

**Doing *fast* and *slow*:
Qualia, prosody, and stylistic variation
among house dancers in Singapore**

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**New Ways of Analyzing Variation 53
University of Michigan–Ann Arbor**

Introduction

Social constructs are constituted by qualities

- E.g., personae, character types
- Differentiation through specific semiotic processes (Irvine & Gal 2000)
- How about differentiation of qualities?

Introduction

Qualia in sociolinguistics

- i.e., the subjective experience of quality (Chumley & Harkness 2013; Harkness 2013)
- Descriptions of languages, dialects, and accents (Inoue 2003; Zhang 2008)
- Issues of iconicity and embodiment (Calder 2019)

**How do house dancers in Singapore
use prosodic resources to do *fast* and *slow*?**

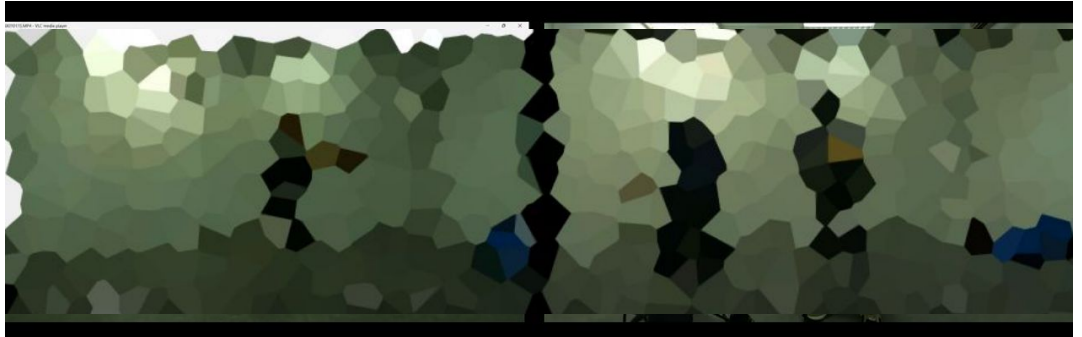
Data

Ethnographic fieldwork with house dancers in Singapore

- Summer 2023, 2024
- Positionality as an existing community member

Dance and Discussion

- Five dancers
- Two-part interview



Data



Analysis

Identify instances of fastness and slowness

- Explicit mention and elaboration of 'fast' and 'slow'
- Each IP coded as Fast, Slow, or Other
 - Other as a baseline comparison level

Extract prosodic features per word

- **Pitch:** mean, max, min, SD, range
- **Intensity:** mean, max, min, SD, range
- **Speech rate**

Analysis

Linear mixed effects regression models for each feature

- Aggregate analysis
- By-speaker analysis

Effects structure

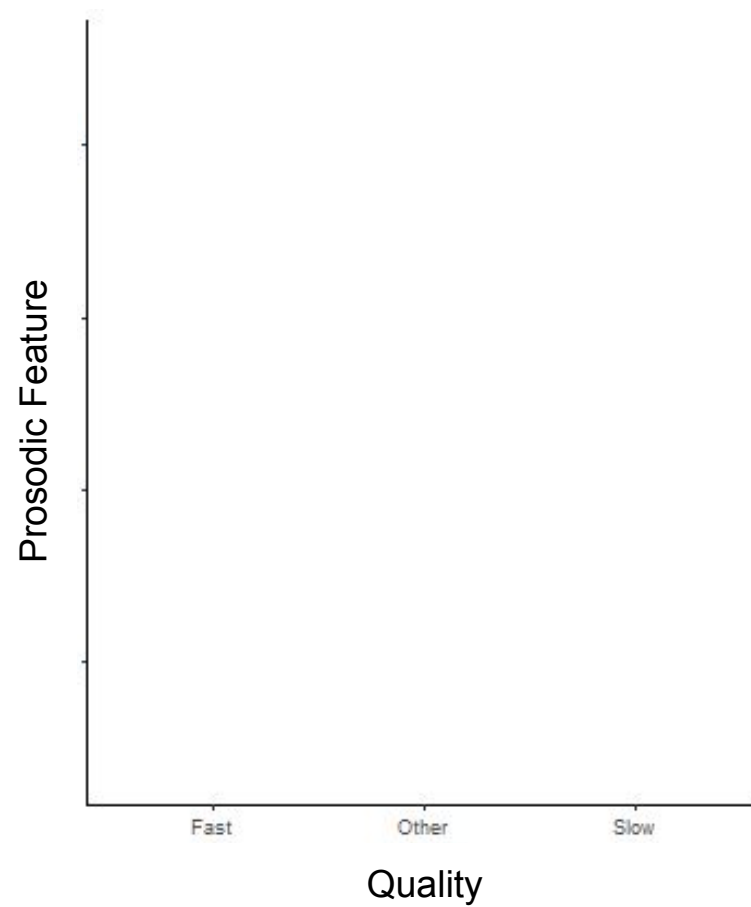
- Fixed effects: Quality (Fast/Other/Slow), Distinction (Yes/No), Phrase Position
- Random effects: Word, Speaker

