

University of Windsor

## Scholarship at UWindor

---

OSSA Conference Archive

OSSA 11

---

May 18th, 9:00 AM - May 21st, 5:00 PM

### Compassion, Authority and Baby Talk: Prosody and Objectivity

Leo Groarke  
*Trent University*

Gabrijela Kišiček  
*University of Zagreb*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive>



Part of the [Epistemology Commons](#), [Logic and Foundations of Mathematics Commons](#), and the [Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons](#)

---

Groarke, Leo and Kišiček, Gabrijela, "Compassion, Authority and Baby Talk: Prosody and Objectivity" (2016). *OSSA Conference Archive*. 115.

<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive/OSSA11/papersandcommentaries/115>

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences and Conference Proceedings at Scholarship at UWindor. It has been accepted for inclusion in OSSA Conference Archive by an authorized conference organizer of Scholarship at UWindor. For more information, please contact [scholarship@uwindsor.ca](mailto:scholarship@uwindsor.ca).

# Compassion, Authority and Baby Talk: Prosody and Objectivity

LEO GROARKE

*Department of Philosophy  
Trent University  
1600 West Bank Drive  
Ontario, Canada K9J 7B8  
leogroarke@trentu.ca*

GABRIJELA KIŠIČEK

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Zagreb  
I. Lucica 3, 10000 Zagreb  
Croatia  
[gkisicek@ffzg.hr](mailto:gkisicek@ffzg.hr)*

**Abstract:** Recent work on multimodal argumentation has explored facets of argumentation which are not well accounted for in many traditional accounts of argument. Emphasizing the distinction between written and oral argument, this paper considers the role of prosody, the structure and quality of the sound of spoken language, in oral argument. We consider prosody in the context of the framework that Groarke & Tindale develop to explain the different roles that non-verbal elements like pictures can play in argument: functioning as flags, demonstrations, symbols, metaphors, and as ways to communicate premises and conclusions.

**Keywords:** appeal to ear, multimodal argumentation, prosody, non-verbal argument

## 1. Introduction: A mode of oral argument?

A key development in argumentation theory over the last two decades has been the extension of argument analysis to multimodal discourse. Traditional accounts of arguing understand it as a verbal endeavor, carried out with words and sentences. In defending multimodality, Groarke (2015) aims to: “to expand the realm of argumentation theory to arguing that depends, not only on visual images, but on sounds, tastes, music, smells, tactile sensations and other non-verbal phenomena that arguers often use in their attempts to provide support for their conclusions” (p. 134). Kjeldsen (2015a; 2015b) provides a comprehensive view of the extensive work that has been done on argumentation which makes use of visuals. In this paper we extend the discussion of multimodal argument in order to recognize and analyze the role that prosodic features like intonation, voice quality, pitch and pitch-range, emphasis, pauses, tempo, and volume play in oral arguing.

According to Groarke (2015), modes are defined in terms of “the ingredients used in constructing arguments” (p. 149). Considered from this point of view, one might treat written and oral argument as different modes of arguing. In both cases, the ingredients of argument are words and sentences, but in one case this implies written words and sentences, in the other spoken words and sentences. Traditional studies of argument ignore this difference, treating both as instances of verbal argument, usually in a way that assumes written argument as a paradigm (in part because theoretical discussions of argument are traditionally carried on with the printed word).

This approach overlooks the fact that someone constructing an oral argument has many resources they can employ that are not a part of written language. As Gelang and Kjeldsen (2010) emphasize, “recipients of a message in a rhetorical situation create their perception of the speaker through a holistic perspective” (p. 567) which incorporates gestures, facial expressions, and other multimodal elements. Our emphasis here is the *prosodic* features of language, which are tied to the sound and rhythm of the voice and the spoken word (prosody was originally the study of these features of poetry). Prosodic features include intonation, tone, stress, and rhythm. They carry meaning—sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly—in a complex way that can have great significance in argumentative contexts.

As Gilbert (1997) points out, the sentence “Fine, fine, you’re right, I’m wrong, we’ll do it your way.” “...can indicate agreement with what has been said if presented flatly and intended sincerely, or, if accompanied by an expression of anger, it can mean that the respondent does not agree at all, but is capitulating” (pp. 2-3). According to a common anecdote, a well-known philosopher is said to have replied to the comment that the logic of natural language contains no rule of double affirmation (an affirmative analogue of the rule “double negation”) which turns two affirmatives into a negative with the dry remark: “Yeah, sure.” It is easy to imagine this said in a tone of voice that clearly says (and seems to prove) that the claim is false.

