

## Focus as phrasing in Georgian

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It has been claimed for intonation languages that focus is phonologically implemented as highest accent in a domain. In this talk, it will be shown that at least in Georgian, focus does not have a necessary one-to-one relationship with highest stress, thus questioning the allegedly obligatory prosodic correlate of focus as stress for such languages. As compared to well-studied Germanic languages, Georgian uses a different prosodic correlate for the expression of focus, namely phrasing.

Georgian is an intonational language with prosodic events reflecting properties of the constituent structure and pragmatic meanings (see Vicenik & Sun-Ah 2008, Skopeteas, Féry & Asatiani 2009). It has free word order with SOV as the canonical option (see Apridonidze 1986) and intonation is sensitive to this variable word order. However, information structural concepts such as focus do not necessarily relate to pitch accents signaling prosodic prominence, but rather influence the choice of particular word orders that allow for different accentual patterns. Word order issues are well studied for Georgian, and the emphasis will be put on prosodic phrasing, a less understood part of grammar: it will be shown that phrasing is able to confirm some claims made in the recent literature.

Several experiments bearing on the prosodic realization of focus in Georgian will be presented. First a production experiment with short sentences consisting of a subject, an object and a verb in different word orders and in different information structural contexts. Eight native speakers realized simple sentences, like in (1), as answers to questions inducing different focus domains (in total 13 permutations of focus domain and word order).

- (1) [[nino]<sub>p</sub>            [mama-s        eloliaveba]<sub>p</sub> ]<sub>I</sub>  
      Nino.NOM        father-DAT    cares  
      ‘Nino cares for the father.’

The upshot is that there is considerable variation in the pitch realization of preverbal constituents in general, and that the identified patterns do not unambiguously correlate with information structure. Pre-verbal constituents are fully intonated, regardless of their focused status. Focus on postverbal constituents is often realized with a characteristic low and flat pattern on the whole word, labeled ‘super-low.’ This pattern is not a pitch accent associated with the stressed syllable, but rather a word melody. Furthermore, focus interacts with prosodic phrasing. The variation observed in preverbal constituents can be accounted for as a preference for the focused constituent to be phrased separately from the rest of the utterance. There is evidence that phrasing and phrasal tones are crucial for the identification of the focus structure of the utterance.

In the second experiment, 16 speakers from Tbilisi produced 176 descriptions in total to communicate the changing spatial layouts of toy animals. This experiment was performed in a comparative fashion with 5 other languages. Georgian is the only language in which the marked order (i.e. locative expression before the toy to be localized) is more frequent even when the toy to be localized was already given in the discourse, although this language exhibits a drop in frequency of the marked word order that is in line with the general pattern (see Féry, Skopeteas & Hörnig 2010).

- (2) a. cxen-i            maimun-is        maržvniv dgas.  
      horse-NOM        monkey-GEN    right        stands  
      ‘A/the horse is standing to the right of a/the monkey’.

b. datv-is            maržvniv            žaḡl-i            dgas  
 bear-GEN          right                dog- NOM        stands  
 ‘There is a/the dog standing to the right of a/the bear ...’

In this experiment, there were occurrences of a post-verbal focused object with the characteristic super-low pattern, indicative for finality, exemplified in (3).

(3) [[cxen-is]<sub>p</sub>    [marcxena    mxare-s    dgas]<sub>p</sub>    [lom-i]<sub>p</sub>]<sub>t</sub>  
 horse-GEN    left.DAT    side-DAT    stands    lion-NOM  
 ‘There is a/the lion standing on the left side of a/the horse’.

The question remains to be elucidated whether instances of pitch variation in Georgian are correlates of pitch accents, or whether they are indicators of a global prominence on certain words. Presence of lexical stress is controversial for this language, with all possible suggestions having been made in the literature.

The third experiment investigates the exhaustive interpretation of the quantifier *ramdenime* ‘some/a few’ in sentences like (4) uttered in a way that the continuation “so we cannot buy the present” is felicitous. It must be noted that preverbal (see 4a) and postverbal (see 4b) focus do not have interpretational differences in Georgian i.e., both word orders can motivate an exhaustive interpretation.

(4) a. čven    ramdenime            lar-i            še-v-a-grov-e-t...  
 1.PL.ERG    some/a.few(NOM)    lari-NOM PR-SBJ.    1-PV-gain-AOR-PL  
 ‘We gained some Lari...’ {so we can buy the present.}/ {so we cannot buy the present.}  
 b. čven še-v-a-grov-e-t ramdenime lar-i...

The findings of the empirical study showed clear correlates of prosodic prominence in the realization of the quantifiers. In particular, in the contexts that motivated the exhaustive interpretation there was a lengthening effect on the duration of the quantifier, especially on the first syllable. Second, some effects on the phonation of the first syllable could be identified, namely frequent occurrence of breathy voice. The third correlate was pitch range expansion on the quantifier. Still the correlates found in this experiment cannot be assimilated to pitch accent, because the effect of prominence on the quantifier was scattered on the first two syllables, and also on the contour of the whole word. By contrast, pitch accent in English is mainly located on a single lexically stressed syllable. This result strengthens the view expressed above that Georgian does not realize prosodic prominence by the bias of pitch accents in the way that is known from familiar language. Prosodic phrasing is the main correlate of focus, even if prominence, in the form of a bundle of phonetic correlates on some words may be present as well.

Apridonidze, Shukia, 1986. *sit’q’vatganlageba axal kartulši* [word order in Modern Georgian], Tbilisi: Mecniereba.

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