

# Prosody, Resonance, Stance

## *Affective framing and the collaborative construction of categories*

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The human propensity to seek out new environments, whether through travel, trade, or migration—or simply curiosity, conversation, and play—puts us often in situations that evoke new forms of experience. If the new experiences don't fit into ready-made categories, it may be hard to think about them, to predict their behavior—in a word, to classify them. To remedy the situation requires new categories built on the fly, or at least ad hoc adjustments to old ones (Barsalou, 1983). But classifying isn't everything. Why care about these things in the first place?

Objectively, things have inherent features, which offers one principle for grouping them into categories. But subjectively, the people who use things are motivated by their own values, desires, and emotions (Dutra, 2017; Charles Goodwin, 2017; Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Cekaite & Goodwin, 2012; Marjorie Harness Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000; Kärkkäinen & Du Bois, 2012). From the user's perspective, an alternative principle of categorization might be: *Whatever you like*. Consider the following diagraph (Du Bois, 2014):

(1) (*Deadly Diseases* SBC015: 186.540-198.625)

1	KEN;	I would	love	to go	{to Nicaragua}	.
7	JOANNE;	I	want	to go	{to Nicaragua}	too .
10	JOANNE;	I 'd	rather	go	to Mexico	though .
17	KEN;	I 'd	kind of like	to go	to Guatemala	.
18	JOANNE;	I	want	to go	to Mexico	.

Here the co-participants deploy a shifting series of affective stance predicates (*love, want, rather, like*) which frame, both syntactically and prosodically, a list of places (*Nicaragua, Mexico, Guatemala*). Yet the category remains implicit, its unifying principle never named: “Latin American countries that are attractive destinations for our next vacation”. The category emerges cumulatively and collaboratively, through a dynamically modulated sequence of affective framings. Crucially, it remains unfinalized—open.

In this talk, I explore the role of affective framing in the collaborative construction of open categories, based on a close analysis of instances from a corpus of conversation (Du Bois, Chafe, Meyer, Thompson, Englebretson & Martey, 2000-2005). I propose stance (Du Bois, 2007) as a unifying framework for analyzing the dynamically negotiated interplay between explicit and implicit, feature-based and role-based, closed and open, objective and subjective—and intersubjective—aspects of category construction. Drawing on theories of dialogicality (Anward, 2015; Bakhtin, 1981 [1934]; Evans, Bergqvist & San Roque, in press; Linell, 2009; Voloshinov, 1973 [1929]), I show how dialogic syntax (Du Bois, 2014) combines with prosodic resonance to create a structural framing for functionally aligned stances (Du Bois, 2007). The prosodic-syntactic framing invites the perception of analogy between the framed elements (Du Bois, Hobson & Hobson, 2014). This framing resonance can be used even in the absence of objectively shared features to create ad hoc categories built on a different principle: a relational role external to the category instances (Goldwater, Markman & Stilwell, 2011; Goldwater, Markman, Trujillo & Schnyer, 2015; Markman & Stilwell, 2001). In this case, the external unifying principle for the category is defined by the role of stance object. Co-participants produce a series of affective evaluations of the shared stance object, which may evolve subtly as the discourse progresses. The accumulation of successive expressions of individual subjectivity is modulated dialogically, in the pursuit of intersubjective alignment.

The prosodic-syntactic framing of stance is at once predictable and open-ended. In line with Schrödinger's characterization of the gene as an aperiodic crystal (Schrödinger, 1943), recurrent structure creates on open frame, which can be filled with new instances of an emerging category. Interlocutors can jointly explore the open-ended range of alternatives (Ariel & Mauri, in press), without having to commit to what, if anything, will emerge in the end. The challenge of joint decision-making is compounded by the fact that the criteria for evaluation are themselves evolving at the same time. The categories that work are works in progress: unfinished, unstable, ad hoc, fuzzy, indeterminate—in a word, open. This is a good thing, if the goal is to truly explore the possibilities of a new environment. The dialogic framing of syntactic-prosodic resonance is up to the job: creating a framework for building categories, actions, and decisions that are dynamically responsive to open-ended intersubjectivity. Ultimately, the categories that thrive in this environment are not just ad hoc but unfinalized: unnamed, perhaps unnameable, yet recognizable by the affective framing that builds them and leaves them open.

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