

# The Role of Prosody and Gesture in Mock vs. Genuine Impoliteness

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5<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Catalan Prosody  
June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013



# Introduction

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# Genuine vs. Mock Impoliteness

- **Genuine impoliteness:** “communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony” (Culpeper 2003).
  - Examples (Culpeper 2010)
    - Insults: *You [fucking/rotten/dirty] [moron/fuck/bastard].*
    - Dismissals: *[fuck/piss/shove] off.*
    - Silencers: *shut [the fuck] up.*
    - Negative expressives: *go [to hell/fuck yourself].*
- **Mock impoliteness:** potentially genuine impolite behaviors that are interpreted as non-impolite because speakers understand its intention to create social bonding (Culpeper 2011)
  - Examples (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012)
    - Jocular abuse: *you big headed bastard* (accompanied by laughter).
    - Jocular mockery: (after someone eats a lot of food), *basically that run you went on this morning James you might as well not have bothered* (accompanied by laughter).

# Genuine vs. Mock Impoliteness

- Mock and genuine impoliteness often use the same lexical items.
  - 'Taboo' words (Stenström & Jörgensen, 2008; Mugford 2013).
  - Slurs (Chauncey, 1994; Kennedy, 2002; Croom, 2011).
- Context is important for both types of impoliteness, but are there any other linguistic features that are associated with one form or another?

# Prosody/Gesture and (im)politeness

- **Prosody:** “Remarkably, the bulk of research on politeness or impoliteness pays woefully little attention to the role of prosody” (Culpeper, 2011; pg. 146).
  - Final rise in intonation has been observed to convey politeness (Chen et al., 2004; Félix-Brasdefer, 2009).
  - Downsteps can be used to used to linguistically hinder speakers (Culpeper, 2003).
- **Gesture:** “Non-verbal cues such as gaze, facial expressions, body movements/gestures [...] and the spatial positioning of the self play a key role in communication [...] yet it is still an area that receives relatively little attention in communication and pragmatic studies” (Culpeper, 2011).
- **Prosody/Gesture and emotion:** Anger has frequently been examined
  - Raised pitch & loudness (Culpeper, 2003).
  - Wide pitch ranges, abrupt pitch changes on stressed syllables & tense articulation (Murray & Arnott, 1993).
  - Higher amplitude (Hammerschmidt & Jürgens, 2007).
  - Furrowed eyebrows (Ekman et. al, 1971).
- **Can specific prosodic and gestural cues be linked to the manifestation of mock vs. genuine impoliteness?**

# Methods: Production Experiment

- **Goals:** Are there specific prosodic and/or gestural cues that are associated with either genuine or mock impoliteness?
- **Participants:** 6 native Catalan speakers (3 male, 3 female, average age = 33,  $sd = 5.1$ ).
- **Task:** Completed a Discourse Completion Task (DCT).
- **Analysis:** Qualitative analysis of prosodic features, using Cat\_ToBI (Prieto, in press), and gestures.

# Methods: Sample DCT

## (1) Genuine Impoliteness

Després d'un desastrós tall de cabell, estàs ben empipat amb el teu nou pentinat. El perruquer t'ha deixat només amb un dit de cabell. Quan arribes a casa, et mires al mirall i comences a riure perquè et sembla que ha quedat totalment ridícul i no hi ha maneres d'arreglar-ho. Aquesta nit et reuneixes en un restaurant **amb el grup de pàdel del gimnàs. Hi ha persones que coneixes i d'altres que no has vist mai.** Quan arribes veus que **hi ha un noi**, que sembla el graciós del grup, que comença a riure i et diu:

"Què, t'han passat el tallagespes pels cabells, avui?" i continua rient. **Tu t'empipes molt.**

Ara digue-li que **se'n vagi a la merda.**

# Methods: Sample DCT

## (2) Mock Impoliteness

Després d'un desastrós tall de cabell, estàs ben empipat amb el teu nou pentinat. El perruquer t'ha deixat només amb un dit de cabell. Quan arribes a casa, et mires al mirall i comences a riure perquè et sembla que ha quedat totalment ridícul i no hi ha maneres d'arreglar-ho. Aquesta nit et reuneixes **amb els teus millors amics i saps que els encantarà veure't amb aquest pentinat tan alternatiu.**

Quan arribes veus que **en Pau** comença a riure i et diu:

"Què, t'han passat el tallagespes pels cabells, avui?" i continua rient.