Visual argumentation has been the subject of a great deal of research, analysis and theoretical background (Lake & Pickering, 1998; Kjeldsen, 2012; Groarke & Tindale, 2013) which explains and develops tools for the analysis and evaluation of arguments which utilize images, photographs and other appeals to the eye and our ability to see. In contrast, non-verbal appeals to the ear have been neglected in argumentation theory and analysis. With this in mind, this paper explores the role of prosodic features in argumentative discourse, what that role might be, and how it can be best understood and theorized. Considered from this point of view, we suggest that we can usefully talk of an oral mode of argument which conveys argumentatively relevant information by means of prosody—information which is not inherent in the simple selection of words and sentences (something that will be evident if one reads the corresponding words in a prosodically different manner). By “argumentatively relevant” information we mean any information that needs to be considered when seriously assessing the acceptability of a standpoint.

## **2. Prosody, communication and argumentation**

Prosodic features are generally regarded as a key element of nonverbal communication (Hickson, Stacks, & Moore, 2004; Knapp & Hall, 2013, etc.). They may include both the specific voice cues of the speaker or their general speaking manner. In oral communication, this makes tone, intonation, tempo and voice quality essential components of what we say. We attach more meaning and significance to messages that are spoken faster and louder, with a wide pitch range, in comparison with messages spoken in normal tone, average intensity and speech rate. The prosodic features of someone’s voice convey information about their personality and emotional state, about their relationship to what they are saying, and about the context and situation in which their remarks occur. Extensive research has empirically confirmed that the information that prosody conveys is generally understood and accepted by an audience.

Vroomen, Collier, & Mozziconacci (1993) write: “The communicative function of prosody is most readily associated with the expression of emotion and attitude” (p. 577). Recent

reviews have shown that vocal expressions of specific emotions (e.g., anger, fear, happiness, sadness) are generally recognized with above-chance-accuracy, and are associated with relatively distinct acoustic characteristics across different cultures (Juslin & Laukka, 2003; Laukka, 2008). Beyond the correlation between prosody and emotions (Davitz, 1964; Scheerer, 1972; Vroomen, Collier, & Mozziconacci, 1993; Neuman & Strack, 2000), in a way that is particularly relevant to argumentation, prosodic features are connected to the perception of a speaker's personality, credibility, his *ethos* (Kramer, 1977, 1978; Berry, 1990, 1992; Kimble & Seidel, 1991; Zuckerman & Miyake, 1993; Hickson, 2004; Zuckerman & Sinicropi, 2011).

Past research has confirmed that prosodic features of language are, like other nonverbal aspects of presentation, associated with the persuasiveness of a speaker and their ability to change the attitudes of an audience (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990; Knapp, 2002). Fluency, variations in pitch, higher intensity (i.e., louder speech) and faster tempo have been positively connected with greater persuasiveness. Based on a review of the empirical research (e.g., Smith, Brown, Strong, & Rencher, 1975; Surawski, & Ossoff, 2006; Bartsch, 2009), we may cautiously conclude that a lower vocal pitch, a faster speech rate, and a comfortable, fluent style correlate with higher ratings for speaker's competence and dominance, *ceteris paribus*.

Zuckerman and Driver's research (1989) on vocal attractiveness hypothesized that attractive voices, like attractive faces, made a positive interpersonal impression on others. Attractive voices are characterized by lower pitch and an absence of nasality or extreme harshness. Professional judges agreed on judgments of attractiveness, and associated attractive voices with a favorable impression of a speaker's personality. Subsequent work has largely replicated these results, showing that the effects of vocal attractiveness are comparable to the effects of physical attractiveness (e.g., Berry, 1990, 1992; Zuckerman, Hodgins, & Miyake, 1990). Speakers with more attractive voices are generally more favorably perceived by others.

Rezlescu et al. (2015) sought to better determine the correlation between attractive voices and attractive faces and its effect on the perception of a speaker's trustworthiness and dominance. Face and voice are important because they are two critical cues audiences use to derive a first impression of a speaker. Their reliability is a complex matter. In many circumstances, they are a rich source of socially relevant information. Looking at a face or hearing a voice, humans can reliably infer an individual's sex, age, identity, and emotional state (e.g., Banissy et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 2007; Scott, 2008).

