Greeting: Displaying Stance Through Prosodic Recipient Design

Danielle Pillet-Shore

Department of Communication, University of New Hampshire


To cite this article: Danielle Pillet-Shore (2012): Greeting: Displaying Stance Through Prosodic Recipient Design, Research on Language & Social Interaction, 45:4, 375-398

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2012.724994
Greeting: Displaying Stance Through Prosodic Recipient Design

Danielle Pillet-Shore
Department of Communication
University of New Hampshire

This article examines the social action of greeting in naturally occurring face-to-face interaction, paying special attention to how people prosodically produce their very first vocalized utterances. Close analysis of a corpus of 337 video recorded openings shows that participants recipient design greetings on the level of prosody, tailoring them to each addressee and thus hearably displaying a stance toward the current state and character of their social relationship. Documenting the discovery of a prosodic continuum along which parties fine-tune their greetings, this article elucidates two distinct clusters of prosodic features with which participants recurrently design their greetings. Analysis demonstrates that parties use each prosodic cluster to display a different stance toward encountering the addressed recipient, with prosodically “large” greetings displaying a positive stance of approval and prosodically “small” greetings displaying (no more than) a neutral stance.

The openings of face-to-face interactions—commonly referred to as “greetings”—are clearly critical to daily social life. Greeting is a universal social action (Kendon & Ferber, 1973) that supports universal human needs: Across a wide variety of languages and cultures, copresent greeting is “essential for social relationships” (Firth, 1972) because it does important interactional work, including the marking of interpersonal access (Corsaro, 1979; Goffman, 1971), presence validation and threat denial (Youssouf, Grimshaw, & Bird, 1976). Through the action of greeting, participants inescapably display a stance toward who they are to one another.

Although there is a distinguished literature that describes the performance and meaning of face-to-face openings (or “greetings” in the broadest sense of the term) in several cultures, very few studies analyze recordings of naturally occurring greetings. One such study, by Kendon and Ferber (1973), concentrates analysis on visually perceivable phenomena (e.g., sighting, body
orientation, gesture). Another study, by Duranti (1997), highlights the importance of aurally perceivable phenomena, describing how village council meeting participants in Western Samoa use overlapping talk to constitute their public identities.

Extant literature on participants’ prosody—the “musical,” nonsegmental aspects of speech (e.g., pitch, loudness, duration)—during naturally occurring openings has thus far only explored telephone interaction. Kaimaki (2011) considers how phonetic features of first spoken turns (summons-answers) signal transition relevance. Schegloff (1998) examines the initial turns of a telephone conversation between friends, arguing that, through each speaker’s prosodic production of *Hi* and *Howareyou*, she displays the stance she is taking toward the interaction being launched. And Szczepke Reed (2009) analyzes openings in broadcast radio phone-in programs, finding that pauses play a major role in the design of a next turn as either responding or as initiating a new sequence.

This article contributes to and advances this literature by providing the first systematic and detailed analysis of the social action of greeting in recorded naturally occurring face-to-face interactions, paying special attention to how people prosodically produce their very first vocalized utterances.

For this research, the term *greeting* refers to discrete vocal, verbal/lexical, and body-behavioral actions that parties deploy to constitute the greeting adjacency pair sequence in the early moments of encounters (cf. Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 1986). This includes prototypical greeting utterances (e.g., *Hi*, *Hello*, *Hey*, *Good morning*) and gestures (e.g., hand wave, palm display, head toss/bow, eyebrow flash; cf. Kendon & Ferber, 1973). Participants use such greeting actions as moves to transition from mere physical copresence into mutually ratified social copresence (Pillet-Shore, 2008).

### DATA AND METHOD

This article presents findings resulting from a larger conversation analytic research project in which I systematically analyzed how both previously acquainted and unacquainted parties open their face-to-face interactions across a wide variety of settings (Pillet-Shore, 2008), including 145 encounters in private residences and 75 workplace encounters. All data were collected with the informed consent of participants, and all participant identifiers have been anonymized. My examination of over 80 hours of video recorded naturally occurring data yielded 337 openings of face-to-face interactions between English-speaking persons in the United States, including parties coming together to socialize and do work.

Across these data, participants are coming together to do different activities while inhabiting different social categories or identities (e.g., host, friend, teacher), in different places (e.g., homes, schools, offices). But all data involve parties coming together in some private territory to which they were granted access (e.g., a friend’s apartment, a teacher’s classroom) for occasions of sustained interaction.

Analyzing these data using the methods of conversation analysis, I collected every instance of incipient and/or realized greeting that occurs in my data set, and then examined each instance on its own terms while at the same time examining the instances as a collection. To develop the details of my analysis, I closely examined 176 greeting sequences. As a complement to
conversation analysis, I used the speech analysis computer software program Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2011) to perform prosodic analyses of sound files that I extracted from my video recordings, measuring, comparing, and drawing pictures of prosodic events (a portion of which appear as figures in this article). All figures include a text tier to show which sound corresponds to which point in the fundamental frequency (F0) trace and use a logarithmic scale (on the y-axis) to increase the visual resemblance of the F0 trace to our human perception (Nolan, 2003). The y-axis of each figure uses bottom and top Hertz (Hz) values representing best estimates of a pitch floor/ceiling for each individual speaker (based upon each speaker’s min/max Hz values during a given interaction). These can be considered in the context of average estimates (widely accepted across linguistic literature) that male speakers’ overall pitch range is 80–250 Hz, and female speakers’ overall pitch range is 150–350 Hz. I transcribed my video recordings using the system developed by Gail Jefferson with one key modification: I used GAT-Transcription Conventions (Selting et al., 2011) to more precisely indicate the type of intonation movement at the end of each turn-constructional unit (henceforth “TCU”; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974).1

THE RECIPIENT DESIGN OF COPRESENT GREETINGS

Close analysis of this project’s corpus of video recorded openings yields a first basic finding: Participants to incipient encounters visibly hold off doing the action of greeting until they see “who’s there,” displaying their orientation to identification/recognition via visual inspection as prerequisite to producing a copresent greeting (Pillet-Shore, 2008, pp. 64–120). This observation relates to a second basic finding: Participants vary the way they produce their greetings. In other words, a person does not produce her/his greetings uniformly regardless of recipient. Rather, as this article demonstrates, participants design their greetings for particular addressed-recipients, tailoring them to (display) their own understanding/appraisal of “who we are to one another right now.” This involves an assessment of the current state and character of their social relationship, including the basic consideration of whether the present occasion “is a first for these parties or involves a next encounter with a history to it” (Schegloff, 1986, p. 113). If the present occasion is a next encounter, participants design their greetings sensitive to the amount of time that has elapsed since their last contact.

