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Bilingualism and intonation: a case study of Andean Spanish noun phrases

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Abstract

Recent studies on bilingualism and intonation have suggested that bilinguals have different intonation systems from monolinguals (i.a. Bullock 2009, Colantoni & Gurlekian 2004, O'Rourke 2005, Queen 2001). This study examines the relationship between focus and intonation in Andean Spanish noun phrases. In non-Andean Spanish focus is encoded phonologically, but not so in Quechua. The research questions of this study are: (a) is intonation used to express focus in Andean Spanish, and if so, how? and (b) is Andean Spanish intonation affected by contact with Quechua? The data come from 16 adult Quechua-Spanish bilinguals from Conchacalla, Peru. The task consisted of a dialogue game (adapted from Swerts, Krahmer & Avasani 2002), in which the subjects described objects and colors by turns. The questions in the dialogue game elicited noun phrases with three types of focus: broad focus, contrastive focus on the noun and contrastive focus on the adjective. The data were recorded and analyzed in Praat. The results revealed some differences between Andean Spanish and non-Andean Spanish with respect to the intonation of noun phrases. Furthermore, the results suggest that the intonation of Andean Spanish noun phrases is affected by contact with Quechua. The study contributes to studies on intonation, bilingualism and language contact.