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“Alright, Gotta Go” Pre-Closings and Closings in American Telephone Conversations

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Abstract

For this study, telephone conversations are conducted in order to answer three research questions (1) How do participants’ pre-closings and closings differ? (2) What are the most commonly used pre-closings and closings? (3) Do the pre-closings and closings differ with gender? Researchers collected data from 50 telephone conversations, 25 female and 25 male, conducted by the researchers. The participants in the study were friends and family of the researchers. Data collection included both audio and hand. It was concluded that participants relied on both a closing and pre-closing when ending telephone conversations. Most participants relied on two pre-closing statements; one in the initial pre-closing, followed by another preceding the final closing statement. The most commonly used pre closing was “Okay,” while participants were likely to say, “Bye,” when closing the conversation. There were no significant differences between male and female pre-closings and closings. This study brings forth many opportunities for further research.

Introduction

Ending a telephone conversation is a skill that is essential in personal communication. While some seem to have mastered this skill, others seem to struggle. There are many possible aspects of ending a telephone conversation that one could study. This study explores an important aspect of telephone conversations: the pre-closings and closings, particularly looking at native English speakers. A pre-closing is described as a speech act that precedes the end of a conversation. It is the statement that gives the interlocutor knowledge that the end of the conversation is near (Clark and Wade 2010). When a pre-closing is utilized, the interlocutor knows to finish the current
topic of discussion and to close the conversation. This investigation made use of naturalistic data to further examine how pre-closings were utilized, using naturalistic data. For the purpose of this study, three crucial questions were asked relating to ending a telephone conversation. These questions have structured the way that this study is set up, and have provided a foundation of analysis for the collected data. The questions are as follows: How do participants’ pre-closing and closing differ? What are the most commonly used pre-closing and closing? and Do the pre-closing and closing differ with gender?

Previous Research

There are three “closing sections,” of a telephone conversation. The first is a topic termination, also known as a pre-closing; the second section is the leave-taking, meaning the actual goodbye exchange, or the material following the topic termination; and the last section is the contact termination, which is the literal hang up (clicking end) on the telephone (Clark and Wade, 2010). The topic termination, or pre-closing, is often preceded by using the words, “Alright,” “O.K.,” and “Sure”. These phrases show that the person wants to end the conversation (Knapp, 1972). Clark and Wade (2010) and Knapp’s (1972) studies also looked at the different pre-closing and closing phrases used by participants.

There are certain conversational strategies that accompany the termination of a conversation. Adjacency pairs are often utilized. With adjacency pairs in conversation, “a speaker can show that he understood what a prior aimed at, and that he is willing to go along with that. Also…. The doer of a first can see that what he intended was indeed understood, and that it was or was not accepted” (Schegloff and Sacks, 1982). This applies to closings, in most instances there is one person who initiates it, and one person who goes along with it. In this current study, researchers took this data into consideration when studying pre-closings and their necessity to precede final closings. “Okay” and “alright” can suggest an ending to a conversation (Schegloff and Sacks, 1982). The researchers of this study looked at these words and their uses as well. Other researchers, such as Friginal (or whoever), looked at the word “okay”, but in different contexts. “Okay,” is also looked at as “supplement filler to ‘buy thinking time’ before a response” (Friginal, 2015). This word is also used to mark transitions and turn endings. Additionally, Friginal mentioned the phrases, “anyway”, “well”, and “actually”. Instead of simply ending a conversation, participants may use these words before the pre-closing sentence in order to ‘buy time’ and think of an appropriate way to end the conversation (Friginal, 2015). Pre-closings can also be seen as markers of turn transitions, as there is generally a pre-closing, the interlocutor’s response to a pre-closing, and a final closing statement. This idea is very relevant to the present study, as participants are likely to use these types of words before pre-closing a conversation. In order to study the words that the participants of this particular study used in pre-closings and closings, data were collected through personal telephone conversations.

Context

This data for this study was collected through telephone conversations. These telephone conversations were collected between noon and 5pm during the months of March and April of 2016.

Participants
The participants for this study consisted of family and close friends of the researchers. Each researcher talked to 25 different people, for a total of 50 participants. Overall there were 25 male and 25 female participants. The participants were all native English speakers ranging from the ages 18-90.

Method

Data were collected through personal telephone conversations. The pre-closing and closing statements were recorded, both via audio recording and by hand. The collected data were organized by the gender of the participant and the particular pre-closings and closings utilized. In order for the data to be natural, the participants were called and asked for a short interview. The “interview” consisted of three questions: 1. Has anyone ever told that you have an accent when you speak? 2. Have you noticed that any of your friends say words differently than you? If so, which words? 3. Are there any words that you feel are specific to your origin; i.e., where you grew up/hometown? Following the “interview”, “That’s all I needed for the interview, thank you. So, how have you been?” was said in order to prompt informal, more casual conversation. The participant was under the impression that the “interview” was over, and continued on with regular, casual conversation. The conversation following the “interview” was used for data collection. In order to collect the appropriate data, the participant was always the one to end the conversation. The pre-closings and closings were recorded by audio recording, then immediately written down following the conversation. After the conversations, it recorded whether the participant was a male or female, whether or not the participant used a pre-closing (Y/N) and a specific description of the pre-closing and closing.

Data Types

Data for this study were collected through audio recordings then written down by hand. Data consisted of oral statements, particularly pre-closings and closings, uttered by the participants.

Data Analysis

The data were split into five separate categories: Participant, Gender, presence of pre-closing, a description of the specific pre-closing used, and a specific description of the closing statement. Once all the information was organized, several factors were considered. First, it was determined whether or not a pre-closing was used when ending the conversation. If a pre-closing was used, words or phrases that were used frequently were studied. These phrases included: “Okay”, “Alright” and Other.