Tu el contestes **en to de broma que se'n vagi a la merda.**



# Results: Production experiment

## ■ Prosody:

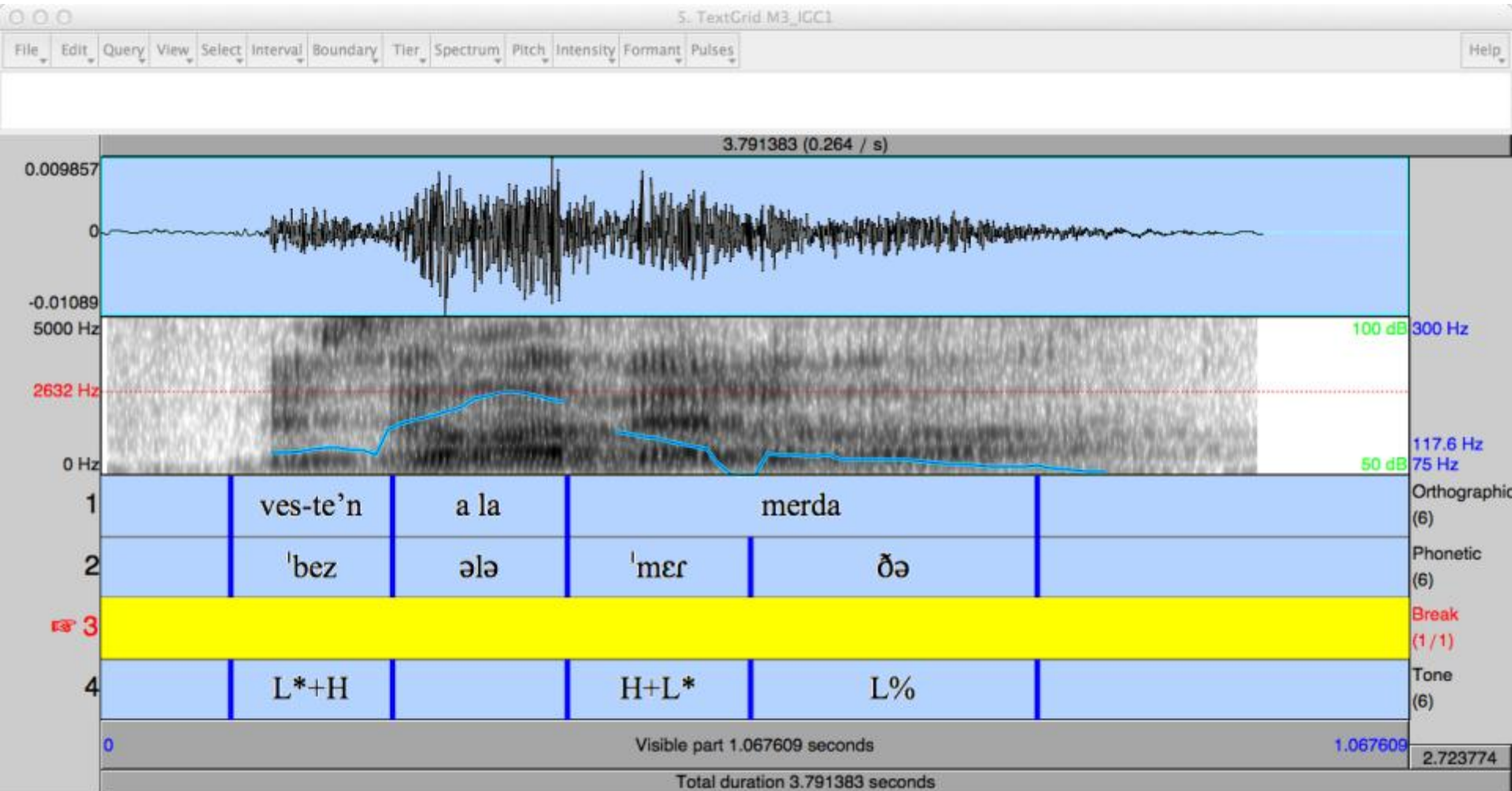
- Intonation: Most utterances began with a pitch accent of L+H\* or L\*+H on the first accented syllable, and then plateauing on the swear word before ending with H+L\*L% or L\*L%.
  - Downsteps can be used to used to linguistically hinder the interlocutor (Culpeper, 2003).

