# Annoyance and architecture: lessons from Russian OY DA sentences

Intro There is a common reasoning loop in linguistics pertaining to affect-related meaning expressed through prosody (see, e.g., Ladd 2008): prosodic expression of affect-related meaning is "paralinguistic", because it is done via "gradient" aspects of prosody, such as pitch height beyond a binary H vs. L distinction or voice quality, and truly linguistic representations rely on categorical distinctions; also, such aspects of prosody as pitch height and voice quality are "gradient", because they are typically used to express affect-related meaning, and any affect-related meaning expressed through prosody is "paralinguistic" and, thus, can't possibly rely on categorical distinctions. It is easy to see how this warps our ideas about what linguistic representations can look like and how meaning, prosody, and syntax interact. In this paper, I look at Russian OY DA sentences, which involve, among other things, increased pitch height to express annoyance, as a case study demonstrating that abandoning this circular reasoning can lead to insightful architectural discoveries. In particular, I show that the OY DA prosody is not itself a tune, but a regularized modification of the pitch height (and optionally voice quality) of the input tune created during the first prosodification stage. While OY DA can modify different utterance types, with a stable shared core meaning, it exhibits apparent constraints on the syntax of utterances it can modify. I argue these to be constraints on the shape of the input tune, which, in turn, is only compatible with some syntactic configurations. On a broader level, this suggests that such aspects of prosody as modifications of pitch height, including those that express affect-related meaning, can, in fact, be regularized and be subject to various structure-sensitive interface constraints.

OY DA meaning and form Meaning-wise, OY DA expresses the speaker's annoyance at having to discuss the QUD associated with the host utterance, e.g., because they believe that this QUD has been resolved already or that its resolution is insignificant in some way. For example, (1) is a regular, information-seeking *wh*-question. (2) is an OY DA modification of this question, which is now rhetorical: the speaker is annoyed the issue of who she will call has been raised, because they believe the resolution to be insignificant (she will call no one or no one of importance). Form-wise, the overall "binary" shape of the tune remains the same, but the two H targets and the interpolated material between them are much higher in the OY DA version; there can also be an optional change in voice quality (e.g., increased breathiness and/or falsetto). (Note: I am using the English ToBI notation to indicate the overall shape of the tune here, with the understanding that it might not be fully appropriate for Russian. The main point of doing so, however, is to demonstrate that a system with only a two-way distinction between H and L tones is not well-equipped for capturing the prosodic contrast between (1) and (2).) Utterances thus modified are typically preceded by interjections, in particular, *oy* (which, broadly speaking, expresses abruptness), the adversative *da*, or their combination—hence the OY DA label.
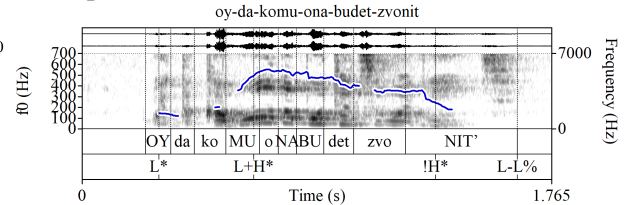
(1) Komu   ona budet zvonit'? 🔊
     who.DAT she will   call
     'Who will she call?'
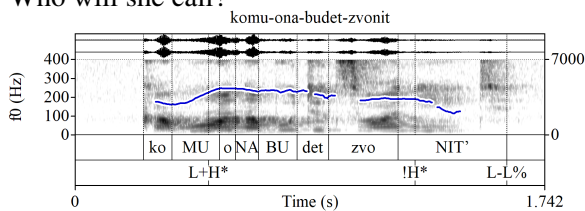
(2) Oy da komu   ona budet zvonit'?! 🔊
     OY DA who.DAT she will   call
     ≈'Oh please, who will she even call?!'

Constraints on OY DA OY DA can modify different utterance types, but there has to be an element at the front of the host utterance that carries an L+H* pitch accent and whose H tone is made super-high by OY DA; I indicate this in the examples below with ↑. I assume that the height of any subsequent H tones, downstepped or not, is simply relativized to the height of this first H during articulation and, thus, don't mark them with ↑ (this assumption might be a bit simplistic, as there might be cases of optional secondary ↑ operations on non-initial Hs, but I leave exploration of this issue for future work). (Note: I am omitting the boundary tones in the examples below; in all cases it's L-L%.) In *wh*-questions the carrier of this resulting L+↑H* is the fronted *wh*-item. In imperatives, as in (3), it is the imperative verb. As for polar questions, OY DA is only