Analysis

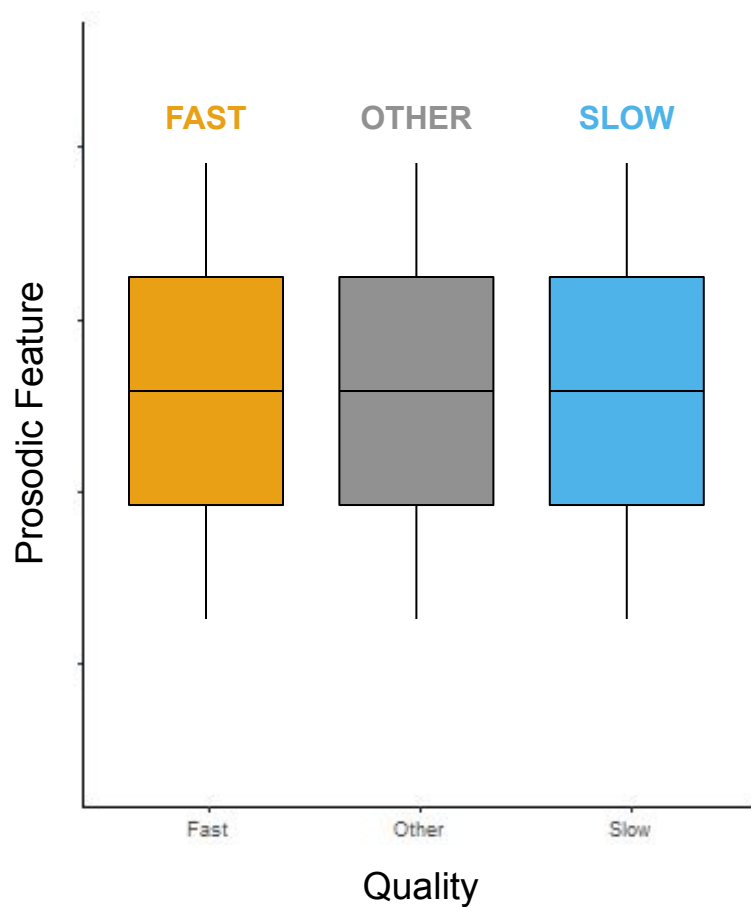
**How do house dancers in Singapore
use prosodic resources to do *fast* and *slow*?**