Impoliteness	H+L*L%	L*L%	L*HL%	L+H*L%	L*HH%	H*H%
<i>Genuine</i>	12 (40%)	16 (53%)	0	0	1(3%)	1(3%)
<i>Mock</i>	4 (13%)	21 (70%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	0

- Other features: shorter average syllable duration, higher pitch range, higher intensity and longer VOT for swear words containing an initial stop (e.g. *puto/puta*) for genuine impoliteness.

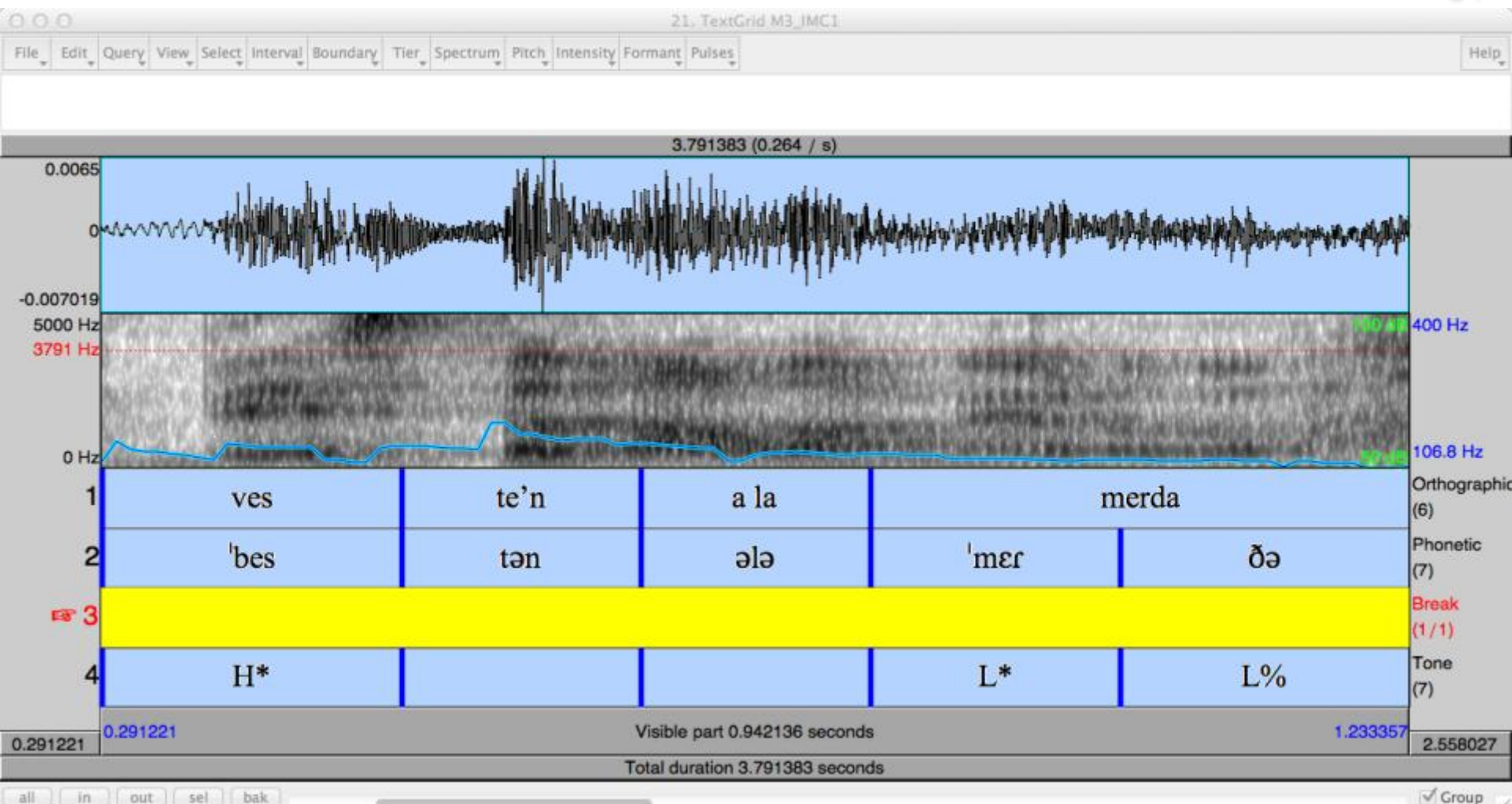
# Results: Production experiment

- Nuclear Configurations: H+L\*L%



