FACTORS AFFECTING PROMINENCE IN OCCITAN, FRENCH AND ITALIAN

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Primary accentuation

ACCENTUATION SYSTEMS IN ROMANCE

French
Accent position prosodically defined: [(o), (o)]
cité – patio – larmes – de petites larmes

Occitan
Accent position lexically defined: [(o), (o)]
ciutat – pàti – lograma

Italo- (and Ibero-)Romance
Accent position lexically defined: [(o), (o)]
città – pàtio – logcrama

Secondary accentuation

French
Non obligatory initial rises: 
[(o), (o)]
de petites larmes
“accent d’insistance” → generalization → left edge marker

Occitan
Initial rises (similar to French) 
[(o), (o)]
la maionesa

Italo- (and Ibero-)Romance
Secondary accents rare

METHODOLOGY

Annotation in Praat:
- phonology: ToBI labels; syllable structure
- perceived prominence
- lexicon: acceptable/non-acceptable; lexical/function word; word-initial/-medial/-final
- syntax: phrase-initial/-medial/-final (XP-projection)
- acoustics: F0, duration, intensity (mean value; difference from previous syl.)

Statistical tests: t-tests, χ², ANOVAs (SPSS)

DATA:

The Northwind and the Sun: Fable summaries
Summary after listening to a version in the speaker’s variety
→ spontaneous monologues (20s – 80s) with similar organization

RESULTS

Acoustic parameters in accentable syllables compared to non-accentable syllables (t-tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACOUSTIC PARAMETERS</th>
<th>VARIETY</th>
<th>F_Fr</th>
<th>F_Oc</th>
<th>I_Oc</th>
<th>I_It</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration (mean syllabic value)</td>
<td>+85.9 ms (s.d. 10.5)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>+71.3 ms (s.d. 9.0)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>+65.9 ms (s.d. 12.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity (difference between mean and mean of previous syllable)</td>
<td>+2.58 dB (s.d. 0.68)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>+3.0 dB (s.d. 0.58)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.32 dB (s.d. 0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F0 (difference between mean and mean of previous syllable)</td>
<td>+2.13 st (s.d. 0.38)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>RISING ACCENTS</td>
<td>+1.86 st (s.d. 0.68)</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prominence judgments

Proportion of syllables perceived as prominent among accentable (right) vs. non-accentable (left) syllables in each variety:
- More accentable than non-accentable syllables perceived as prominent in all varieties.
- Non-accentable syllables perceived as prominent: + frequent in F_Fr
- Accentable syllables perceived as prominent: – frequent in F_Fr

Proportion of accentable syllables perceived as prominent in phrase-final (right) vs. non-final (left) position in each variety:
Accentable syllables perceived as prominent:
- + frequent in phrase-final than non-final position in I_It, I_Oc and F_Oc
- no effect of position in the syntactic phrase in F_Fr

CONCLUSIONS

Though accentable syllables have significant acoustic correlates in French as in Occitan and Italian, prominence assignment in French differs from the other Romance languages: more prominent non-accentable syllables, less prominent accentable syllables, no effect of position in the syntactic phrase. Occitan behaves in a similar way to its southern neighbors, even when it is in close contact with French: accentable syllables tend to be prominent, mostly in phrase-final position.

But only 2 speakers and 1 coder! → next step: perception experiment online in several language contact situations.

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