, intermediate junctures, and terminal junctures. These conventions have been reviewed by various authors (Estebas-Vilaplana & Prieto, 2008; Hualde &

world [words → world])—or whether it is the world that adapts to the speaker's desires—i.e., a desire exists, which is then expressed in words (e.g., giving someone an order) (world to words [world → words]). (Félix-Brasdefer, 2019, p. 65).

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Prieto, 2015), who have made changes in an effort to create a phonological representation more closely aligned with phonetic reality. However, for varieties of Spanish, a phonetic use of the system has prevailed, with the aim of identifying pragmatic, diastratic, diaphasic, and diatopic variations.

4 Methodology

4.1 Corpus

The data was retrieved from the PRESEEA-Guatemala corpus (Verdugo, 2002), which is part of the Project for the Sociolinguistic Study of Spanish in Spain and America (PRESEEA, 2014). The creation of the study subcorpus involved the selection of audio segments in which each speaker expressed opinions of approval, like, or dislike regarding a topic, i.e., evaluative utterances which, due to their pragmatic function, are expressive speech acts (Searle, 2010). A total of 122 utterances, integrated into speaking turns in which each speaker conveyed their point of view and subjective evaluation regarding work environment, family, and interpersonal relationships, were analyzed.

4.2 Participants

Using the analysis previously carried out by Martin Butragueño and Velásquez Upegui (2023) as a starting point, the interviews of six speakers from the younger generation were selected: three men and three women, representing three educational levels:

1. “Illiterate, no schooling. Primary Education (up to approximately ages 10–11), about 5 years of schooling
2. Secondary Education (up to approximately ages 16–18), about 10–12 years of schooling
3. Higher Education (college, technical higher education) (up to approximately ages 21–22), about 15 years of schooling.” (Moreno Fernández, 2021, p. 14)

4.3 Procedure

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The selected paragraphs were divided into intonation groups, i.e., segments separated by pauses. The pauses were confirmed using the interview transcription, in accordance with the conventions of the PRESEEA project. Each intonation group was segmented into syllables, and labels were assigned to each stressed syllable: S1, S2, S3…Sn, from left to right in order of appearance. In the nuclear configuration, the nuclear and final syllables were labeled SN and SF, accordingly. To assign the tonal accents, the nuclear accent, and the final and intermediate junctures, the labeling guidelines of the *Sp*_ToBI system (Hualde & Prieto, 2015) were followed.

Monotonal accents were transcribed as H* for high melodies and L* for low melodies, not exceeding 1.5 st. in either case. Rising bitonal accents were labeled as L+H*, L+<H*, and L*+H, with rises greater than 1.5 st. being the ones considered. Specifically, for the L+H* tonal accent, the diacritic (¡) was added for rises from 3 to 4.5 st., and (!!) was added for rises from 4.5 to 6 st. However, to represent this tonal movement collectively, the parenthesis L+ ( ) H* was used to express that all realizations above 1.5 st. in total were being referenced, without specifying the rise levels. Falling bitonal accents were transcribed as H+L*.

Final and intermediate falling junctures were transcribed as L% and L-, accordingly. For sustained junctures, the symbols !H% and !H- were used. In rising cases, H% and H- were used. To determine the frequency of occurrence of TAs, the occurrences in each stressed syllable were counted.

5 Results

The analysis considered the positions of tonal accents, whether on the first, second, third, or fourth stressed syllable, represented as S1, S2, S3, and S4, accordingly. In the case of non-evaluative utterances, the corpus contained only two stressed syllables in the prenuclear segment, whereas evaluative utterances included up to five stressed syllables. However, in the latter case, only one utterance was found, which is why it is not included in the table. Thus, the comparison is based on S1 and S2, with the remaining syllables in evaluative utterances described separately.

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Table 1. Tonal Accents in the Prenuclear Segment of Non-Evaluative Utterances and Evaluative Utterances in the Spanish of Guatemala City [4].

Utterances	Non-evaluative		Evaluative			
Tonal Accent	S 1	S 2	S 1	S2	S3	S4
H*	45	67	24	23	13	6
%	50	74.44	28.24	40.35	39.39	42.85
L+ ( ) H*	25	8	22	14	10	5
%	27.78	8.89	25.9	24.56	30.3	35.72
L+<H*	18	12	23	5	2	0
%	20	13.33	27.05	8.78	6.06	0
L*+H	2	0	4	2	0	0
%	2.22	0	4.7	3.5	0	0
H+L*	0	2	8	10	5	0
%	0	2.22	9.4	17.54	15.15	0
L*	0	1	4	3	3	3
%	0	1.11	4.7	5.27	9.1	21.43
Total	90	90	85	57	33	14
%	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Prepared by the authors of this article

The first notable characteristic in the prenuclear segment results (Table 1) is that the most frequently used tonal accent in both types of utterances and across the different stressed syllable positions is the sustained high tonal accent H*. However, evaluative utterances contain many more instances of the rising tonal accent L+( )H* and the displaced accent L+<H*. These results are different to those of previous research, which indicated that declarative utterances showed displaced tonal accents L+<H* in the prenuclear segment. It is likely that these differences are related to the fact that earlier studies used data from sentence-reading tasks, whereas this study is based on sociolinguistic interview data.