A particularly clear way to observe—see and hear—these findings is by examining one person’s greetings addressed to different target recipients during the same interactional occasion. In Excerpts 1 and 2, fellow university students are gathering at a campus apartment to watch live televised coverage of U.S. presidential election results. Both of these excerpts show the same cohost, Paula, opening her (opaque) apartment door and then greeting an arriving guest: Excerpt 1 shows Paula greeting Amanda, and Excerpt 2 shows Paula greeting Derik just a few minutes later.

1To indicate the type of intonation movement at the end of each TCU, I use the following notation: rise-to-high [?], rise-to-mid [,], level pitch [-], fall-to-mid [:], and fall-to-low [.]. Data in this article also use the British pound sign (£) to indicate smile voice, and an asterisk [*] to indicate onset of visible conduct described inside double parentheses [(())].
Excerpt 1  [Election a-1]

01  (2.0)/((Paula opening door))
02  Paula:  →  £He:::[y:::=
03  Aman:    [Hello;
04  Paula:   =£How are you::;
05  Aman:   [(<Hello?>)
06  Aman:  F#:::ne

Excerpt 2  [Election b-1]

01  (2.4)/((Paula opening door))
02  Paula:  →  ↑Hi::ee.
03  Derik:   =Hi-
04  (.)
05  Paula:  =Yer [Teresa’s <frien:d.> =
06  Derik:   [How’s it going.
07  Derik:   =Ye5..
08  Paula:  =How are you.
09  Derik:  =Good.h.h I’m Derik.h=
10  Paula:  =I’m Paula.=I thi:nk I met chyou really_briefly.=At thuh
11  thing;:  (0.2) pt! .hh way [back;
12  Derik:  [.h Oh yeah yeah.=That’s right.

Excerpts 1 and 2 differ sequentially: In Excerpt 1, Paula and Amanda treat identification/recognition as accomplished tacitly through visual inspection—postgreeting exchange, they immediately and collaboratively move onto a next howareyou sequence (Pillet-Shore, 2008; Schegloff, 1986), thereby allowing the joint identification/recognition project to pass unexpanded. In Excerpt 2, however, Paula and Derik treat identification/recognition as needing to be done explicitly, achieved through the expanded identification sequence launched at line 5. After a small postgreeting sequence delay at line 4, Paula identifies Derik categorically as belonging to her roommate and cohost Teresa, thus revealing her trouble personally recognizing Derik. After confirming Paula’s categorical formulation of “who he is” at line 7 and answering her howareyou inquiry at line 9, Derik offers his first name to Paula, thereby launching a self-initiated introduction sequence (Pillet-Shore, 2011).

Excerpts 1 and 2 also differ in more granular ways. There is clearly a lexical difference between Paula’s greeting of Amanda (“Hey”) and her greeting of Derik (“Hi”). But an even more granular difference occurs on the level of prosody.

The Prosodic Recipient Design of Copresent Greetings

A side-by-side comparison of Figures 1 and 2 enables visual access to some of the hearable prosodic differences between Paula’s greetings of Amanda and Derik. Figure 1 shows a F0 trace of Paula’s greeting of Amanda (Excerpt 1, line 2), and Figure 2 shows a F0 trace of Paula’s greeting of Derik (Excerpt 2, line 2).

In prosodically designing her greeting for Amanda, Paula substantially lengthens (i.e., sound-stretches) her production of the greeting term “Hey” to 1.15 s in duration (Figure 1), thus
GREETING: DISPLAYING STANCE THROUGH PROSODY

FIGURE 1  F0 trace of Paula’s greeting to Amanda (Excerpt 1, line 2).

FIGURE 2  F0 trace of Paula’s greeting to Derik (Excerpt 2, line 2).

To facilitate comparison, the window sizes of Figures 1 and 2 are about the same.
producing this monosyllabic greeting to be four times as long as her monosyllabic *Hiee* (0.29 s in duration) to Derik (Figure 2). In addition, though Paula audibly smiles while greeting Amanda, she does not audibly smile while greeting Derik.

When greeting Amanda, Paula starts her utterance high: Her initial pitch is 351 Hz, and as she starts to fully articulate the vowel sound of her greeting utterance her pitch reaches a maximum of 461 Hz. Paula designs her greeting of Amanda to use a fall-to-mid phrase-final pitch accent (i.e., her greeting TCU-terminal intonation does *not* fall-to-low). She also designs her greeting utterance to have a wide pitch span (12.8 semitones), using a steadily falling intonation contour that glides from a high onset to lower pitch through all intermediate pitch values.

When greeting Derik, however, Paula uses an even higher overall pitch setting, raising the baseline of her local pitch span. Her onset pitch is about 400 Hz, rising to a maximum of 525 Hz and then falling to a minimum of 347 Hz. Within this (for her) higher-than-normal pitch setting, Paula designs her greeting of Derik to use a fall-to-low phrase-final pitch accent. And compared to her greeting utterance addressed to Amanda, Paula’s greeting of Derik has a narrower pitch span (7 semitones).

This close analysis shows Paula to be recipient designing her greetings on the level of prosody. But is it possible to observe prosodic differences between the same person’s greetings not only of different target recipients, but also of the same target recipient during the same interactional occasion? Indeed it is. One of the findings of this research is that copresent greetings can occur more than once during the same occasion between the same coparticipants (usually when there is a break in the involved parties’ sustained physical proximity). When this happens, participants produce their locally *initial* and *subsequent* greetings with distinctive prosody. Thus, part of the identification/recognition work implicated in recipient designing copresent greetings involves parties’ analysis of local position (cf. Schegloff, 1996).

Excerpts 3 and 4 show the same host, Paula, opening her apartment door on another occasion: This time, a small group of apartment complex neighbors, who are also classmates in a first-year graduate student cohort, are gathering at Paula’s residence to collaborate on homework and have dinner. Excerpt 3 shows Paula greeting the first arriving guest, Owen, for the first time on this occasion. While Paula is preparing dinner, Owen arrives to put some beer in her refrigerator.

