



Filled pauses and prolongations in Roman Italian task-oriented dialogue Jessica Di Napoli

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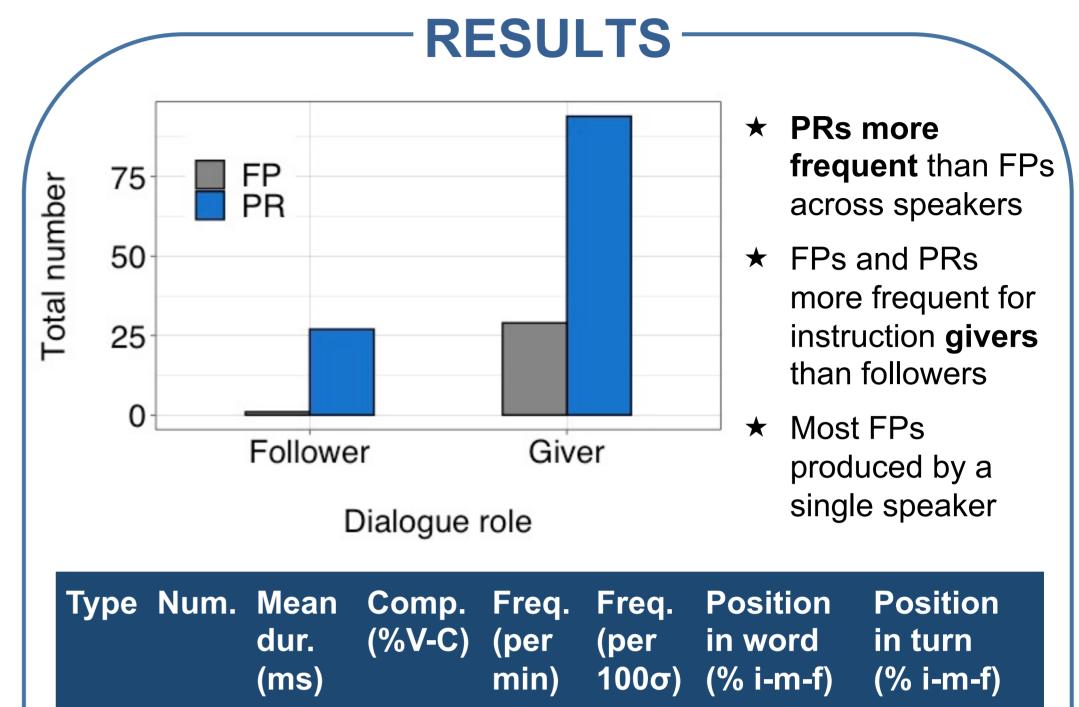
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INTRODUCTION

Filled pauses (FPs) and prolongations (PRs) are markers of disfluency that signal hesitation through vocalization and duration (Eklund, 2001; Betz et al., 2017)

 $PR = \langle ss \rangle si$ 'yes', otto<00> 'eight' = eeh, ehm

- FPs longer and more frequent than PRs (Eklund, 2001)
- In conversation, FPs help interlocuter gain time before answering a question (Lickley, 2001), while PRs signal speaker's intention to hold floor (Savino & Refice, 2000; Gravano & Hirschberg, 2011)
- Cross-linguistic differences in FPs with respect to preferred type (*uh* vs. *um*) and phonetic quality of vowel (Lo, 2019) and in PRs with respect to target segments and position in word (Betz et al., 2017)
- In Italian, FPs more frequent in spontaneous speech than read speech (Magno Caldognetto et al., 1997), and vowel quality of FPs varies by region (Giannini, 2003)



PRs more frequent than FPs in Italian? (Savino & Refice, 2000)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ♦ What are the characteristics of prolongations and filled pauses in Italian?
- \diamond Do Italian speakers produce more prolongations than filled pauses?
- \diamond Is there any evidence that filled pauses and prolongations function interactionally in Italian, and do they function similarly or in distinct ways?

