

SYNTACTIC VS. INTONATIONAL FOCUS MARKING IN PAPIAMENTU

In Papiamentu (Iberian creole, spoken on Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao), a constituent can be focused syntactically: the focused phrase appears sentence-initially, preceded by focus marker *ta* (1) (Kouwenberg & Murray 1994). Focus fronting is common in creoles (Sanchez 2005), and this specific construction is a long-attested feature of Papiamentu. Previous work has shown pragmatic constraints on focused constituents related to information status, and suggests that these constraints are correlated with the language contact situation. Focus fronting appears to be falling out of use in heavily contact-influenced Papiamentu dialects (Sanchez 2006). However, previous work was not able to point to the adoption of an alternate method of focus, leaving open the possibility that focus fronting is not being affected by contact, but that speakers in some dialects simply find occasion to focus fewer things than speakers in others (logically possible but linguistically unreasonable).

More recently, Remijsen and van Heuven (2005) describe intonational focus in the Papiamentu of Curaçao. Specifically, there is a LH prominence tone associated with the stressed syllable of a focused element like *lora* ‘parrot’ in (2) (an answer to ‘Does Aruba have flamingo in the countryside?’). This prominence tone is not found in words with default focus (as in *lora* ‘parrot’ in (3), a response to ‘Is this a gray parrot?’) or in words out of focus (as in *lora* ‘parrot’ in (4), a response to ‘Does Curaçao have parrots in Punda (downtown)?’). [Papiamentu has a hybrid prosodic system which includes both stress and tone. Remijsen and van Heuven (2005) call it a ‘pitch-accent’ system and liken it to Swedish prosody. They report on the Curaçao dialect only, noting that the Aruba dialect has significantly more inter- and intra-speaker variation, and that they have yet to collect data from the Bonaire dialect.]

This paper compares the parameters of use of the two methods of focus in the Papiamentu of Curaçao, the only dialect for which the descriptive facts of intonational focus are available. I identify all instances of both syntactic and intonational focus (with the latter defined according to Remijsen and van Heuven’s (2005) observations of changes in F_0), and describe the linguistic, social, and contact factors conditioning each. The analysis focuses on these questions: 1) Are syntactic and intonational focus inversely related? Is one form replacing the other? and 2) Can intonational focus be correlated with language contact (or lack thereof)?

- (1) Pero **TA** **NOS** tabata mala mucha.
but FOCUS we COPULA-PAST bad child
But, WE were the bad kids. (Sanchez 2005)

- (2) No, Ruba tin **LORA** na mondi
no Aruba has PARROTS in countryside
No, Aruba has PARROTS in the countryside. (Remijsen and van Heuven 2005: 233)

- (3) Si, esaki ta un lora shinishi
yes this COP a parrot gray
Yes, this is a gray parrot. (Remijsen and van Heuven 2005: 232)

- (4) No Korsow tin lora na **MONDI**
no Curacao has parrots in COUNTRYSIDE
No, Curacao has parrots in the COUNTRYSIDE. (Remijsen and van Heuven 2005: 233)

References

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