

# Prosody in Dialog Assessment Checklist

Subject, Dialog segment:

Rater, Date:

## Constructions

### Turn Management

- Turn take
- Turn yield
- Filled pause
- Turn holding
- Backchannel response
- Backchannel cue
- Supportive overlap
- Particle-assisted turn switch

### Topic Management

- Topic starting or continuation
- Topic closing
- Topic development
- Off-topic-contribution

### Expressing Stance

- Positive assessment
- Seeking empathy or agreement
- Expression of indifference

### Marking Information Structure

- Important
- Parenthetical
- Contrast
- Rhetorical pause

### Performing Speech Acts

- Suggesting
- Calling contour

## Features

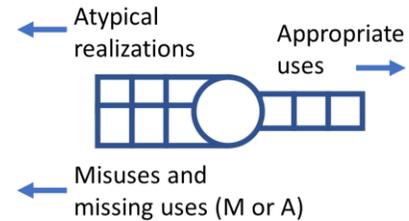
- |           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| low pitch | high pitch           |
| monotone  | pitch excursions     |
| vibrato   | syllable stresses    |
| quiet     | loud                 |
| reduced   | precise articulation |
| slow      | fast                 |
| creaky    | breathy              |
| nasal     | harmonic             |

## Purpose

This checklist is designed to support the assessment of an individual's prosodic skills, either overall or regarding specific areas or specific skills. It has been piloted on typical speakers, autistic speakers, and non-native speakers.

## Use

Listen first once to the dialog for familiarization. Then do a second pass, focusing on the behavior of the target individual, and noting salient prosodic happenings. For each, identify the relevant factor, then mark the appropriate square(s) in the checkbox cluster(s). A single prosodic happening may involve multiple functions or features. Pausing and replaying may be needed



Regarding the functional uses of prosody, use the short left checkboxes for cases where the intent is clear and the use appropriate, but aspects of the realization are unusual to the point of possibly interfering with the interlocutor's ability to understand the intent. Do not mark insignificant dialect or idiolect differences. Use **A** to mark a salient Absence of the prosodic form when it would have been appropriate, and **M** to mark a Misuse, that is, an inappropriate appearance.

Regarding feature use, circle **P** if that feature is present pervasively, **L** if largely lacking, **U** if its appearance seems to be sometimes uncontrolled, and **S** if it seems to be used in some systematic, but non-standard, way. If it seems to be used correctly, check the rightmost box.

Finally, after the second pass, review all items, especially the features for P and L.

As the checkbox clusters are designed for recording production skills, any observations regarding interpretation skills should be recorded on the side. For example, responses that indicate successful interpretation of some meaning conveyed by the interlocutor's prosody can be indicated with  $\triangle$ , and salient failures to pick up on some prosodic meaning with  $\times$ .

Other issues should be recorded as freeform notes. These may include overreliance on one or a few prosodic patterns, prosody that gives an unfortunate impression --- such as of aggression, annoyance, or timidity --- and unclear cases.

## Preparation

Before using the checklist, ideally study the descriptions in Chapters 1-8 and 11-14 of *Prosodic Patterns in English Conversation* (Nigel G. Ward, Cambridge University Press, 2019). Each item in the Constructions checklist references a specific prosodic construction, with its associated family of functions, as described in the book and illustrated with audio examples at <http://www.cs.utep.edu/nigel/english-prosody/>.

## Limitations

The list of skills is derived from those presented in the book, which was developed from an analysis of conversations among 12 university students speaking American English in El Paso, Texas. This list includes constructions explaining 44% of the variance in the computed prosodic features, but is not exhaustive. Allowances should be made for the subject's age and the way the dialog was collected. It is often not possible to definitively classify any specific instance, but with 2-5 minutes of data, informative patterns can be found. The reliability, validity, and utility of the checklist have not yet been assessed.