

Prosodic system in contact: Occitan and French

Rafèu Sichel-Bazin (Universität Osnabrück i Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

Occitan and French are two Gallo-Romance languages that have been in a diglossic situation in southern France for centuries. This close contact has led to interference at all levels, including prosody. This presentation will deal with phrasing, accentuation and intonation in Occitan and southern French, highlighting the consequences of language contact. On the one hand, Occitan has adopted the Accentual Phrase (AP), the basic phrasing unit of French, which may contain more than one lexical word but displays only one obligatory final pitch accent (an initial rise may optionally mark its left edge). On the other hand, southern French recalls Occitan in its rhythmic patterns, showing more frequently penultimate accentuation and relics of lexical stress (marked even AP-internally as a foot-level prominence). As far as intonation is concerned, most contours are common to both languages. However, some specific utterance types (such as biased statements or wh-questions) show different nuclear configurations in Occitan and in northern French; southern French shows an intermediate situation, tending to one or the other pole as a function of the intensity of contact with Occitan.