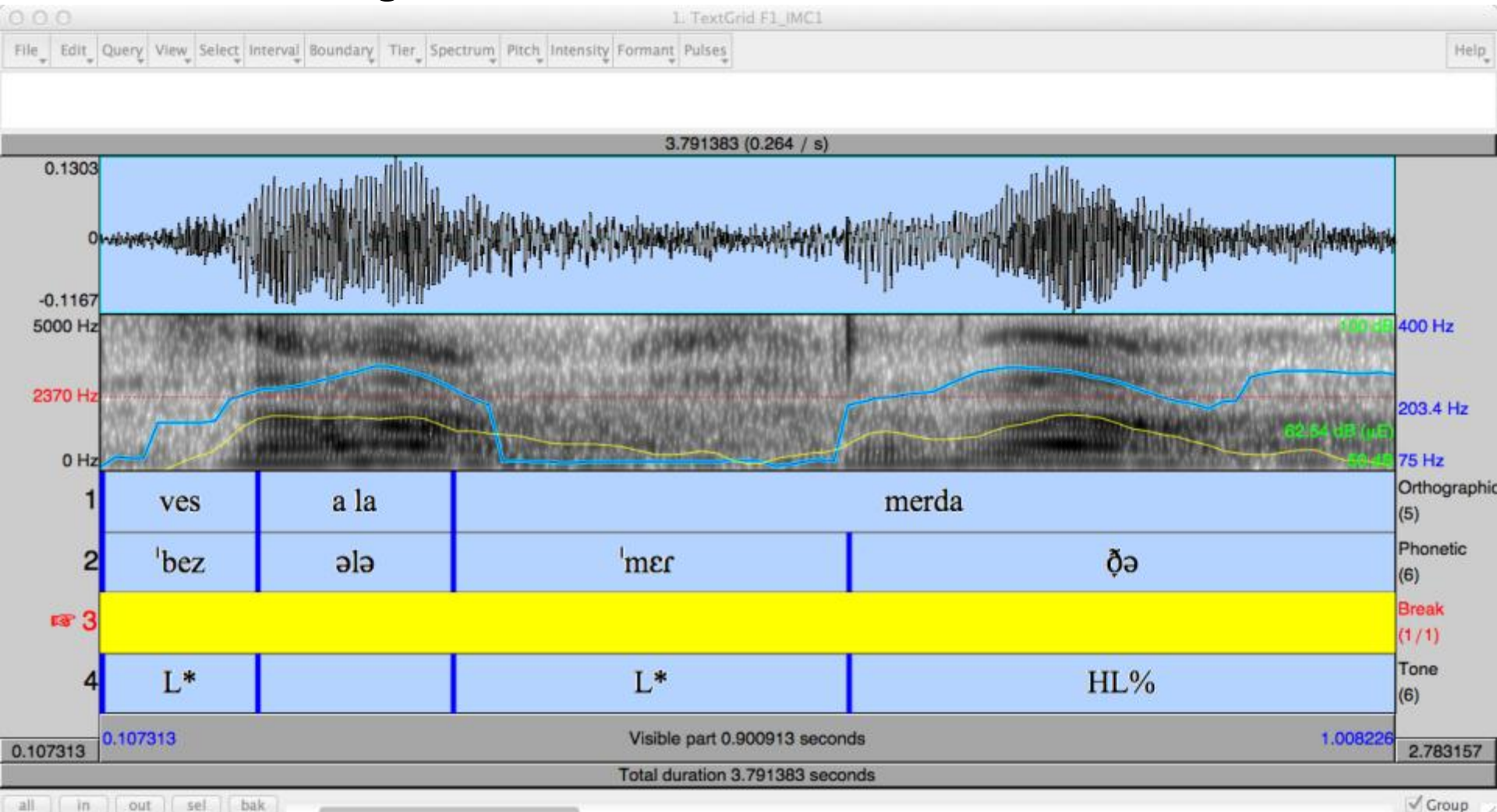
# Results: Production experiment

- Nuclear Configurations: L\*L%



# Results: Production experiment

- Nuclear Configurations: L\*HL%



# Results: Production experiment

## ■ Gestures:

Gestures	Genuine	Mock
Head shake	5	7
Head nod	<b>10</b>	3
Head tilt	3	1
Furrowed eyebrows	<b>15</b> →	3
Raised eyebrows	6	8
Smile	0	<b>25</b> ←
Body movement	0	<b>7</b> ←
Gesture A	<b>8</b> →	3
Gesture B	9	5
Gesture C	3	1
Gesture D	3	<b>8</b> ←

