

## Task determines differential prosodic marking of focus in Italian

Caterina Ventura<sup>1</sup>, Martine Grice<sup>1</sup>, Michelina Savino<sup>2</sup> and Petra B. Schumacher<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Cologne, <sup>2</sup>University of Bari

Differences in focus structure entail differences in the degrees of prosodic prominence of a word in an utterance. For example, across a number of varieties of Italian, it has been shown that broad focus, non-contrastive narrow focus and narrow contrastive (corrective) focus are produced using pitch accents with differing degrees of prominence (Fivela et al., 2016; Grice et al., 2005): in broad focus and non-contrastive narrow focus, nuclear accents are generally falling (e.g. H+L\*), whereas in narrow contrastive (corrective) focus, they can be both rising (e.g. L+H\*) or falling (e.g. H\*+L). Moreover, some pitch accents are attested only postfocally, e.g. L\* in the Florentine and Siena varieties (Bocci & Avesani, 2010).

A similar (although not identical) form-function mapping has been argued for German too. However, studies have found that certain patterns do not hold for all speakers, and that individual speakers are often inconsistent across different realisations of the same function, even in identical contexts (Grice et al., 2017, Cangemi et al., 2015). In fact, as shown in Grice et al. (2017), some speakers may use the same pitch accent to mark different types of focus, but nevertheless succeed in using intonation to express intended pragmatic functions, allowing listeners to recover the intended focus.

The current study explores two datasets in the variety of Italian spoken in Udine (in the north-eastern part of Italy), with the aim of comparing the differential production of three focus structures across two tasks. Both tasks manipulate contexts through the use of three question-answer pairs that made the target word occur either in broad focus, contrastive focus or as part of the background (post-focal). Subjects (n=14 in each of the two sessions) listened to the questions (presented both visually in written form and auditorily) and read out the answers in a contextually appropriate manner. Each subject produced 60 answers in total. The difference between the two sets of stimuli was in the length of the utterance: in the first experiment, speakers were required to repeat part of the question; in the second, they provided a shorter answer. The strategy was considered more natural in the second than in the first task version (Table 1). We explore whether this difference in length (involving repetition of material in the question) affects the ability of subjects to differentiate between focus structures, addressing the question: Do task requirements play a role in the planning of the focus structure a speaker has to produce?

The first (long answer) dataset appears to confirm the trend mentioned above, with participants producing a high degree of overlap in their productions across the three conditions. In the second (short answer) set, the three conditions are realized more distinctly (Figure 1). These results show that production studies on intonation are very sensitive to task requirements and individual strategies employed by participants. In fact, when the task implies a higher level of difficulty, prominence relations are less clearly defined, showing the relevance of the task in the planning of the focus structure speakers want to produce.

Conditions	Questions	Answers	
		Set 1 (long answers)	Set 2 (short answers)
Broad focus	Cosa bisogna fare quando si va in gita? (What do you need to do when you go on a trip?)	Quando si va in gita, bisogna preparare un <b>panino</b> per la merenda. (When you go on a trip, you need to prepare a <b>sandwich</b> as a snack)	Bisogna preparare un <b>panino</b> per la merenda. (You need to prepare a <b>sandwich</b> as a snack)

Narrow focus	Quando si va in gita, bisogna preparare un panino o un caffè per la merenda? (When you go on a trip, do you need to prepare a sandwich or a coffee as a snack?)	Quando si va in gita, bisogna preparare un <b>PANINO</b> per la merenda. (When you go on a trip, you need to prepare a <b>SANDWICH</b> as a snack)	Bisogna preparare un <b>PANINO</b> per la merenda. (You need to prepare a <b>SANDWICH</b> as a snack)
Post-focal	Quando si va in gita, bisogna preparare o comprare un panino per la merenda? (When you go on a trip, do you need to prepare or buy a sandwich as a snack?)	Quando si va in gita, bisogna <b>PREPARARE</b> un <b>panino</b> per la merenda (When you go on a trip, you need to <b>PREPARE</b> a <b>sandwich</b> as a snack)	Bisogna <b>PREPARARE</b> un <b>panino</b> per la merenda (You need to <b>PREPARE</b> a sandwich as a snack)

Table 1: Examples of stimuli for each condition. Bold indicates the target words, while words in capital letters are the focused ones.

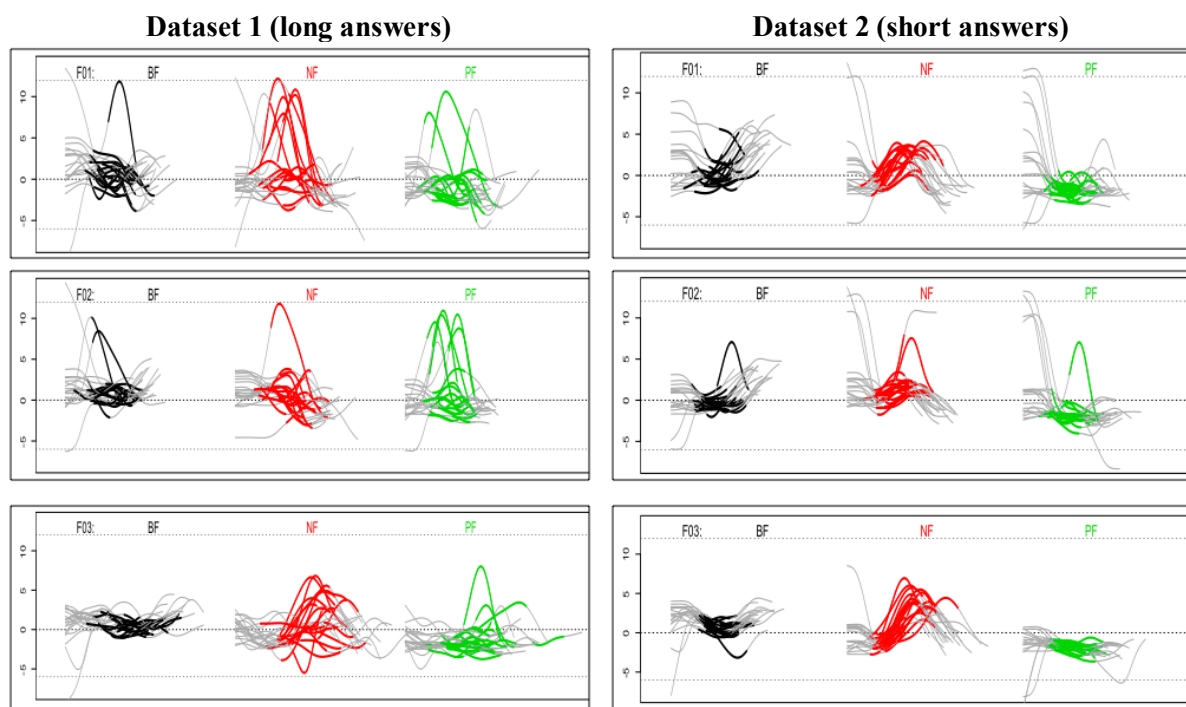


Figure 1: Pitch contours (in semitones, relative to each speaker's median) for each target word, for each condition (BF= Broad focus, NF= Narrow focus, PF=post-focal), for three speakers (F01, F01, F03). Coloured lines indicate the stressed syllable. Set 1= long answers, Set 2=short answers.

## References

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