A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH POST-NUCLEAR PATTERNS

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Resumen

El presente comunicado tiene como objetivo establecer diferencias y similitudes entre los patrones post-nucleares en inglés y español, es decir, el tipo de material inacentuado que se puede encontrar en las llamadas colas. Además, se hace referencia al estudio realizado por Gussenhoven sobre este tema en y sobre el inglés. De esta manera, se establece un marco de trabajo, de acuerdo al que se analizan las oraciones del español.

En lo que respecta al inglés, la abundante literatura disponible presenta un sinnúmero de casos en los que se deja inacentuado cierto material lingüístico en situaciones de Foco Amplio, por ejemplo: *I'm a vegeTARian, you know*. Curiosamente, y probablemente en contra de la creencia predominante, se pudo encontrar ciertas estructuras que presentan núcleos tempranos en el español de Chile.

Abstract

(*This corpus-based paper is aimed at establishing differences and similarities between English and Spanish post-nuclear patterns, i.e., the type of unaccented material found in the so-called tails. Furthermore, special reference is made to Gussenhoven's work on this problem area in and about the English language; thus, establishing the working framework according to which sentences in Spanish are analysed.*

As far as English is concerned, the plentiful literature available has shown a number of cases where linguistic material is left unaccented in Broad Focus situations, e.g. I'm a vegeTARian, you know. *Interestingly, perhaps contrary to the prevailing belief, certain structures presenting early nuclei can also be found in Chilean Spanish.*)

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This investigation is mainly concerned with establishing differences and similarities in the behaviour of post-nuclear patterns both in English and in Chilean Spanish. Firstly, I shall undertake a brief

discussion of the treatment of words in terms of their 'phonological size', which leads to a description of the 'nuclear tone approach'. Also, I shall examine the scant work on Spanish accentuation, more specifically, final vocatives and final reporting clauses. For comparison's sake, Gussenhoven's classification of English unaccented elements found in an intonation group, i.e., *tails*.

2.0   THE CORPUS

The corpus used in this investigation consists of one instalment of a Chilean 'soap opera' which contains approximately 4,000 words. This soap opera mainly features people aged 17-27. Therefore, there might be differences in the results if the study was conducted using a different age-group. On another level, the vast majority of characters are intended to represent middle- and at times – upper-class accents. The language that is more widely used throughout the soap opera could be defined as 'relatively colloquial'.

   For the purpose of my analysis, real speech was not selected, for this usually comprises a number of hesitations, false starts, etc., which would have made the study more difficult to conduct. In lieu of unrehearsed speech, this quasi-spontaneous style was preferred on the following grounds:

- Utterances are most often well-structured.
- Utterances are, for the most part, free of unnecessary hesitations or false starts.
- a strong degree of spontaneity is always present in the phrasing of the scripts because actors usually deviate from it.
- The type of text is similar to the one used in a corpus-based study conducted by Gussenhoven in English.

3.0   SENTENCE ACCENT

The treatment of words in terms of defining which is 'greater in size' goes back to the 16th century. However, it is in the 20th century when the most important schools of thought developed. In this work, I shall follow the 'tone-group approach', according to which the contour is divided into its different components. The unit of analysis within this approach has been given various names, viz. 'sense group', 'tone-unit', 'intonation unit', 'intonation group', etc. Nevertheless, we have not yet come across a fully satisfactory definition for this concept. Jones explains that 'a few words in close grammatical

connexion, such as would be said together in giving a slow dictation exercise' make up an intonation group.

Personally I take the stand that an intonation group may well be made up of a single monosyllabic word, e.g.

A: *You're likely to fail your exam*
B: *WHAT*

Some words in English are more likely to take an accent than others. The group of 'accentable words' comprises main verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, etc.. This group has often been referred to as 'content/lexical words', while the group of 'unaccentable words' mainly consists of auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, relative pronouns and articles; this group has been traditionally termed 'form/grammatical words'.