---

**Excerpt 3** [PA Visitor a-1]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>(1.0)/((Paula opening door))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Paula:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Owen:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Paula:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Owen:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Paula:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>((door closing))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

This finding contradicts Sacks’s (1975, pp. 68–69) claim that “greetings are not repeatably used,” unless Sacks is suggesting only that greetings should not occur directly upon completion of a prior sequence of them.
After placing the beer in Paula’s refrigerator, Owen leaves to retrieve homework from his nearby apartment. Excerpt 4 shows Owen’s return 3 min later.

**Excerpt 4**  [PA Visitor a-2]

01   (2.0)/((Paula opening door))
02   Paula:  →  [Hey.= Yer back.
03   Owen:  [Hi.
04   Teresa:  hih huh [huh ((Teresa waves as est. mutual gaze with Owen))
05   Owen:  [Yeah.=
06   Paula:  =What with &stats?
07   Owen:  Yeah.
08   Paula:  Uh huh.

Although the greetings that Paula delivers to Owen in Excerpts 3 and 4 are lexically identical (*Hey*), Paula designs each greeting with different prosodic features. Figure 3 shows a F0 trace of Paula’s locally initial greeting of Owen (Excerpt 3, line 2), and Figure 4 shows a F0 trace of Paula’s locally subsequent greeting of Owen (Excerpt 4, line 2).

In prosodically designing her initial greeting, Paula lengthens her production of the greeting term “Hey,” this utterance totaling 0.85 s in duration. This is over four times as long as her

---

3Owen’s initial and subsequent greetings of Paula are also lexically identical (*Hi* in Excerpt 3, line 3, and Excerpt 4, line 3) but prosodically distinctive from one another in all of the ways described for Paula. Paula and Owen’s greetings thus exhibit striking prosodic similarities and may be analyzable as instances of “prosodic matching,” even though they
subsequent greeting (Hey is 0.2 s in duration in Figure 4). In addition, Paula produces her initial Hey perceptibly louder than her subsequent Hey. And while Paula audibly smiles during her initial greeting, she does not do so during her subsequent greeting. Whereas Paula uses a higher onset pitch (407 Hz) for her initial greeting, she uses a significantly lower onset pitch (259 Hz) for her subsequent greeting (the difference being 7.8 semitones). And Paula delivers her initial greeting to use a fall-to-mid (233 Hz) phrase-final pitch accent, but she delivers her subsequent greeting to use a fall-to-low(er) (205 Hz) phrase-final pitch accent. Thus, over the course of her locally initial greeting of Owen, Paula’s pitch span is wider (9.7 semitones), whereas her pitch span is narrower (4 semitones) on her locally subsequent greeting.

The foregoing close examination shows that, even when speakers and interactional occasions are held constant, greeting-deliverers prosodically vary the way they produce their greetings based on identification/recognition of current addressed-recipients, designing them sensitive to and specifically for both person and position. The balance of this article further substantiates this finding, documenting the discovery of an unanticipated manifestation of the general principle of “recipient design” (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 727) by demonstrating that the most delicate recipient design work occurs on the level of prosody.

But what interactionally meaningful action are participants doing by prosodically recipient designing their greetings? The answer to this question, as subsequent sections of this article demonstrate, is that they are using each recipient designed greeting “melody” to display the stance they are taking up toward encountering the addressed-recipient.
DISPLAYING STANCE: CLUSTERS OF PROSODIC GREETING FEATURES

There are two different clusters of prosodic features with which participants recurrently design their copresent greetings. Each cluster, which I will term small and large respectively, represents one end on a continuum, with each displaying a different stance toward encountering the addressed-recipient. I use the metaphorical adjectives small and large to evoke the auditory impression that each cluster engenders, and because these descriptions are most empirically warranted by the data. Table 1 lists the prosodic features constituting each cluster.

With these clusters of prosodic features in hand, we can observe that, whereas Paula uses the “large” set in designing her greetings in Excerpts 1 and 3, she uses much of the “small” set in designing her greetings in Excerpts 2 and 4. Let us first consider “large” greetings to establish the stance participants are displaying through this cluster of prosodic features.

“Large” Greetings

Straightforwardly named, a “large” greeting sounds big, substantial, effusive. “Large” greetings are often produced by participants in a chorus of overlapping talk (discussed subsequently). This further contributes to their robust sound.

Excerpt 5 shows multiple participants designing their greeting utterances with the “large” cluster of prosodic features. This exemplar, as well as data throughout this article and throughout this research project’s corpus, demonstrates that both males and females, guests and hosts, arriving and prepresent persons, and persons of a variety of different ages, can and do use the “large” set of prosodic features. Several family members are visible sitting around a table engaged in animated postdinner conversation when another family member, Aiden, arrives. After admitting himself through the back door of the house and walking through the vacant kitchen, Aiden steps over the threshold between the kitchen and the dining room (lines 4–5) and starts delivering his utterance at line 5 just as he can first see, and be seen by, the prepresent others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not lengthened</td>
<td>lengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no audible smiling</td>
<td>audible smiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower onset pitch</td>
<td>higher onset pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrase-final fall-to-low</td>
<td>phrase-final fall-to-mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrower pitch span</td>
<td>wider pitch span</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>softer</td>
<td>louder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4The descriptions small and large are designed to specifically avoid imposing unwarranted labels on the data. While other terms exist in the literature for this kind of prosodic clustering (e.g., “phonetically downgraded” and “upgraded,” Ogden, 2006), these terms occasion deep analytic and methodological problems when used to analyze the design of first actions—the analytic target of this article.
At line 5, arriving Aiden delivers a greeting utterance (lexically an exaggerated form of Hey) that also works to summon the prepresent party’s gaze/attention/recipiency (Pillet-Shore, 2008, pp. 100–109). There is a call-and-response quality to the sound of this excerpt: Aiden initiates a summons/greeting sequence at line 5, to which the prepresent participants respond by first redirecting their gaze toward Aiden (thereby answering his summons) and then producing a return-greeting (during lines 6–9, the video shows each person to start articulating her/his greeting utterance at the moment his/her gaze lands on Aiden). Each prepresent person performs these actions independently, yet concurrently, thus enabling them to achieve a return-greeting chorus at lines 6–9 (cf. Duranti, 1997; Lerner, 2002). Because there is a time lag between the start of Aiden’s utterance (at line 5) and the start of others’ return-greetings (the time it takes each person to move her/his gaze to Aiden), Aiden produces much of his greeting before others start overlapping his utterance. We can thus reliably use speech analysis software to analyze the prosodic features with which Aiden designs this utterance. Figure 5 shows a F0 trace of Aiden’s greeting.

