

SOCIAL & CONTEXTUAL FACTORS CONSTRAIN PITCH CONTOUR SELECTION IN VOCATIVES



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INTRODUCTION

Vocatives and their functions

- Used in a variety of speech acts, such as greetings, calls, commands, requests...
- They have been claimed to fulfill three main functions (Zwicky 1974, Leech 1999, Poynton 1990):
 - getting someone's attention
 - identifying someone as addressee
 - maintaining and reinforcing social relationships

Vocatives and politeness

- Because of their explicit social implications,
 - they characterize the speaker in relation to the addressee
 - and provide marks of power and solidarity (Brown & Levinson 1987, Ahmed 2007)
- cf.:
 - the use of honorifics (e.g. *Sir, Mademoiselle, Your Imperial Majesty, Don/Doña, Molt Honorable President, Rector Magnífic...*)
 - the distinction between t- and v-forms in some Romance languages (e.g. *tu/vós/vostè* for Catalan)

Vocative marking

- Languages may use a variety of strategies to mark vocatives (see Daniel & Spencer 2009 for a review):
 - morphological vocative case (e.g., *dominus* vs. *domine* in Latin)
 - vocative particles (e.g., the use of *o* in Balearic Catalan: *O Margalida!*; Prieto et al. 2013)
 - as well as prosodic mechanisms such as specific intonation forms (in most Romance languages), stress shift or truncation (e.g. in Southern Italian dialects; Vanrell & Cabré 2011)

Vocatives and intonation

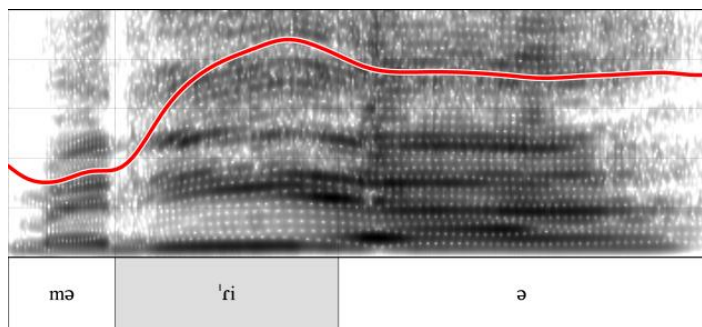
- Several studies have shown variation in vocative contour selection within a language (e.g. Ladd 1996 for English, Frota & Prieto 2013 for Romance languages)
- Some authors have claimed that age and social status constrain the use of the so-called *vocative chant* (labeled H* !H% after Ladd 1996) across languages:
 - for instance, it is found to be **characteristic of children's speech** (Abe 1998 for Japanese)
 - or **not used to call somebody of a higher social rank** (Sadat-Tehrani 2008 for Persian)
- **Insistence** and **physical distance** has also been attested in Romance languages as being factors that constrain the prosody of vocatives (Prieto et al. 2013 for Catalan, Frota et al. 2013 for Portuguese)

Vocatives in Catalan

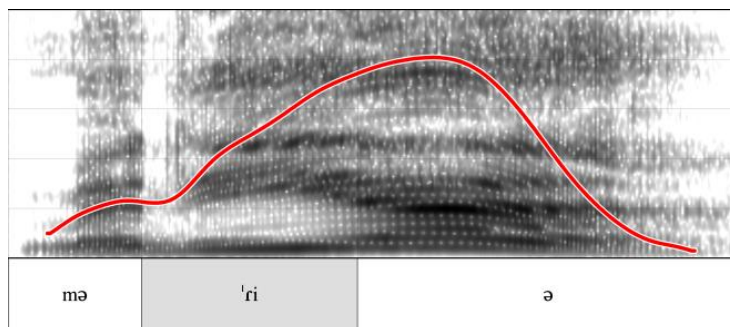
- In Central Catalan, vocatives are mainly identified through the lack of personal article
 - *Maria, vine!* ‘Mary, come here!’
 - *La Maria va venir ahir* ‘Mary came yesterday’
- A variety of contours are used for vocatives, but three are majority: [L+H* !H%], [L+H* HL%], and [L* H%]