3.1   Elements of the Intonation Group

This unit might consist of four different parts: nucleus, tail, head, and pre-head; the nucleus being the only compulsory element. In the examples provided to illustrate each of the different parts, the elements being discussed have been underlined.

(i)   Nucleus: As was stated above, the nucleus is the only mandatory element in an intonation group. It performs the function of pitch-initiator whereby there is normally a change of pitch direction. Besides, The nucleus tends to fall on the last content word of the intonation group, e.g.

She is studying engiNEERing

(ii)   Tail: The stretch following the nucleus containing prominent syllables, e.g.

GET them to me

(iii) Head: It extends from the first accented syllable up to (but not including) the nuclear accent. Yet again, we way or may not find heads in an intonation group, e.g.

I hope you can get them in TIME
It was in the CAR

(iv) Pre-head: The pre-head consist of all the unaccented syllables preceding the first accented syllable either the head or nucleus, e. g.

It <u>was the</u> FIRST time
<u>There's</u> a marvellous CAStle in that city

3.2   The focal model

The focal model is one of the main approaches to nuclear accent placement apart from the traditional, the syntactic and the semantic. When analysed in depth, we find that they overlap in concepts which are sometimes regarded as characteristic of a given approach.

Although the notion of focus is constantly alluded to in the literature, few definitions have been attempted. Eady et al (1986: 233) state that 'linguistic focus is (…) the tendency to accentuate or highlight a portion of a sentence for reasons related to meaning'. Such a definition is preceded by Halliday's (1967) concept of 'points of information focus' and Bolinger's (1972b) stance that '(A)ccented words are points of information focus'.

As can be inferred from the above paragraphs, focusing and accentuation are inextricably linked. For instance, for Gussenhoven focus marks semantic constituents, yet he does not entirely disregard syntactic constituents. Moreover, he claims that the position of the nucleus is defined according to focus. The chief advantage of the focal model is that it takes contextual and pragmatic aspects into account. Hence my preference for this approach in the analysis of my own corpus.

Ladd (1979) enriched the concept of focus by stating that this can be broad and narrow. The former occurs when there is focus on the whole sentence; the latter, when only part of the sentence is in focus. This can be seen in the following examples where (1.8) and (1.9) are in broad and narrow focus respectively.

Lastly, I will subscribe to Gussenhoven's view that focus is a language universal concept.

[*I don't usually go shopping for clothes*] FOCUS

A: *Are they any good?*
B: *VEry* [FOCUS] *good*

4.0   ACCENTUATION IN SPANISH

As noted earlier, a review of the literature reveals the existence of a megatrend of allocating the nucleus to the last lexical item in English. Crystal (1969:267) reports that 'tonicity is almost entirely restricted to the four lexical classes, namely nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (93%)'. Nouns being by far more likely to take the nuclear accent at the expense of verbs, irrespective of their position in the utterance, e.g.

She's standing in the CORner
I have a conFESsion to make

A couple of years earlier, Halliday (1967) had stated that in utterances in broad focus the nuclear accent normally falls on the last lexical item, thus giving rise to the LLI rule (for short).

A number of models have developed in an attempt to account for nuclear-accent placement in English while in Spanish only a handful of authors have looked into the issue.

As for Spanish, Navarro Tomás is undoubtedly the most prominent linguists in the peninsular tradition. In his work (1932) there is no explicit reference to an equivalent of the LLI rule. However, the notion of nuclear accent assignment to the last lexical item is implicitly referred to.

One of the major concerns for Spanish linguists –Navarro Tomás (1925), Quilis (1985)– has been to establish a correlation between accentability and syntactic classes. Quilis takes the view that there are certain words which always take an accent and others which never do. Indeed, the most comprehensive account of Spanish accentuation can be found in Ortiz (1994). In his thesis he is mainly concerned with the accentual behaviour of final vocatives and final reporting clauses. I expect my analysis will throw light on these and other post-nuclear patterns.