On the other hand, faces and voices can prompt spontaneous evaluations of attractiveness and of character traits like trustworthiness and dominance (Willis & Todorov, 2006; Vukovic et al., 2011). Rezlescu et al. (2015) have experimentally confirmed these results. They are important in the realm of argument because the judgments this implies are often exploited—consciously or unconsciously—in discussion and debate in the public sphere.

While communicative role of prosody has been confirmed by empirical research in the field of nonverbal communication (Knapp, 2002; Hickson, 2004), communication studies (Surawski & Ossoff 2006), psychology (Neumann & Strack 2000), semiotics (van Leeuwen, 1999) and rhetoric (Fahenstock, 2011). Research on the importance of sound and speech has also been a focus in semiotics, van Leeuwen (1999) writing that: “Semiotics of sound concerns itself with describing what you can ‘say’ with sound, and how you can interpret the things other people ‘say with sound’” (p. 4). Semiotics assesses the “sound act: value of different speech

patterns and characteristics, for instance melody and intonation of speech, voice quality and timbre.

Rhetoric is the one argumentation discipline which has traditionally shown interest in prosody. Fahenstock (2011) notes that

Certain features of oral communication have always been difficult to capture in writing, such as the changes in dynamics from loud to soft, the variations in pitch from high to deep, the manipulations in duration from prolonged to rushed, and the pauses of different lengths. Altogether, these features can be lumped together under the term prosody. Together with paralinguistic features like facial gestures and body language, these performance qualities were given the attention of an entire canon of rhetoric, that of delivery.” (p. 255)

In ancient rhetoric it was already “understood that the cadences produced by stress patterns and the variations in pitch, pace, and pauses across a passage create rhythms in sound can support an argument” (Fahenstock, 2011, p. 271)

We grant that prosody is important in speech delivery, but we are more interested in the ways that prosody can be a core element of arguments as they are traditionally conceived: as collections of premises and conclusions that may be judged (as classical rhetoric suggests) from the point of view of logos, pathos and ethos. Kišiček (2015) has already studied the roles that prosodic elements can play in multimodal argumentative discourse. We build on her work here. We are motivated by the conviction that prosody is especially important in the study of real life oral argument, for this is a context in which it plays key roles which are easily lost and overlooked when audible voices are ‘translated’ into written words and language.

### 3. Prosodic argument

Once we recognize that voice quality and other prosodic features convey information, and can be chosen and arranged to deliberately create a particular cadence, sound, etc., it is easy to see how prosody can be a key component of an argument. In analyzing verbal arguing, this means that we can distinguish between written and oral modes of arguing, and can prosodic arguing—arguing in which prosody plays a key role—as a subspecies of the oral mode of arguing. Especially as audiences instinctively infer a person’s character from the prosodic features of their speech, this makes prosodic arguing an important way in which conclusions are, deliberately or sometimes unconsciously, conveyed in argumentative exchange.

Examples where prosody is the basis of conclusions about an arguer’s character are particularly common. Examples from political discourse readily come to mind, for one of the principal goals of a political campaign is to convince an audience of a candidate’s integrity, competence, thoughtfulness, etc. In this way, a politician’s *ethos* is itself an important means of persuasion, providing evidence for their suitability as a leader.

In almost any political campaign, one can find variants of the following syllogism.

(*Major premise:*) Strong, confident and determined people are the good political leaders. (*Minor premise:*) Candidate C is a confident, strong and determined person. (*Conclusion:*) So candidate C would be a good political leader.

In a typical campaign, many different reasons will be offered in support of the minor premise in this argument. In debates and presentations it can be supported by the prosodic features of a candidate's speech: the quality of their voice; the way they use volume, tempo; and so on. Everyone knows that confident, strong and determined people usually sound confident, strong and determined. This is why politicians take lessons in presentation and hire speech coaches – to learn how to use their voices in a way that makes a positive impression.

Situations like this illustrate one of the important reasons we need to recognize prosodic argument as a form of arguing. For it is a powerful form of argument that often exerts its influence unconsciously, audiences accepting the conclusion that someone is strong, determined, trustworthy, etc. (or devious, uneducated or untrustworthy) without recognizing that they are doing so. Making their prosodic reasoning explicit is important because it is an important way to raise the question whether the conclusions that they draw are warranted.