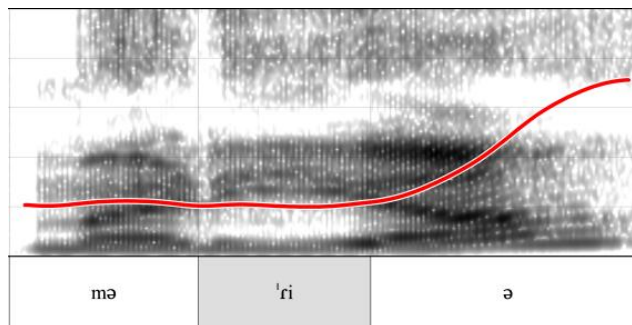
Vocatives in Catalan



L+H* !H%



L+H* HL%



L* H%



Motivation

- Though preliminary data suggest a great effect of insistence in vocative contour selection, a large amount of variation remains unexplained
- Little is known about the potential interaction between the role of **social politeness** and **other pragmatic factors** in pitch contour selection
- Not only variation in contour selection, but also in syllable duration or pitch range, needs to be explored in a controlled experimental setting

THE STUDY

Methodology

- Four factors were selected for the study of prosodic variation in vocatives
 - Two sociopragmatic features (Brown & Levinson 1987):
 - **social distance** (2 levels: at work / at home)
 - and **power** balance (2 levels for each social distance value: at work, calling a supervisor / a subordinate; at home, calling the aunty / the little sister)
 - Two other situational factors:
 - **physical distance** (same room / next-to-speaker's room)
 - and degree of **insistence** (first call / insistent call).

Methodology

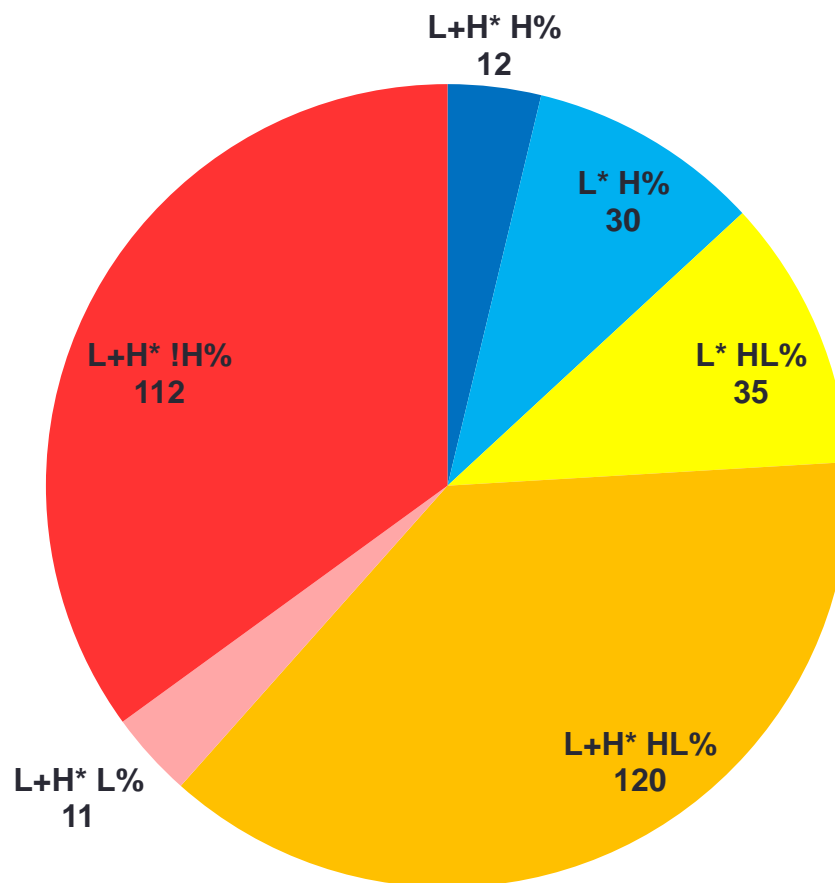
- 20 speakers of Central Catalan (3 male) participated in a **Discourse Completion Task** (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989)
 - containing 16 different discourse contexts which were controlled for the abovementioned features (2 POWER × 2 SOCIALDIST × 2 PHYSICALDIST × 2 INSISTENCE)
- Gender was controlled so male participants were calling a man (*Emili* [ə.'mi.li]) and female participants were calling a woman (*Marina* [mə.'ri.nə])