compatible with polar questions that involve fronting of the focused element (and the *li* particle cliticizing to it), which is not a neutral way to ask a polar question in Russian and normally clashes stylistically with the very colloquial and aggressive OY DA; however, OY DA goes well with idiomatized rhetorical *malo li* polar questions, as in (4). In OY DA-modified declaratives, the item carrying L+↑H* has to be focused and at the front of the utterance (as a first approximation, within the first prosodic word), as in (5-i). Thus, OY DA cannot target a focused item, e.g., in an utterance-final position, as shown in (5-ii), although a non-OY DA version of (5-ii) in (5-iii) is an acceptable response in this context. Nor can OY DA overwrite the tune created based on the information structure of the host utterance by placing an L+H* (whose pitch height it can then modify) on the first prosodic word of the utterance if it is not supposed to bear focus, as shown in (5-iv).

(3) Oy da zvoni$_{L+↑H*}$ komu ugod$_{!H*}$no! 🔊
OY DA call.IMP who.DAT want.ADV
≈'Oh please, call whoever the hell you want!'
(I don't care who you call.)

(4) Oy da ma$_{L+↑H*}$lo li komu ona zvoni$_{!H*}$la! 🔊
OY DA few/little Q who.DAT she called
Lit.: 'Did she call few people?'
(I don't care who she called.)

(5) A: Dima is trying to find out who Anya called.
B: (i) Oy da Ni$_{L+↑H*}$ne ona zvoni$_{?L*}$la! 🔊
OY DA Nina.DAT she called
≈'Oh ffs, it was Nina that she called!'
(It's not that puzzling or interesting.)
(ii) *Oy da ona zvonila Ni$_{L+↑H*}$ne!
(iii) Ona zvonila Ni$_{L+H*}$ne. 🔊
(iv) #Oy da ona$_{L+↑H*}$ zvonila Ni$_{!H*}$ne! 🔊

Note that in all these cases the meaning effects are stable and predictable: there is clearly annoyance and/or disdain conveyed in all cases, but the meaning contribution of OY DA is always more specific and, in particular, ties this affect to the QUD associated with the host utterance being discussed. For example, (5-i) can't be interpreted as (directly) expressing the speaker's annoyance that Anya called Nina and not someone else or something utterance-external (cf. pitch height changes that more uniformly affect stretches of one's speech).

Analysis I, thus, propose to analyze the OY DA modification in the following way:

• All the obligatory and optional surface elements associated with OY DA, including prosody, interjections, and facial expressions (typically, squinting, frowning, and/or eyerolling) jointly expone the same abstract object, OY DA. (A more decompositional approach can be pursued in future work.)
• This object is hosted by a general purpose expressive left periphery projection Expr that is above whatever speech act projections we assume. (The same projection hosts the expressive component of exclamatives.)
• Prosodic tunes are created in (at least) two passes: first, the basic sequence of L and H tones is created, in a way that is sensitive to, a.o., information structure (operationalized via syntactic features); in the second pass, this sequence can be modified by operations such as ↑ (a drastic increase in F0 on the target tone).
• The obligatory prosodic exponent of OY DA is ↑ on the H tone of the L+H* pitch accent on the first stressed syllable of the input prosodic structure; if there can be no L+H* on this syllable (e.g., because that would not match the information structure), OY DA cannot be exponed. The item carrying the resulting L+↑H* can, thus, be hosted by a variety of syntactic projections on the left periphery. (This is also reminiscent of how the expressive prosody of exclamatives must be realized utterance-initially in Russian and English.)

OY DA on interjections As shown above, OY DA cannot overwrite the tune created at the first prosodification stage, at least not in a way that would create a mismatch with the utterance's information structure. However, it can be used on interjections (that are long enough to host it). Thus, (5) consists of two speech acts, each modified by an instance of OY DA. The second speech act is similar to the ones above: its first-pass tune is L+H* !H* L-L%, with OY DA then adding an ↑ on the first H. But the first speech act is a frozen interjection, with no propositional content and, thus, no internal information structure that would be disrupted by a tune that doesn't match it. I propose that in cases like this we can impose any tune on the utterance during the first prosodification stage. (See also Esipova 2021a,b for other examples from Russian of the same tune realized twice, on a response particle/interjection and on the following utterance with propositional content.)

(5) Oy da ja$_{L+↑H*}$ tebja umolja$_{!H*}$ju / bo$_{L+↑H*}$zhe zh ty moj$_{!H*}$! Komu$_{L+↑H*}$ on nu$_{!H*}$zhen?! 🔊 / 🔊
OY DA I you.ACC beg / god.VOC EMPH you my who.DAT he needed
≈'Oh please / for God's sake! Who even needs him?!'

References

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