- Speech rate
- Intensity
- Pitch

Analysis



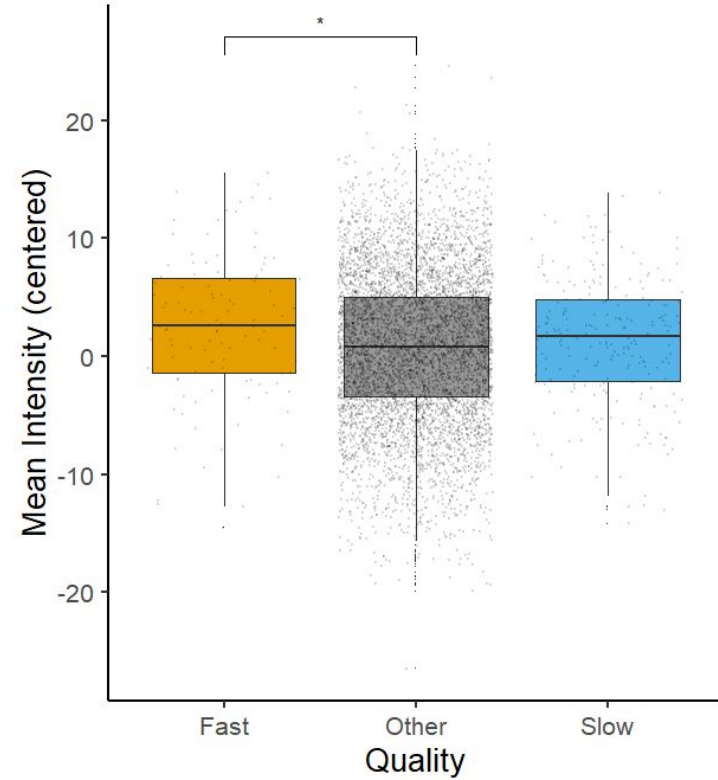
Analysis



Analysis

Aggregate data

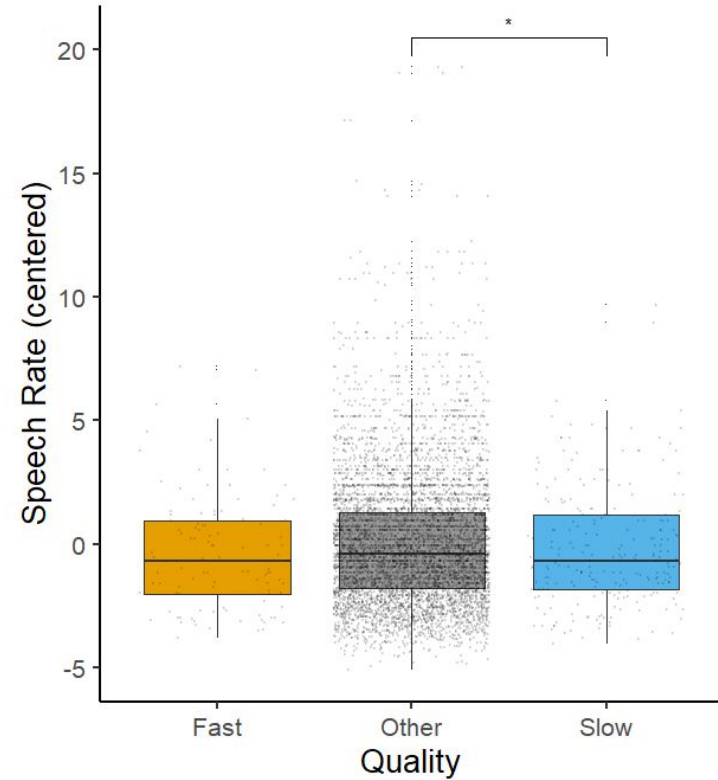
- 'Fast': ↑ intensity



Analysis

Aggregate data

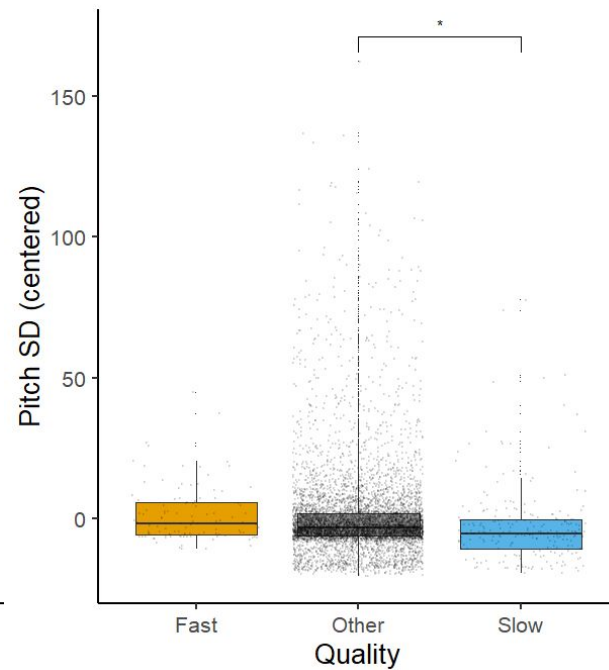
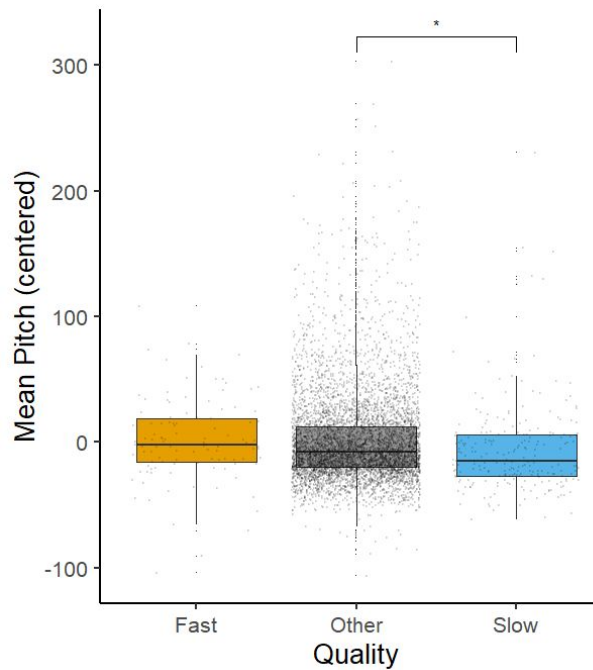
- 'Fast': ↑ intensity
- 'Slow': ↓ speech rate



