

## High pre-tonic falls in Northeastern Brazilian varieties: may a prenuclear high target spreading rightward re-categorize as a nuclear leading tone?

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The intonation of northeastern Brazilian Portuguese shows a nuclear falling pitch accent in statements, with a salient high-pretonic rise (Cunha & Colamarco, 2005; Silvestre, 2012), which was labeled in literature as  $\downarrow H+L^*$  (Moraes, 2008). This contour was also documented in Recife (PE) and in João Pessoa (PB), through different elicitation tasks, by the authors of the present paper.

A recent study on the Italian variety of Pescara (Barone, upcoming), using the Discourse Completion Task (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), finds this accent in narrow noncontrastive focus SVO statements. For further investigation, the author adds sentences with a compound postverbal object phrase and systematically finds a “hat” plateau pattern, with a prenuclear rise to a high target, spreading (Gussenhoven, 2004) forward until the nucleus, followed by a nuclear fall. This shows that the high pretonic fall is nothing but a degenerating plateau of length zero in absence of segmental material between the first and last tone bearing units of the narrowly focused salient constituent (“beve [una tAZZA DI Latte]” vs “bevE-[IL Latte]”: Table 1a, compare Figures 1a vs 2a). This pattern stays identical in broad focus statements, because in absence of an informational focused phrase, a rule applies, with a mandatory “default” prosodic focalization on the post-verbal stretch, not necessarily corresponding to informational focus value, in the sense of Selkirk (1984). As to Brazilian Portuguese, Vigário & Fernandes-Svartman (2010) show that variability in prenuclear accentuation of compound phrases is also sensitive to the size of the prosodic word group, in the Southern variety of Campinas.

Four female and two male speakers from Recife aged between 23 and 31, with high school completed, participated in a questionnaire, aimed at eliciting 20 target broad focus statements with a nuclear sentence-final object phrase, varying in syntactic complexity (e.g. compound words, syntactically articulated phrases, phrases with an embedded relative clause) and in number of tone bearing units, distinguishing simple object (1 TBU) from compound object (2 to 5 TBU). Results show that on compound object phrases Recife speakers may use either the hat pattern (39%) or the pre-tonic rise (61%), which is allowed in Pescara only for simple object phrases (Fig. 1). The use of the pretonic rise instead of a hat pattern has proven to be sensitive to gender: 79% for women and 37% for men. This suggests that a productive rule

PLATEAU > PRETONIC RISE / (if only 1 TBU),

similar to Pescara, exists in Recife, but a process of prosodic reanalysis is occurring, led by young female speakers: as the simple object constituents are more frequent, the pre-tonic rise is being applied by analogy to all statements, independently of the number of TBUs, with the reanalysis of the right spreading of the trailing tone of a  $L+H^*$  prenuclear accent as the leading tone of a nuclear accent. An upcoming analysis on female older speakers from Recife will help confirming this hypothesis. A cross-check with reading task data is also being done by the authors, to account for diaphasic variation. Finally, data from João Pessoa are being analyzed, in order to grasp the geographical scope of the phenomenon.