# Results: Production experiment

- Genuine impoliteness features: L\*L% nuclear configuration, furrowed eyebrows, head tilt, Gesture C
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6r3\\_pEw9l4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6r3_pEw9l4)

# Results: Production experiment

- Mock impoliteness features: L\*L% nuclear configuration, smiles, shakes head back and forth, dismissive hand gesture (Gesture D).
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikh5botdIBY>

# Methods: Perception Experiment 1

- **Goals:** Can people tell the difference between genuine and mock impoliteness when presented with prosodic cues only and/or with both prosodic and gestural cues?
- **Participants:** 47 native Catalan speakers.
- **Task:** Complete an online survey created with SurveyGizmo, using the materials obtained through the production experiment. Divided between Block 1 (audio only) and Block 2 (audiovisual).
  - 20 stimuli in each block (5 scenarios x 2 levels of impoliteness x 2 speakers).
  - Two Questions after listening/watching the utterance.

5. Penses que el parlant està insultant el seu interlocutor? Contesta en una escala de l'1 al 5. \*

No l'està insultant

Una mica

Neutre

Força

Totalment

6. Penses que el parlant està fent broma amb el seu interlocutor? Contesta en una escala de l'1 al 5. \*

No està fent broma

Una mica

Neutre

Força

Totalment

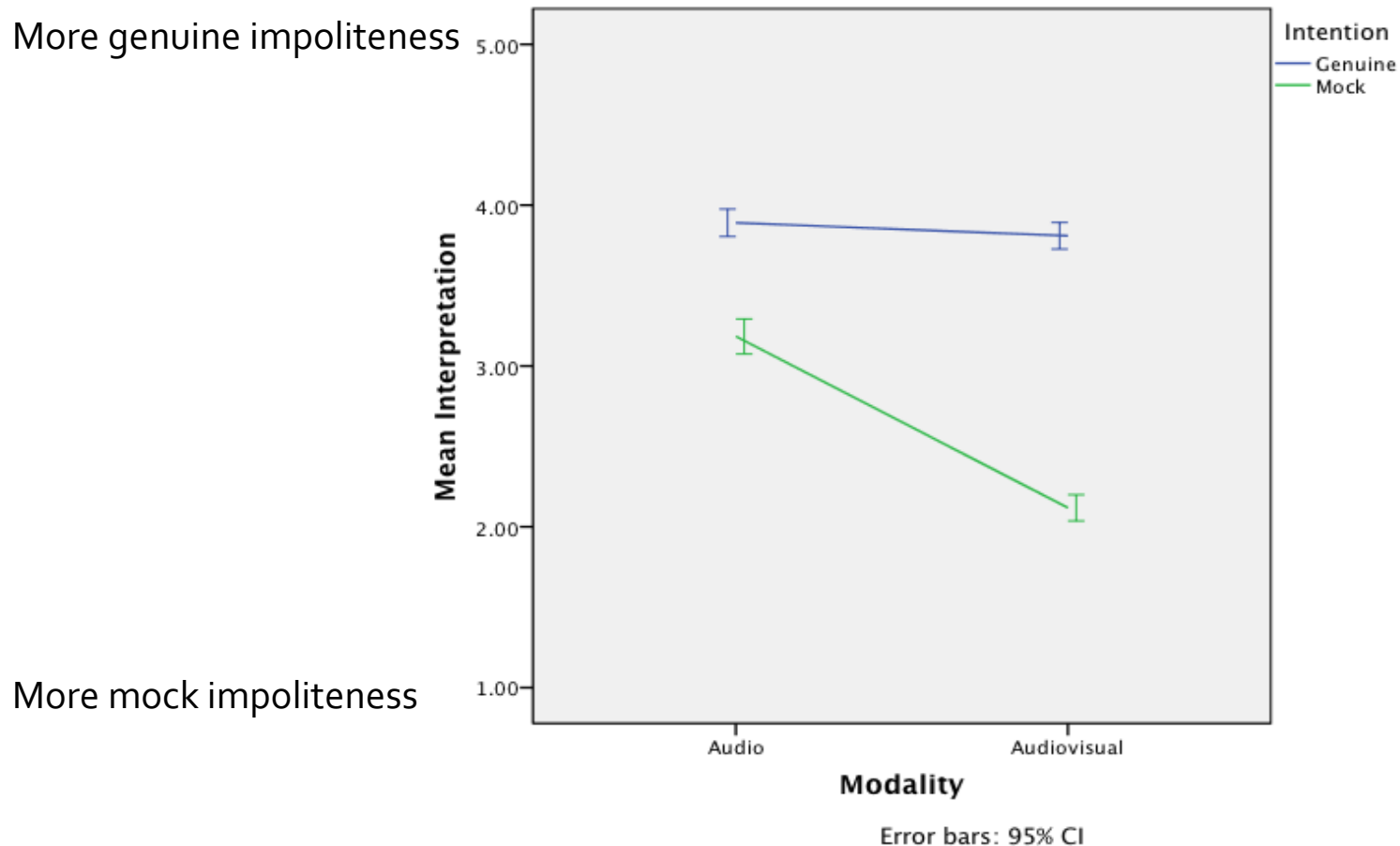


# Results: Experiment 1

- Generalized Linear Mixed Model (GLMM)
  - Dependent variable: An impoliteness scale was created by first reversing the mock impoliteness scale and then averaging it with the genuine impoliteness scale.