Analysis

Aggregate data

- 'Fast': ↑ intensity
- 'Slow': ↓ speech rate,
↓ pitch

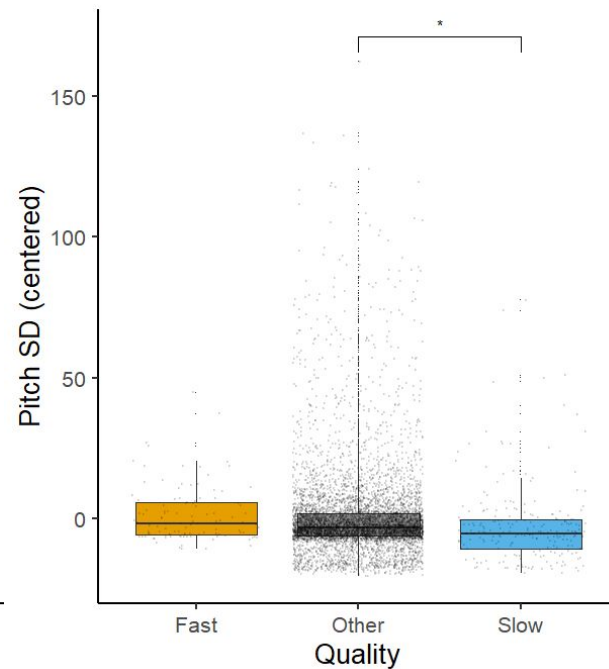
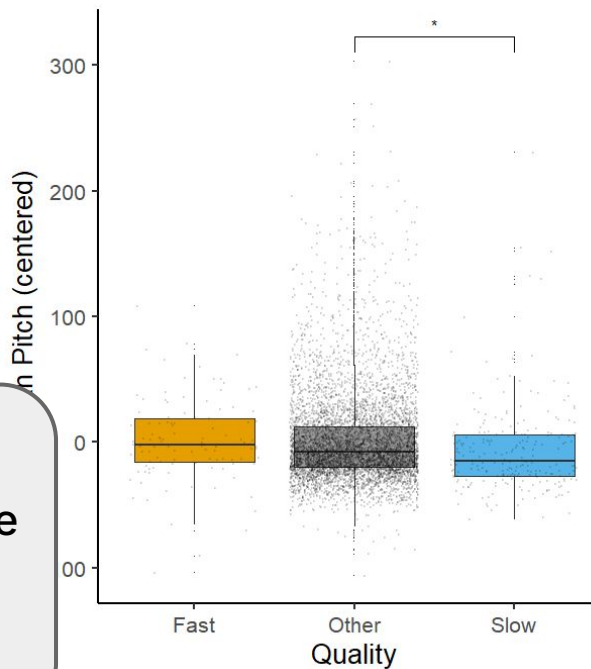


Analysis

Aggregate data

- 'Fast': ↑ intensity
- 'Slow': ↓ speech rate,
↓ pitch

Prosodic resources for
doing *fast* and *slow* leverage
iconic associations across
different acoustic material



Analysis

Inter-speaker analysis

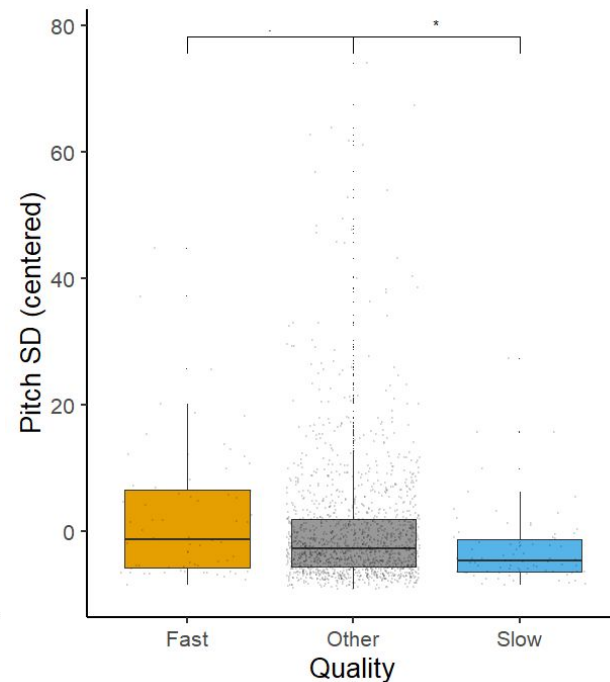
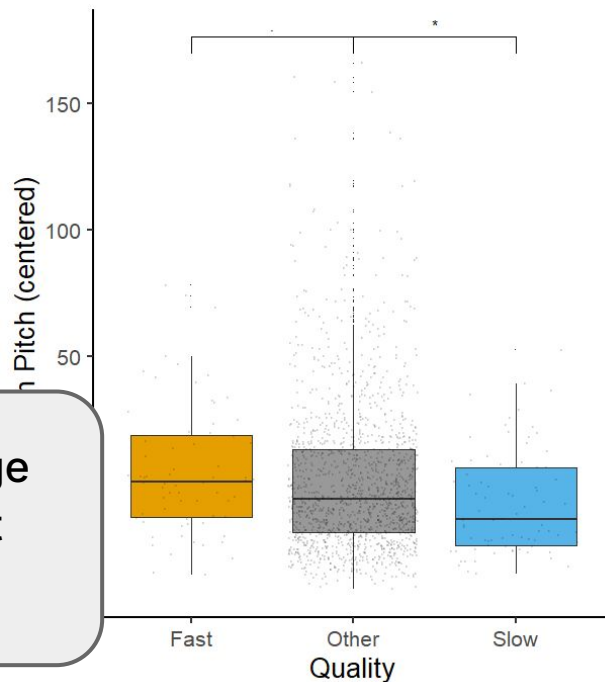
- Individual prosodic styles used to do *fast* and *slow*