The same steps were then taken to analyze the closing statements. There were also certain phrases used frequently. These phrases included: “Bye”, Some variation of “See you later”, and Other.

The study analyzed the phrases “okay” and “alright”. These particular phrases were analyzed quantitatively and qualitative. These two phrases were studied quantitative by counting how many participants used either of these phrases. Qualitative data were collected by recording the specific words that the participants used when saying their pre-closing and closing.

Findings
PRE-CLOSINGS

There were only slight differences between the types of pre-closings and closings that participants used. The participants generally used the same types of phrases in their pre-closing statement. Their responses were separated into three categories: Okay, Alright, and Other. Twenty participants used the phrase “Okay” to end the conversation, specifically seven males and thirteen females, as seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1  Use of Okay in Pre-closings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th># of participants that used “okay”</th>
<th># of male participants that used “okay”</th>
<th># of female participants that used “okay”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two examples of the use of this phrase are shown below in examples 1 and 2: The participants used “Okay,” as an indication that the conversation was ending.

Example 1:

Male Participant: Okay, well, I love you

Researcher: Okay, love you too!

Male Participant: Okay, alright, bye.

Example 2:

Female Participant: Okay, I gotta go see if the water is boiling…..

Researcher: Okay, enjoy your dinner!

Female Participant: Alright, Alright bye bye

The second most commonly used word in pre-closing statements was “Alright”. There were seventeen participants that used “Alright,” to pre-close; specifically, nine males and eight females. The information is shown Table 2 below.

Table 2  Use of Alright in Pre-Closings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of</th>
<th># of participants that used “Alright”</th>
<th># of male participants that used “Alright”</th>
<th># of female participants that used “Alright”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Participants used “Alright” that used “Alright” that used “Alright”  

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two examples of the phrase “Alright” in pre-closings is shown below in Examples 3 and 4.

**Example 3:**

Male Participant: *Alright, keep in touch…*

Researcher: *Will do!*

Male Participant: *See you this summer bye!*

**Example 4:**

Female Participant: *Alright honey….*

Researcher: *Ok, see you later*

Female Participant: *Ok see you soon!*

There were twelve participants that used neither, “okay” nor “alright” in their pre-closing statements. These twelve phrases were classified in the pre-closings as “other” These included words such as, “awesome,” “well,” and “cool”. The findings show that males were more likely to use an “other” phrase. There were nine males and three females that used a different pre-closing statement, which ended up being the largest gap in gender. The information is shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 Use of “Other” in Pre-Closings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th># of participants that used “Other” pre-closing statements</th>
<th># of male participants that used “Other” pre-closing statements</th>
<th># of female participants that used “Other” pre-closing statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two examples of the use of “other” pre-closings statements are shown below in examples 5 and 6. Some used an alternative pre-closing statement.

*Example 5:*

Male Participant: *Awesome, it was nice talking to you and if you need anything else…*

Researcher: *I’m good, but thank you! Talk to you soon!*

Male Participant: *Talk to you soon.*

*Example 6 shows that some participants did not use any phrase to indicate a pre-closing, but instead closed the conversation abruptly.*

*Example 6:*

Female Participant: *I need to give the baby her bottle.*

Researcher: *Alright, that’s okay.*

Female Participant: *Ok, love you call me later.*

Participants were likely to use a pre-closing in the both the initial pre-closing statement, and immediately before the final closing statement. 15 out of the 50 participants used the phrase “Okay,” as a second pre-closing. Eight of the 50 participants were male and seven were females. The information is shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 Use of Okay as a Second Pre-Closing:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th># of participants that used “Okay” as a second pre-closing</th>
<th># of male participants that used “Okay” as a second pre-closing</th>
<th># of female participants that “Okay” as a second pre-closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two examples of the use of “okay,” as second pre-closings are shown in *Examples 8 and 9.*

*Example 8:*
Male Participant: Ok, I’m gonna go nowwwww…

Researcher: Ok, sounds great!

Male Participant: Ok bye

Example 9:

Female Participant: Alright I am really busy Anj

Researcher: Okay that’s fine

Female Participant: Okay, love you call me later

Twelve participants used “alright” as their second pre-closings. Of these twelve participants, eight were male, while four were female. The information is shown in the Table 5 below.

**Table 5  Use of Alright in Second Pre-Closings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th># of participants that used “Alright” as a second pre-closing</th>
<th># of male participants that used “Alright” as a second pre-closing</th>
<th># of female participants that used “Alright” as a second pre-closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two further examples of “Alright” as a second pre-closings are shown in *Examples 10 and 11*.

Example 10:

Male Participant: Cool, cool… anyway, it was good seeing you yesterday.

Researcher: You, too! Good luck back at school.

Male Participant: Alright, see ya.

Example 11:

Female Participant: I’m getting into a lot of traffic, let me call you later.
Researcher: Sounds good!

Female Participant: Alright, have a good day, bye bye!

Most of the participants used more than one pre-closing, and some used the same pre-closing twice. Data were collected to see how many participants used the same pre-closing statement as both their first and second pre-closing.

Eight of 50 participants used “Okay” in both the pre-closing and closing statements. Five males and three females used “Okay” in both statements. An example of this use is shown below in Example 12. There were four participants that used “Alright” in both the pre-closing and closing statements. Three of these participants were male, and one was female.

Example 12:

Male Participant: Ok, Anjelica, anything else you need?

Researcher: No, just wanted to catch up! That’s all.

Male Participant: Ok, talk to you later.

CLOSINGS

“Bye,” was very common for both male and female participants in the closings. There were 30 participants that used the phrase “bye” in the closing, 16 were male and 14 were female. The information is shown in the Table 6 below.

