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On affect expression in prosodic structure

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ABSTRACT: Paralinguistic meanings may be expressed linguistically and linguistic ones paralinguistically, although more commonly linguistic means are expressed linguistically and paralinguistic ones paralinguistically. This contribution illustrates the first of these four cases.

KEYWORDS: paralinguistics; structural intonation; rhetoricalness; accent shift.

We humans use pitch variation as a form of proto-language to convey information-structural meanings like focus and interrogativity, while we use structured tonal representations of intonation to convey various affective meanings. Depending on their reaction to the above sentence, linguists fall into three groups. The first would argue that the distinction between paralinguistic and structural intonation rests on an illusory difference between phonological representations and phonetic forms. A second possible reaction is that the sentence gets things the wrong way round and that it is the structural part that expresses the focal and interrogative meanings. The third would concede that the statement is correct, but misleading in that the reverse is also true. José firmly falls in this third group, where I am happy to join him.

It is not always easy to identify the kinds of affect that are expressed by structural prosody. A simple case in Dutch would appear to be the pitch-accent on the weak final syllables in [ˈyːrənH*L] *uren* 'hours and hours' and [ˈjaːrənH*L] 'years and years', where the otherwise optional post-schwa [n] is obligatory. In many other cases, such meanings are harder to define. Dwight Bolinger devoted a chapter on ways of using *well* (Bolinger 1989: 300-340), where he reminded us of the contributions of modal particles in Germans and Dutch and their co-occurrences with melodic and ac-

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centual properties. More often than not, we are left with glossing the utterance in context, without feeling we can attribute a specific semantic contribution of every morphological element in it, quite apart from feeling less than confident about the identification of those morphemes in the case of prosody. One meaning that has been claimed to be expressed by structural intonation is rhetoricalness, signaled in European languages like Dutch, German and Greek by more general non-default locations of pitch accents. Hualde & Nadeu (2014) asked Spanish participants to transfer each of three prosodic patterns to words elicited with a list intonation. The words used as prompts were spoken as single-word utterances, all of which had penultimate stress with two preceding unstressed syllables and denoted groups of people by nationality, like *Alemánes* 'Germans'. In addition to the neutral version, one had a pitch peak on the first syllable followed by a fall through the rest of the word ('emphatic stress') and the other had high pitch on the first syllable followed by mid level pitch for the rest of the word, analyzable as a downstepped pitch accent in the second syllable ('rhythmic stress'). Triggered by a visual prompt, participants responded by producing a listing of three groups of nationals, as in *Rumános, Portuguéses, Venezolános, ...* 'Rumanians, Portuguese, Venezuelans, ... , whereby each of these had a non-default pitch accent. Words beginning with three unstressed initial syllables were hypothesized to bring out the difference between emphatic *Ve*^{H*}*nezolános* and rhythmic stress *Vene*^{H*}*zolános* most clearly.

José and his co-author leave no doubt about their interpretation of the differences as structural. The primary stress stays on the penult in all cases, as evidenced by the consistently longer duration of the penultimate syllables across the three conditions, while other syllables all retain their shorter durations. All mentions of the target words are consistently marked with the primary stress on the penult, as a reminder that the structure takes priority over surface prominence impressions. This is not true for intensity, but there is no reliable relation, as far as I am aware, between intensity and stress independently of the location of the pitch accent, so that an assumption that pitch accents are intensity-prone will be a more plausible hypothesis. Second, the pitch contours are manifestations of pitch accents on the first, second or penultimate syllable, as the authors make clear by citing other cases of meaningful non-default accent locations in the literature on Dutch, German and Greek. Spanish 'rhetorical stress' therefore, their superordinate term for emphatic and rhythmic stress, consists of 'the anchoring of a pitch accent on a syllable preceding the lexical stress' (Hualde & Nadeu 2014).

The evidence for the existence of two patterns, one emphatic and the other rhythmic, is weak at best in theirs prosodic transfer data. Perhaps an investigation of their meanings through semantic differentials, like *(not) rhetorical*, *(not) honest*, *(not) emphatic*, etc. may bring out any non-trivial differences, apart from bringing out a difference with the baseline default pitch accent location. The same goals could also be approached with a reading text using a set of instructions suggesting different levels of rhetoricalness or emphasis, as used in Gussenhoven (1983), which I must admit now looks like a laborious alternative to the semantic differential method. In fact, semantic judgements might even disprove that the Dutch late pitch accents in 'hours' and 'years' are equivalent in meaning to 'many hours/years', just as 'years and years' may not express the same affect as 'many years'.

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