

Intonation of Spanish as a foreign language spoken by Brazilians

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This study aims at analyzing the influence of intonation patterns of Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP) and Spanish on the intonation patterns of Spanish as a foreign language (henceforth SFL). For this purpose we analyze declarative sentences as well as yes/no and wh-questions in SFL spoken by Brazilians.

In spite of the fact that there are important descriptions of the intonational patterns of Spanish and BP as first languages (Navarro Tomás, 1944, Quilis 1988, 1993, Prieto, 2003, 2010, Sosa, 1999, Moraes 1998, 2003, Lucente 2006, 2008), Spanish as a foreign language is not as well studied. There are few studies about the topic: Pinto (2006, 2008) and Sá (2009).

This study proposes to fill this gap in our understanding of the SFL intonation by analyzing the data using DaTo (Dynamic Tones of Brazilian Portuguese), an intonation annotation system proposed by Lucente (2008) to describe BP intonation. Here we show that is possible to extend this system to Spanish and SFL with some modifications. In the DaTo system, pitch accents and boundaries tones are not seen as a linear sequence of tones of combination of tones, but as integral contours inserted in a context where the movement is as important as the target. Then, the rising contours (LH and >LH, LHL for example) start with a short fall, and the rising must occur during the stressed vowel. The falling contours (HL and >HL, for example) start with a smooth rising and the falling must occur during the stressed vowel.

This study tries to answer to the following questions: (1) Is the number of prominences in SFL utterances the same as in Spanish? (2) Are these prominences associated to the same contour types and located in the same positions? (3) When there is a contour, is the relative distance (measured in percentage) between the F_0 targets related to the stressed vowel the same in both Spanish and in SFL?

To answer to these questions, we performed an experiment with three female subjects, two Brazilian and one Spanish. The subject G. is from São Paulo city. She has an intermediate level of proficiency in Spanish. The subject W. is from the state of Bahia but she has lived in São Paulo city since she was one year old. She has an advanced level of proficiency in Spanish. The Spanish subject is from Talavera de la Reina (Castile-la Mancha). For the purpose of the present study, we have analyzed the 21 sentences read in isolation by each subject in Spanish.

The preliminary results have shown that in general the number of prominences is higher in SFL compared to Spanish first language (Figure 1), being the most frequent contours for the Brazilian speakers >LH and HL in SFL and PB. The LHL and >LH are more frequent in Spanish (Figure 1 and 2). Even the advanced speaker W. shows very similar contours both in SFL and BP. The most significant difference between W. and G is related to the final boundaries tones in interrogatives that in the advanced speaker is similar to the native speaker.

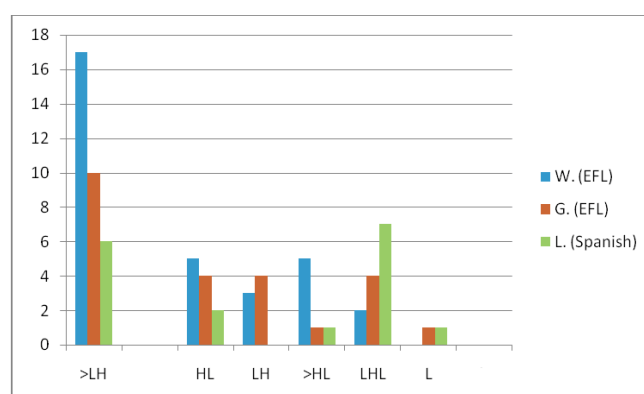


Figure 1. Number and type of contours in nine Spanish sentences produced by W. G and L.

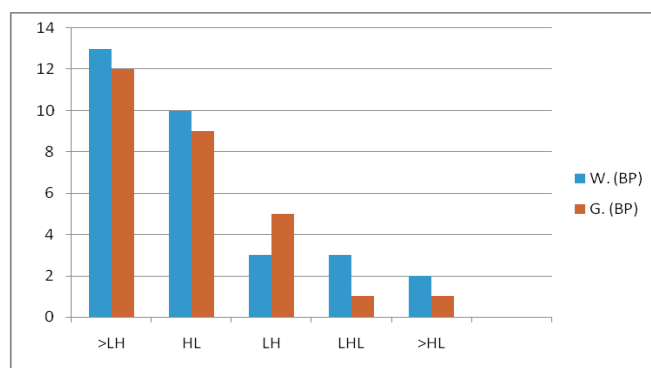


Figure 2. Number and type of contours in nine BP sentences produced by W. and G.

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