Table 6  Use of Bye in Closings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th># of participants that used “Bye” in the closing</th>
<th># of male participants that used “Bye” in the closing</th>
<th># of female participants that used “Bye” in the closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A variation of “See you later,“ ("See you later," "See ya later," and "Talk to you later") was also used frequently in the closings. 19 participants used a variation of “See you later,” specifically nine male and 10 female. The information is shown in Table 7 below:

### Table 7 Use of Variations of See Ya Later in Closings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th># of participants that used a variation of “See you later”</th>
<th># of male participants that a variation of “See you later”</th>
<th># of female participants that used a variation of “See you later”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion/Conclusions and Limitations**

The data indicate that these participants relied on both a pre-closing and closing when ending a telephone conversation. Pre-closings and closings were very limited in variation. The two most commonly used phrases were “Okay,” and “Alright”, which coincided with previous research studies. “Alright”, “Okay”, and “Sure” were the most commonly used pre-closings in Knapp’s study (Knapp, 1972). Schegloff and Sacks wrote that “Okay,” and “Alright” are used to suggest an ending to a conversation (Schegloff and Sacks, 1982). This supports the findings from the current study, where it was found that “Okay” and “Alright” were also the most commonly used pre-closings.

The data from this study also suggest that these pre-closings are used as both an initial pre-closing and a final pre-closing immediately preceding the closing. Friginal looked at “Okay,” as a “supplement filler” used to buy thinking time before a response (Friginal, 2015). He also mentioned the phrases, “anyway,” “well,” and “actually.” The findings from the current study did not specifically analyze the particular words that Friginal used, but “okay” and “alright” can be referred to as “supplement fillers”, as they serve the same purpose. The participants used these phrases before stating their reasons for leaving the conversation.

There was a large gap between those participants who utilized these phrases, and those who chose to use other ones. When participants used either “Okay” or “Alright”, the ending of the conversation was soon to follow. The specific closing and pre-closing that the participants used correlates with the results from a previous study. Most participants utilized a pre-closing then a closing, which was followed by the termination of the call (click of the telephone) (Clark and Wade, 1981).

Based on the analysis of the closings statements, it can be concluded that there was limited variation in closings. The two main closing phrases were “Bye,” and a variation of “See you later.” More male participants used the phrase, “Bye” whereas more females used the variations of “See you later,”.
When gender differences were considered in pre-closings, there was not much variation. There were slight differences, however. Females were more likely to use the phrase, “okay” in a pre-closing, while males more likely to use “alright”. The biggest difference between men and women was seen in the use of “other” pre-closings. Males were more likely to use an alternate pre-closing statement than “okay” and “alright”.

It is essential to point out that participants were not the ones who initiated any telephone conversations themselves. The participants were always called first. While naturalistic data was collected, the participant always ended the conversation. This may have limited the data collection because in normal phone calls there is variation seen in who delivers the pre-closing statement. The pre-closing and closing statements may have differed if the participants were not the ones who ended the phone calls.

The number of participants in the study can be noted as a limitation. Data were only collected data from 50 participants. While most participants used a pre-closing and a closing, this conclusion cannot account for all American telephone conversations. Additionally, the data were limited geographically because the participants were all from the Northeastern part of the United States. This study focused the on friends and family, as opposed to using a wider variety of participants. While this strategy worked well for the natural phone calls following the interview, it certainly created additional limitations on the data.

The large age gap between participants is a limiting factor in the study. The age of the participants was not recorded. Participants ranged from 18-90, however most of the 50 participants were between the ages of 20 and 45. There were only two participants over 50 years old. Specifically, one participant was 75, and another was 90. Looking at this limited data, it is difficult to tell whether senior citizens, for example, use different pre-closings and closings than the ones utilized by younger participants. This limitation is yet another result of the participants being solely friends and family.

**Implications of Study/Areas for Future Research**

This study implies that most native English speakers use a pre-closing before completely terminating a telephone conversation. It was also indicated through the research that it is a common practice of native English speakers in the United States to use both a pre-closing and closing in a telephone conversation. These data suggest that it might be considered marked speech to end a conversation without a preceding pre-closing. The research found from the study can be applied when addressed to non-native English speakers who are interested in knowing the “norms,” of ending a telephone conversation in the United States.

There are several possibilities for future research following this study. The researchers controlled certain aspects of this study in order to focus on specific things. If the control had been placed on different aspects, like the researchers ending the phone calls abruptly, or not calling close family and friends there could have been very different results. An example would be if the researchers would have called people that were not close family or friends.

This study only focused on American telephone conversations. The findings were also collected from native English speakers. This study can be expanded to study certain cultural differences throughout America. Pre-closings and closings could be
looked at in reference to differences in native English speakers and non-native English speakers. A future study could look into whether or not non-native English speakers use the same phrases as native English speakers.

While there was not a large emphasis on age in this study, a future study could emphasize this concept. The researchers hypothesize that pre-closings and closings would differ in situations with large age gaps. A future study could focus on specific age groups, then compare the pre-closing and closing statements to those of other specific age groups. The study could focus on children between the ages of five and 10, and compare their data to data collected from adults ranging from 18-25. If the ages are more specified, there may be greater variations in data.

As previously mentioned, the participants were the ones who ended each conversation. The purpose of this particular study was to study pre-closings and closings when initiated by the participant. In a future study, the researchers could look at the differences in pre-closings and closings when the participant does not initiate the end of the conversation. The researchers also called each participant. The study may have differed if the participants initiated the phone calls. A future study may focus on the person more likely to end the phone call: the person who initially calls or the person who answers the phone.

**Bibliography**


Perceptual Correlates of High-Rising Terminal Intonation in New York English

Ian Miller, The City University of New York-Queens College

Ian Miller holds a BA in Linguistics from The City University of New York-Queens College. He likes to learn/teach Jewish Mysticism/spirituality. He is currently pursuing a clinical Master's in Speech-Language Pathology and working to bring the imminent redemption and usher in a time of peace and harmony on earth.

