
Intonation and discourse status of Spanish subject pronoun *yo* ('I')

Andrea Pešková
Universität Osnabrück
apeskova@uos.de

Ingo Feldhausen
Goethe-Universität Frankfurt
feldhausen@em.uni-frankfurt.de

The present paper investigates intonational patterns of the referring expression *yo* ('I') in Buenos Aires Spanish, a typically null-subject language. The pronoun of the first-person singular is expressed at very high rates in spoken Spanish and exhibits several pragmatic-discourse functions. This study assumes five information-structural functions of pronominal subjects (PS): Two categories with optionally overt form of the PS (familiar topic, aboutness-shift topic), and three categories with obligatorily overt form of the PS (disambiguating topic, contrastive topic, focus). As for tonal analysis, the study applies the Spanish Tones and Break Indices system (e.g., Prieto & Roseano 2010) based on the Autosegmental-Metrical model of intonational phonology (Pierrehumbert 1980). The author's manual labeling technique is supported by the Eti-ToBI, a tool for automatic transcription of intonation according to the Spanish ToBI (Elvira-García et al. 2016). The results (based on ten-hour-long undirected natural interviews) show that *yo*-topics differ from *yo*-focus in intonation, whereas different types of topics do not show clear patterns, as, for example, Frascarelli (2007) assumes for Italian. We cannot thus simply rely on prosody by reconstructing discourse properties of topics in the variety under study, since (the proposed) IS categories can have variant correlates (see, e.g., Féry 2007).

References: • Elvira-García, W., Roseano, P., Fernández Planas A. M. & Martínez Celdrán E. (2016): A tool for automatic transcription of intonation: Eti-ToBI a ToBI transcriber for Spanish and Catalan. *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 50(4), 767–792. • Féry, C. (2007): Information structural notions and the fallacy of invariant correlates. In Féry, C. & Fanselow, G. & Krifka, M. (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies on Information Structure* 6, 161–184. • Frascarelli, M. (2007): Subjects, topics and the interpretation of referential pro: An interface approach to the linking of (null) pronouns. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 25(4): 691–734. • Pierrehumbert, J. B. (1980): *The Phonetics and Phonology of English Intonation*. PhD Dissertation. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. • Prieto, P. & Roseano, P. (2010): *Transcription of intonation of the Spanish language*. München: Lincom.