Although scant attention has been given to accentuation in Spanish, there is some type of agreement with respect to the accentual behaviour of-as mentioned above – final vocatives and final reporting clauses.

4.1   Final vocatives in Spanish

As for vocatives, the non-nuclear position tends to prevail although Navarro Tomás and some other linguists have followed the nuclear vocative position. Besides, it has been suggested that final vocatives

taking a nuclear accent are normally regarded as belonging to two separate intonation groups. Otherwise, they remain unaccented, e. g.

Buenas TARdes | Sr. GarCÍA
VAmos María

In the alter example, as Ortiz points out 'the speaker chooses to place vocatives in final position precisely because the attention of the addressee need not be particularly attracted'.

As for the former example, Ortiz claims that 'speakers choose to gives final vocatives nuclear accents when they put them to uses other than simple terms of address, i.e. in order to produce special semantic/pragmatic effects'.

4.2   Final reporting clauses

Yet again, this is an area which has received very little attention. However, we can find a number of different names for it. Unfortunately, the use of final reporting clauses seems to be restricted to writing with very few exceptions in the conversational style which makes it even more difficult to analyse. This is confirmed in my corpus.

Ortiz presents a fairly representative collection of examples containing final reporting clauses which do not take a nuclear accent of their own; instead, they seem to be appended to the nuclear accent of the host sentence.

The length of the reporting clause appears to be an important element which makes it more likely to take an accent of its own.

5.0   NON-NUCLEAR EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH

My purpose here is to examine Gussenhoven's categorisation of tails in English, which will be applied to my corpus.

Gussenhoven conducted a corpus-based study which centred on post-nuclear patterns in English. For this purpose, he used four instalments of British television serials. Furthermore, Gussenhoven used an accent assignment rule which he referred to as the Sentence Accent Assignment Rule, or SAAR. In his work, the main preoccupation is with classifying tails taking SAAR as the norm for accentuation. This, in turn, is closely related to the focal model, for SAAR is said to 'operate over focus domains, that is, it assigns an accent to each (+focus) focus domain'. In SAAR, sentence constituents are classified into two Categories: Arguments, which comprise subjects

and objects and Predicates-Conditions, which comprise most adverbials. An important portion of his work is devoted to the classification of tails. Gussenhoven distinguishes three different categories, each presenting a different factor that influences the location of the nucleus, i.e. grammar, semantics and pragmatics.

5.1   Category I

As stated above, category I comprises tails which for various grammatical-syntactic reasons take an early nuclear accent. Some of the combinations which are to be found in his study are:

(i)   Certain verbs + oneself: In this type the verbal particle takes the nuclear accent, e.g.

I must stop TALKing to myself

(ii)   Subject + intransitive verb/(be) complement: Gussenhoven provides a number of examples belonging to this sub-category, e.g.

Her SON'S turned up

(iii) Transitive verb + object + particle: In this type, is the object, when placed between the phrasal or phrasal-prepositional verb, the one which attracts the accent, e.g.

Are you going to buy the PRAM in?

The combination complex Transitive verb + object + object complement is included as a sub-category of the previous type, e.g.

I've spelt BraZIL wrong

Wh- movement in questions, e.g.

How's the 'HOME work coming on?

(iv) Subject + passive verb: Gussenhoven does not provide any example of this type, for none was found in his corpus, so he resorts to Bing's example:

CLASSes have been cancelled

5.2   Category II

For brevity's sake, I shall go over the different types belonging to category II, which are labelled as typically (-focus) expressions.

Time markers: This type includes expressions such as: *today, tonight, the other day,* etc., e.g.

I booked his DAD today

Space markers: some of the most common expressions are: *in here, anywhere, in life,* etc., e.g.