Abstract
This paper examines perceptual correlates of high-rising terminal declarative (HRTD) intonation, or “uptalk,” in New York English speech. This paper reports on a matched guise study that (i) examines perception of HRTDs in both male and female speech; and (ii) manipulates independently the degree of sentence-final pitch rise. Two speakers, a male and a female, were each recorded reading a list of 10 English sentences, first with falling declarative intonation and then with rising intonation. These samples were then digitally manipulated to create six (three male, three female) stimulus recordings of declarative sentences differing only in pitch contour: one with falling pitch, a second with a 40% rise and a third with a 70% rise. 102 volunteer participants—undergraduates at a NYC-area University—each judged one of these guises on a battery of personality attributes taken from previous literature. The results suggest an interaction between pitch contour and speaker gender not reported in any prior studies.

Introduction
This research project will investigate perception of high-rising terminals in New York English speech, specifically in declarative clauses of both male and female speakers. The high-rising terminal (HRT) contour is typically used for polar (yes/no) questions in English, but an additional occurrence of this intonation appears in declarative clauses (HRTDs). In this study, we will investigate perception of this nonstandard occurrence of HRT intonation and its sociolinguistic significance.

This phonetic variable (the HRTD) occurs in other forms of English and has been studied extensively in Australian and New Zealand English (Guy and Vonwiller, 1984), a variety of United States Englishes (Edelsky, 1979; Ching, 1982; Ritchart & Arvaniti, 2013; Tyler, 2012), and to a lesser extent in Canadian English (Shokier, 2008). While a considerable amount of qualitative study has been performed on HRTDs, most perceptual work has investigated the variable solely in the context of gender roles, discourse function or semantic function (Lakoff, 1975; Ladd, 1978; Edelsky, 1979; Ching, 1982). More recent studies, however, have investigated the sociolinguistic relevance of the feature and even the perceptual meanings of HRTDs. They differ from this study in that they focus on the frequency of HRTD use across genders, on the perception of
HRTDs in female speakers only or on the phonetic details and discourse function distribution of the rising contour itself (Shokier, 2008; Tyler, 2012; Ritchart & Arvaniti, 2013).

This study will investigate more comprehensively the social perceptions of this phenomenon in New York English (NYE), focusing primarily on determining the sociolinguistic perceptual correlates of HRTDs in both male and female New York English speech. In so doing, this study will test some of the claims made in previous literature about the different perceptual correlates of HRTDs. It is the goal of this study to explore generally and define more specifically, the perceptual correlates of HRTDs in NYE. Primarily, we will concentrate on the perceptual contrast between the HRTDs of both male and female speech, as well as the effects of varying degrees of terminal pitch rise on speech perception.

The discussion is organized here as follows: Section 2 traces the background for this study and presents relevant information from previous studies on HRTD intonation in other varieties of English. Included in this section are the significant phonetic, syntactic and semantic properties of HRTDs as presented in other literature on the subject. Additionally, Section 2 presents the perceptual correlates that resulted from prior perceptual studies of HRTDs. Section 3 presents the research test questions for our study. This section notes how our questions are based on the background information presented in Section 2, as well as how our study differs from other research on HRTDs. Section 4 outlines the method used in this study including test groups, testing techniques and all technical information regarding how this study was conducted. Sections 5 and 6 deal with the results of our study, a discussion of those results and the conclusions of this study and their relevance on the continued study of HRTD perception. Section 7 lists the references cited throughout the paper.

**Previous Research**

Guy, Horvath, Vonwiller, Daisley and Rogers (1986) describe the phonetic properties of the contour in Australian English as “an F0 rise of at least 40%, beginning on the last tonic syllable of the tone group and continuing sharply upwards through any subsequent syllables.” Ladd’s (1978) and Lakoff’s (1975) results, however, suggest that in HRTDs in US English, the rise in intonation can start lower, rise more slowly and end at a lower level than the phenomenon described in Australian English (Guy et al., 1986). Ritchart and Arvaniti (2013), studying Southern California English, describe the HRT statement contour as beginning instead on the last stressed vowel with a L*L-H% melody and a more exaggerated pitch-rise in female speech than male speech.

The syntactic domain of this feature is the declarative sentence, which is the same domain studied in all varieties of English mentioned in this paper. According to Cruttenden (1997), HRTDs are defined as declarative sentences with a high-rise terminal intonation that, in a given context, do not function as questions, but as statements. This feature seemingly does not occur in imperative statements of any English dialect.

Many different ideas have been presented regarding the semantic role and discourse function of HRTDs. Guy and Vonwiller (1984) describe the discourse function of HRTDs as interactional rather than propositional. This means that HRTDs serve both or all interlocutors as opposed to just the speaker. Similarly, Guy et al. (1986) posit that HRTDs in Australian English are used by the speaker to check if the listener has understood the information that has been presented. In such a context, HRTDs are indeed used interactively. In this setting, they are not used to convert a statement into a
formal polar question, as they normally would be. Rather, the speaker uses this intonation contour to “ask” if the statement has been understood. This is an act of verification seeking in communication, and typically elicits a polar response, that the listener either understands (head-nod, *mhm*, *yup* etc…) or does not understand (quizzical look, shoulder shrug etc…). In the latter case, the speaker is likely to register the listener’s response and to continue speaking in an attempt to clarify the statement for the listener, again seeking confirmation, potentially by repeated use of this intonation (Guy et al., 1986). Ritchart and Arvaniti (2013) refer to occurrences of this discourse function as “indirect questions.” Interlocutor responses indicate that they are questions, but syntactically, they are statements. While this discourse function of the HRT intonation is akin to a polar question, it differs in that it does not ask about the proposition described in the declarative, but about the comprehension of the speech act itself.

