

### Phonological Constraints on Verum Focus

It is widely assumed that the most common phonological property characterizing clitics in Spanish is the inability to bear stress (Harris 1989b, Klavans 1995 among others). However, in Argentinian Spanish (AS), clitics can be stressed under certain structural and contextual conditions. In AS only enclitics but not proclitics may, but not need, be stressed. This means that forms with unstressed enclitics alternate in AS with forms with stressed enclitics (1) and (2).

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1)a. <b>dámelo</b>            | (2) a. voy a <b>hacértelo</b> |
| b. <b>dámeLÓ</b>               | b. voy a <b>hacérteLÓ</b>     |
| give.imp-me/it                 | (I) am going to do/to you/it  |
| ‘(you informal) give it to me’ | ‘I am going to do it’         |

The structural conditions under which the enclitic can have prominence are the following. In the case of *two enclitics* attached to a verbal base, the stress falls on the second enclitic as in monosyllabic verbs (3) and verbs of more than one syllable (4).

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|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| (3)a. <b>dámelo</b>           | (4) a. <b>cómaselo</b> |
| b. <b>dámeló</b>              | b. <b>cómaseló</b>     |
| c. * <b>dámélo</b>            | c. * <b>cómasélo</b>   |
| give/me/it                    | eat /oneself/it        |
| ‘(you informal)give it to me’ | ‘(you formal)eat it’   |

In the case of only *one enclitic*, whether or not it can be stressed depends on the verb it is attached to. The enclitic is not stressed if the verb is monosyllabic (4) or bears stress in the last syllable as in the case of command forms in 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular ‘vos’ (5) and in infinitive forms (6). In other instances, the enclitic can be stressed (7).

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|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (4) a. <b>dá-lo</b> | (5) a. <b>comélo</b>    | (6) a. voy a <b>comérlo</b> | (7) a. <b>cómalo</b>     |
| b. * <b>dá-ló</b>   | b. * <b>comeló</b>      | b. *voy a <b>comérlo</b>    | b. <b>cómaló</b>         |
| give/me/it          | give/to me              | (I) am going to eat/it      | eat/it                   |
| ‘give it to me’     | ‘(you informal)give me’ | ‘I’m going to eat it’       | ‘(you formal) eat is up’ |

I propose that the variation is not entirely free since the utterance with prominence on the enclitic carries a marked semantic interpretation. With this interpretation, the speaker affirms the truth of the proposition in question. From now on, I’ll refer to this interpretation as ‘Verum Focus’.

‘Verum Focus’ is realized in many Indo-European languages by means of giving prominence on the verb. This is shown in German (8b) and Spanish (8c), including AS. The English cases can be realized either by giving prominence in the main verb or to the DO-support.

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|--|-----------|
| (8) a. Do you really hear me?              |           |
| b. Ich <b>HÖRT</b> dich.                   | (German)  |
| c. Yo te <b>OIGO</b> .                     | (Spanish) |
| d. I <b>HEAR</b> you/ I <b>DO</b> hear you | (English) |

The phonological correlate of ‘Verum Focus’ is that the focused element, the verb or the category in INFL, receives prominence. Prosodically, there is a direct relationship between stress and focus, which means that focused phrases always receive sentence stress which, by default, is assigned to the rightmost (or most embedded) constituent via the Nuclear Stress Rule (NSR) (Chomsky and Halle 1968, Cinque 1993). However, in this case that I present here, ‘Verum Focus’, the focus element appears in situ in nonfinal

position. The problem is therefore that the focus does not align with nuclear stress. Since the focus does not align with nuclear stress it follows that focus movement cannot be derived from prosodic conditions in these examples.

Sosa (1999) claims that Spanish favors short phonological phrases due to the fact that the main stress, which always falls on the final position, cannot fall on any other phrase in the sentence. According to Buring and Gutiérrez-Bravo (2001) since every lexical word in Spanish bears lexical stress, almost all words in Spanish bear a pitch accent and form their own phonological phrase. Since the word that is situated immediately before a pause between phrases always receives some prominence, Sosa argues that Spanish uses short phonological phrases to give prominence to words that are not in final position. I assume that the presence and absence of pitch accents correlates with the information status of the phrase. Then I consider ‘Verum Focus’ as a type of contrastive focus since we are contrasting the truth value of the proposition with the negation of same. Cases of verum focus are not subject to the requirement on Nuclear Stress and they can appear in different positions as it is in the case of the verb.

In AS, ‘Verum Focus’ is realized by giving prominence to the final enclitic of a *Verb+enclitic* structure, in contrast to Standard Spanish in which the prominence falls on the verb. Stressing the rightmost syllable of the rightmost element in ‘Verum Focus’ readings is also attested in German. Reis (1985) observed that there is a convergence of phonological properties regarding lexical complementizers or multisyllabic *wh*-expressions in subordinate clauses in German with ‘Verum Focus’. With *wh*-expressions, both stress assignments are possible as shown in (9).

(9) *Wárum/Warúm* hat Lisa das getan?  
 why has Lisa that done  
 ‘Why did Lisa do that?’

However, in subordinate contexts only stress on the second syllable is allowed (10).

(10) Ich weiss nicht [*warúm*/\**wárum* Lisa das getan hat].  
 I know not why Lisa that done has  
 ‘I do not know why Lisa did that’

In this paper I propose that in AS the *verb+enclitic* form a phonological phrase unit (p-phrase). Prominence on the enclitic is therefore realized as a pitch accent which marks the rightmost syllable of the phrase, resulting in the observed ‘Verum focus’ effect. This association takes place at the level of PPh. I propose that this can be accounted for by the postulation of an Alignment constraint: Align-R (PA,PPh).

(12) **Align-R (PA,PPh)**

“Align Pitch Accent with the right edge of the Phonology Phrase”

#### PARTIAL REFERENCES

**Harris, James W.** (1989b). ‘The stress erasure convention and cliticization in Spanish’. LI 20. p. 339-363. **Klavans, Judith L.** (1995). *On clitics and cliticization: The interaction of morphology, phonology, and syntax*. New York/London: Garland. **Reis, M.** (1985). Saltzeinleitende Strukturen im Deutschen. Über COMP, Haupt, und Nebensätze, w-Bewegung und die doppenkopfanalyse. In Abraham, W. (ed.), *Erklärende Syntax des Deutschen*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr. 271-311.