It won't LEAD you anywhere

5.2.1 *Cohesion markers*

This sub-category comprises expressions which indicate different types of relationships amongst them and the utterances they are attached to. Some of them are; *of course, though, if necessary, on the other hand, really,* etc.
       Of course the above expressions can be given an accent if they occur in initial position. Furthermore, the semantic orientations can well vary depending on the position of the expression in the utterance, e.g.

Is sex a PROBlem then?
Nice to be on our OWN for a change

5.2.2 *Hearer-appeal markers*

This class comprises expressions which speakers widely use with the aim of establishing a sense of camaraderie with the hearer. This class is divided into two groups. The first one is usually referred to as 'softening phrases', whereas the second group is made up of vocatives.
       The softening phrases which occur more frequently in Gussenhoven's corpus are: *you know, I mean, then, thanks* and *please,* e.g.

If you'd HAD one I mean
I'll say cheeri'O then
Not for ME thanks

As for vocatives, as can be expected, they occur very frequently in Gussenhoven's corpus, e.g.

NO George
Good NIGHT son
Don't FUSS woman

5.2.3 *Tags*

Two different types of tags can be distinguished in English. Type I, which is taught as the norm, is formed by inverting the polarity of the sentence to which the tag is appended. The tag repeats the subject and the predicate in proforms. Modal verb in the tag stand for the whole predicate. Furthermore, the tag always presents subject-verb inversion.

Phonologically speaking, tag I forms a separate intonation group, thus making it stand outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, Tag II lends itself to be analysed, for it does not form a separate intonation group.

Unlike Tag I, Tag II agrees in polarity with the host sentence where both are positive. It is noteworthy to observe that in Gussenhoven's corpus the operator or the operator together with subject were ellipted in the host sentence, e.g.

Been WORKing have you?
You in the CHAIR are you?

Tag II is said to have always a rise which comes either from a fall-rise tone or the continuation of a rise nuclear tone. The examples above are also illustrative of this claim.

5.2.4 *Textual markers*

Although Gussenhoven's corpus does not include examples representing this sub-category, I trust it is useful to mention because similar examples could be found in my corpus. Textual markers can be divided into two groups:

5.2.5 *Reporting sentences/clauses*

As the name clearly suggests, this type of clause is used to report somebody else's words. Such reporting clauses seem to be highly infrequent in quasi- spontaneous speech. Conversely, in colloquial-spoken English they are very much used.

Comment clauses

In comment clauses there is a group of verb which is usually used to make comments. These comments are often attached to the host sentence as non-nuclear elements. Interestingly, the only comment clause in Gussenhoven' s corpus was given a separate intonation group.

…and found acCEPTable | I beLIEVE

5.2.6 *Approximatives*

This sub-category comprises expressions that indicate the approximative nature of the expressions they are appended to, e.g.

I suppose they ARE in a way
It must be eleven YEARS or more
Just for a DAY or two

6.0   TAILS IN SPANISH

It has been widely suggested that in Spanish there is a much greater tendency towards allocating the nuclear accent to the last lexical item if compared to English. Moreover, Ortiz's work confirms that in Spanish we tend to place nuclear accents on given material (*¿VIEnes o no VIEnes*?). In his work he provides a significant number of examples illustrating such a stance. Furthermore, the same tendency goes for what has been traditionally referred to as 'event sentences', (*Se perdió el GAto*). This could immediately lead us to believe that there might not be well-defined instances in which the nuclear accent towards the left, other than the speaker's personal choice. Nonetheless, in my 4,000-word corpus I have come across over fifty utterances where the nucleus takes an early position; thus, leaving at times, lexical items unaccented.

As I have mentioned throughout my work, I selected Gussenhoven's model in an attempt to establish whether or not it was applicable to Spanish. This choice was made due to its comprehensiveness as compared to Crystal's or Firbas' works. As expected, many of the examples found in my corpus fit well within Gussehoven's characterisation, whilst others do not. In these cases, I was met with challenge of having to account for typically Chilean locutions as well as their own phonological patterns.

