Evidence from Brazilian Portuguese Information Packaging

Lilian TEIXEIRA DE SOUSA (UNICAMP)

1. Intonation has multiple functions in language, including a pragmatic one that indicates speech act distinctions; expresses word-level contrasts in tone languages; and assigns a structure to utterances in terms of phrasing and prominence relations. Understood as being pitch variation in the course of an utterance, intonation is therefore strictly related to information structure. For many scholars new information is marked with high tone (H), whereas given information is marked with low tone (L). However, Kohler (2004) and Baumann (2008) have argued that the distinction NEW/ GIVEN is not enough to understand the relation between intonation and information packaging in German. According to them, it is also important to distinguish degrees of givenness. Considering the relevance of prominence relations for information packaging, my aim in this paper is to investigate which type of accentuation is used to indicate given/ new information in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and also to check if degrees of givenness play a role in the intonation in this language.

2. I have considered three degrees of givenness, based on their cognitive status: 1) new or inactive: information mentioned for the first time; 2) newsworthy or semi-active; 3) given or active. Because the concepts of newness and givenness of information are generally related to the Focus/ Background terminology, I have analyzed such interactions on the light of the concepts of contrast and emphasis. I considered contrastive those referents which were used (by the speaker) to correct something in the previous speech and emphasized all referents highlighted without corrections.

3. For this study, I have recorded four native male speakers of BP in an interactional context, aged 18 to 30 years-old. To record the speakers, I used a clue game in which two speakers should indicate suspicious people of a crime taking into account information available in a set of statements. Each speaker had a different set of statements that contained conflicting information, e.g., the suspect 1 affirming to be with suspect 2 in the library during the crime and the suspect 2 affirming to be alone in the living room. The way the referents in the statements were resumed by the speaker was used to classify the degree of giveness. If the referent was repeated, the information was considered given, if it was resumed by a pronoun or synonym, the information was considered newsworthy. Referents not available in the statements were the only information considered new. With this game, the speakers were able to produce spontaneous sentences through controlled referents. From the set of utterances, I selected 59 declaratives sentences, which were later analyzed with the Praat software (Boersma;Weenink, 2010). From those sentences, I was able to recognize 34 given referents, 44 newsworthy and 10 new ones. Since the number of utterances containing new information was lower than the ones containing given and newsworthy, it was not possible to proceed to a detailed statistical analysis.

4. To the intonational analyses, I paid attention to the distribution of pitch accents and their relation to informational status of the referent. DaTo intonational annotation system (Dynamical Tones of Brazilian Portuguese) was used, a system proposed by Lucente (2008) to describe Focus in the intonation according to the notion of dynamical contour. The alignment in this approach was specified considering a synchrony between phonation and articulation.

5. Despite the impossibility of a detailed statistical analysis, the results have shown relevant relations, on one hand between falling contours (HL, >HL, LHL) and contrast and, on the other hand, between rising contours (LH, >LH, HLH) and emphasis. Regarding the degree of givenness, the results have not indicated a one to one relationship between degree of givenness and intonation. However the results confirmed most studies which relate high tone

to new information, since new information is marked through high tone. In sum, it is possible to state that LH contour is more frequently used to express given information, while HL is more frequently used to convey the newsworthy information type.

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