

# Prosody and grammaticalization

The case of *sort of/kind of/type of*

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# Overview

- ❖ Background: Prosody, grammar and grammaticalization
- ❖ Research questions
- ❖ Material & method
- ❖ Results
- ❖ Discussion and outlook

# Prosody and grammar

- ❖ Proposed relationship between prosody and grammar
- ❖ “Prosody is grammar” (Wagner & Watson 2010)
- ❖ No 1:1 mapping: Crystal (1969) found ~80% match between prosody and grammatical structure
- ❖ “intonation and grammar are pragmatically but not linguistically interdependent. Neither can be used to define the other in any strict sense” (Bolinger 1989: 67)

# Prosody and grammaticalization

## ❖ “Parallel reduction theory” (Bybee et al. 1994)

1. There is a link between frequency of use and phonetic bulk such that more frequently used material, whether grammatical or lexical, tends to be shorter (phonetically reduced) relative to less often used material
2. Gram[matical items] are phonetically reduced relative to generalized lexical items, which in turn are reduced relative to more specific lexemes.  
(Bybee et al. 1994: 20)

## ❖ “[...]prosodic prominence goes along with propositional meaning and semantic transparency, while deaccentuation goes along with semantic bleaching and with discursal, interactional, and interpersonal purposes [...]” (Dehé & Stathi 2016: 914)

# *Sort of/ kind of/ type of*

- ❖ Construction with the structure N1 of N2

*“Cavatelli? What is that?”*

*“It’s a **type of pasta.**”*

- ❖ Three distinct stages of grammaticalization (e.g., Denison 2011)

A) binominal stage: NP of NP

B) qualifying stage: NP?/hedge of NP

*“It’s **kind of a funny story.**”*

C) adverbial stage: DM of X *“It’s **sort of complicated.**”*

# *Sort of/ kind of/ type of*

- ❖ Associated prosodic patterns (Dehé & Stathi 2016), synchronic study using data taken from ICE-GB
  1. N1 is stressed > associated with binominal construction
  2. N2 is stressed > associated with qualifying & adverbial construction
  3. N1 and N2 are stressed > associated with binominal construction
  4. neither are stressed > associated with adverbial construction(Tendencies, no 1:1 mappings)

# Research questions

- ❖ Can the correspondence between prosody and grammaticalization be established diachronically?
- ❖ Is prosody more closely associated with grammar or with meaning?
- ❖ Is there competition between *sort*, *kind*, and *type*?

# Material and method

## ❖ Material:

1. Original London-Lund Corpus (Svartvik & Quirk 1980): 1960s-1980s, prosodically tagged (audio recordings not widely available), ~190,000 words
2. London-Lund Corpus 2 (Pöldvere et al. 2021): matched to LLC1, material from 2010s, not prosodically tagged but audio recordings available, ~77,500 words

	SKT-noun	LLC1	LLC2	total
Included tokens	<i>type</i>	15	2	17
	<i>kind</i>	76	78	154
	<i>sort</i>	443	66	509
<b>total</b>		<b>534</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>680</b>
Words in corpus		190,000	75,500	265,500