Different claims have been made regarding the social and semantic relevance of HRTDs in US English. HRTDs are typically defined as speaker indecision, need for reassurance, inappropriate politeness or deference due to lack of authority, specifically regarding female speakers (Lakoff, 1973). Similarly, Ladd (1978) noted HRTDs to be perceived as hesitation or tentativeness in US English. Edelsky (1979) used the term straight-rise contour to describe HRTs in general. When HRT intonation is used in a declarative sentence, Edelsky considers it a “feminine attribute of speech.”

One detailed study of HRTDs in Southern US English notes various functions for the feature: topicalization of a unit; emphasis of a certain unit; a real question asked to determine the interlocutor’s comprehension of or agreement with a statement; uncertainty and an apologetic request for correction; deference by the speaker to “ingratiate oneself with one’s audience;” politeness and an attempt to avoid offending the listener (Ching, 1982).

It is important to note that both Shokier (2008) and Ritchart (2013) present evidence of HRTDs as a common feature in male speakers, unlike older findings such as those of Lakoff (1973) and Edelsky (1979), who both conclude that HRTDs are a feminine speech feature. Research has also shown that men and women perceive HRTDs differently. In general, men perceive falling declarative contours as being more certain, final and confident, and women perceive standard declarative intonation as being most final, but women perceive HRTDs as being more confident and certain than other contours (Shokier, 2008).

In the past, the social perception of HRTDs has been investigated in open-ended studies where participants were asked for their perception of HRTDs without having set correlates suggested to them. This was done in an effort to better understand perception of HRTDs without requiring participants to judge a specific set of limited correlates. The results of this study, conducted by Joseph Tyler (2012), show numerous perceptual correlates, grouped as positive, negative, linguistic (functional) or social. In contrast to much popular, prescriptive opinion, this study found many positive perceptions of uptalk. Participants of this study noted that uptalk is an expressive, excited, bubbly, happy and clear way of speaking. The same study also noted various negative connotations attached to HRTDs. In this regard, HRTDs were perceived as aggressive, dramatic, annoying, insecure, unintelligent, immature and ditzy. Thus, HRTDs are marked for perceptual meaning as both aggressive and weak, and as both continuation and completion, though it is unclear if the intonation is marked for both simultaneously, or if these opposing perceptions exist solely on the level of the general speech community (Tyler, 2012).
A third recent study (Ritchart & Arvaniti, 2013) documented the rising contour pattern commonly referred to as uptalk or HRTD intonation. This research, unlike past claims of Cruttenden (1997) and Guy and Vonwiller (1984), shows that in Southern California English, questions and statements use different melodies and rising contours. This can potentially be explained as a matter of dialectal difference. Ritchart and Arvaniti also found that in their dialect of study, HRT intonation on statements was equally common between male and female speakers, and that ethnicity, SEC status and language background did not affect the occurrence of HRTDs.

Context
The main focus of this research is high rising terminal intonation on declarative sentences. In this project, we tested the perceptual correlates of HRTDs using a matched-guise study. Specifically, we examined the perceptions of New York college-age students to learn if their perceptions of HRTD intonation vary in some way from the findings of other linguistic studies, particularly of those mentioned in the previous section. From the above-mentioned studies we extracted those test correlates that were socially relevant and original.

Guy and Vonwiller (1984) tested five dimensions and found that HRTDs were considered more friendly than unfriendly, more uncertain than confident, less forceful than yielding, more expressive than dull and more attentive than indifferent. Shokier (2008) found that men perceived HRTDs as being less confident than falling intonation statements. Shokier found no correlation between terminal declarative intonation and confidence in female perception. Tyler (2012) lists a large number of perceptual correlates from an open-ended study, as follows: bubbliness, happiness, excitedness, clarity, maturity, aggressiveness, dramatization, intelligence, ditziness, annoyingness, and disturbance, as well as levels of age, femininity, “valley girl”-ness and “blond”-ness. Each of these correlates was used in our study to determine contrastive perception based on gender and scale of terminal rise.

Our study will investigate these perceptual correlates of HRTDs in both male and female NYE speech. We will also look at perceptual variation between a greater and lesser F0 pitch-shift over six different pitch and gender variations. While all of our test correlates have been extracted from prior research, none of these studies has tested audio samples of intonation variables in a matched-guise experiment. We hypothesize that an F0 rise of 70% will elicit different and more extreme perceptual reactions to HRTDs than a 40% F0 shift. Additionally, we will study perceptual variation in HRTDs based on speaker gender. According to the findings of previous research, we hypothesize that survey participants will perceive HRTDs more favorably in female speech than in male speech. Based on these two hypotheses, we also anticipate that for males, the greater the rise, the more negative will be the perceptual results. And the opposite will be true for females: the greater the rise, the more positive the response.

Participants
Six groups totaling 159 college-age students yielded 102 usable surveys from which to gather perceptual data. Each participant was asked to listen to a single sound token containing four instances of a particular intonation variable and to answer a survey based on their perception of the audio file. The survey prompted participants to rank their perception of the speaker on a scale from one to seven for each of the 20 test correlates. The division of groups is shown below (Figure 1), including a gender split per group.
Figure 1- Test Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Speaker (total participants-male/female)</th>
<th>Female Speaker (total participants-male/female)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Falling Declarative</td>
<td>Group 1 (15-2m/13f)</td>
<td>Group 4 (10-2m/8f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%-rise</td>
<td>Group 2 (26-11m/15f)</td>
<td>Group 5 (12-4m/8f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%-rise</td>
<td>Group 3 (19-8m/11f)</td>
<td>Group 6 (20-7m/13f)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants received the same survey and were allotted as much time as they needed to complete the survey. Students were allowed to listen to the audio sample as many times as they needed to.

