

Abstract
Intonation in Northern Peninsular Spanish

The study seeks to corroborate intonational patterns proposed by phonologists concerning peninsular Spanish. I want to evaluate whether or not peninsular Spanish speakers interpret some intonational patterns in the manner that authors assume they do. Moreover, I want to analyze if the interpretation of those patterns made by speakers from Madrid (principally described dialect in previous studies) is the same as those from other Spanish dialects.

It is not clear whether or not Spanish speakers use the same intonational pattern (specifically, the contour containing a high tone of intermediate phrase H-) to mark contrast between old and new information within the same sentence itself; and, in addition, to mark contrastive focus, e.g. contrast between a part of the sentence and (an)other element(s) in the conversation, in the dialog, in the discourse. For that, I would also want to analyze if both pragmatic strategies use the same H- at the end of the contrastive word, and the different interpretation depends only on context itself, or if those contours are not the same.

In order to make such an evaluation, I will recruit a person from Madrid to record three simple sentences¹ using four possible intonations: broad focus, emphasis over the first element, over the second one, and over the third one. I will make recordings in the Phonetics Lab at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), where I will verify (using Praat or Pitchworks) that sentences show patterns described by authors. Each sentence will be transferred to a tape six times, because it is necessary that the subjects answer six questions about each sentence (one at a time), in order to establish some conclusions about issues proposed above. Thus, 72 sentences (3 sentences * 4 intonations * 6 times) will be randomly ordered in the tape.

Subjects (from Bilbao, Madrid and Barcelona) will receive a written questionnaire with 72 questions. Subjects will hear a sentence and will answer a question about the interpretation given to that sentence. The process will be repeated 72 times. Written questionnaires will be analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

¹ All sentences have the canonical Spanish word order (subject-verb-object). They do not have voiceless sounds because they break the fundamental frequency of intonation. Subjects, as well as verbs and objects are paroxytones. Each element (subjects, verbs and objects) has the same number of syllables (subjects: 2, verbs: 2, objects: 3), and all syllables are open. Thus, I am controlling word order, accent, number and kind of syllables.

Questions to oral input:

Informants will listen to each sentence, and will answer in a sheet a question about it.

For example²:

Sentence (oral input): “Nora mira la luna” ‘Nora look at the moon’

Question (written):

Tell if this intonation is appropriate as an answer to the question “¿Qué mira Nora?” ‘What does Nora look at?’. Mark the number which you think is more appropriate

(1=No, 2=Maybe, 3=Yes) 1 2 3

² I have believed unnecessary to put all the questions, and I only have put an example, because all the questions have the same format.

Alicia Burga

403 S. Busey Ave. Apt # 10, Urbana, IL 61801-7888, USA

burga@uiuc.edu

Graduate student (Master's degree) at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)