Analysis

Junjie

- 'Fast': \uparrow pitch
- 'Slow': \downarrow pitch

Fast and slow can leverage iconicity through different prosodic configurations



Analysis

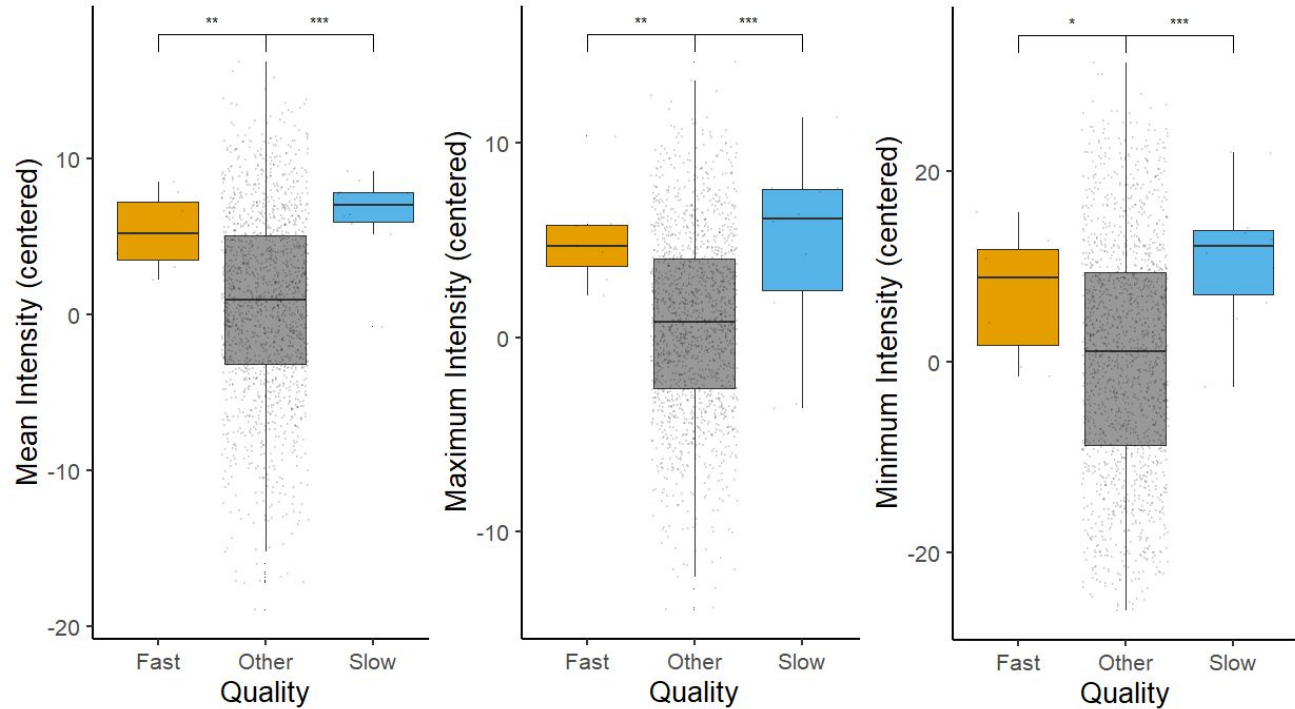
Sam

- 'Fast': ↑ intensity

Analysis

Sam

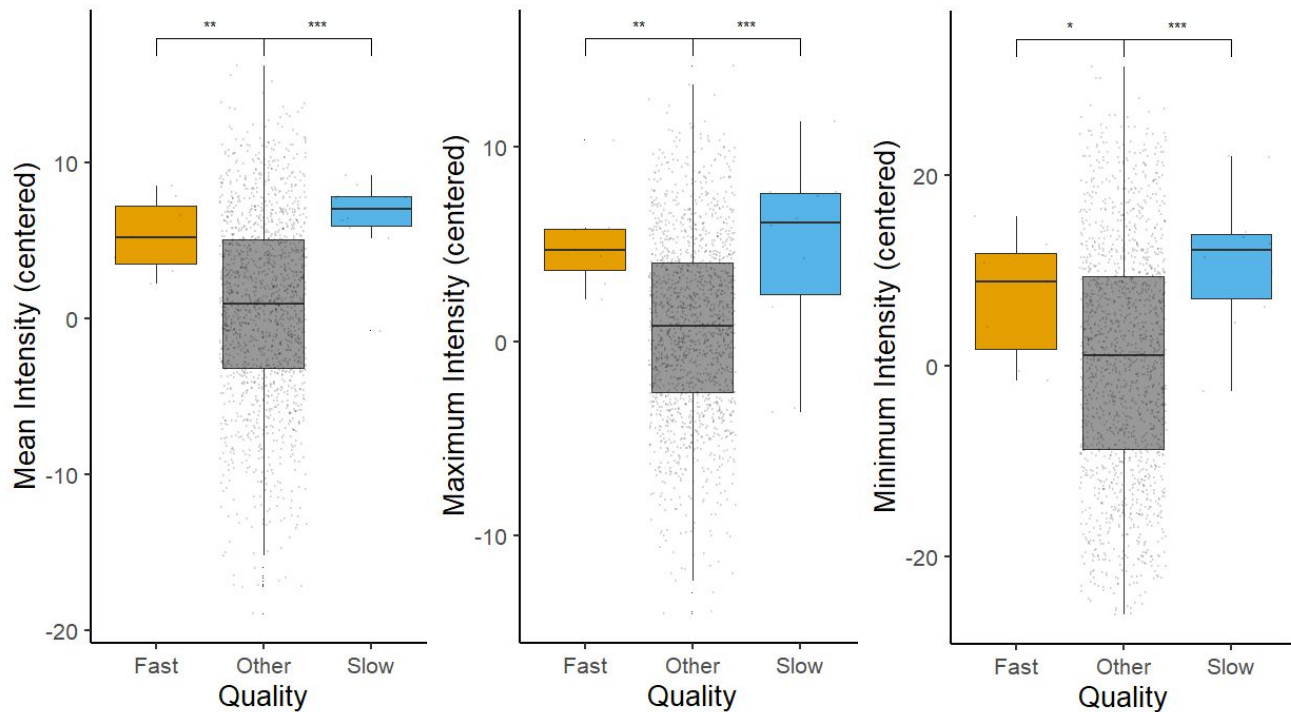
- 'Fast': ↑ intensity
- 'Slow': ↑ intensity