Methodology

- [AT WORK, TO SUPERIOR, CLOSE, FIRST CALL]
 - Ets responsable d'àrea en una gran **empresa**. La directora general és la senyora Marina. Li **tens respecte**, i no la coneixes gaire. Necessaries que vinguis perquè t'ha de signar uns papers. La tens **al davant**. Crida-la pel nom perquè vingui.
- [AT HOME, TO SUBORDINATE, FAR, INSISTENT CALL]
 - La teva **germana petita** Marina té moltes habilitats per les matemàtiques, i t'aniria bé que es mirés un treball que estàs fent. Tu ets la seva germana gran, **tens influència** sobre ella. Ara és **a l'habitació del costat**, pel que potser no et pot sentir bé. Ja l'has cridat un cop perquè vingui. Torna-la a cridar.

Labeling: overall contour frequency

- The vocatives obtained were prosodically labeled using the Cat_ToBI system (Prieto et al. 2013)
- Great number of [L+H* HL%] and [L+H* !H%]
 - There is no single intonation for vocatives in Central Catalan



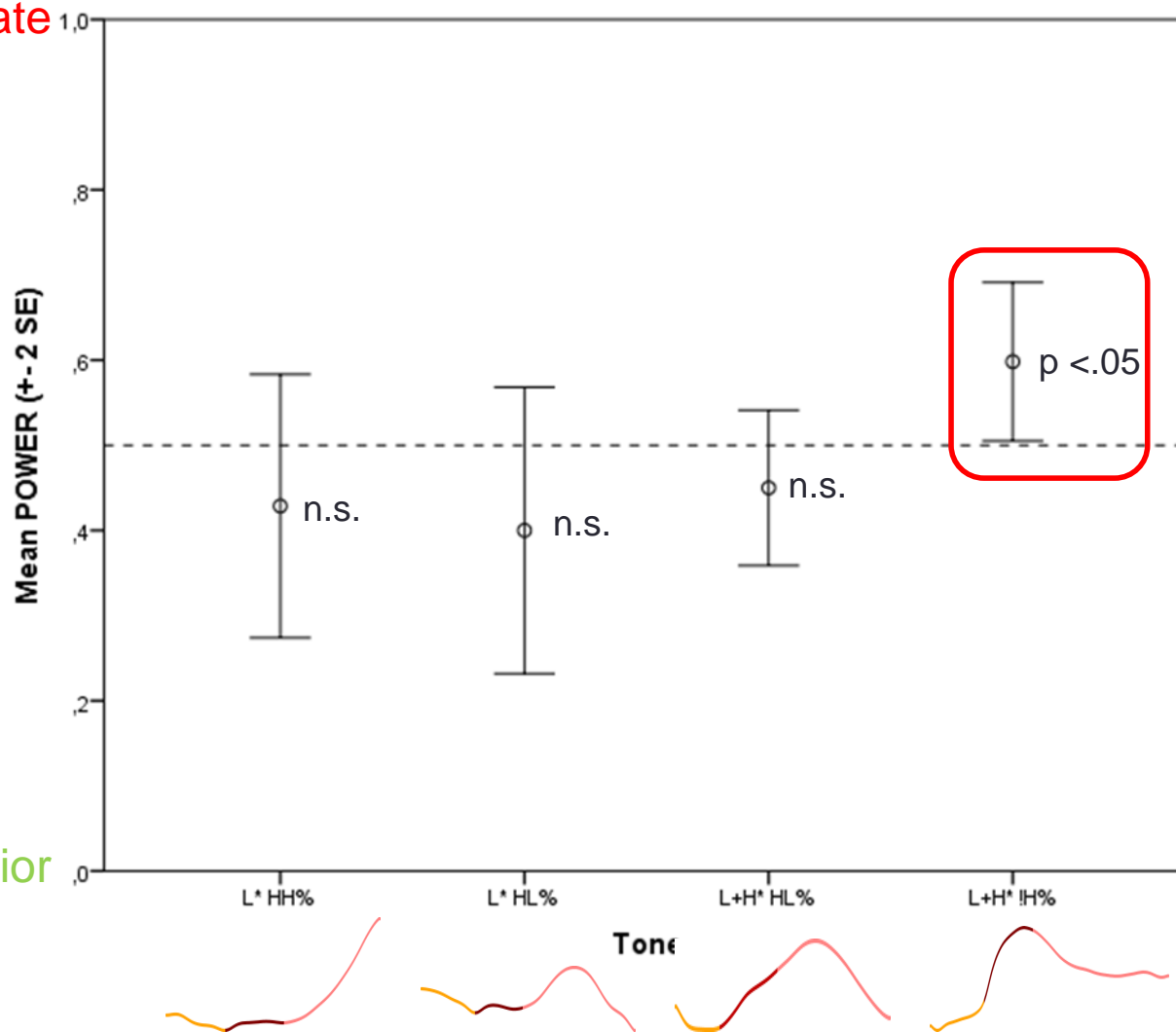
Labeling (cont.)