# Material and method

## ❖ Method:

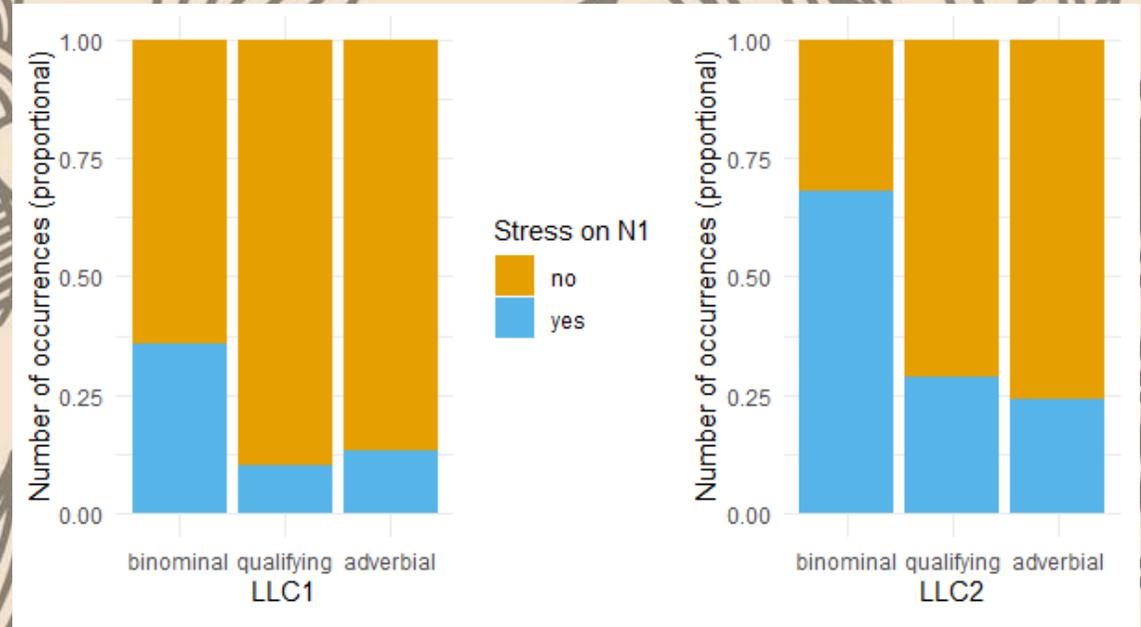
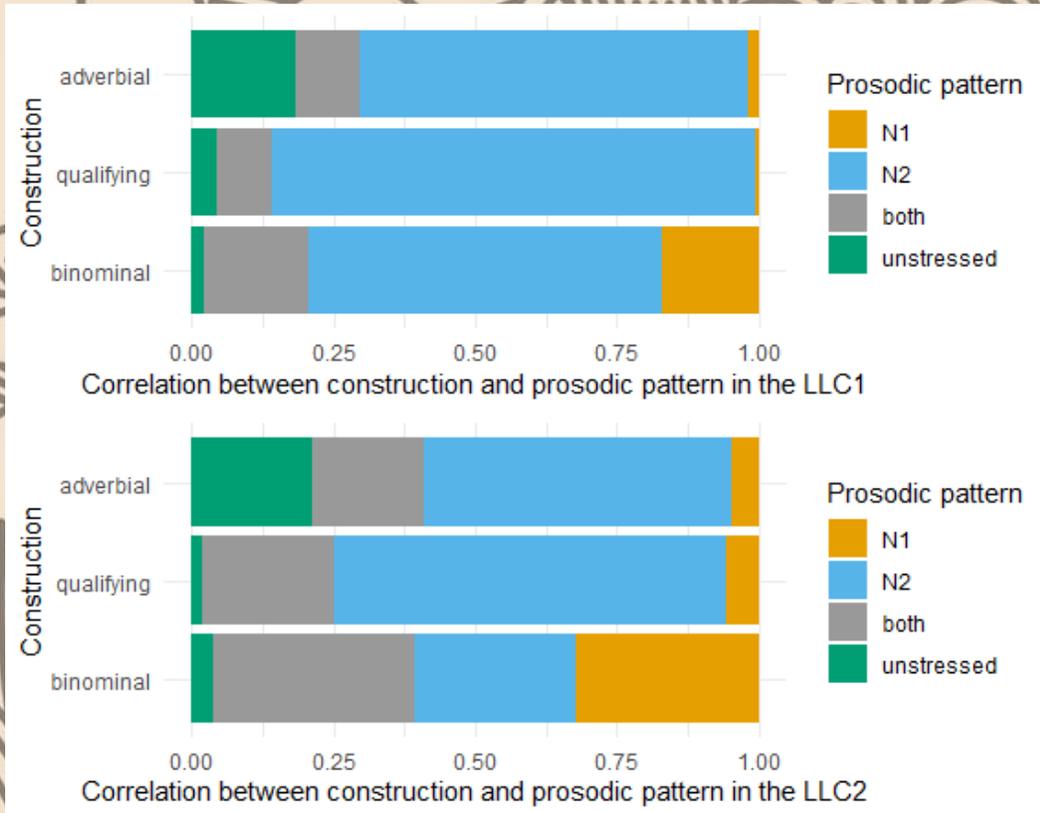
categorization into 3 stages of grammaticalization acc. to grammatical indicators

categorization into prosodic patterns

LLC1: acc. to prosodic tagging in the corpus (tags for pitch, loudness, nuclei)