METHODS

Speech material

- Map Task dialogues from the CLIPS corpus (2 analyzed so far; approximately 27 minutes of dialogue)
- Four native speakers of Roman Italian (2 female, 2 male) matched for gender (F-F, M-M); speakers take turns as *instruction giver*

Annotation in Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2018)

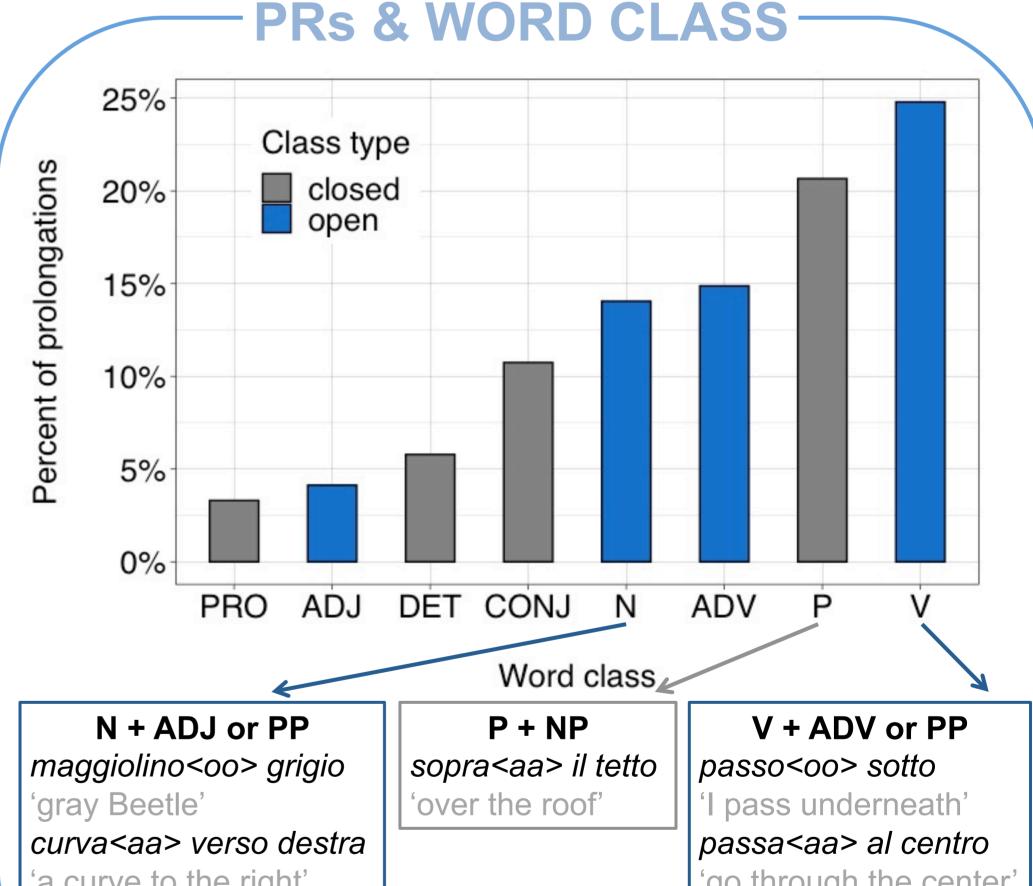
- Segmentation of speech into *turns*, defined here as interpausal units or IPUs (Koiso et al., 1998; Di Napoli, 2018)
- Annotation of **syllable nuclei** by script (de Jong & Wemke, 2009) with manual correction **m** annotation of FPs and PRs

Analysis of FPs and PRs

- Frequency of occurrence: 1) absolute frequency, for speakers in their two dialogue roles; 2) relative frequency, with respect to dialogue time (min) and speech produced (100 syllables)
- Characteristics of FPs and PRs: 1) duration (ms); 2) segmental

FP	30	568	67–33	0.7	0.4	NA	67–20–13
PR	121	325	90–10	2.7	1.7	5–4–91	18–43–39

- ★ PRs are most frequently **vowels** in **word-final** position
- ★ FPs tend to occur in turn-initial position; PRs occur in turnmedial or turn-final position



composition; 3) position in turn (initial, medial, final)

Additional characteristics of PRs: 1) word class; 2) position in word (initial, medial, final)

'a curve to the right'

go through the center

★ PRs occur somewhat more frequently in open class words (58%) than closed class words (40%)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Language-specific characteristics of hesitation – Italian patterns differently than other languages (cf. Eklund, 2001; Betz et al., 2017):

- Relative frequency of PRs > FPs
- Link to Italian syllable
- Segments undergoing prolongation (primarily word-final vowels)
- structure (Savino & Refice, 2000; Krämer, 2009)

Interactional functions of FPs and PRs – Possible roles in turntaking and discourse management:

- Turn holding (Savino & Refice, 2000) and gaining time before responding to a question or continuing to speak (Lickley, 2001)
- Signaling uncertainty (Betz et al., 2019)

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