- For frequency reasons, L+H* L% (only 11 tokens) are excluded from subsequent analyses
- In order to have more equilibrated categories for our subsequent analyses, we merged [L* H%] and [L+H* H%] labels into a single [L* H%] category
- Additional measures were taken from the contours:
 - Duration difference between the pretonic and the tonic syllable (ms)
 - Duration of the posttonic syllable (ms)
 - Rise within tonic syllable (st)
 - Total rise (st)
 - Final fall (st)

RESULTS

Power ($p = .056$)

To subordinate



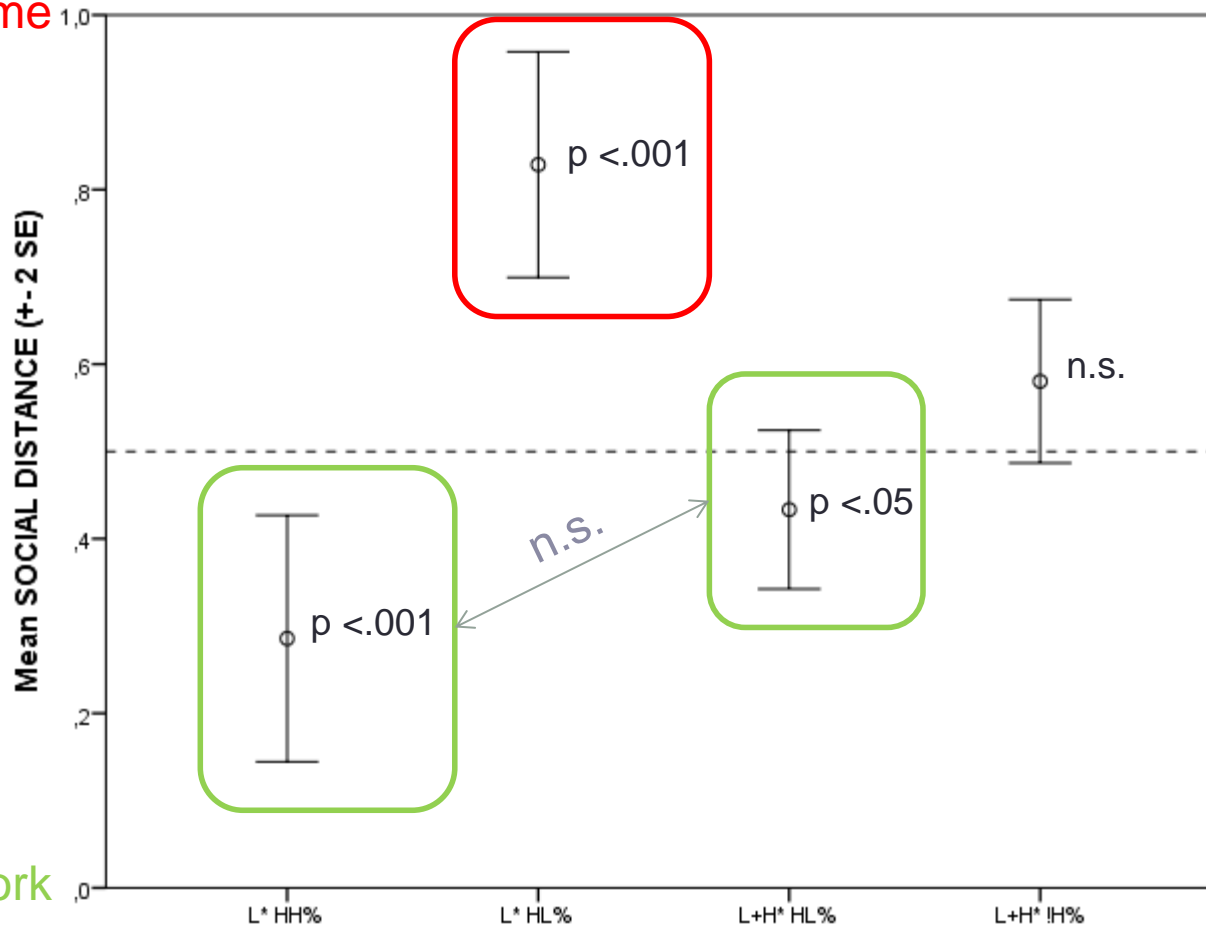
To superior

PHONETIC EFFECTS

Tonic rise
to superior < to
subordinate (.038)

Social Distance ($p < .001$)

At home



PHONETIC EFFECTS

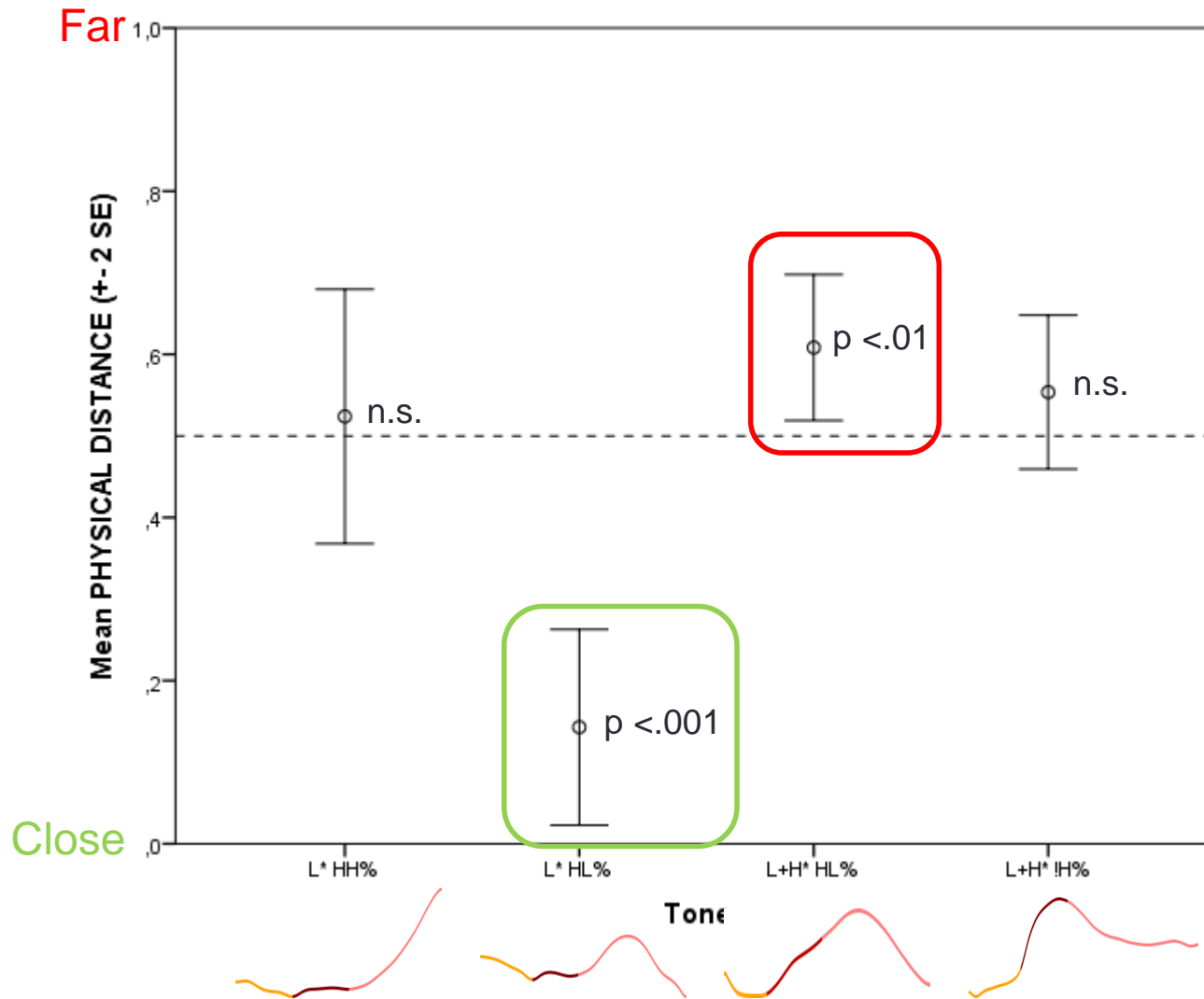
Posttonic dur.
at work < at home
($< .001$)

