Entonación, discurso y estructura informativa en el español rioplatense

Doctoral Thesis
Leopoldo O. Labastía

Supervisors:
Dra. María Victoria Escandell-Vidal (U.N.E.D.)
Buenos Aires/Porteño Spanish
Theoretical background: pragmatics

Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, 2004; Wilson and Wharton, 2006)

- Cognitive Principle of Relevance: “Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance”
- Communicative Principle of Relevance: “An utterance or other ostensive act creates a presumption of optimal relevance.”
- Relevance: characterised in terms of cost-benefit:
  - Benefits: positive cognitive effects: the derivation of contextual implications, strengthenings, weakenings
  - Effort: processing effort and memory effort
- A contextual implication: a deductive assumption involving the synthesis of a proposition P (utterance) with a context C. As communication progresses, the set of assumptions in the context is continuously updated (House, 2006).
Theoretical background: pragmatics

- Both coding and inference processes play a key role in communication.
- Linguistic expressions encode **conceptual meaning**.
- Other expressions encode **procedures** which constrain inference processes by increasing the salience of some hypotheses and eliminating others, and thus reduce processing effort: discourse connectives, mood indicators, discourse particles, pronouns, intonation.

- Intonation can have three functional orientations (House, 2006):
  - Towards the speaker himself: indexical information.
  - Towards the message: it contributes to the propositional content or clarifies the context to recover the speaker’s intended meaning.
  - Towards the interaction: the on-going process of constructing discourse.
Theoretical background: pragmatics


- Information packaging: A procedural approach to information structure.

- Three primitives: S: \{FOCUS – GROUND\}
  - Focus: the informational part: RETRIEVE-ADD
  - Ground: \{ link – tail \}.

- Link: the conceptual address where the hearer has to record the information. GO TO.....
- Tail: given information. RETRIEVE-SUBSTITUTE

/John took the BUS on his way to work/
Theoretical Background: Prosody

  - Pitch accents
  - Boundary tones
  - Phrase accents
- Phrasing: the intermediate phrase, the intonation phrase.
- SP_toBI transcription system (Sosa, 2003; Estebas-Vilaplana y Prieto, 2008)
- SP_toBI applied to Buenos Aires Spanish (Gabriel et al, 2010)
Hypotheses and aims

Hypotheses:
- Tone choice is used to guide pragmatic interpretation processes in B.A. Spanish: foreground and background relations in discourse.
- Nuclear tone placement is used to signal foreground/background within intonation phrases.
- Tone choice indicates the changing accessibility of discourse referents.

Aims:
- To study tone choice in impromptu spoken discourse, and identify their meaning in terms of procedural encoding.
- To study declination across intonation units, and identify their procedural meaning.
- To study nuclear tone placement at the end of the intonation unit and in other positions, and identify their meaning in terms of procedural encoding.
Corpus and methodology

Corpus:
- TV and radio interviews

Methodology
- Transcription of the interview
- Division into sections: theme-based
- Identification of relevant prosodic/pragmatic phenomena
- Auditory analysis
- Pragmatic and discourse analysis
Intonation and discourse structure 1

- The role of the level nuclear configuration: L+H* M%, H+L* M%.
- Entrevista a Alejandro Dolina: Dol5-019/050 (13:20’)

```
033° 034° 034°
/ adeMÁS de /(la afiCION que teNía mi aBUElo) (por proteGER a cuanto desmaDRAdo)
L+H* M%  L+H*  L+H*  L+H* M-  L+H* L+H* M-

035° 037°
(huBIere por... por la ZOna) / mi CAsa teNía un... si ES no ES de de teAtro /
L+H* H+L*M%  L+H* L+H* L+H* L+H*  H+L* L%
```
Intonation and discourse structure 1
The suspensive nuclear configurations: L+H* M%, H+L* M%, H+L* M% creates the context in which to process an eventual falling configuration (H+L* L%, L+H*+L L% or L* L%).

The M% indicates to the hearer he should wait until a falling configuration has come.

The falling configuration acts as a timing signal to process the whole discourse section with the guarantee that the hearer will obtain contextual effects, and that his processing effort will be duly rewarded.
Intonation and discourse structure 2

- The role of the rising nuclear configuration: L* M% or L+H* H%.
- Entrevista a Mariano Grondona: Gron4-021-052
Intonation and discourse structure 2
Intonation and discourse 2

- The rising nuclear configurations: L* M%, L+H* H%, H+L* M%, indicate that the context is already accessible, either through previous discourse or through inference (shared cultural knowledge, etc.), and should be used to later compute the relevance of an intonation unit with a falling nuclear configuration.
- The M% / H% indicate to the hearer he should wait until a falling configuration has come.
- The combination of suspensive and rising nuclear configurations with falling configurations constitute processing units that facilitate the derivation of contextual effects for the listener.
### Declination and discourse