[4] For clarification purposes, in the presentation of the results, declarative, representative, or assertive utterances will hereafter be referred to as non-evaluative.

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Table 2. Nuclear Accents and Boundary Tones of Non-Evaluative Utterances and Evaluative Utterances in the Spanish of Guatemala City.

Juncture								
Corpus	Non-evaluative utterances				Evaluative utterances			
Nuclear accent	L%	!H%	HL%	Total	L-	!H-	H-	Total
H*	7	7	1	15	9	15	5	29
%	7.78	7.78	1.11	16.67	17.65	45.39	12.5	78.54
L+ ( )H*	42	10	13	54	28	14	32	74
%	43.33	7.78	8.89	60.00	54.9	45.17	80	180.07
L*	0	0	0	0	5	1	3	9
%	0	0	0	0	9.8	3.22	7.25	10
H+L*	0	0	0	0	9	1	0	10
%					17.61	3.22	0	20.87
Total	59	17	14	90	51	31	40	122
%	65.56	18.89	15.56	100	41.8	25.41	31.79	100

Source: Prepared by the authors of this article

In terms of the nuclear configuration, it was found that in both types of utterances, the nuclear accent L+( )H* is the most frequently used, as is the falling juncture tone. This shows that both share the same intonational realization, regardless of the evaluative content of the utterance. In other words, the dialectal features associated with unmarked intonation remain consistent, even when the speaker expresses a point of view or evaluation of the described reality.

It is worth noting that sustained intermediate junctures are more frequent in evaluative utterances. This suspension appears to indicate that these utterances reflect the speaker's personal stance, rather than a categorical affirmation or denial of reality. Thus, they do not imply absolute closure.

Since the tonal accent L+( )H* is the most frequent in the nuclear configuration in both types of utterances, it is relevant to explore its productivity in the prenuclear segment of evaluative utterances, where it appeared more often than in non-evaluative utterances. This TA appears most frequently in S1 and is found mainly where utterances contain only one tonal accent in the prenuclear segment (Fig. 1). As the number of stressed syllables increases in this part of the

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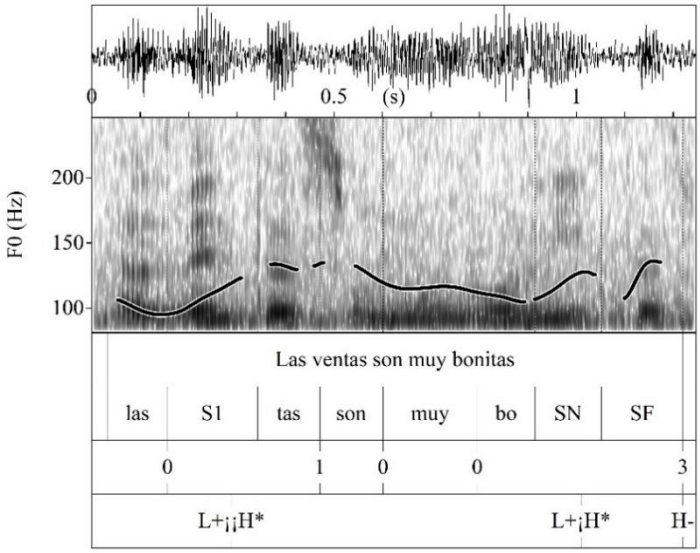
utterance, its frequency in the first position decreases, where tonal accents H*, L+( )H*, and L+<H* seem to have an equal chance of appearing, given their similar occurrence percentages (Table 1).

Figure 1. Sales are very nice. Male. Education Level 2.



Context: Interviewer: But are sales profitable?

I: /> look // in sales / I have always worked in sales // it's what has put food on my table // ***sales are very nice*** / because you interact with people //[…]

In relation to the second stressed syllable, S2 (Table 1), TA L+( )H* appears much less frequently than in S1 (Fig. 2). In S2, non-evaluative utterances show a higher frequency of the displaced TA L+<H*, following sustained accent H*. On the other hand, evaluative utterances show a much lower frequency of the displaced accent, with L+( )H* occurring more frequently (Table 1).

Figure 2. I don't like people meddling in my life. Female. Education Level 3.

