
Review by Maria del Mar Vanrell

Does the paper make a novel contribution to the understanding of the topic under investigation? [max 250 words]

The paper provides a significant contribution to understanding both the violation of the Focus Prominence Rule (FPR) and its potential relation to the proposed vulnerability of external grammatical interfaces in second language acquisition. Specifically, the authors suggest that this vulnerability may extend to monolingual language use. To my knowledge, prior to this paper, the topic of FPR violations had not been specifically addressed. Additionally, the manuscript departs from the notion that FPR violations can occur in perception, production, or both. The authors propose a specific data analysis to determine precisely when these violations occur in their data, whether during production or perception. Their analysis yields conclusive evidence that the violations primarily occur during production.

Is the empirical content of the paper sound (i.e. the data are collected and presented properly, the experiments are well designed, the statistics is well done, the examples contain no spelling mistakes, etc)? [max 400 words]

The empirical content of the paper is sound. However, there are certain aspects that could be considered to strengthen the presentation of the results or to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the findings (due to space constraints, references will be provided below).

1. The results regarding language variation are particularly relevant, demonstrating that different language varieties utilize or emphasize acoustic cues to varying degrees. However, it appears that language variation was not initially a focal point of the manuscript, as evidenced by the absence of motivation for the inclusion of European Spanish speakers in the sample. It would be beneficial for the authors to incorporate the topic of language variation throughout the paper or at least provide justification for why not only Argentinean speakers participated in the perceptual study.

2. Based on the results presented in Table 5 (p. 14), it appears that subject/object asymmetries are observed. Since these asymmetries have also been documented in the literature, I would recommend consulting previous studies.

3. The rationale behind including voice quality as one of the parameters for study is not entirely clear, especially considering that this parameter was not included in Vanrell et al. (2013), and it is often excluded in similar experiments due to its perceived dependence on the distance between the speaker and the microphone. If the authors are drawing from other studies besides Vanrell et al. (2013), it would be sufficient to provide a brief reference to them.

4. The authors focused their measurements on the target H, the target L2 (of the L+H*+L pitch accent), and the falling movement from H to L2 (p. 19). While this decision is reasonable, it should be justified, particularly since measurements for Castilian Spanish typically concentrate

on L1, H, and the rising movement from L1 to H.

5. On pages 23-24, the authors state that “in Argentinean Spanish, stressed syllables are significantly longer than unstressed syllables, whereas in European Spanish, there is no significant difference in duration between stressed and unstressed syllables (Gabriel & Kireva 2014).” It would be beneficial for the authors to contextualize this claim within previous research. Additionally, the present results resemble those obtained in Vanrell et al. (2013), where the increased duration observed in Lecce Italian is attributed to the complexity of the tonal movement (rising-falling, as seen in Argentinean Spanish) (see p. 215 in Vanrell et al. 2013).

Is the argument coherent and sound, with no major flaws and/or shortcomings, within the context of the theoretical assumptions made by the author? [max 500 words]

Yes, the argument is coherent and sound, and there are no major flaws within the theoretical assumptions made by the authors. However, I will suggest some topics that could strengthen and complement their theoretical framework (references will also be provided below).

1. From what I understand, the violations of the Focus Prominence Rule (FPR) are solely based on "prominence", as indicated by the term itself, rather than on alignment. Considering the proposal by Féry (2013) that prominence and alignment are distinct prosodic mechanisms for marking focus, which may or may not coincide, it raises the question of whether some (if not all) of the violations previously identified in the literature would still be considered violations if focus aligns with a prosodic edge. Could the authors elaborate on this aspect?

2. Building on Féry's (2013) argument, it is plausible that the observed phenomenon does not necessarily indicate vulnerability at the external interfaces even in monolingual usage. Instead, speakers might be relying on alignment rather than prominence to express focus. If this is the case, it prompts the question of how to determine whether speakers will utilize prominence, alignment, or both. Féry (2013) suggests that foci “stronger” in the hierarchy (i.e., corrective/contrastive focus) are more likely to be expressed through prominence, which aligns with the findings of the present study.

3. Another topic mentioned in the paper, previously discussed in the literature, pertains to the nature of the focus category. I will provide references that support the authors’ proposal that focus is not a “genuine linguistic category” (p. 25 in the present paper).

Are there any relevant scholarly works that have been overlooked by the author? If the answer is YES, please provide the full references.

I will provide the references I referred to in the two previous questions since I could not do so due to space limitations.

- Relevant references about subject/object asymmetries

Büring, Daniel & Gutiérrez-Bravo, Rodrigo. 2001. Focus-related word order variation without the NSR: A prosody based cross-linguistic analysis. In SASC 3: Syntax and Semantics at Santa Cruz. Linguistics Research Center, James McCloskey (ed). Santa Cruz CA: University of California,

Santa Cruz.

Vanrell, M.M., Fernández-Soriano, O. (2018). Language variation at the prosody-syntax interface: Focus in European Spanish. In: García, M., Uth, M. (Editors), *Focus Realization and Interpretation in Romance and Beyond*, 33-70. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Zubizarreta, Maria Luisa. 1998. *Prosody, Focus, and Word Order*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.

- Differences between accented stressed syllables, unaccented stressed syllables and unstressed syllables in Castilian Spanish

Prieto, P., Vanrell, M.M., Astruc, L., Payne, E., Post, B. (2012). Phonotactic and phrasal properties of speech rhythm. Evidence from Catalan, English, and Spanish. *Speech Communication* 54(6), 681-702.

- Prosody and alignment as distinct prosodic mechanisms for marking focus

Féry, Caroline. 2013. Focus as prosodic alignment. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 31: 683-734. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11049-013-9195-7>

- Nature of the focus category

Borràs-Comes, J., Vanrell, M.M., Prieto, P. (2014). The role of pitch range in establishing intonational contrasts. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 44(1). [Discussion section]

Gili-Fivela, B. (2009). From production to perception and back: An analysis of two pitch accents. In S. Fuchs, H. Loevenbruck, D. Pape, & P. Perrier (Eds.), *Some aspects of speech and the brain* (pp. 363-405). Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang GmbH. [Pages 12-13]

Have you seen this paper, its content, the proposed analysis, or the conclusions published in other venues? [If your answer is YES, please add the relevant reference.]

No

If you accept the paper with minor revisions, please list the revisions you would advice (you are not required to proofread the paper) [max 500 words]

I accept the paper with minor revisions. The revisions I suggest are provided above. Additionally, I would suggest carefully checking the references section, as there are inconsistencies such as missing author names, variations in city names between German and English, and inconsistencies in the abbreviation "eds" where sometimes it includes a full stop and sometimes it does not.