Data Types

To investigate perception of HRTDs, we used a matched-guise design and a survey to collect data. In this experiment, we created a total of six speech tokens as a basis for recording perceptual data. Three of these tokens were male speech and three female, with the distinction between each of the three male/female clips being the %-rise in F0; either standard (0%), 40%-rise or 70%-rise. The resulting speech tokens were presented to groups of college students, with a given group hearing only one clip. Surveys were distributed and the students recorded their perception of the speaker across a range of perceptual correlates. Responses were recorded on a scale of 1-7 for each correlate. The results of these surveys were then collected, arranged by group and filtered for native English speakers. The outcome of this process left a group of L1 English speaker survey responses to each sound file. The survey response data is the basis of our findings in this study.

Method of Data Collection

To design the speech tokens, two recordings were made; one each of a male and a female speaker (both native speakers of NYE) reading a list of ten declarative sentences. Both speakers are white, middle-class college students in their early-20s, originally from the same Long Island suburb of NYC. The male speaker is trilingual in English, Spanish and Hebrew, and the female speaks English and Hebrew.

For the final token, four of these sentences were chosen, with each token using the same four sentences in the same order. These speech samples were recorded directly to Praat using the internal microphone of an Apple MacBook Pro at a sampling rate of 48 kHz. On the original recording, each sentence was read with a standard declarative pitch-contour. Using Praat software, the terminal F0 pitch of each sentence was manipulated to rise 40% according to the HRTD contour. The ends of each standard declarative sentence were also manipulated separately to rise 70%, creating a total of three male speech tokens and three female tokens.

This manipulation process was done based on the specifications outlined by Guy et al. (1986) in Australian English. We also took into consideration the adjustments mentioned by Ladd (1973) and Lakoff (1978) for US English (start lower, rise slower and less drastically). In addition, we included in our token design the specifications of Ritchart and Arvaniti (2013), who note that the HRT intonation on statements begins on the last stressed vowel, has a L*L-H% melody and has a greater pitch-exursion for female speakers than males. However, since these descriptions of the HRTD contour are
not necessarily based on NYE, we also recorded each of our speakers reading the same sentence list with their own HRT pitch. We used these HRTD recordings as a basis for our HRT contour pitch-track, and made small adjustments in accordance with the specifications of the research mentioned above. We edited our tokens this way in order to more accurately reflect the HRT contour in New York English. Based on Shokier’s criteria for usability (must “be a declarative sentence, include the end of an intonational phrase and have an interpretable contour”), we chose usable tokens from the recordings and manipulations.

As a base, each speaker was recorded saying ten sentences with standard intonation, and then the same ten sentences with HRTD intonation. The pitch tier of these HRTD sounds clips was extracted and manipulated to make 40% and 70% rising-contour pitch tiers. These pitch tiers were matched for timing and duration and exchanged for the standard declarative-intonation pitch tier. Thus, the original sound file was used for the no-rise, 40% and 70%-rise recordings and only the pitch contour differs between the three sound files. The purpose of this edit was to control for possible confounds arising from the difference in voice quality, speech rate and any other variables which might occur if multiple separate recordings were collected and used. The recorded linguistic token provided survey participants four distinct opportunities to observe each variable feature in linguistic performance. Student perceptual responses were then recorded on the survey, as mentioned above.

Method of Data Analysis

All of the data collected for this study was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The data was input to a spreadsheet in 6 groups, one for each speech token. From this set of data, a variety of new groupings were used to search for and analyze any patterns in the data. The data was broken up into sets for male/female speech, male/female response, positive/negative dimension, pitch-rise and response averages. All of these groupings were analyzed to find meaningful patterns, either in support of our hypotheses or otherwise, and likewise with regard to the claims made in previous literature. The relevant data and findings were organized and can be found below.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the claims of Guy and Vonwiller (1984), Shokier (2008) and Tyler (2012) that HRTDs are marked for uncertainty, we tested perceptual correlation of uncertainty. We found (Figure 2.1) that for a male speaker, the expected pattern was present. The most confident/certain terminal intonation was clearly the falling intonation, with the 40%-rise being second and the 70%-rise being most “uncertain.” This also lends support to Guy et al.’s (1986) claim that speakers use HRTDs to “ask” their interlocutors if they understand. This means that the greater the rise, the more uncertain the speaker, thus indicating that a rising terminal intonation could be seeking verification from the listener.
However, the same feature (“uncertainty”) patterned differently for female speech (see Figure 2.2). While the 70%-rise was also the most uncertain for females, the 40%-rise was perceived as most confident and certain. This seems to support the conclusions of Lakoff (1973) and Edelsky (1979), that HRTDs are a feminine feature of speech. This could explain the perception of HRTDs as being most confident and least uncertain in female NYE. While we anticipated that a greater rise would yield more extreme results, our results do not support this hypothesis. We found a similar pattern present in the perception of female HRTDs in the precursor to this study, conducted in 2013. There, we recognized a pattern that indicated that in female speech, a 40%-rise was good, but a greater rising intonation was perceived negatively, as being too much.
The pattern that we found previously (2013) is reflected in the perception of the feature “annoying,” as proposed by Tyler (2012), which patterns similarly to “confidence” in female speech. Seemingly, the more confident a female speaker is, the more annoying she is perceived to be. Thus, the most confident contour (40%-rise) is also the most annoying, and the least confident (70%-rise) is perceived as the least annoying terminal contour. (For both test correlates, the falling declarative is in the middle.) This finding shows that a female who speaks confidently may be considered annoying.

