

## Sound patterns as interpretive clues in spontaneous interaction

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This paper addresses a universally rather neglected aspect of the “grammar of interaction” (e.g. Evans & Watanabe 2016): the correlation between grammatical patterns and their phonetic behavior. The study of spontaneously produced spoken interaction has been attracting increasingly focused and systematic attention within cognitive linguistics but not much is as yet understood about the role of phonetics. In this exploratory corpus-based probe, we try to identify specific recurring prosodic and segmental features associated with a particular syntactic structure and its distinct interpretations. Based on the findings, we then sketch a way of capturing this dimension of conversational language in an integrative representation, using the tools of Construction Grammar.

The corpus-based exploration involves a specific structure commonly occurring in conversational Czech: a type of clausal insubordination (Evans 2007) introduced by the marker JESTLI, used for expressing speakers’ subjective stance with differences in polarity (1a vs. 1b), in contrast to the syntactic use of JESTLI in embedded Y/N questions (2), which is its original function. Previous research (Fried 2009) has identified a spectrum of discourse functions associated with the use of JESTLI in different contexts. Using those findings as a starting point and the phonetically annotated corpus of conversational Czech (Ortofon) as our empirical base, we work with the hypothesis that there will be a predictable relationship between the functional variants in (1) and (a cluster of) specific sound parameters (intonation, temporal properties, degree of speech reduction; Zíková & Machač 2014). We also hypothesize that particular prosodic and/or segmental features might signal a relative distance between the original interrogative function in (2) and the target interpretations in (1) in terms of their semantics and pragmatic force.

Based on the generalizations that can be drawn from the attested correlations, we propose a multilayered constructional representation that helps capture the relationship between the syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and phonetic patterning in the form of clusters of recurring features – i.e. constructions.

The paper thus takes a first step toward a more complete analysis of the JESTLI patterns in Czech, and suggests a path toward a better understanding of the phonetic nature of subordination in general. On the theoretical level, the paper’s contribution is two-fold: (i) It offers a basis for developing the conceptual and analytic tools for detecting and identifying sound patterns that might serve as systematic interpretive clues associated with specific syntactic structures. (ii) In this respect, the work also has implications for developing Construction Grammar toward becoming a truly multimodal conceptual and analytic tool that can capture the speakers’ knowledge which underlies natural conversational behavior.

- (1) a. *vypadala pěkně blbě, [...] jak dyž je vopařená, **jesi** se vopalovala, nebo co,*  
‘she looked pretty dreadful, [...] as if she got scalded, **I-guess maybe** she’d been sunbathing, or something’  
b. *ale **jesi** jim vláda uvolní peníze*  
‘but **I-suspect** the government **may not** provide money for it [=extending a subway line]’
- (2) *ale už tam není, no, já nevím, **jesi** jí někdo zničil*  
‘but it’s gone, y’know, I don’t know if somebody destroyed it’

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