

# Focus realization in the native Spanish of monolingual and bilingual speakers

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In this paper, we shed new light on the question of how narrow contrastive and information focus is realized in Castilian Spanish and we show that monolingual native speakers and German-Spanish bilingual speakers differ in their prosodic and syntactic strategies.

**Background:** The theoretically oriented literature suggests that information focus must be realized rightmost, while stress shift is possible for contrastive focus – next to syntactic structures such as clefting or fronting (Zubizarreta 1998). Experimentally-oriented studies suggest that stress shift can be used for both types of focus (Muntendam 2009, Gabriel 2010, Leal et al. 2018). However, as already argued in Feldhausen & Vanrell (2014, 2015), this apparent discrepancy can often be reduced to diatopic differences, since the abovementioned studies did not consider the same varieties of Spanish. By considering the same variety as Zubizarreta (1998), our experimental study supports the findings of Feldhausen & Vanrell (2014, 2015) and extends them by including German-Spanish bilinguals (living in Germany).

**Findings:** Based on data from a production test designed to elicit different focus readings (narrow informational and contrastive focus on the subject and (in)direct objects) in the semi-spontaneous speech of 12 speakers of Central-Peninsular Spanish, our study reveals five main findings:

- (a) Monolingual speakers realize information focus by different strategies (e.g., clefting, p-movement), but stress shift is not a relevant option – in contrast to Muntendam 2009, Gabriel 2010, Leal et al. 2018;
- (b) Bilingual speakers, in turn, realize both types of focus almost always by stress shift, and the pitch accent is predominantly realized by L+H\*;
- (c) Cleft constructions are used by monolinguals for both focus types even though there are certain preferences: (inverted) pseudo-clefts are favored for neutral focus, whereas simple clefts are preferred for contrastive focus;
- (d) Focus does not have to bear always sentential stress: in clefts, prosodic alignment can be a sufficient correlate of focus (supporting Feldhausen & Vanrell 2014, 2015);
- (e) Monolinguals typically realize the pitch accents by L+H\* for non-final focused constituents and L\* for final focused constituents.

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