Male speech also follows a similar pattern between the correlates “confidence” and “annoyingness.” As noted above, for a male speaker, the higher the rise, the less confident; likewise, the higher the rise the more annoying the speaker. This reveals the pattern that for males, lack of confidence could be perceived as annoying, while for females, the opposite is true; too much confidence is considered annoying. This finding does fit with some of the common social stereotypes that exist (Davis, 2010; Gross, 2014).

A similar contrast pattern exists between male and female speakers for the correlate “aggressive.” In male speech, the 70%-rise (least “confident”) is perceived as most aggressive, with the falling contour and the 40%-rise being about even. The opposite is found for female speech, where the 70%-rise (least “confident”) is least “aggressive”, and the other two contours are also close. This too indicates that by male speakers, lack of confidence is perceived negatively, while for female speakers, lack of confidence is acceptable and even favorable. Seemingly, a female who speaks with confidence is considered “aggressive” and therefore threatening, while a male who speaks with confidence is appropriate and expected.

The same conclusion is supported by the test results for the correlate “feminine.” For male speakers, the least confident intonation (70%-rise) is also considered most
feminine. The same is true for female speech, where the least confident contour (70%-rise) is considered most feminine and the most confident contour (40%-rise) is considered least feminine. These findings signify a certain approval for lack of confidence in female speakers and a disapproval of the same lack of confidence in male speakers.

On a somewhat more positive note, our survey revealed a set of positive test correlates that patterned similarly in both male and female speech. For male speech, the correlates “friendly,” “happy,” “bubbly,” and “excited” patterned together, with each showing the falling contour to be least “friendly, happy, bubbly and excited.” Both 40%- and 70%-rises were perceived almost equally and both were identified significantly more “friendly, happy, bubbly and excited” than the falling contour. This conclusion is as we predicted, that a greater rise in terminal pitch would yield more extreme (in this case positive) results. This finding also supports the evidence presented by Guy and Vonwiller (1984) and Tyler (2012) about the effect of terminal rising intonation on these correlates, though his study records such an occurrence only regarding female speech.

Surprisingly, while our male speaker results support the claims of past research, the results of our study’s female speaker perception do not lend themselves to the same conclusion. Still, we did find that in female speakers as well, the correlates listed above (“friendly, happy, bubbly and excited”) did pattern together, though they patterned differently from perception of male speech. For female speech, we found that for these four correlates, the most positively received pitch-contour was the 70%-rise. The least positively received contour was actually the 40%-rise. This was unexpected according to both our own hypothesis as well as the conclusions in both Tyler’s (2012) and Guy and Vonwiller’s (1984) studies, and certainly is curious considering the trend found in the perception of these correlates in male speech.

However, we can attempt to explain this occurrence by looking at our results for another correlate, “forcefulness.” For female speakers, the most “forceful” intonation contour was the 40%-rise, which might explain why this contour was also considered least “friendly, happy, bubbly and excited.” While Guy and Vonwiller (1984) found HRTDs to be less “forceful” in their experiment on Australian English, our results show a different conclusion. Seemingly, for females this correlate carries a negative connotation, and therefore, the more “forceful” a woman sounds, the less “friendly, happy, bubbly and excited” her speech will be.

Conclusions and Implications for Future Research

Regarding male speech of New York English, we found that “confidence”, “annoyingness” and “femininity” all correlated with degree of pitch rise. Our results show that the more a male’s terminal pitch rises, the less “confident,” more “annoying” and more “feminine” he sounds. Though there is no evidence from our study that increased perception of male “femininity” is the cause of the increased perception of “annoyingness” and lesser perception of “confidence,” the correlation exists in our data and could be tested in the future to determine causality. As such, we could hypothesize that for male speakers of New York English, “femininity” has a negative effect on the correlates “confident” and “annoying,” meaning that New Yorkers might perceive a man who sounds “feminine” to be both “annoying and “lacking in confidence.”

We also found that for male speakers, correlates in Tyler’s “positive” dimension (“friendly, happy, bubbly, excited”) patterned closely with one another and support our prediction that a greater rise in terminal pitch will yield a more extreme result. Thus a falling contour was considered least “friendly, happy, bubbly and excited,” and a rise
was perceived more so, with the 70%-rise being perceived most “happy, bubbly and excited” by a small margin. This result upholds the claims made by Guy and Vonwiller (1984) and Tyler (2012) regarding these correlates in the “positive dimension.” Our findings therefore show that while rising terminal contour in male New York English indicates “femininity,” “lack of confidence” (“uncertainty”) and “annoyingness,” it also indicates “friendliness,” “happiness,” “bubbliness” and “excitedness.” Our study also shows that for male speakers, in support of our first hypothesis, a greater rise yields more extreme perceptual responses regarding the above-mentioned “positive” correlates in particular (though the pattern does not hold true for every test correlate in our study).

Concerning female speech in New York English, our findings demonstrated a number of interesting patterns. Primarily, we found that the 70%-rise (highest rise) in terminal pitch was perceived as being least “confident,” least “forceful,” least “annoying,” least “aggressive,” and most “feminine.” This seems to imply the existence of a certain social acceptance of a lack of confidence in female speech, seeing it as least “forceful and aggressive” and most “feminine.” This could indicate that a female “should” speak in such a manner where she sounds less “confident.” This explanation is also supported by the pattern that exists in our data for the 40%-rise. The 40%-rise contour was perceived as being most “confident,” most “forceful,” most “annoying,” and least “feminine.” Female speech that is marked for “force” and “confidence” is considered “annoying” and even “unfeminine.” The perception of “confident” female speech as being “annoying” has many social implications and opens the door for much new sociolinguistic research. It can be further tested to see if this finding results from the perception of such “forceful” and “confident” female speech as being in some way threatening or intimidating.