In broader terms, four categories can be distinguished where the first is syntactic in nature, the second semantic, the third consists of highly accentable expressions and the fourth encompasses various expressions grouped under the title 'miscellaneous'.

Most of the utterances posed no difficulty upon classifications; yet, much reflection was called for in a select few, forcing me to hypothesise about how they could be categorised.

6.1   Category I

As was mentioned earlier, category I is grammatical in nature, for there is movement of syntactic elements either towards the left or right from their conventional positions. Some authors have referred to this phenomenon as 'left/right dislocation' depending upon the direction in which the syntactic elements are moving. However, only when left dislocation occurs are we able to observe that the mentioned element takes the nuclear accent with it, whilst with right dislocation this is not the case. Nevertheless, in both these cases early accent placement can be observed.

(i)   *Left dislocation*

¿En Eso habíamos quedado?	(habíamos quedado en *eso*)
A propósito de Eso lo estoy llamando	(lo estoy llamando a propósito de *eso*)
Bien PÁlido estaba, Sra. Vivi.	(estaba bien *pálido*...)

(ii)   *Right dislocation*

¿Qué están de vacaCIOnes todos?	(...*¿todos* están de vacaciones?)
Le han pasado muchas COsas a la pobre	(*a la pobre* le han pasado muchas...)
Dónde estaRÁN esas niñitas	(*esas niñitas* estarán en alguna parte)

The examples found in this category differ greatly from those found in Gussenhoven, partly because the constructions included in his corpus are different from those in my corpus and hence, in the Spanish language. Some of the grammatical constructions found in Gussenhoven are:

(i)   Certain verbs + oneself
       I must stop TALKing to myself

(ii)   Transitive verb + object + particle
       Are you going to bring the PRAM in?

(iii) Subject + passive verb
       CLASSes have been suspended

Observe that the structures used in Spanish to express the ideas conveyed by the English syntax tend to take an accent on the last lexical item, e.g.

Debo dejar de hablar conmigo MISmo
¿Vas a entrar el COche?
Suspendieron las CLAses

6.2   Category II

This category encompasses expressions that can be given a semantic characterisation. As is also the case with Gussenhoven's corpus, five classes can be found, which include the following expressions:

- Time-space markers
- Cohesion markers
- Hearer-appeal markers
- Textual markers
- Approximatives

6.2.1 *Time-space markers*

Curiously enough, those classes which in Gussenhoven's corpus group a larger number of examples ten to be weaker in my corpus. The fact that his corpus features examples falling into the 'time-when', time-duration' and 'time-frequency' classes clearly confirms the above claim. Moreover, only one example was found that fell into this class, e.g.

Es una mujer que ha dado mucho que haBLAR en estos últimos días

The above-mentioned seems to corroborate what some authors have posited in terms of time adverbials taking a nuclear accent in Spanish, e.g.

Espérame un raTIto
Se va a quedar por un TIEMpo

6.2.2 *Cohesion markers*

No examples equivalent to those presented in Gussenhoven were found in any of the groups that make up this class. Nonetheless, the results obtained from the reading of utterances containing expres-

sions that Gussenhoven includes in this class led me to the conclusions that they can be deaccented, e.g.

¿Fuiste a la CAsa entonces?
No era tan boNIta en realidad
No es tan GRANde de hecho

As a native speaker of Spanish I sense that these expressions are generally used in initial position.

6.2.3 *Hearer-appeal markers*

As was mentioned 5.2.2, these expressions are more often than not used with the purpose of establishing a sense of solidarity between the speaker and the hearer.

In my corpus I found examples which fall into the three groups that make up this class.

6.2.3.1 *Softeners*

In this group, one of the most frequent expressions-which by the way is typically Chilean – is *¿cachai?*, which performs the previously mentioned function when in final position, where it is very likely to take a fall-rise tone. Other expressions found in my corpus are: *por favor, te diré,* etc.,e.g.

