

Prosodic Correlates of Information Structure in Brazilian Portuguese Negation

Sentential negation in spoken Brazilian Portuguese (BP) has been of intense interest to the cross-linguistic study of negation (Bernini and Ramat 1996; Schwegler 1990; Zanuttini 1997), since it presents the typologically rare case of three distinct constructions:

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| (1a) | Não gosto disso.
'I don't like that.' | NEG1 |
| (1b) | Não gosto disso não. | NEG2 |
| (1c) | Gosto disso não. | NEG3 |

All three negatives in (1) share the same propositional meaning. The discourse licensing conditions for these forms are tied to the accessibility of the negated proposition in the common ground. The canonical form NEG1 can be used to negate a proposition that has any degree of accessibility. Non-canonical NEG2 and NEG3, however, can only be used to negate propositions previously activated in the ongoing discourse record. The crucial distinction between NEG2 and NEG3 is that NEG2 is felicitous where the negated proposition is either explicitly evoked in the discourse or merely inferable on the basis of other activated propositional content; this is not the case for NEG3, which must negate a proposition that has been explicitly evoked in the discourse (Schwenter 2005).

Building on Baltazani's (2006) work on intonation and pragmatic interpretation in negation in Modern Greek, in this paper we determine how prosody and information structure interact in BP. We show that there are prosodic patterns in the BP negatives in (1) that map the distinct three sentential negatives to information structure. Lab speech from 6 BP speakers from the Northeast cities of Fortaleza and Aracati were analyzed using Praat. The speakers produced a total of 68 utterances in affirmative, NEG1, NEG2 and NEG3 form. The data were recorded using a Sony microphone with a Dell laptop using the Audacity recording program. The data were analyzed within the ToBIPI framework (Lucente et al. 2006), based on the ToBI system (Beckman et al 1993). In ToBIPI the possible tones found in BP are L*, H*, L+H*, L*+H, H*+L, H+!H*, with L%, H% boundary tones.

The analysis revealed varying patterns for sentential negation in declarative utterances. NEG1 utterances revealed a steep rise on the negative particle, followed by a H+L* pitch on the final word of the utterance. The general patterns for sentential negation across speakers revealed that pitch accent is always obligatory for at least one negative particle. NEG2 may or may not have pitch accent on the pre-verbal negative particle, a finding linked to the phonological reduction of the preverbal negative particle *não* > *num* (Ramos 2002). NEG2s with no pitch accent on the pre-verbal negative particle have tunes that are almost identical to NEG3 tunes. We typically find propositional content deaccented for NEG2 and NEG3 with stress only on the negative particle(s). We propose that this relationship between stress and deaccenting is analogous to the relationship between an anaphoric reference (the deaccented information points the listener back to a discourse old proposition) and new information (stress on the negative particle). In effect, for NEG2 and NEG3 the speaker makes an anaphoric reference to an activated proposition, and adds a stressed negative particle, which is new information. The option of pitch accent on the pre-verbal negative particle for NEG2 can be predicted depending on whether the proposition is explicitly activated (pitch accent) or inferable (no pitch accent). The prosodic patterns found for negation in BP distinguish non-canonical NEG2/3 from the canonical NEG1 form: the former, but not the latter, are necessarily tied to discourse-old propositions. More broadly, our findings illustrate the close interrelationship between prosodic structure and information structure in the expression of negation.

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