    - From 1 (more mock impoliteness) to 5 (more genuine impoliteness).
  - Fixed factors: speaker intention (genuine vs. mock impoliteness) and modality (audio vs. audiovisual).
  - Random factors: subject and items.

# Results: Experiment 1

## ■ Interaction: INTENTION x MODALITY



# Methods: Perception Experiment 2

- **Goals:** Does context matter in the interpretation of genuine and mock impoliteness? What happens when there is a mismatch between the context and the utterance?
- **Participants:** 50 native Catalan speakers.
- **Task:** Same as Experiment 1, but before listening/watching the utterances, participants were asked to read a discourse context.
  - New factor: congruency
    - Congruent: When the discourse context matched up with the correct utterance, e.g. genuine impoliteness discourse context followed by a genuine impoliteness utterance.
    - Incongruent: When the discourse context did **not** match up with the correct utterance, e.g. mock impoliteness discourse context followed by a genuine impoliteness utterance.
  - 2 Blocks, 10 stimuli in each block (5 scenarios x 2 levels of impoliteness x 1 speaker).

20. Penses que el parlant està insultant el seu interlocutor? Contesta en una escala de l'1 al 5. \*

No l'està insultant

Una mica

Neutre

Força

Totalment

21. Penses que el parlant està fent broma amb el seu interlocutor? Contesta en una escala de l'1 al 5. \*

No està fent broma

Una mica

Neutre

Força

Totalment

22. Valora de l'1 al 5 si creus que la manera de pronunciar la frase d'en Miquel encaixa amb la situació en què es produeix. \*