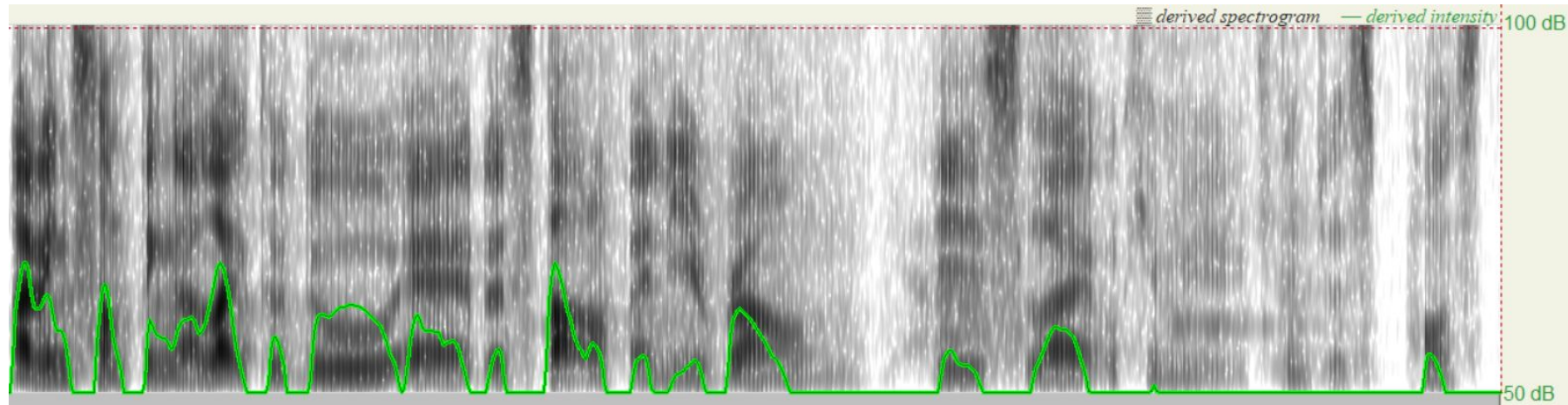
Analysis

Sam

- 'Fast': ↑ intensity
- 'Slow': ↑ intensity

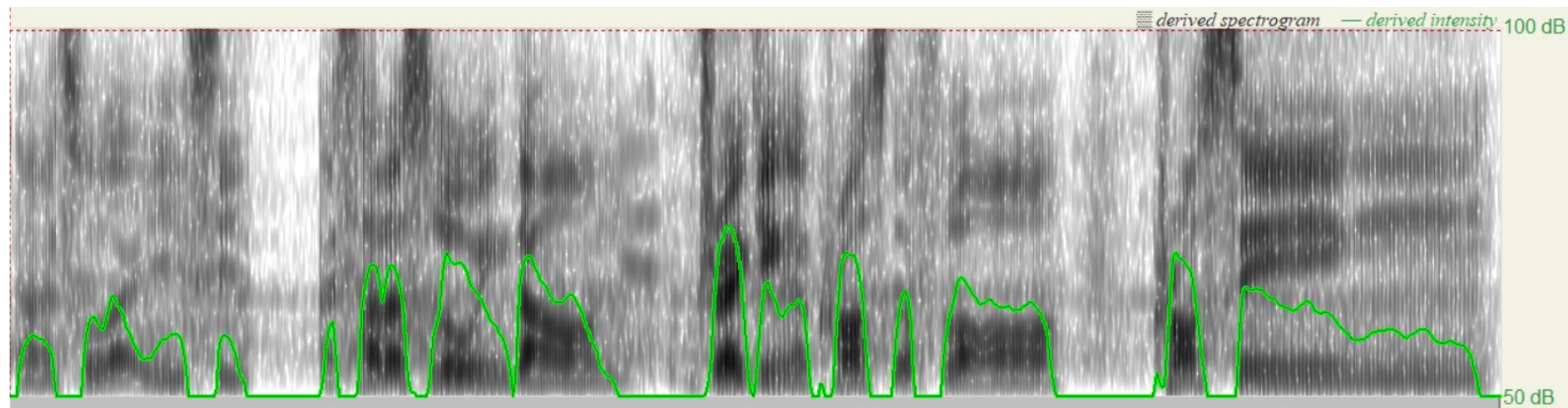


Analysis: Sam



I think something I like to do at the start of any round is like okay maybe we can just pause this,