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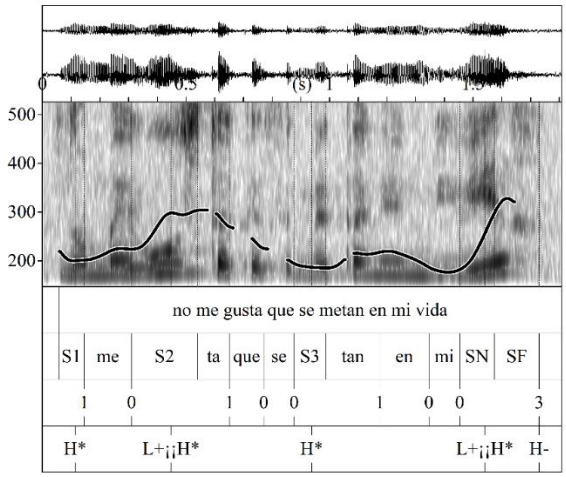
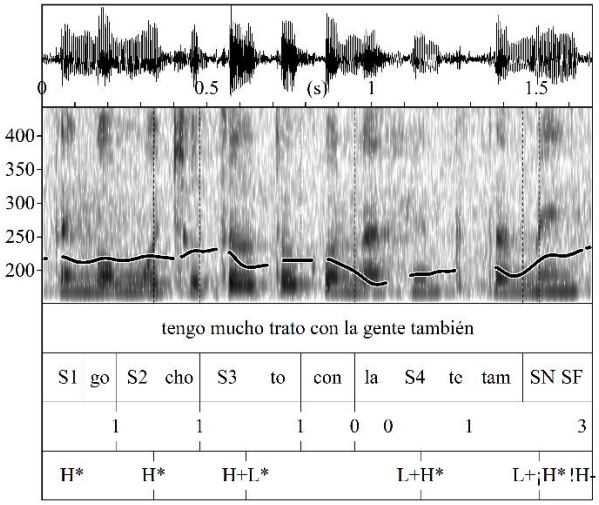


Context: Informant: […] no / I don't like gossip / because I'm someone who / **doesn't like people meddling in their life** // much less do I like meddling /[…]

The third stressed syllable shows a lower frequency of TA L+( )H* compared to S1 and S2 (Table 1). This may be because utterances with three tonal accents can be considered long utterances, which are not the most commonly used by speakers. The same thing applies to utterances with four stressed syllables, which reduces the likelihood of higher occurrences and intonational diversity (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Because I also interact a lot with people. Female. Education Level 2.



Context: Interviewer: And you do like it? [The job]

Informant: I love it / I love it / **because I also interact a lot with people** / with the students / and these people um // […]

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Lastly, TA L+( )H* showed variation in pitch height in evaluative utterances. In most cases, the pitch reached 1.5 st., representing 57% of realizations. The remaining 43% were rises ranging from 1.5 st. to 6 st., which could occur in any position of the utterance, contrary to what was observed in non-evaluative utterances.

Final Considerations

This study compared declarative utterances with referential content and with evaluative content, in order to determine whether the pragmatic information in such utterances shows differences in intonation. Based on the data reviewed, expressing more or less evaluative information does not appear to greatly affect the intonation of the utterance. In other words, describing or evaluating a state of affairs does not necessarily cause intonational variation in the utterance.

The nuclear configuration shows that tonal accent L+( )H* and juncture L% (or L-) are preserved regardless of the type of information being conveyed. This suggests that, from a suprasegmental standpoint, assessments, judgments, and evaluations of reality are expressed in the same way as objective descriptions thereof. This reveals that different prosodic resources are not necessary to express these pragmatic contents, since the illocutionary force of the utterance likely depends exclusively on lexical and grammatical aspects. However, evaluative utterances do show a preference for the L+( )H* accent in the prenuclear segment, with rises greater than 1.5 st. These realizations were not particularly frequent in non-evaluative utterances.

An interesting aspect in the analysis of tonal accents within the body of the utterance, when evaluative content is expressed, is that S1 exhibits tonal accent variation. In other words, TAs H*, L+( )H*, and L+<H* (Table 1) show fairly similar frequencies of appearance, contrary to what happens in non-evaluative utterances, which may indicate that this position is more sensitive to evaluative information.

In terms of terminal junctures, evaluative utterances show a preference for using intermediate junctures, which suggest suspension rather than closure. Although the speaker may have finished their turn, they do not conclude it definitively, and this appears to provide subjectivity to the utterance, as if their participation was left open to discussion.

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Lastly, in the context of research involving more realistic corpuses, it is often difficult to pinpoint unmarked utterances containing objective information in order to analyze them as a comparative basis for potential pragmatic variations. In light of this challenge, this study reveals that, in prosodic terms, evaluative utterances could also be considered part of the same intonational group and, therefore, could contribute to enriching a corpus for such descriptive purposes.

CRediT

Acknowledgement:

Financing: Not applicable.

Conflicts of interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.

Ethical Approval:

Contributor Roles:

Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. VELÁSQUEZ-UPEGUI, Eva Patricia.

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