In prosodically designing his utterance at line 5, Aiden substantially lengthens the greeting term Hey (to 1.8 s). Aiden also uses a high onset pitch, and as he starts to fully articulate the vowel sound, his pitch reaches a maximum of 361 Hz. Aiden designs his greeting to use a fall-to-mid (about 220 Hz) phrase-final pitch accent. He also designs this utterance to have a wide pitch span (9.4 semitones). Figure 5 graphically illustrates Aiden’s use of a steadily falling intonation contour that glides from a high onset pitch to lower pitch through all intermediate pitch values on one single syllable, henceforth termed “portamento” (Szczepak Reed, 2006, pp. 111–112; 2011, p. 75). (The apparent break in the trace is due to a moment of background noise.) Aiden also sustains an expansive, open-mouthed audible smile during this utterance. And Aiden delivers his greeting to sound loud—it engenders the auditory impression of being both louder than the previously-in-progress talk between the prepresent participants and louder than his own subsequent talk.

In the greeting chorus that occurs at lines 6–9, the prepresent persons also design their return-greeting utterances addressed to Aiden (both monosyllabic and multisyllabic) with the “large” cluster of prosodic features: Each utterance is lengthened, louder than their previously-in-progress talk, done with visible/audible smiling, and uses a high onset pitch with a gradual fall-to-mid. The prosodic matching/alignment between the greetings delivered by Aiden and the prepresent persons creates an overall auditory impression of a sound rollercoaster. Each participant in Excerpt 5 uses what Szczepak Reed (2006) terms “marked prosody” (an instance of “stylized” prosodic design), starting with high pitch (this being one kind of “new beginning”;

Excerpt 5  [S11-AK-2]

01 Sam:    Yeah.=She’s thuh mayor of
02   P;w[*ell. (*Aiden first visible in adj. kitchen))
03   ()/((Aiden stepping from adj. kitchen into dining room))
04 Aiden:   £HuhA;¥E:::[::; ((Aiden sustaining open-mouthed smile))
05 Char:    [£WOW::: LOOK who’s HE:::RE:::;* {start of }]
06 Sam:    [<£AI: D [E: ::::::N>]; {clapping }]
07 Kevin:  [£HE':::Y::::::; [in each ]
08 Cat:    [£YE::AH::::::::= [utterance]
Couper-Kuhlen, 2004) followed by extreme lengthening, loudness, and “a long declination line realized as a portamento” (Szczeppek Reed, 2006, p. 111). But what are participants doing interactionally through their use of this form of marked prosody?

**The stance participants display through “large” greetings.** By prosodically recipient designing greetings with the “large” cluster of features, speakers are doing a socially meaningful action: They are using these prosodic features to do “displaying a positive stance” toward encountering the addressed-recipient.

Excerpt 6 provides a particularly clear exemplification of this, showing party cohost Paula using the same form of marked prosody (as that used by the participants in Excerpt 5) to design her very first vocalized utterance to arriving guest Stella.

Excerpt 6  [Election c-2]

01 (0.3)
02 Paula:  → **YA::y Ste::lla::=:)=I’m so glad yer h#e:re**
03 J2:  [Hi↑::

Upon first laying eyes on Stella, Paula displays a positive stance toward encountering her. She designs her first TCU (and intonation phrase; Szczeppek Reed, 2011, pp. 56–61) to start with Yay, a celebratory appreciating exclamation specifically designed to show approval. By then saying her current recipient’s first name, Paula not only addresses her talk to her (Lerner, 2003) but also explicitly demonstrates that she has successfully recognized her. Paula then latches her first TCU to her next TCU in which she further explicates her positive stance toward encountering Stella: *I’m so glad yer h#e:re*. In addition to using these explicit, lexical resources, Paula also
does “displaying a positive stance” toward encountering Stella by producing this utterance—particularly her first TCU in line 2 (see Figure 6)—using the “large” cluster of prosodic features. Thus, Paula displays a positive stance toward encountering Stella through multiple modalities.

Paula substantially lengthens her delivery of her first TCU, this portion of her utterance totaling 1.15 s in duration (compared to the 0.9 s duration of her second TCU at line 2). She also uses a high onset pitch and produces it with increased loudness (she produces ↑YA::y Ste:lla:::, with an intensity of 88 dB but delivers I’m so glad yer h#e::re, with a mean-energy intensity of 74 dB). Her pitch reaches a maximum of 501 Hz, and she produces this first part of her utterance to use a fall-to-mid (about 271 Hz) phrase-final pitch accent, thus designing it to have a wide pitch span (10.6 semitones) and a steadily declining intonation contour with portamento. Thus, like the speakers in Excerpt 5 (and like her own greetings in Excerpts 1 and 3), Paula uses these “large” prosodic features to do “displaying a positive stance” toward encountering the addressed-recipient.

Throughout my data corpus, every time a speaker designs her/his greeting utterance to include an explicitly lexicalized positively valenced stance toward the addressed-recipient, that speaker also produces her/his greeting with the “large” cluster of prosodic features. Although participants recurrently display their positive stance toward encountering addressed-recipients through multiple modalities, they can achieve this display without lexically formulating that positive stance.

As cases in point, the participants in Excerpt 5 all clearly display a positive stance toward encountering one another, even though they constitute their greeting utterances with a variety of lexical items, including prototype greeting terms (e.g., Hey at lines 5 and 8), address terms (e.g., “Aiden” at line 7), registerings (e.g., “Look who’s here” at line 6; Pillet-Shore, 2005, 2008), and appreciating exclamations (e.g., Wow at line 2; Yeah at line 9). But what is common across all of these various lexical choices is each speaker’s “audiovisual prosody” (including both verbal and
visual features; Swerts & Krahmer, 2005). Each person produces his/her greeting utterance with the “large” cluster of prosodic features while also deploying complementary embodied actions, which together hearably and visibly display a positive stance toward encountering addressed-recipients (cf. M. H. Goodwin & C. Goodwin, 2000).