LLC2: acoustic analysis (max pitch, max intensity of N1 and N2), !acoustic analysis does not mirror prosody perception, so additional auditory analysis

# Results RQ1: Relationship between prosody and grammaticalization



**Figure 1** (left): Correlation between stage of grammaticalization and prosodic pattern in LLC1 (upper graph) and LLC2 (lower graph)

**Figure 2** (right): Correlation between stress on N1 and stage of grammaticalization in LLC1 (left graph) and LLC2 (right graph)

## Results RQ2: Grammar vs pragmatics

- ❖ Difficult to establish an actual causal relationship
- ❖ Binominals & qualifying constructions are structurally similar (both have SKT-element + *of* + NP), but prosodically and semantically different (stress on N1 vs stress on N2, full noun vs hedge)
- ❖ Qualifying constructions & adverbial constructions are structurally different (i.e., N2 = NP vs N2 = any POS), but prosodically and also semantically similar (mostly not stress on N1, often stress on N2, hedge vs DM)

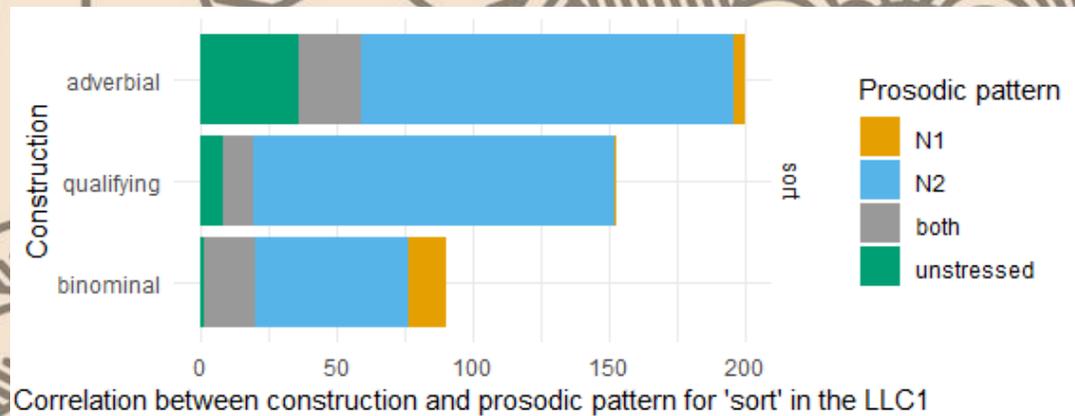
=> There is a more direct link between prosody and meaning than between prosody and surface structure

## Results RQ3:

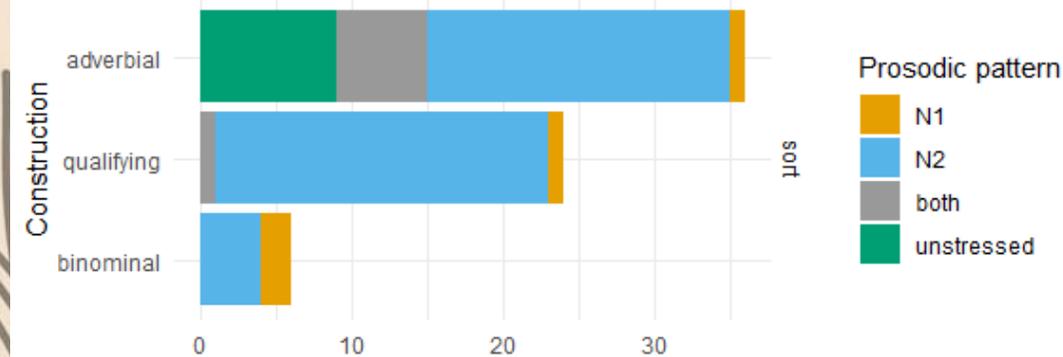
### Competitions between *sort*, *kind*, and *type*

- ❖ Increase in use of *kind of*, decrease in use of *sort of* (*type of* roughly the same)
- ❖ Suggests that *kind of* is replacing *sort of*  
(Possible caveat: interspeaker variation)
- ❖ Will *sort of* become obsolete in this construction?

