

## Production and perception of focus in L1 Spanish/L2 Basque speakers

It is generally assumed that, like other Romance languages (e.g., Catalan, Italian), Spanish resorts to syntactic movement to mark focus (Bolinger 1954, 1954-55, Büring & Gutiérrez-Bravo 2001, Zubizarreta 1998, among others). The specific strategies used to alter the canonical word order are apparently determined by focus type. Since informational focus must be in sentence-final position to receive phrasal stress by means of the Nuclear Stress Rule (NSR) (Chomsky & Halle 1968, Zubizarreta 1998), in this language the non-focal material has to move to a non-canonical position, what is known as *prosodically motivated movement* or *p-movement* (see (1)). Interestingly, a variety of mechanisms are available for contrastive focus in Spanish: the focused constituent can be clefted (2b), fronted (2c) or remain in situ (2d). The focused constituent *manzanas* 'apples' in (2) is generally interpreted to bear the nuclear accent. From the phonological point of view, no intonational difference between information and contrastive focus has been reported so far (Estebas-Vilaplana & Prieto 2008, Hualde & Prieto 2015) and the deaccentuation of postfocal material in contrastive focus still remains under discussion (Cruttenden 1993, Swerts et al. 2002 among others, against Nadeu & Vanrell 2015). On the other hand, in Basque (which has canonical word order SOV), a focused phrase must be left-adjacent to the verb as in (3) and (4) (Arregi 2001) and, consequently, only a constituent in this position will be able to receive the main prosodic prominence (Elordieta & Hualde 2014). Typically, contrastive focus is characterized by a higher peak followed by a decreased pitch level in the postfocal material. Information focus can also be produced with this pattern but it can be often realized with no prosodic difference from broad focus. At the surface level neither focus domain (broad vs. narrow) nor focus type (information vs. contrastive) could be distinguished on the basis of syntactic order (Elordieta & Hualde 2014: 422-426).

In this paper we explore the effect of contact between Spanish and Basque on the production and perception of focus. Specifically, we try to determine whether there is transfer from Basque to Spanish and, if so, which is the specific nature of this transfer (prosodic, pragmatic or syntactic). To this end, we created a corpus by presenting the participants with question-answer pairs based on short picture stories in a PowerPoint slide show. The questions were designed to elicit information and contrastive focus either on the subject or on the object. Speakers with different language profiles participated in the experiment: L1 Basque/L2 Spanish speakers, L1 Spanish/L2 Basque speakers and Madrid Spanish speakers. This production experiment was complemented with a judgment task experiment. Interesting results are obtained regarding the production of information focus by L1 Spanish/L2 Basque speakers, since they tend to resort to fronting when the object is under focus, see Figure 1 (which is a typical strategy in Basque). It is also interesting that intonation seems not to be affected by focus type, but by the position of the focused constituent (final vs. non-final). The results obtained in production are generally reproduced in perception, that is, the listeners rate the preferred strategies in production as sounding the most natural in perception. These and additional findings will be discussed in the light of recent insights in contact linguistics and second language acquisition.

- (1) a. *¿Quién trajo manzanas?*  
 who bring.PAST.3SG apples  
 'Who brought apples?'  
 b. *\*[Blancanieves]<sub>F</sub> trajo manzanas*  
 Snow.White bring.PAST.3SG apples  
 'Snow White brought apples'  
 c. *Trajo manzanas [Blancanieves]<sub>F</sub>*  
 bring.PAST.3SG apples Snow.White  
 'Snow White brought apples'
- (2) a. *Blancanieves trajo pomelos, ¿no?*  
 Snow.White bring.PAST.3SG grapefruits no  
 'Snow White brought grapefruits, right?'  
 b. *No, fue [manzanas]<sub>CF</sub> lo que trajo Blancanieves*  
 no was apples what bring.PAST.3SG  
 Snow.White  
 'No, it was APPLES what Snow White brought'  
 c. *No, [manzanas]<sub>CF</sub> trajo Blancanieves*  
 no apples bring.PAST.3SG Snow.White  
 'No, Snow White brought APPLES'  
 d. *No, Blancanieves trajo [manzanas]<sub>CF</sub>*  
 no Snow.White bring.PAST.3SG apples  
 'No, Snow White brought APPLES'
- (3) a. *Jonek nor ikusi du?*  
 Jon.ERG who.ABS seen has  
 '¿Whom did Jon see?'  
 b. *Jonek [Miren]<sub>F</sub> ikusi du*  
 Jon.ERG Miren.ABS seen has  
 'Jon saw Miren'
- (4) a. *Jonek Garazi ikusi du?*  
 '¿Jon saw Garazi?'  
 b. *Ez, Jonek [Miren]<sub>CF</sub> ikusi du*  
 'No, Jon saw MIREN'

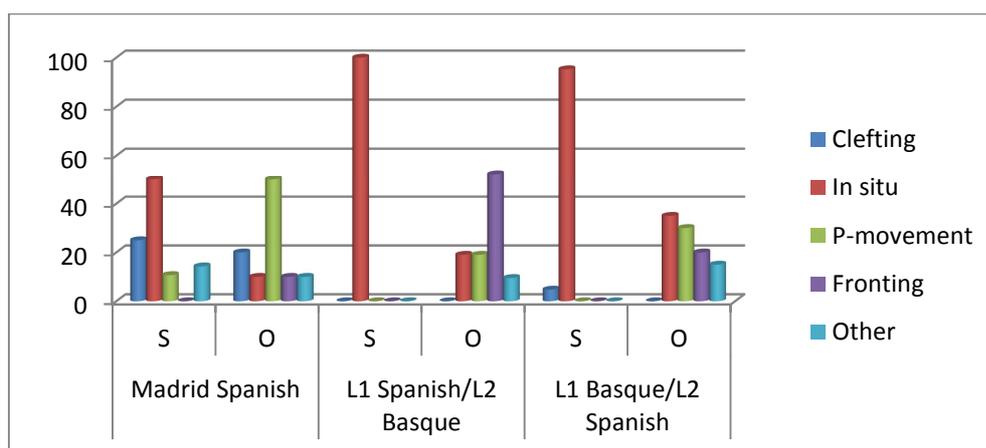


Figure 1. Percentage of different syntactic strategies for subject and object in information focus across different language varieties.

## References

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