One such complementary embodied action is smiling: As already mentioned, every participant smiles as s/he produces his/her “large” greeting. Smiling is of course a canonical display of positively valenced affect—a way of visibly communicating happiness, friendliness, and/or social playfulness (e.g., Ekman, Sorenson, & Friesen, 1969; Kraut & Johnston, 1979). Another such embodied action is clapping: In Excerpt 5, Kevin is the first participant to start clapping (during his greeting utterance at line 8) as he gazes at Aiden. The video also shows Cat to start clapping midway through her greeting utterance at line 9, and Char to start clapping near the end of her utterance at line 6, both as they sustain their gaze at Aiden. And clapping, which here develops into a round of applause and overall cheering, is “quintessentially an expression of approval and affiliation” (Clayman, 1992, p. 35; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986).

By prosodically recipient designing greetings with the “large” cluster of prosodic features, participants are doing “displaying a positive stance” toward encountering the addressed-recipient for at least the first—and often both—of the following reasons:

1. To treat the current addressed-recipient as familiar. The “large” cluster of prosodic features provides a fast-and-frugal way of displaying successful recognition. When speakers lexically design their greeting utterances to include—or be wholly constituted by—recipients’ names (thereby explicitly demonstrating recognition), they recurrently also prosodically design those greeting utterances using “large” features (as in Excerpt 5, line 7; Excerpt 6, line 2). And speakers who produce their greetings to sound “large” (even when they do not address recipients by name) immediately move onto next, postgreeting sequences that do not include explicit identification/recognition (as in Excerpts 1 and 3). Thus, a greeting produced with the “large” cluster of prosodic features is, by itself, a claim of recognition.

2. To treat the current encounter as special. The “large” cluster of prosodic features indexes speakers’ orientation to the amount of time elapsed since last contact as significant (cf. Goffman, 1963, 1971) and/or the current occasion as unusual/unexpected. Speakers who produce their greetings to sound “large” recurrently subsequently invoke the special occasion and/or the substantial time since last contact (e.g., at least four months have elapsed since the prepresent parties have seen arriving Aiden in Excerpt 5; the video shows that, immediately after Kevin delivers his greeting utterance to arriving Aiden at line 8, he says, “Aide(h)n, You blew my daughter’s sweet sixteen off, brotha” while smiling and shaking Aiden’s hand, invoking the last family gathering that took place four months earlier at which he had expected to see Aiden, but did not).

This research thus demonstrates that parties design their greetings using the “large” cluster of prosodic features to do “displaying a positive stance” toward encountering the addressed-recipient, constituting displays of approval and appreciation of recipients (i.e., they do “being happy to see” recipients). Juxtaposition of this finding with past research suggests that what I have termed the “large” cluster of prosodic features by itself constitutes a display of approval/appreciation when used to produce any utterance designed to display a stance, greeting or otherwise.
Most recently and relevantly, Szczepek Reed (2006) examined speakers’ prosodic displays of appreciation in a nongreeting interactional environment: following one participant’s presentation of an object (e.g., a just-opened birthday present). In this sequential context, she found that the typical prosodic pattern for showing appreciation is a “long, declining portamento contour,” concluding: “The physical lengthening of sounds and syllables has an iconic force which is more directly expressive than a purely verbal description of approval and appreciation” (p. 130).

It also appears that the present article’s finding that the “large” cluster of prosodic features constitutes a display of approval during copresent greetings is directly related to a very different line of research: Fernald’s (e.g., 1992) cross-language psychological investigations on the functional significance of prosody in mothers’ speech to infants. During laboratory recording sessions in which she elicited interactions between mother and infant, Fernald (1992, p. 265) describes mothers’ approval vocalizations as being “high in mean F0 and wide in F0 range . . . [with] a rise-fall F0 contour.” Her research suggests that, to the human ear, these prosodic features together make a particularly meaningful “melody”—one that connotes approval and praise by showing that the speaker is “happy” (Fernald, 2006).

And returning to the realm of greetings, the present article’s findings about copresent greetings also connect to Schegloff’s (1998) observations about participants’ prosody during the openings of telephone conversation. Examining the initial turns of a single telephone conversation, Schegloff observes that “the participants work out the pitch level at which the conversation—or at least its first part—will be conducted, and thereby ‘negotiate’ the tenor of the conversation’s launching” (p. 235). Focusing specifically on the called-participant’s prosodic design of her return-greeting, Schegloff observes that she uses a pitch setting that is hearably high-within-her-range to claim recognition of the caller, and to display “the stance she is taking toward the interaction being launched here through the ‘enthusiasm’ of her prosody . . . a practice designed to ‘do’ ‘really pleased to hear from you’” (p. 245, emphasis mine).

More generally, this article’s finding that speakers design their “large” greetings using high onset pitch relates to an assertion made by Trim (as cited in Couper-Kuhlen, 1986): “The higher the starting point, the greater the degree of emotional involvement.” Indeed, this article’s demonstration that “large” greetings are prosodically large provides the first empirical evidence of Goffman’s (1963, p. 102) classic claim that each face-to-face “engagement tends to be initiated with an amount of fuss appropriate to the period of lapsed contact.”5 “Large” greetings are designed to display a large amount of “fuss” over encountering the addressed-recipient, and thereby provide a way of showing that a relationship is still what it was at the termination of the previous coparticipation . . . The enthusiasm of greetings compensates for the weakening of the relationship caused by the absence just terminated” (Goffman, 1967, p. 41).

Thus, what emerges from considering this article’s findings alongside past relevant work is a more complete understanding of a recurrent way that participants prosodically display approval and appreciation: by smiling while producing utterances that are lengthened, loud, and use a high onset pitch with a declining portamento contour that falls-to-mid. Thus, by delivering a prosodically “large” greeting, a speaker moves to satisfy—during the first moments of an encounter—her/his addressed-recipient’s “positive face wants”—the desire to be approved of and liked (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

5More recently, Dunbar (2004) suggests that we tend to greet distant acquaintances more effusively than we do those whom we see more often, thereby further bolstering the relationship due to longer time-since-last-contact.
“Large” greetings and the interactive achievement of simultaneity. Sacks (1972/1992, pp. 570–571) observed that “there aren’t many things lawfully done together in conversation.” The social action of copresent greeting, however, is one thing that participants treat as not only lawfully, but preferentially, done together (Pillet-Shore, 2008). As mentioned earlier, “large” greetings are often produced by participants in a chorus of overlapping talk. But this does not occur by accident. Rather, participants use the “large” cluster of prosodic features to maximize the possibility of achieving greeting simultaneity. Participants observably work to achieve greeting simultaneity—along a single modality or across multiple modalities—by:

- lengthening their greeting utterances;
- appending address terms to lexical greeting terms;
- latching TCUs to deliver more than one lexical greeting term; and
- combining body-behavioral greeting actions with lexical greeting terms.