One finds an illustrative example of prosodic argument in the appeals for clemency made on behalf of Stanley Williams as he faced the death penalty for murder in California<sup>1</sup> The basis of the appeal is the claim that Williams went through a radical change of character during his many years in prison, emerging as an important leader who preached against violence and dedicated his life to helping others, especially children attracted to what he called “the thug life” in notorious Los Angeles gangs. The basic argument can be summarized as follows:

*(Premise1:)* Stanley Williams is a rehabilitated person—a peaceful, gentle person dedicated to eliminating violence (a “greatly changed” person). *(Premise2:)* Rehabilitated, changed people should be shown mercy and spared the death sentence. *(Conclusion:)* Stanley Williams should be shown mercy and spared the death sentence (i.e., should not be executed).

In the video that appeals for clemency, the claim that Williams' personality has undergone a radical rehabilitation is supported in many ways: through the verbal testimonies of his friends, people he has helped, by recounting his work with gangs, by citing his children's books, and so on. The claims made are important elements of the argument, but we cannot fully understand it without recognizing that it is an instance of multimodal arguing in which visual and prosodic appeals play a key role.

One might summarize the prosodic argument implicit in the Williams video as the argument that *(premise:)* he sounds like a remorseful, gentle advocate of non-violence, therefore *(conclusion:)* the claim that he is a rehabilitated person is credible. It is difficult to appreciate the power of this argument without listening to Williams' voice, but we can represent its content and structure in the following KC (Key Component) table and diagram.

---

<sup>1</sup> The argument for clemency is analyzed in detail in van den Hoven and Kišiček (2015). A video of the appeal is available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhFoeJPP6HE>>

<i>Key Component</i>	<i>Role in the Argument</i>	<i>Mode</i>
Sound of Williams voice today.	Premise ( <i>s</i> )	Prosodic—the features of Williams voice (high pitch, slow tempo, low volume) suggesting a modest, gentle, unassertive man
Stanley Williams is a rehabilitated person—a peaceful, gentle person dedicated to eliminating violence (a “greatly changed” person).	Conclusion ( <i>r</i> )	Verbal



One finds another example of prosodic argument in a Superbowl commercial directed at American farmers.<sup>2</sup> It sells Ram trucks to the farming community via a Paul Harvey message that glorifies farmers: their sacrifice, their hard life and their courage. The ad functions as an argument by association that positively associates Ram trucks with farm work in a series of photographs and, more deeply, with a reverential appreciation of farmers and what they do.

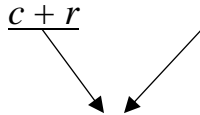
The first photograph we see is a cow standing on a wind-swept winter field. The second is a small wooden rural church. The Harvey voice over is a monologue recorded with a reverberation (an echo) that makes it sound as though he is speaking inside the church. In the combination of monologue and photographs that follow, the prosodic qualities of Paul Harvey’s voice play a key role delivering the argument that we should think highly of Ram because it is deeply associated with farming, in a practical and reverential way.

One way to make the claim that something should be revered is by saying that this is so. A more subtle (and in some ways more powerful) way to do so is by speaking of it in a reverential voice. This is the approach that the commercial adopts, Paul Harvey speaking with the voice of an aging prophet who speaks with a strict tone of indubitable authority. Intonation, pauses, cadence and word emphasis all contribute to a somber religious ambience that is naturally associated with preaching. In a manner very much in keeping with the interest in prosody that traditionally characterizes homiletics, the sound of Harvey’s voice is what we would expect of a preacher giving a stirring sermon in a country church.

The commercial operates as a many-premised multimodal argument in which visual, verbal, prosodic and auditory cues combine to establish the ultimate conclusion about Ram trucks. In the Key Component table below we will limit our analysis to a few visual, prosodic, and auditory elements that play a key role establishing the unstated, but clear conclusion that farming and the farmer are sacred and should be revered.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMpZ0TGjbWE>

<i>Key Component</i>	<i>Role in the Argument</i>	<i>Mode</i>
Photograph of the small wooden rural church.	Premise ( <i>c</i> )	Photograph (associating what is said with what is sacred)
Reverberation (echo) in Harvey's oration.	Premise ( <i>r</i> )	Sound (associating what is said with sermons inside such churches)
Sound of Harvey's voice.	Premise ( <i>s</i> )	Prosodic (the deep, resonant voice, the intonation, the cadences and the pauses conveying reverence and respect)
What Harvey speaks about (farming) should be revered.	Conclusion ( <i>f</i> )	Implicit in the combination of the photograph and the voice.



*s*

*f*

This is an example which usefully illustrates the way in which a variety of non-verbal modes of arguing may combine in important ways within an argument. In this case, the combining of visual and prosodic cues highlights the way in which prosody is an essential element of the veneration of the farmer that is the ultimate basis of the Ram commercial.