Analysis: Sam



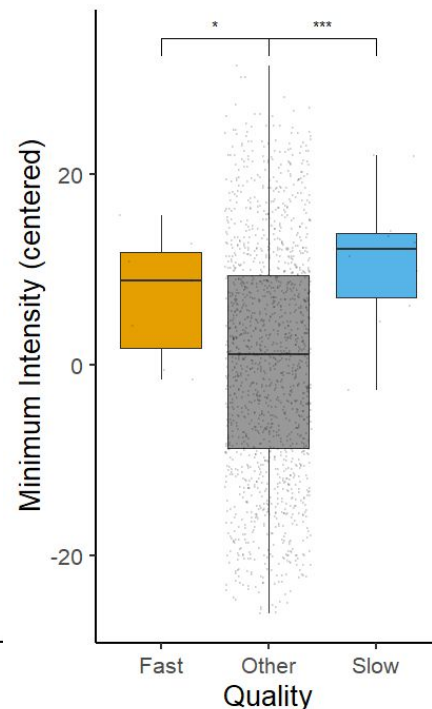
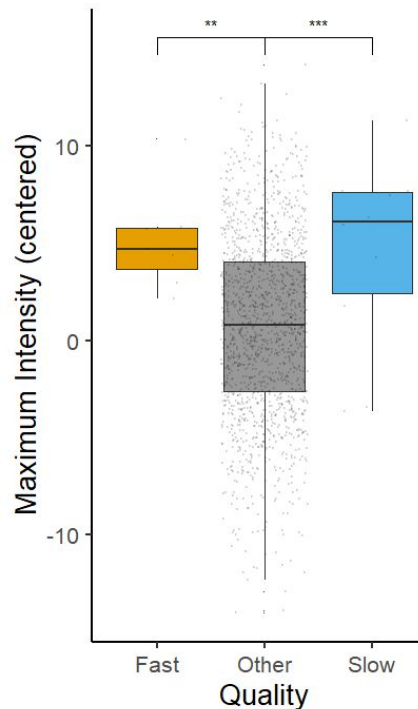
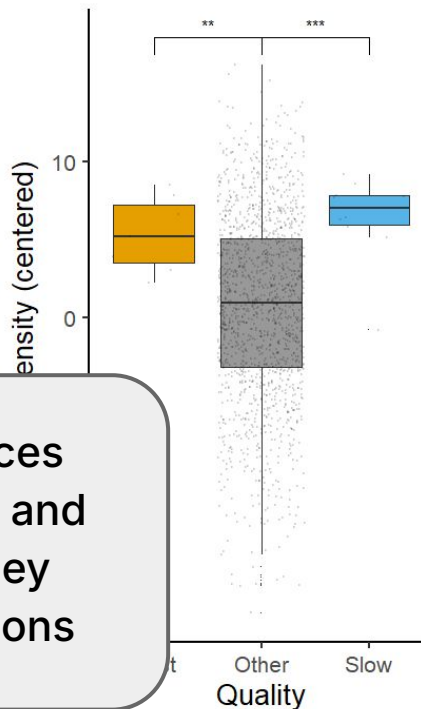
ah so like eh see I started slowing down dragging across the floor, crossing, yeah.