At work

Tone



Physical Distance ($p < .001$)



PHONETIC EFFECTS

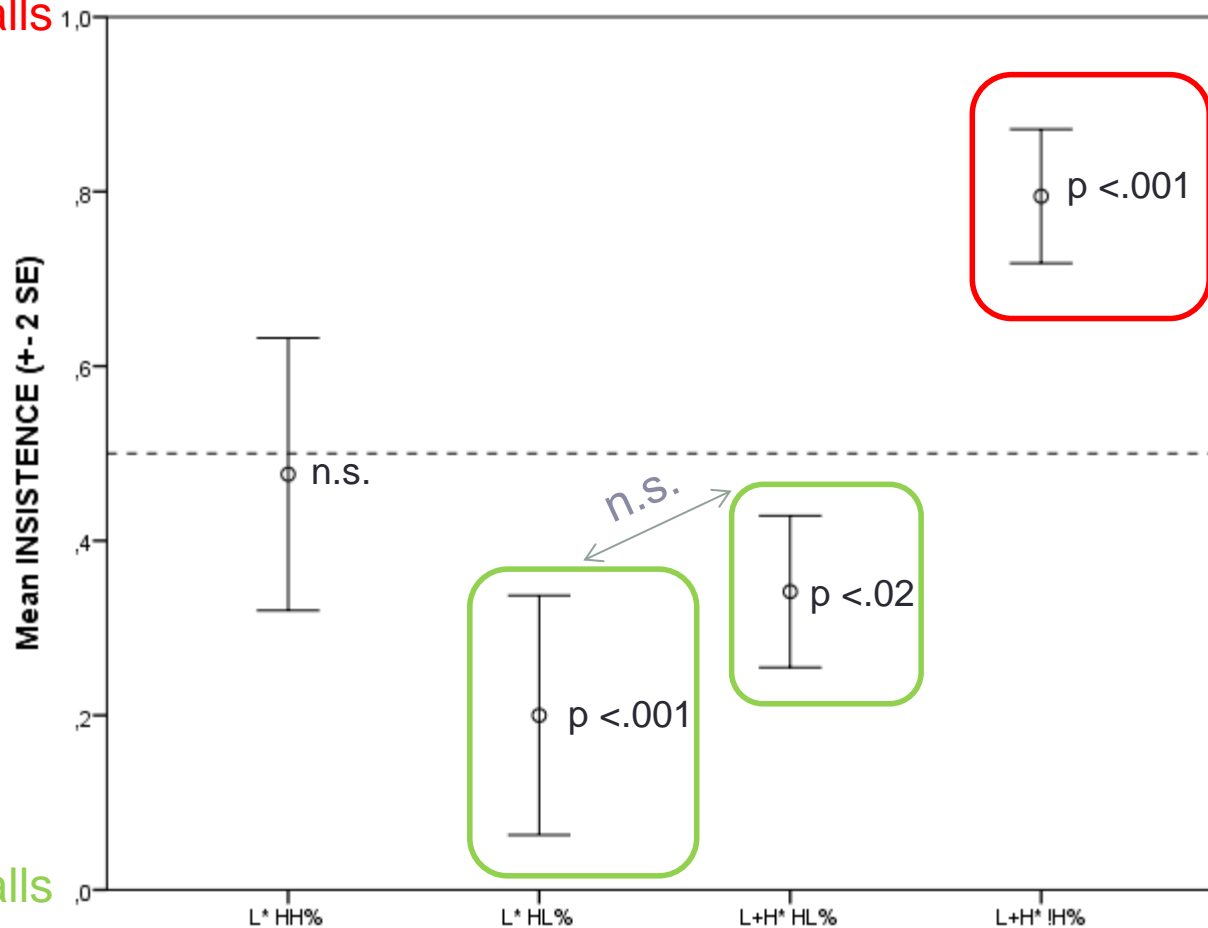
Tonic rise
close < far ($< .001$)