- **Dolina 030/042**

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<tr>
<td>030</td>
<td>031-032</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>/y enTONces / (haBlA) (por empeZAR) /</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>L+H* M%</td>
<td>L+H* M-</td>
<td>L+H* H%</td>
<td>212 Hz</td>
<td>205 Hz</td>
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<tr>
<td>033</td>
<td>034a</td>
<td>034b</td>
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<tr>
<td>/adeMÁS de / (la afiCION que teNía mi aBUElo) (por proteGER a cuanto desmaDADO) /</td>
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<tr>
<td>L+H* M%</td>
<td>L+H*</td>
<td>L+H* M-</td>
<td>L+H* H%</td>
<td>L+H* M-</td>
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<td>035</td>
<td>037</td>
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<tr>
<td>(huBIEre per... por la ZQna) / mi CAse teNía un... si ES no ES de de teAtro /</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L+H*</td>
<td>H=L*M%</td>
<td>L+H* L+H*</td>
<td>L+H* L+H*</td>
<td>H+L* L%</td>
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</tbody>
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<td>038a</td>
<td>38b</td>
<td>039</td>
<td>040</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/haBlA / MUCHes persoNAjes / alGUnos de Ellos / ... MUY pintorescos /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L+H* M%</td>
<td>H*</td>
<td>H+L*L%</td>
<td>L+H*</td>
<td>L+H* M%</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>041</td>
<td>042</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>/ (después esTAba la afiCION) (de mi MAdre y de mis TIAS por la lecTUra /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L+H*</td>
<td>L+H* M-</td>
<td>L+H*</td>
<td>L+H*</td>
<td>H+L* M%</td>
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</table>
Declination and discourse
Declination and discourse

- Declination indicates the beginning and end of processing units.
- At the beginning of the processing unit, there is pitch reset to a high key.
- There is a gradual descent throughout the intonation phrases in the processing unit.
- The unit usually ends with an intonation phrase with a low key.
- Declination organizes discourse into coherent units, and thus make it easier for the hearer to process it.
Information structure and the intonation phrase

Silveira 000-047

022
/(y es TOdo un moMEnTo) (en la vida de una mujer) (NO)/
L+>H*   L+H*+L   L-   L- L*+H* H%
Information structure and the intonation phrase

- Silveira 045

045
/
(yo CREo que a lo meJOR) (tiene que VER) (con este momento) (NO) /
L+H*   L+H*M%   H+L* L-   L- L*+H L%

[Sound wave and annotations]
The location of the nuclear tone indicates where the listener should focus on to obtain the most contextual effects.

Deaccenting indicates that the information in that part is contextually accessible: repetition, paraphrase, inferrable material.

Deaccented items: discourse connectives, illocutionary adverbs, quotation phrases.

Changing the nuclear pitch accent to non-final positions (the neutral, standard position) indicates that the listener can expected extra or special cognitive effects (contrastive focus, special emphasis, etc.)
The prosody of links/topics in discourse

Silveira

Sil2-066-089

O’Donnell: Usted ya había perdido a su padre...

Silveira: Yo había perdido a mi padre. Mis padres este… mi madre se casó muy joven. Se separó al año y pico. Mi padre era de San Isidro. Los Silveira somos, o son, de San Isidro. Después si quiere le explico ese son o soy de San Isidro.

O’Donnell: Hay algo de orgullo en eso, ¿no?, son de San Isidro.

Silveira: no, cuando yo empecé a trabajar, este… la familia de mi padre me llamó y me pidió que yo me sacara la i griega del Silveira, que me pusiera Silveira con i latina, y eso me costó mucho tiempo perdonarlo.

O’Donnell: Para que no lo confundieran.

Silveira: para que, “¿cómo una actriz en la familia?” [risa].
### The prosody of links/topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intonation phrase</th>
<th>Link/topic</th>
<th>Focus tail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>066</td>
<td>/usted/</td>
<td>ya había perdido a su padre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>067</td>
<td>yo</td>
<td>había perdido a mi padre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>068a</td>
<td>mis padre</td>
<td>este:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>068b</td>
<td>mi madre</td>
<td>se casó muy joven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>069-070</td>
<td></td>
<td>se separó al año y pico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>071</td>
<td>mi padre</td>
<td>era de San Isidro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>072-075</td>
<td>los Silveira</td>
<td>somos o son de San Isidro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>082 Cuando</td>
<td>YO</td>
<td>empecé a trabajar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>083</td>
<td>la familia de mi padre</td>
<td>me llamó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>084 y</td>
<td></td>
<td>me pidió</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que</td>
<td>yo</td>
<td>me sacara la i griega del silveira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>085 que</td>
<td></td>
<td>me pusiera Silveira con i latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>086 y</td>
<td>Eso</td>
<td>me costó mucho tiempo perdonarlo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The prosody of links/topics

- Intonation signals the relative accessibility of referents.
- From very accessible (null subject), deaccented, L*, L+H* to rather inaccessible: (L+>H*).
- The more salient the referent, the less accessible it will seem to the speaker
- The use of different pitch accents facilitates the identification of the intended referent by indicating the changing accessibility of referents throughout discourse.
Summary

- Prosody allocates processing effort to parts which will yield cognitive effects.
- Neutral prosody will cost the least to process: L+H*, H+L*.
- Departures from standard prosody might cost extra effort, but it may alter the salience of certain interpretations. It may encourage the listener to look for extra or different effects.
- Prosody indicates the balance between cognitive effects and processing effort.
Moltes gràcies
Thanks a lot
Tante grazie
Merci beaucoup
Muchas gracias