All three of our examples demonstrate the possibility of prosodic argument. Many other instances of the argumentative use of prosody are found in political discourse, in advertising, in speeches of all kind, in theatre, in film, in the court room, and in marketing and promotion.

#### 4. Prosodic roles in multimodal argument

In their account of visual argumentation, Groarke and Tindale (2013) distinguish four different ways that images may be used in arguing: as *visual flags*, *visual demonstrations* (what might be called ‘arguing by showing’), and *symbols* and *metaphors*. They summarize their outlook as follows):

Argument flags and nonverbal demonstrations are the most direct way in which arguments may employ nonverbal elements. In such circumstances, these elements are understood in a straightforward, literal way. In other cases, such elements may be used in a more figurative way to convey a message that turns on the proper interpretation of non-verbal elements. A political cartoon that depicts a politician as a devil with horns employs nonverbal elements, but it is not a demonstration. The artist is not claiming that this is how the politician actually looks. (Groarke & Tindale, 2013, p. 151)



Here we will explore the roles that prosody plays in arguing by attempting a cursory answer to the question whether it can play the different argumentative roles that Groarke and Tindale (2013) enumerate.

### *Prosodic flags*

Visual flags are used to attract an audience's attention, as when a stunning photographic attracts our eyes to a page which elaborates an argument. The importance of such flags is underappreciated in a world in which we are constantly bombarded by arguments and arguers cannot convince others of their conclusions unless they first succeed in attracting attention to it. The best argument in the world cannot convince someone that they should accept its conclusion unless they first attract their attention.

In prosodic argument, the analogue of a visual flag is a *prosodic flag* that attracts our attention through its prosodic features. Prosody is well suited to this role because our ears are naturally attuned to the human voice, making it a sound that readily captures our attention. In the Ram commercial we have already noted, the powerful photographs and the riveting sound of Paul Harvey's resonant voice grab—and steadfastly maintain—the attention of an audience. In this way they function as a stunningly effective multimodal flag that makes it difficult not to watch and listen to the message.

Other examples of prosodic argument flags are found in advertisements that give human voices to animals. A series of commercials for cat food<sup>3</sup> feature a father cat who explains humans to a kitten. In another set of advertisements, smart talking cows endowed with women's voices are "part of the family" in a way that draws our attention of a California Milk Campaign that promotes the use of milk with a "real California" seal.<sup>4</sup> In another case, a cat with a melodic female voice, a dog with a deep male voice, and a weasel with a soft French accent sing to bring out attention to the reasons why we should purchase Bounce Fabric Softener.<sup>5</sup> And so on.

In these kinds of cases, the prosodic features of the voices assigned to different animals are usually fashioned very carefully to fit the characters the animals represent. The father cat speaks with the slow tempo, frequent pauses, and soft tone of worldly confidence that we might expect when a father advises their son or daughter on the way the world works. The cows who represent California milk have a happy woman's voice which is full of confidence as they nurture themselves and the families in which they are embedded. In all such cases, it is notable that these argument flags attract attention in a way that can be contrasted with the flag we noted in the Ram advertisement. In that case, it was a powerfully somber, religious message that attracts our attention. In these animal advertisements it is humor, wit and comedy.

### *Prosodic demonstrations*

A prosodic demonstration is an analogue of visual demonstration is an argument by showing which establishes its conclusion through prosody. It is not difficult to think of examples. One might show that one can speak in a Russian accent by doing so; that one can imitate someone else's voice by speaking in a way that imitates their cadence, tone, etc.; or that

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBrSvHPY1NQ>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpIX83f2a4>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVhkCuxMNSU>;

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkmhpP334kc>

the singer Holly Cole's enunciation was exceptional in the low registers by listening to recordings of her singing. Less direct appeals to prosodic demonstration may use it to reveal what underlies it, as when the sound of someone recounting actual abuse is evidence of their suffering (one hears the pain, the tension, the emotional hurt and the suffering in their voice).<sup>6</sup>

### *Prosodic symbols*

In prosodic demonstrations, particular prosodic elements provide direct evidence for a conclusion. In the case of prosodic symbols, they are not featured as direct evidence of something that has happened or is occurring, but are used as a way to convey argumentative ideas through common prosodic associations. Some of the examples we have already mentioned illustrate the point that differences in tone can make the sentence “You went to the butcher shop.” a question or an assertion. The normal agreement expressed as “Sure.” easily becomes an expression of negation if it is elongated and accompanied by a doubtful tone.

