Introduction

- In Brazilian Portuguese (BP), initial stress (signaled with a H-tone) is computed with reference to the primary stress position and depends on the number of pretonic syllables (it requires at least three pretonic syllables) within a Prosodic Word (PW). It is optional and postlexical (Frota & Vigário, 2008; Tonari, 2002; Fernandes, 2007a,b; Vigário & Fernandes-Svartman, 2010).

- In branching Prosodic Word Group (PWG), formed by more than one PW with the head corresponding the rightmost PW, initial stress is associated to the initials of both head and non-head PW in branching PWG and constitutes an evidence for the PW domain in BP (Vigário & Fernandes-Svartman, 2010).

- In BP, second stress assignment essentially signals the beginning of the PW in emphatic contexts (Abreu & Galvés, 1998; Abreu & Fernandes-Svartman, 2008; Fernandes-Svartman, 2009).

- In Brazilian Portuguese (EP) emphatic and initial stress are assigned to the first (or in some cases the second) syllable of a PW and both are optional (Vigário, 2003).

- Emphatic stress: high pitch at the beginning of the word; it highlights the whole word in some Romance languages, as in itâleo ‘This is great’ (e.g. Vigário, 2003; Huudal, 2007).

- In Spanish two stress phenomena occur in initial syllables of the left of a PW and the pragmatic functions and intonational contours of these stresses are, in principle, quite distinct. These phenomena are labeled ‘rhythmic’ and ‘emphatic’ postlexical secondary stress and they are tonally marked (Hudal, 2007).

Results

Branching PWG – neutral contexts

- Branching PWG – Neutral contexts:
  - Force: Both emphatic and initial stress are produced with a high tone (H), but there are also cases of low-high (LH) and high-low (HL) in both varieties of BP (Panamá – PR – and MG).
  - Function: Initial stress is an edge phenomenon – deictic function; emphasis is used to highlight a PW.
  - Distribution: Initial stress is only found in the first and second syllables of a PW and requires a minimum number of pretonic syllables – at least three pretonic syllables in both varieties of BP.
  - Emphatic stress can be associated with any pretonic syllable and also with the stressed syllable within a PW.
  - No stress has been identified in post-tonic syllables in none of varieties.
  - Some speakers display both emphatic and branching PWG in different varieties of BP.
  - Age: Between 20 to 30 years old.

Discussion & conclusions

- Our results suggest that location within the word and function clearly distinguish between emphatic stress and initial stress, as summarized below:
  - (i) Emphatic stress assignment (optional): Emphatic stress is assigned to any pretonic syllable, irrespective of its distance to the stressed syllable; also occurs in the stressed syllable of PW.
  - (ii) Initial stress assignment (optional): Initial stress is assigned in the first or second syllable of PW, and it is sensitive to rhythmic conditions (at least two syllables are required between the syllable bearing initial stress and the word-stressed syllable).
  - Both stresses are tonally marked – most often with a H-tone.
  - Initial stress is not perceived as emphatic, differently from emphatic stress;
  - Both stresses are distinct in their function; while emphatic stress is used to highlight a PW, as documented for BP in Vigário (2003), initial stress is an edge phenomenon and may contribute to signal PW initial position.
  - Emphatic stress is also different from focal stress because it does not mark semantic contrast nor does it require a particular context in order to be felt.

Hypotheses and Future research

- It is possible that the emphatic stress found in neutral contexts is also found in unstressed and stressed syllables of sentences produced in focusing contexts; this may explain some of the results in Tonari, Vigário & Abiara (2013).

- Focusing: Both emphatic stress and initial stress may also exert influence on their choice of producing emphatic stress or initial stress (as a function of the words and others).

- Testing the effect of these factors can further inform on the nature and phonology of emphasis stress in BP and will be left for future research.

Selected references


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This research was funded by Prósp. 2010/2011-024 and the FCT Project PORD/CE-UNICAMP/0002/2009.

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