In addition to the above results, the 40%-rise was also perceived as being the least “friendly, happy, bubbly and excited” contour for female speakers. This finding (40%-rise) did not support our predictions regarding a greater pitch excursion. Neither did it support the claims made by Tyler (2012) and Guy and Vonwiller (1984) that rising terminal pitch correlates positively with “friendliness, happiness, bubbliness or excitedness,” though our results for the 70%-rise do support the claims made in those studies.

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Text-Speech Romances its Way into Everyday Vocabulary

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College is a linguist’s paradise: slang, accents, and new sounds abound. We are inundated with words and sounds for the entire day, some of them more recognizable than others. Compared to the rest of my generation, I am quite behind the times when it comes to modern slang and euphemisms. I had heard of texting abbreviations before, but hearing them spoken was a foreign and curious experience. While waiting to eat dinner at the university dining hall, I overheard a conversation where a female student was commenting on a male friend’s clean-shaven face. As he ended the conversation and turned to leave, the girl called after him, “ILY!” Immediately, the linguistic gears in my brain began to turn as I made note of this encounter. “ILY” is a common abbreviation used in texting that means “I love you.” This instance of “text-speech,” or texting terminology used verbally, points to sociolinguistics: a branch of linguistics that studies how social factors affect language use. Social factors that affect language include gender, age, location, customs, or education. In this case, age is the predominant social factor because “ILY” is commonly used among teenagers and young adults.

This instance caught my attention because it represents how much texting has influenced our everyday lives. Texting has become an integral and wide-spread method of communication, therefore securing a firm place in our society. It is often the primary and preferred method of informal, non-face-to-face communication. Because texting is so widely used by so many people, the common phrases and abbreviations trickle into everyday speech, exhibited by the girl in the aforementioned conversation.

Another interesting facet of text-speech is its pronunciation. “ILY,” for example, could be pronounced in two different ways: the phrase could be said like eye + ly or ill + ly. The latter pronunciation is used most frequently. However, the first option does have merit because the subject I in I love you sounds like the noun eye. Because “ILY” is not considered to be a word (it is more along the lines of an acronym), it is difficult to determine its correct pronunciation.

Developing and diverse, the modern world of communication is intertwined with and dependent on technology. Text-speech can be considered an evolving category of words because new abbreviations and euphemisms can be created with only a few taps of a finger. This characteristic hearkens back to the idea of displacement, unique to
humans, which means that people have the ability to be creative with their language and response. We are not “boxed into” a reply directly related to specific stimuli: humans have options and the ability to choose. Text-speech exemplifies the malleability and fluidity of language.
How Russian Children Overregularize Verbs Using the Optional Infinitive

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Pat Goodridge is a senior at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studies Linguistics and works for a Russian teaching site, 3ears.com. He loves to study languages and run his Facebook page for Linguistics majors, The Linguist Lattice. He hopes to pursue future graduate work in Russian Studies.

As children learn the complexities of language, they seem to speak a variation that is entirely their own. “I builded the house,” they say, or “Mommy goed to the store.” Pinker (1986) identified this type of error in the speech of English-learning children, calling it “overregularization” of verbs. That is, children make the error of over-applying certain conjugation rules when learning verbs and their tenses. The phenomenon is most common with over-applying -ed to indicate past tense. For example, a young child may say “Skip bited me!” Surprisingly, research from Bar-Shalom and Snyder (1996) and Gagarina (2000) show that this overregularization of verbs also occurs in the speech of Russian-learning children. It occurs, however, differently than during English acquisition, through a phenomenon known as the optional infinitive (OI). The OI provides Russian children a way to express themselves by using a basic infinitive form of a verb, like “to walk”, before they have mastered all of that verb’s complex endings.

The Russian language employs two complex grammatical features that children must learn—inflexion and aspect. Inflection refers to the patterns in which lexical items change form according to such factors as gender, case, the plural and tense. Russian is highly inflected, meaning its verb conjugations vary widely according to the categories just listed. These forms are often irregular and hard to predict, not to mention difficult to form and separate in appearance from the base infinitive form.

Further complicating matters is aspect, a typical feature of Slavic languages that indicates whether or not an action is complete or not. Russian does this by having two forms for each verb, called the perfective (complete) and imperfective (incomplete). Usually the two forms are similar, with a simple prefix added to indicate perfective (govorit’ and pogovorit’), but other times the two forms may look almost entirely different (vesti and vodit’). These two forms indicate whether an action was done to completion, or temporarily. For example, a different verb form is used to say “I read the book” (for a while) and “I read the book” (the entire thing). One form emphasizes completeness, the other progress.
How then, do Russian children learn such forms? The answer is a common one: mistakes. Similar to the concept of overregularization advanced by Pinker (1986, 1999), by which children mistakenly over-apply grammatical rules (“I finded it!”), is the concept of the optional infinitive in Russian. This concept is a tool used by Russian children in which they will apply the infinitive form of a verb when they are unsure of how to conjugate it correctly. An example can be found in the Russian imperative form; a child may use the infinitive for the verb “igrat’” (to play) in saying “Play with me!”, saying “Igrat’ sah mnoi!”, which an adult Russian speaker will have no problem recognizing as a mistake for the intended “Igrai sah mnoi!” The infinitive is therefore versatile as a substitute for unknown or unmastered forms, and may make learning forms much easier for Russian children, as diary studies by Kiebzak Mandera (2000) show that Russian children actually master verb forms relatively easily.

Factors like the optional infinitive help Russian children learn complex forms, much the same way overregularization in English helps children express irregular forms, albeit incorrectly. Essentially, phenomena like the OI and overregularization help children compensate for forms they don’t yet know by using forms they do (i.e. the basic infinitive for Russian learners, -ed for English learners). This finding is critical in creating an understanding of how children learn, apply, and misapply verbal rules, an area still ripe for further research in both languages.

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