More complex associations make particular prosodic symbols of particular human states. These symbols can still function as important means of communication. A woman who speaks with a shivering voice (on the verge of crying), quietly, in a manner that sounds frightened, scared, and insecure, can in many cases immediately be recognized as someone who represents abused women. Tone of voice, voice quality, loudness, intonation all play a role in this, making these prosodic features common elements which are used in campaigns against human trafficking, violence, domestic abuse.<sup>7</sup> In such cases, they do not merely accompany the verbal message but more clearly than the words used tell us that she is a frightened, terrified person. In many cases, her words themselves will not contribute to the argument presented, which is delivered by a voice over delivered in another voice.

Empirical research as to how voices are stereotypically perceived suggest that prosodic elements may function as symbols in a more powerful way than visual symbols. For a great many visual symbols (facial expressions being a possible exception) are institutionally learned—through schooling, driving lessons, etc. In contrast, prosodic symbols seem to be intuitively perceived as a result of media and popular culture influence which reinforces stereotypes.

### *Prosodic metaphors*

The metaphorical use of prosody is one of the most prominent ways in which prosody plays a role in argument. Consider an American public service announcement advocating for a Drug Free America.<sup>8</sup> It gives the drug heroin a voice which speaks to those who use it. In a somewhat terrifying voice it begins by saying that “You know me, you brought me to this party, I am your best friend” and ends with the chilling threat that “I will kill you....I will violate you.” So, how does the voice of heroin sound? Scary, dreadful, dangerous, horrific. This is communicated through voice quality, tempo, and unfinished sentences and strange ambient sounds that accompany it. Here the frightening, threatening sound of the voice is a metaphor for the frightening, threatening aspects of heroin use, which are further illustrated with chilling photographs of its effects.

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=domestic+abuse;](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=domestic+abuse;)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZ27W2K12fk>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUY8APLxnKA>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DC6XdfldG0> (4:38 – 5:05)

One finds a related technique used in another Public Service Announcement by the same group,<sup>9</sup> in which the prosodic features of the voice change dramatically as the monologue moves from: “Doing drugs is like being on a top of the world. Everyone says so. Everyone seems to be having dandy old time. Hey it’s part of growing up.” to “Or is it? Just think about it. Before you go and do something you’ve never done before, you just better know what you are jumping into.” The initial sentences are characterized by a slow, lazy tempo, a soft voice, and a high rising intonation which resembles singing (usually associated with a carefree, joyful mood). In its pronunciation of first syllables (especially in the word *everyone*) the voice sounds like the voice of someone who is happily intoxicated. The voice and the mood change immediately with the question “Or is it?” the voice deepening, the tone becoming serious and threatening. The carefree prosody of the previous sentences disappears. In the one case, the lazy sounds represent the carefree fun of using drugs; in the other the serious sound of the voice represents the serious issues one is raising when one becomes a user. The change in prosody demarcates a move from argument to counter-argument, the seriousness of the counter-argument trumping the intoxicated sound of the earlier claims, claiming the last word in the debate. The attendant visuals tell essentially the same story.

Similar techniques are used in advertising. In, for example, a Covergirl ad for “Simply Ageless Makeup” using the modulating tones of Ellen Degeneres’ voice to evoke the notion that the results of using the makeup will be fun and exuberant.<sup>10</sup> One finds a similar prosodic trope in a commercial for Booking.com,<sup>11</sup> which argues that it is the best option for you when planning your holiday because it offers you excitement, thrill, and adventure. But the excitement is conveyed, not by the list of things it enumerates (slippers, showers, ice cubes, eggs, beds), but by a voice-over which represents that excitement with a higher-than-normal pitch, a wide pitch-range, fast tempo and high intensity (all prosodic signs of excitement).

In some cases, prosodic metaphors are so influential that they become identified with what they refer to. Since 2006, the state of Michigan has sponsored a radio, television and internet advertising campaign for “Pure Michigan” that features the voice of the actor Tim Allen.<sup>12</sup> His soft voice on the ads, which has been described as “warm and caramel,” has been credited with much of their success, Forbes Magazine ranking the campaign as one of the all-time best tourism promotion campaigns in the world. In the state itself, the warm tones of Allen’s voice, the wistful escape-from-the-ordinary message in the advertisements, and the stunning photography that many of the ads include, have become a point of pride, a statement of what Michigan is, and a rallying cry for its future.