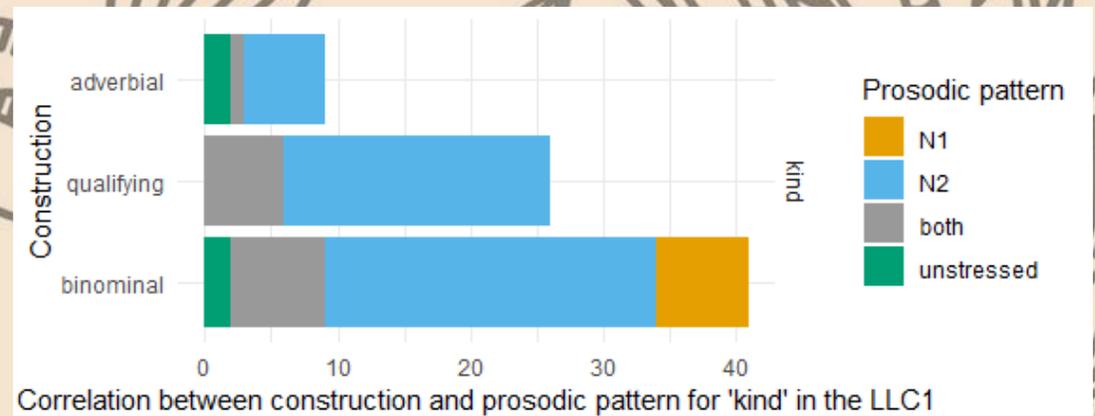
# Results RQ3: Competition between the three SKT-elements



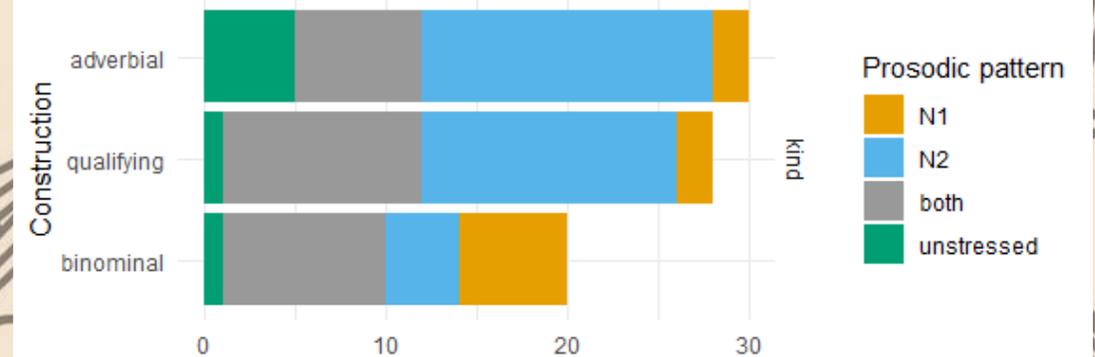
Correlation between construction and prosodic pattern for 'sort' in the LLC1



Correlation between construction and prosodic pattern for 'sort' in the LLC2



Correlation between construction and prosodic pattern for 'kind' in the LLC1



Correlation between construction and prosodic pattern for 'kind' in the LLC2

**Figure 3** (left): Correlation between stage of grammaticalization and prosodic pattern for *sort* in LLC1 (upper graph) and LLC2 (lower graph)  
**Figure 4** (right): Correlation between stage of grammaticalization and prosodic pattern for *kind* in LLC1 (upper graph) and LLC2 (lower graph)

# Conclusion & outlook

- ❖ Establish a link between prosody and grammaticalization for the *sort of/kind of/type of* construction both synchronically and diachronically
- ❖ Possible evidence that there is a stronger link between prosody and pragmatics as opposed to prosody and grammar > similar studies investigating other constructions needed
- ❖ Signs that *sort of* is being replaced by *kind of* > closer look at interspeaker variation needed

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