Parties do these things to extend their greeting actions so as to maximize the possibility that recipients will “join in” and help them achieve a greeting chorus by producing their greetings at or near the same time.

Data throughout this article show participants working to achieve greeting simultaneity. For example, in Excerpt 7, Jill extends her greeting actions at line 1 by lengthening her utterances, latching her TCUs to deliver more than one lexical greeting term, and appending the address term everybuddy to the end of her second lexical greeting TCU.

Excerpt 7  [JH-pt2-a]

01 Jill:  ṢHiːẹː::=Hi everybuddy?:
02 Pat:  [Hːɪː::=Happy Thanksgiving:::= ((smiling))
03 Jim:  [Wʊːnderful.
04 Jim:  =Here co[mes a lotta jo:y? ((smiling))
05 Pat:  [Hːɪː : :: ((waving hand; visibly smiling))

At line 2, Pat begins delivering her greeting actions in overlap with Jill. Pat collaborates with Jill in promoting and extending their achieved greeting simultaneity by lengthening her utterances (at lines 2 and 5), latching her TCUs to deliver more than one lexical greeting term (at line 2), and combining a body-behavioral greeting action (the hand wave noted at line 5) with her lexical greeting utterances.

Excerpt 8 shows this same pattern. Mom extends her greeting actions by latching her TCUs to deliver more than one lexical greeting term and lengthening her utterance:

Excerpt 8  [PT.28.UC.02.08.02-a]

01 Mom:  H[iː=Good ɪmɔrnːiːːːːng;
02 T2:  [H ɪː :: Good mɔːrning;=I’m s:orry I’m laːt;

and Teacher (T2) collaborates with Mom to achieve greeting simultaneity by lengthening her utterance and delivering more than one lexical greeting term.
Achieved greeting simultaneity is therefore a product of cooperative action (it is not done competitively; cf. Lerner, 2002; Schegloff, 2000). In working to achieve greeting simultaneity, parties display their orientation to a preference for doing greetings together. Parties who produce greetings together display approval toward and appreciation of one another at the same time, thereby collaborating in reaffirming their relationship and building social solidarity by simultaneously satisfying one another’s “positive face wants” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). They also satisfy the preference for recognition over self-identification (Schegloff, 1986).

This finding complements and extends Duranti’s (1997) observation that, in Western Samoa “ceremonial greetings are a challenging exception to the ‘one party at a time’ principle.” In addition, the present analysis also complements C. Goodwin and M. H. Goodwin’s (e.g., 1987) research on assessment sequences in which they conclude that hearers are able to produce their own assessment terms simultaneously with speakers of initial assessments by tracking emergent prosodic details. Thus, the production of an assessment (cf. Ogden, 2006) shares something important in common with the production of a copresent greeting: Both are loci where participants’ prosody facilitates collaborative action between multiple participants.

“Small” Greetings

Straightforwardly named, a “small” greeting sounds little, subdued, reserved. “Small” greetings are recurrently produced by participants one at a time. This further contributes to their subtle sound.

Both participants in Excerpt 9 use the “small” cluster of prosodic features to design their greetings. Consistent with preceding exemplars’ focus on first greetings, the target utterance in Excerpt 9 is the greeting at line 6 (the second greeting at line 7 may be designed to match the first). At line 1, prepresent teaching assistant Brad is visible sitting alone at a table in a university campus conference room looking over documents when graduate student Aaron knocks on the closed room door. After rising to stand and then walking to the door, Brad opens it, starting to deliver his greeting utterance at line 6 just as he can first see, and be seen by, arriving Aaron. Figure 7 shows a F0 trace of Brad’s greeting.

Excerpt 9 [UT-11]

01 ((knock knock knock on door to room))
02 (3.8)/((latched to third knock, Brad rises from chair, holding his gaze on the documents on the table; Brad then gazes toward the closed door as he walks to it))
05 (2.0)/((Brad reaches for doorknob, then opens door))
06 Brad: Hi. ((Brad and Aaron in mutual gaze))
07 Aaron: Hi. ((Aaron extending right hand toward Brad))
08 Brad: How you doin.* ((grasping/squeezing hands))
09 Aaron: G[οτč] o d. ((handshaking))
10 Brad: [Brad Sykes* ((“start of hand disengage”))
11 Aaron: Aaron Foss, ((Aaron walking into room))
12 Brad: °(Have a)+ seat;
13 Aaron: =.hh Thank youh ((Brad walking to seat))
Brad and Aaron deliver their greetings one at a time, with Aaron producing his return-greeting at line 7 after a transition space of 0.46 s. This is possible because Brad does not lengthen his greeting utterance at line 6 (which is 0.16 s in duration). Brad also does not audibly smile nor use increased loudness. And Brad uses a normal onset pitch (for his range), a narrow pitch span (3 semitones), and designs his greeting utterance to use a fall-to-low phrase-final pitch accent. But what is Brad doing interactionally by designing his greeting with the “small” cluster of prosodic features?

The stance participants display through “small” greetings. By prosodically recipient designing greetings with the “small” cluster of features, speakers are doing “displaying (no more than) a neutral stance” toward encountering the addressed-recipient for one of the following reasons:

1. To treat the current addressed-recipient as unfamiliar. The “small” cluster of prosodic features provides a way for speakers to display their trouble identifying/recognizing the recipient (through visual inspection), prosodically projecting the relevance of stopping to explicitly deal with identification as a discrete interactional activity (i.e., through an introduction or name renewal sequence; Pillet-Shore, 2011). Speakers who produce their

---

6Within the “small” cluster of prosodic features, a phrase-final fall-to-low helps prosodically project the relevance of stopping to explicitly deal with identification as a discrete interactional activity. This contrasts with the fall-to-mid characteristic of the “large” cluster, which projects immediate movement onto next nonidentification sequences.
greetings to sound “small” recurrently move onto a next, postgreeting sequence that involves explicit identification/recognition (as in Excerpt 9, lines 10 and 11; Excerpt 2, lines 5 and 7, 9–10).