## 5. Prosody and objectivity

In our cursory look at the role of prosody in argument, we have given many examples in which argumentative meaning depends on prosodic elements like voice quality, intonation, tempo and loudness, pitch range, pause and emphasis. In many of the cases we have noted, the importance of prosody is evident when prosodic features are removed or altered, for this may radically change the content and/or the success of an oral argument.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKeF3VL-KFQ>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qzz7mT2OUfs>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG6Lt7\\_8uEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG6Lt7_8uEw)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oHe6GRo7Dg>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWPytpwcMC8>;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpsaL-WAqBY>

We have argued that prosody is a key component of multi-modal discourse which needs to be recognized in the analysis, reconstruction and evaluation of a multi-modal argument. As we noted at the outset, prosodic features are a component of oral argument which shows that the force of a verbal argument may depend, not merely on the words and sentences it employs, but on how they are delivered.

We have tried to show that some of the theoretical distinctions which have been developed in the study of visual argumentation can be applied to prosodic argument. This is an important point, but we are not claiming that there are no important differences between visual and prosodic argument. This is a question that needs to be explored (Hollien, 2002). It is worth noting that prosodic elements in an argumentative discourse often rely on stereotypes and frequently work on a subconscious level. We hear someone on a radio and perceive him/her as deceptive, irritating, appealing etc. without being aware of the reasons why we feel this way. Often the reason is not *what* someone says but *how* they say it.

This has made the prosodic elements of oral argument elusive, in a manner that makes them more, not less, powerful elements of public discourse (in politics, advertising, business). This is one key reason that prosody needs to be taken into account in serious analyses of multi-modal discourse. The present context aims to illuminate objectivity and bias in such argument. Our examples show that we cannot fully understand judgments of objectivity and bias without recognizing the role that prosody plays in establishing them. Without diminishing the importance of written verbal argumentation, which functions as a visual correlate or oral arguing, it is time to recognize prosodic arguing as a mode of arguing that needs to be better recognized and studied in our theories of argument.