Yo soy seca pa'l tra BAjo, ¿cachai?
Me fascinan los capu'CInos, te diré
SÍgame, por favor

I should stress that some of the expressions found in this category may perform different function depending upon the position they take in the utterance. Without doubt, the best two examples are *te diré* and *¿cachai?* When found in initial position they act as introductory elements for the message that is to be conveyed, in which case, it may or may not take an accent. Under no circumstances should this accent be nuclear.

6.2.3.2 *Vocatives*

Vocatives also occurred very frequently in my corpus as is the case of similar studies that have been conducted in this area of study. Here are some examples:

¿Estás más tranQUIla, Tamara?
Ojalá me estés escuCHANdo, mi amor
¿Para qué seRÍA, Señorita Cordero?
CLAro, mijita
Por suPUESto, señorita
Lo haces super BIEN, comadre
No sé que haría sin alumnas como TÚ, Makita

6.2.3.3 *Tags*

The first thing that needs to be said is that Spanish does not present well-defined tag- like structures as does English. Nevertheless, there are expressions that behave as such.

In 5.2.3, two types of tags are briefly discussed and compared with each other as to their phonological behaviour.

I came across only one example which is comparable to the tgs used in commands in English, e.g.

No seas hablaDOra, ¿quieres?

In the aforementioned example the tag-like expression takes a rising tone which turns out to be merely a continuation of the fall-rise nucleus.

6.2.4 *Textual markers*

Regrettably, only one example was found falling into the group of comment clauses, e.g.

Va a tocar un grupo de rock hoy DÍa, parece

As for the group of final reporting clauses, no examples were found, largely due to the restricted use of such expressions to writing.

6.2.5 *Approximatives*

No expressions falling into this class were found. I am under the impression, however, that many of the Spanish expressions that are equivalent to those included in this class are likely to be accented. Similarly, if found in final position, such expressions can also take the nucleus, e.g.

Debe haber sido once años o MÁS

Perhaps these expressions are in focus in Spanish, which is why they tend to take the nucleus.

6.3   Category III

Seemingly, in Spanish there is a group of words whose semantic contribution to the sentence is weighty enough as to take the nucleus. These words denote a notion of 'completeness' or 'cut above/below the average'. For some authors this is a manifestation of 'lexical focusing', e.g.

Te juro que no tenemos NAda que ver con esto
¿Por qué no me llamaste en TOdo el fin de semana?
En MUchas cosas
Tu casa es espectacuLAR para hacer fiestas
Vengo a hablar algo muy imporTANte con usted

6.4   Miscellaneous

A mere handful of the few examples that posed difficulty upon classification seem to imply a certain degree of implicit givenness, i.e. material which the speaker assumes as given, contrast, emphasis, etc., e.g.

¿QUIÉN escribió este papel?
¿De QUÉ me está hablando usted?
¿CÓmo me dijiste que te llamabas?
¿A qué HOra lo puedo ubicar'
Pero eso no ES verdad

7.0   CONCLUSIONS

Due to the small corpus used in this work, the present analysis may not be comprehensive enough; however, I do believe that this investigation offers a comparison of expressions which have not received much attention in the literature dealing with English and Chilean prosody. Likewise, further research could certainly be carried out in both general and specific problem areas of intonation.

Broadly speaking, five conclusions emerge from the present study:

- It has become evident that Spanish speakers most often prefer to place the nucleus on the last lexical item. There are, however, occasions on which speakers choose not to assign the nucleus to the last lexical item, as is the case of left/right dislocation.
- There are classes of expressions where no examples were found and therefore further research needs to be conducted.
- A fair number of examples found in my corpus fit well in Gussenhoven's categorisation, which definitely facilitated the comparison.
- Lastly, I hope I have made a significant contribution to the study of prosody in Chilean Spanish despite the use of quasi-spontaneous speech.

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