Analysis

Sam

- 'Fast': ↑ intensity
- 'Slow': ↑ intensity

While prosodic resources can be used to do *fast* and *slow* in iconic ways, they also serve other functions



Takeaways

Qualities of *fast* and *slow* are cultivated by transforming acoustic material into signs of fastness and slowness

Prosody can be used to construct social distinctions and linguistic distinctions

Thank you!

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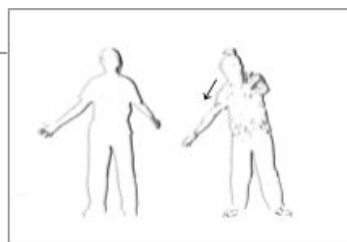
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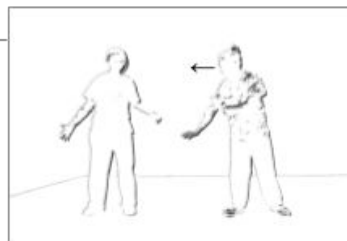
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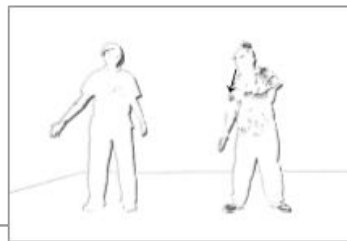
(3) 1 cause as you like that,
((looks down at right hand))
1.15 s, 116.73 Hz, 65.94 dB, 4.34 syl/s
(0.25)



2 SLOWLY.
((looks at interlocutor, palms come up))
0.49 s, 156.83 Hz, 72.57 dB, 4.11 syl/s
(0.22)



3 if you do it slowly,
0.77 s, 142.74 Hz, 66.68 dB, 7.53 syl/s
(0.53)



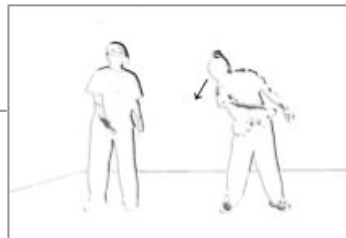
4b [e]:→
((looks at hand, right arm moves horizontally across, fingers move back and forth))
1.32 s, 87.14 Hz, 53.78 dB, 0.76 syl/s



4c you can you can feel your hands moving.
((hand sweeps to left))
1.22 s, 101.03 Hz, 60.14 dB, 7.01 syl/s
(0.62)

- 5 but if you do it fast, **((torso bends to right,
head turns to right))**

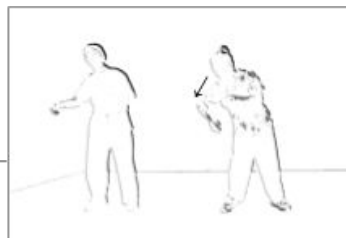
0.86 s, 131.40 Hz, 69.56 dB, 6.72 syl/s
(0.92)



- 6 you will probably like,
0.74 s, 143.45 Hz, 72.73 dB, 6.73 syl/s
(0.36)

- 7 be like that.
((right forearm flows out from elbow))

0.44 s, 105.03 Hz, 65.74 dB, 6.25 syl/s



Identifying Distinctions

Using contrastive discourse structures, i.e., distinctions, to identify relevant qualities in the interaction

- Discursive sites for differentiation
- Instances where qualities are explicitly contrasted against each other using linguistic material

There is a difference between [A] and [B].

yeah there is a difference between like - boom -
and like - boooooom -

It's not [A], it's [B].

it's not - ha ha ha ha ha - it's - ha aa aa aa aa -

[A] compared to [B].

if I do like this, compared to,

[A] versus [B].

Japanese versus like let's say the Europeans,