## References

- Addington, D. W. (1968). The relationship of selected voices characteristics to personality perception. *Speech Monographs* 13, 546-554.
- Banissy, M. J., Sauter, D. A., Ward, J., Warren, J. E., Walsh, V., & Scott, S. K. (2010). Suppressing sensorimotor activity modulates the discrimination of auditory emotions but not speaker identity. *Journal of Neuroscience* 30 (41), 13552–13557.
- Berry, D. S. (1991). Accuracy in social perception: Contributions on facial and vocal information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 62, 298-307.
- Berry, D. S. (1992). Vocal types and stereotypes: Joint effects of vocal attractiveness and vocal maturity on person perception. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 18, 187-197.
- Blair, J. A. (1996). The possibility and actuality of visual argument. *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33, 1–10.
- Burgoon, J. K., Birk, T., & Pfau, M. (1990). Nonverbal behaviors, persuasion and credibility. *Human Communication Research* 17 (1) 140-169.
- Davitz, J. R. (1964). *The Communication of Emotional Meaning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fahenstock, J. (2011). *Rhetorical Style: The Uses of Language in Persuasion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gelang, M., & Kjeldsen, J. (2010). Nonverbal communication as argumentation. In: F. H. van Eemeren, B. Garssen, D. Godden & G. Mitchell (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 7th Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA), 29 June-2 July, 2010*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg / Sic Sat.
- Gilbert, M. A. (1997). *Coalescent Argumentation*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Groarke, L., & Tindale, C. (2012). *Good reasoning matters: A constructive approach to critical thinking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Groarke, L. (2015). Going multimodal: What is a mode of arguing and why does it matter? *Argumentation* 29, 133-155.
- Hickson, M., Stacks, D., & Moore, N. (2004). *Nonverbal Communication: Studies and Applications*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Hollien, H. (2002). *Forensic Voice Identification*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hoven, P. van den, & Kišiček, G. (2017). Processing multimodal legal discourse: The case of Stanley ‘Tookie’ Williams. Trento Days of Rhetoric. (Forthcoming)
- Juslin, P. N., & Laukka, P. (2003). Communication of emotions in vocal expression and music performance: Different channels, same code? *Psychological Bulletin* 129, 770–814.
- Kimble, C. E., & Seidel, S. D. (1991). Vocal signs of confidence. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 15, 99-105.
- Kišiček, G. (2015). The role of prosodic features in the analysis of multimodal argumentation. In: B. J. Garssen, D. Godden, G. Mitchell, & A. F. Snoeck Henkemans (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA), 1-4 July 2014*. Amsterdam: Rozenburg / Sic Sat.
- Kjeldsen, J. E. (2012). Pictorial argumentation in advertising: Visual tropes and figures as a way of creating visual argumentation. In: F. H. van Eemeren & B. Garssen (Eds.), *Topical Themes in Argumentation Theory: Twenty Exploratory Studies* (pp. 229-255). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Kjeldsen, J. E. (2015a). The rhetoric of thick representation: How pictures render the importance and strength of an argument salient. *Argumentation* 29, 197-215.
- Kjeldsen, J. E. (2015b). The study of visual and multimodal argumentation. *Argumentation* 29, 115-132.
- Knapp, M. L., & Hall, J. (2013). *Nonverbal communication in human interaction* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Thomas Learning Inc.
- Kramer, E. (1964). Personality stereotypes in voice: A reconsideration of the data. *The Journal of Social Psychology* 62, 247–251.
- Kramer, C. (1978). Female and male perceptions of female and male speech. *Language and Speech* 20, 151-161.
- Laukka, P. (2008). Research on vocal expression of emotion: State of the art and future directions. In: K. Izdebski (Ed.), *Emotions in the Human Voice: Foundations* (Vol. 1) (pp. 153–169). San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing.
- Leeuwen, T. van (1999). *Speech, Music, Sound*. London: MacMillian Press.
- Lippa, R. (1998). The nonverbal display and judgment of extraversion, masculinity, femininity, and gender diagnosticity: A lens model analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality* 32 (1), 80-107.
- Meyer, M., Baumann, S., Wildgruber, D., & Alter, K. (2007). How the brain laughs. Comparative evidence from behavioral, electrophysiological and neuroimaging studies in human and monkey. *Behavioural Brain Research* 182 (2), 245–260.
- Neumann, R., & Strack, F. (2000). “Mood contagion”: The automatic transfer of mood between persons. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, 211-223.
- Rezlescu, C., Penton, T., Walsh, V., Tsujimura, H., Scott, S. K., & Banissy, M. J. (2015) Dominant voices and attractive faces: The contribution of visual and auditory information to integrated person impressions. *Journal of Nonverbal Communication* 39 (4), 355-370.

- Rosenthal, R., Hall, J. A., DiMatteo, M. R., Rogers, P. L., & Archer, D. (1979). *Sensitivity to Nonverbal Communications: The PONS Test*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Scheerer, K. R. (1972). Judging personality from voice: A cross-cultural approach to an old issue in interpersonal perception. *Journal of Personality* 40, 191–210.
- Scott, S. K. (2008). Voice processing in monkey and human brains. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 12 (9), 323–325.
- Siegmán, A. W. (1987). The telltale voice: Nonverbal messages of verbal communication. In: A. W. Siegmán & F. Stanley (Eds.), *Nonverbal Behavior and Communication* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 351–433). Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Surawski, M. K., & Ossoff, E. P. (2006). The effects of physical and vocal attractiveness on impression formation of politicians. *Current Psychology* 25 (1) 15–27.
- Vroomen, J., Collier, R., & Mozziconacci, S. (1993). Duration and intonation in emotional speech. In: *Proceedings of Eurospeech 1993* (Vol. 1): Berlin, Germany (pp. 577–580). Baixas, France: International Speech Communication Association (ISCA).
- Vukovic, J., Jones, B. C., Feinberg, D. R., DeBruine, L. M., Smith, F. G., Welling, L. L., & Little, A. C. (2011). Variation in perceptions of physical dominance and trustworthiness predicts individual differences in the effect of relationship context on women's preferences for masculine pitch in men's voices. *British Journal of Psychology* 102 (1), 37–48.
- Willis, J., & Todorov, A. (2006). First impressions: Making up your mind after a 100-ms exposure to a face. *Psychological Science* 17 (7), 592–598.
- Zuckerman, M., & Miyake, K. (1993). The attractive voice: What makes it so? *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 17, 119–135.
- Zuckerman, M., & Sinicropi, V. (2011). When physical and vocal attractiveness differ: Effects on favourability of interpersonal impressions. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 35, 75–86.
- Zuckerman, M., Hodgins, H., & Miyake, K. (1990). The vocal attractiveness stereotype: Replication and elaboration. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 14, 97–112.