No encaixa gens

No gaire

Dubto

Encaixa força bé

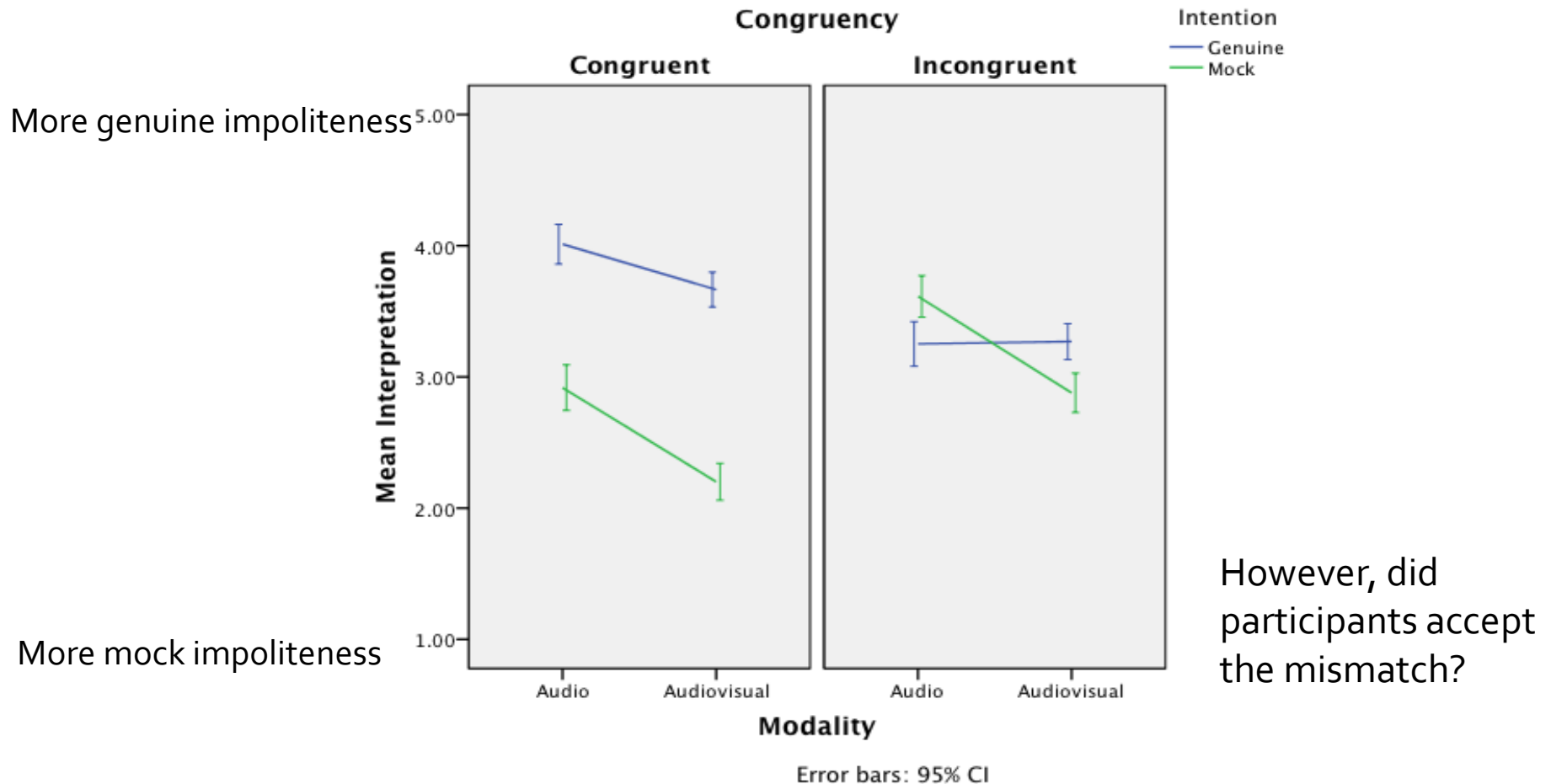
Encaixa perfectament

# Results: Experiment 2

- Generalized Linear Mixed Model (GLMM)
  - Dependent variables:
    - Impoliteness scale: From 1 (more mock impoliteness) to 5 (more genuine impoliteness).
    - Naturalness of how well the audio/audiovisual fits with the provided discourse context.
  - Fixed factors: speaker intention (genuine vs. mock impoliteness) and modality (audio vs. audiovisual).
  - Random factors: subject and items.

