

The phonetics and phonology of fronted focus in Catalan

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It is generally assumed that Catalan resorts to syntactic movement to mark focus. The specific strategies used to alter the canonical word order are apparently determined by focus type. Since informational focus must be in sentence-final position to receive phrasal stress (Chomsky & Halle 1968), the non-focal material has to be either left- or right-dislocated (Vallduví 1991). Other mechanisms such as focus fronting or clefting seem to correspond to a contrastive interpretation (Solà 1990, i.a.). From the phonological point of view, no intonational difference between information and contrastive focus has been reported so far (Borràs-Comes et al. 2014). Interestingly, recent empirical studies on the syntax-prosody interface of focus in Catalan (Vanrell & Fernández Soriano 2013, i.a.) question the claims made both from the syntactic and the prosodic perspective. First, they observe that constituent fronting can also be a very common strategy to mark information focus. Second, they also report that, when constituent fronting is used as syntactic marking, intonation plays a crucial role in distinguishing the information and contrastive focus: fronted information foci are characterized by a low nuclear tone followed by rising-falling boundary tones which extend to the postfocal region (Fig. 1, left panel), whereas fronted contrastive foci are characterized by a rising nuclear tone and postfocal compression (Fig. 1, right panel). In this talk we will present a phonetic and phonological analysis of fronted focus in Catalan. The results show that, from a prosodic point of view, there is evidence in Catalan that the notion of focus is not homogenous and that, as far as prosodic realization of focus is concerned, Romance languages may not differ so much from Germanic languages.

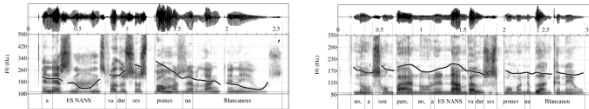


Figure 1. F0 contour of the fronted information focus declarative [A es nans]_{IF} va dur ses pomes na Blancaneus 'Snow White brought the apples [to the dwarves]_{IF}' (left panel) and of the fronted contrastive focus declarative No, a son pare, no, [a es nans]_{CF} va dur ses pomes na Blancaneus 'No, not to her father, no, Snow White brought the apples [to the dwarves]_{CF}'.

References: • Borràs-Comes, J., M. del Mar Vanrell & P. Prieto. 2014. The role of pitch range in establishing intonational contrasts. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 44(1). 1–20. • Chomsky, N. & M. Halle. 1968. *The sound pattern of English*. New York: Harper & Row. • Solà, J. 1990. L'ordre dels mots en català. Notes pràctiques. Solà, *Lingüística i normativa*, 91–124. Barcelona: Empúries. • Vallduví, E. 1991. The role of plasticity in the association of focus and prominence. *Proceedings of the Eastern States Conference on Linguistics (ESCOL)* 7, 295–306. • M. del Mar Vanrell & O. Fernández-Soriano. 2013. Variation at the interfaces in Ibero-Romance. *Catalan Journal of Linguistics* 12. 243–282.