2. To treat the current addressed-recipient as already-greeted. The “small” cluster of prosodic features provides a way for speakers to display their orientation to “this” greeting as locally subsequent (as in Excerpt 4, lines 2–3).  

3. To index an orientation to some intra/inter-personal trouble. The “small” cluster of prosodic features provides a way for speakers to do “displaying a negative personal state/stance” when greeting familiars in locally initial position (as in Excerpt 10).

In my data corpus, I have zero instances of a speaker audibly delivering a prosodically “small” greeting in locally initial position when s/he is also oriented to the addressed-recipient as familiar. I do, however, have one instance, shown in Excerpt 10, of a participant doing an action in second position (to a first greeting) that constitutes an extreme beyond the left end of the Table 1 continuum. The video preceding Excerpt 10 shows Tasha and Irene, two undergraduate college students who are also both resident members of a sorority, eating breakfast and talking intermittently while standing and moving about their house kitchen. During the silence at line 2, fellow student/resident Sally first becomes visible, arriving from her upstairs bedroom as she steps over the threshold into the kitchen. Sally is entering into physical copresence with Tasha (and Irene) for the first time on this day (after they have spent the preceding evening and night apart). Thus, these participants are oriented to Tasha’s utterance at lines 4–5 as a locally initial greeting that treats Sally as familiar.

Excerpt 10  [SBreakfast2 c-1]

01 (1.4)
02 (.)/((Sally first visible stepping into kitchen;)
03 Sally gazing at Tasha; Tasha gazing toward Sally))
04 Tasha: He*y= ((“Sally removing her gaze from Tasha))
05 Tasha: =Sally:* ((“Sally completes turning her head/gaze 90° away from Tasha as she walks toward kitchen pantry cabinet,
06 her back now facing Tasha as she pulls a paper plate from
07 pantry; Tasha moving her gaze 30° to the right of Sally
08 toward pantry, keeping her head/body parallel with Sally as
09 she walks 3 steps in same direction as Sally))
11 → (0.8)/((Irene turns her gaze to Sally midway into silence))
12 Tasha: *ptch! ((“Tasha turns her gaze back to Sally))
13 Tasha: What’s wrong, ((Tasha sustaining her gaze at Sally))

Sally displays that she sees Tasha as she enters the kitchen by gazing directly at Tasha’s face, but at line 11, Sally produces no audible response to Tasha’s greeting. Because Sally’s back is turned both to the camera and to her interlocutors, it is equivocal whether she withholds a return-greeting or produces a return-greeting that is so prosodically “small” it is imperceptible. Either way, Sally is violating the “simple rule of adjacency pair operation” (Heritage, 1984,  

7For additional exemplars and analysis of locally subsequent greetings, see Pillet-Shore (2008, pp. 150–161).
GREETING: DISPLAYING STANCE THROUGH PROSODY

p. 246; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 296). If she withholds a return-greeting, she is not producing
the action accountably due next (thereby snubbing Tasha, and/or giving her “the silent treat-
ment”; cf. Williams, Shore, & Grahe, 1998). If she produces a return-greeting but chooses to
do so with such prosodically “small” features that it is imperceptible, Sally is thereby not pro-
ducing a prosodically type-matched second pair-part response. Participants observably monitor
for the adequacy not only of what is lexically said/done as a second pair-part, but also for how
it is prosodically said/done, such that they can treat a response that they judge to be prosodi-
cally mismatched/nonaligned as accountable (cf. Szczepke Reed, 2006, pp. 52–54; 2009; 2011,

At lines 12–13, Tasha treats Sally as accountable for her actions, both proposing that Sally
heard/understood her greeting, and treating Sally’s failure to deliver a (prosodically aligned)
return-greeting as the basis for negative inference, showing her understanding of Sally’s actions as
displaying a negative personal state/stance—something is “wrong.” And indeed, a few moments
later in this interaction, Sally reveals that there is something “wrong”: After staying up late into
the preceding night writing a 20-page term paper, she “lost” it when her computer crashed. But
Sally starts indexing her orientation to this personal trouble at lines 4–12, during the very first
moments of this encounter.

Thus, if a participant performs an action embodying the leftmost end of the Table 1 continuum
in locally initial position when s/he is also oriented to the addressed-recipient as familiar, that
participant may be doing “displaying a negative personal state/stance” (e.g., due to some intra-
interpersonal trouble). Such a display can quickly undermine social solidarity since it poses a
threat to involved participants’ “positive face wants” (Brown & Levinson, 1987; cf. Goffman,

THE FINE-TUNED CALIBRATION OF COPRESENT GREETINGS

Parties may fine-tune the prosodic design of their greetings to fall in between the two ends of
the Table 1 continuum. For example, if two unfamiliar parties are meeting each other for the first
time but they already know something about one another and/or have been expecting to meet one
another, they may choose to design their greetings using select prosodic features from both the
“small” cluster and the “large” cluster:

Excerpt 11  [UT-1]

01 Robin:  Hi:=>Ho[w are you doing< Willow:=
02 Willow:  | £ H i zi: .
03 Willow:  =£Is it Robin?=
04 Robin:  =£Yes:.=
05 Willow:  £Nice: to meet yo[u]?=
06 Robin:  ![ (Ni[ce) to meet you as we:ll.=
07 Willow:  [=Willow Tr[man?

Both Robin and Willow deliver their greetings (at lines 1 and 2) at a volume consistent with
their normal speaking voices, and they each use a fall-to-low phrase-final pitch accent. But they
also both smile and use high onset pitch. Though Robin does not lengthen her first TCU at line 1
(0.26 s), delivering it with a narrower pitch span (3.4 semitones), Willow lengthens her greeting at line 2 (to 0.8 s) and uses a wider pitch span (13 semitones). Robin also works to extend her greeting at line 1 by latching her TCUs to append a howareyou greeting utterance and the first name of her recipient so as to maximize the possibility of achieving simultaneity with Willow. Indeed by lengthening her greeting at line 2, Willow collaborates with Robin in their joint achievement of simultaneity. Thus, these participants choose to design their greetings to do “displaying a positive stance” toward encountering one another while also prosodically projecting the relevance of stopping to explicitly deal with identification as a discrete interactional activity.\(^\text{8}\)

As another example, if cohabiting parties are “just now” coming back together after a relatively short time of separation, they may choose to design their greetings with a different combination of prosodic features:

**Excerpt 12 [S10-CB-1]**

01 Teri: **Hell:lo,**
02 Ava: **Hi::,**
03 Mel: \(\uparrow\) **Hi::**
04 Char: **[Hiee::,=
05 Miley: **=Hi::**

All five participants design their greetings with either a fall-to-mid or a rise-to-mid phrase-final pitch accent. Though they all slightly lengthen their greeting utterances (Teri’s is 0.45 s; Ava’s is 0.48 s; Melanie’s is 0.46 s; Charlene’s is 0.53 s; and Miley’s is 0.38 s), none works to further extend their greeting turns at talk. Despite some latching and terminal overlap, the overall auditory impression of Excerpt 12 is that the greetings are done basically one at a time. While two participants use a wider pitch span (Teri’s is 8.9 semitones; Melanie’s is 14.3 semitones), the others use a narrower pitch span (Ava’s is 2.7 semitones; Charlene’s is 3.5 semitones; and Miley’s is 1.2 semitones). And no participant audibly smiles nor increases her loudness. And only one person (line 3) uses high(er) onset pitch, with all others using comparatively low onset pitch. Thus, these participants choose to design their greetings so they treat current addressed-recipients as familiar while also doing “displaying a neutral stance” toward encountering them, thereby indexing their orientation to the amount of time elapsed since last contact as insignificant.

As a final example, Excerpt 13 shows one speaker, Sandy, prosodically fine-tuning her greetings of two different acquaintances within the same second. Sandy is a guest who has just arrived to a baby shower at a house. While she is looking down, signing a card located in the house foyer, another previously arrived guest Kim quietly walks up behind her and summons her attention by slapping her on the bum. As Sandy turns around to see who’s there, she discovers two different acquaintances standing behind her: Kim and Dan. Kim and Dan, however, are not a couple.

---

\(^{8}\)This analysis sheds additional light on Excerpt 2: Paula and Derik display that they are having trouble recognizing each other through the way they each prosodically produce their greetings at lines 2–3. Through Paula’s use of high onset pitch and overall high pitch setting (see Figure 2), however, she does “displaying a positive stance” toward encountering the addressed-recipient—part of doing “being a welcoming host” even to an arriver with whom she is less familiar. In this excerpt, Paula is also the first to display remembering having previously met Derik (lines 10–11), with Derik lagging in his claimed recall of meeting her, which helps explain why he produces his greeting with level pitch.
Thus when Sandy turns around, she discovers two separate parties, and she greets them each individually at line 4 as she moves her gaze first to Kim, and then to Dan:

**Excerpt 13** [S10-EC-2ab]

01 ((Kim slaps Sandy on bum))
02 Sandy: O[:h. ((Sandy turning around))
03 Dan: >>What’s up<
04 Sandy: → He:y]=[HE:↑:::Y:::
05 Dan: [How’s it go:in=
06 Sandy: .=hh ↑GOOD=HOW ARE YO:U:::
07 Dan: I’m go(h)od;
08 Sandy: *Good tah see ya:h man, *((Sandy and Dan start hug))
09 How’s things over in: ah (0.3) Afghanist:A:n.

Figure 8 shows a F0 trace of Sandy’s two consecutive greetings at line 4—first to Kim, then to Dan. Although these greetings are both lexically identical and generally trend toward the right end of the Table 1 continuum, Sandy hearably discriminates between each recipient, producing her greeting of Dan to be prosodically “larger” than her greeting of Kim.

Sandy significantly lengthens her greeting to Dan, spending much more time greeting Dan (1.33 s) than she spends greeting Kim (0.38 s). Sandy also begins audibly smiling only as she starts to greet Dan. Sandy uses a higher onset pitch (585 Hz) when starting to greet Dan than she uses when she starts to greet Kim (490 Hz). Over the course of her greeting to Dan, her pitch span...
is wider (15.5 semitones) than during her greeting to Kim (5.6 semitones). And Sandy produces her greeting of Dan to be 3 dB louder than her greeting of Kim.

But what accounts for these differences, given Sandy’s orientation to both Kim and Dan as familiar persons whom she has not seen in some time? The central finding of this article is that participants prosodically recipient design their greetings, tailoring them to display a stance toward encountering the addressed-recipient. Ethnographically we know that, whereas Kim is one of Sandy’s daughter’s friends, Dan is one of Sandy’s own long-time friends. Dan is also one of the guests of honor at this baby shower because he is the father of the baby. And Dan has been away for a year serving military duty in Afghanistan. With this ethnographic context, we can further appreciate how Sandy prosodically recipient designs each of her greetings: Through her fine-tuned prosodic calibration, Sandy displays a more positive stance toward encountering Dan, correlative displaying a greater amount of approval for and appreciation of Dan—doing “being happier to see” Dan and thus making it clear that it is Dan who is her priority “right now.”

And this is how copresent greetings constitute and align social relationships. Through the meaningful “melody” with which parties recipient design their greetings, they recognizably display their stance toward the current state and character of their social relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

Through its combination of conversation analysis, prosodic analysis, and ethnographic contextualization of data, this study provides a method for examining the design of first actions. Focusing on the social action of greeting in naturally occurring face-to-face interaction, this article demonstrates that participants recipient design greetings on the level of prosody, tailoring them to hearably display a stance toward encountering the addressed-recipient.

Sound is touch at a distance, both literally and metaphorically (Fernald, 2006). And when it comes to the maintenance or “grooming” (Dunbar, 2004) of a social relationship, “a touch is worth a thousand words” (Dunbar, 2010). A speaker who produces a prosodically “large” greeting immediately touches her/his recipient in a way that, on a primordial level, connotes approval for and appreciation of that recipient—doing “being happy to see” that person—thereby reaffirming the strength of their relationship despite the lapsed time of no contact that is “just now” coming to an end. This explains why we experience “distress” when we feel that another person’s greeting sounds too “small” or “inadequately warm” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), denying us the touch we feel we deserve. Through copresent greetings, parties can display greater or lesser amounts of approval for recipients. Thus, the findings of this research provide evidence that greetings are microcosmic encapsulations of social relationships critical to parties’ (re-)creation and maintenance of social solidarity. This article shows that we can learn something about the current condition of a given human social relationship by closely inspecting how the involved persons prosodically produce their greetings. In a very real sense, every copresent greeting is a relationship.

REFERENCES