Posttonic dur.
close < far (.001)

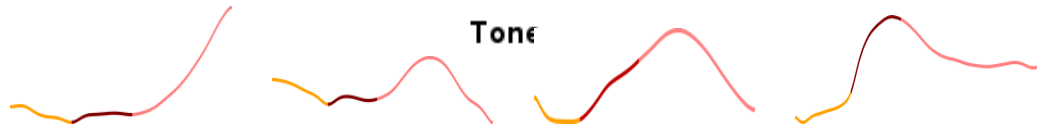
Total rise
close < far (.010)

Insistence ($p < .001$)

Insistent calls



First calls




PHONETIC EFFECTS

Tonic rise
first < insist ($< .001$)

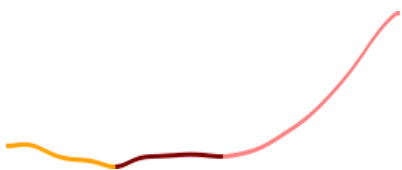
Posttonic dur.
first < insist (.008)

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Frequent use of contours

- L* H% 

- At work

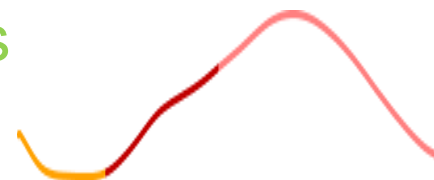


- L+H* HL% 

- Far distances

- First calls

- At work

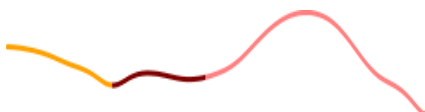


- L* HL% 

- Close distances

- First calls

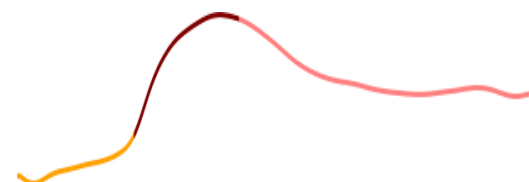
- At home



- L+H* !H% 

- To subordinates

- Insistent calls



Conclusions

- Our results suggest that pitch contour selection in Catalan vocatives is governed by a complex interaction of
 - social factors (like power and social distance)
 - and specific features from the communicative act itself (like insistence and physical distance)
- Such factors allow us to argue that
 - [L+H* HL%] is the most unmarked tone for Central Catalan vocatives
 - [L+H* !H%] is not preferred to call somebody of a higher social rank (probably because of its use for insistence marking)
 - The F_0 range within the tonic syllable and the variation in the duration of the posttonic syllable are clear correlates of these same factors

THANK YOU!