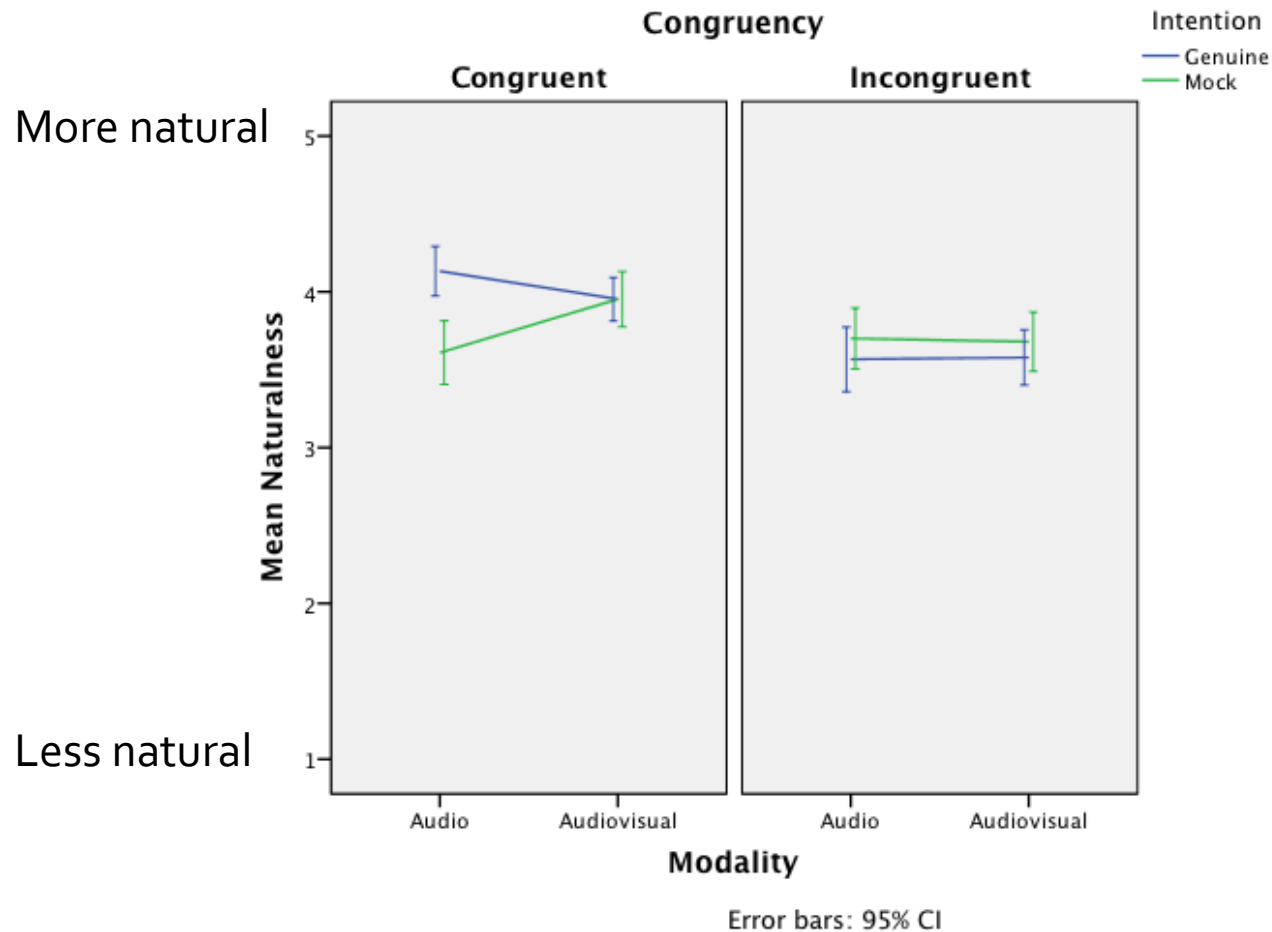
# Results: Experiment 2

- Impoliteness scale interaction: INTENTION x MODALITY x CONGRUENCY



# Results: Experiment 2

- Naturalness scale interaction: CONGRUENCY x INTENTION x MODALITY



# Discussion

- Speakers are able to distinguish genuine from mock impoliteness by prosody and by a combination of gestural and prosodic cues.
  - For genuine impoliteness: there is no difference in the interpretation of genuine impoliteness between prosody only and prosody + gesture (both are interpreted as high in genuine impoliteness, 3.9 and 3.8, respectively).
  - For mock impoliteness: there is a difference in the interpretation of impoliteness between modalities, with prosody + gestures receiving higher scores of mock impoliteness (2.1) vs. prosody only (3.1).

# Discussion

- However, context matters!
  - There was a clearer significant difference between genuine and mock impoliteness when the context was congruent (3.8 vs. 2.5) than when the context was incongruent (3.2 vs. 3.2).



# Discussion

- Even though speakers are “confused” when presented with an incongruent discourse context/audio(visual) pair, they accept it.
  - Genuine impoliteness discourse context with mock impoliteness audio(visual): “maybe they were trying to diffuse the situation with humor.”
  - Mock impoliteness discourse context with genuine impoliteness audio(visual): “maybe they were upset by the joke.”