

# Prosodic markers of narrow focus in Italian L1 and L2 (French L1): an experimental study



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## 1. Introduction

**Focus** is understood as the most informative part within an utterance (<-> *background*).

**Italian and French** exploit (partially) different strategies to encode **focus** prosodically (Michelas & German 2020, Féry 2001, Bocci & Avesani 2005 *inter alia*).

The mapping of **focus on prosody** (and syntax) can be difficult for **non-native speakers** (see Andorno & Turco 2015, Zubizarreta & Nava 2011).

How do native and non-native speakers of Italian encode **focus**?

## 2. Materials & metrics

3 groups: **native Italian sp.** (ITL1), **native French sp.** (FRL1), French learners of **Italian L2** (ITL2).

Group	N. speakers
ITL1	10
FRL1	10
ITL2	10

Task-elicited speech (*stimuli* adapted from Gabriel 2010).

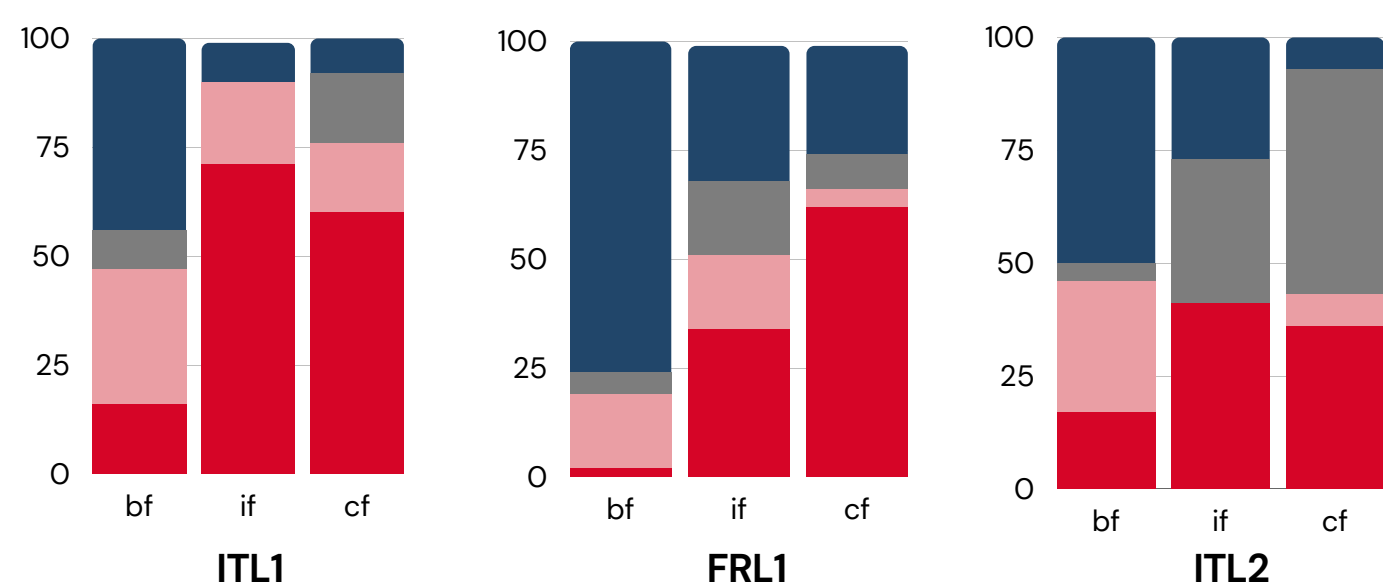
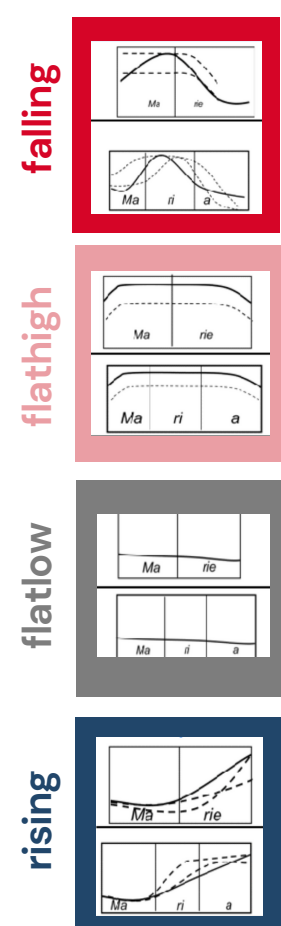
3 **focus conditions**: broad foc. (bf), narrow identificational foc. (if), narrow corrective foc. (cf); 2 **syntactic roles**: **subject** (sbj) and **object** (obj).



Analysis run with **Polytonia** script (Mertens 2014).

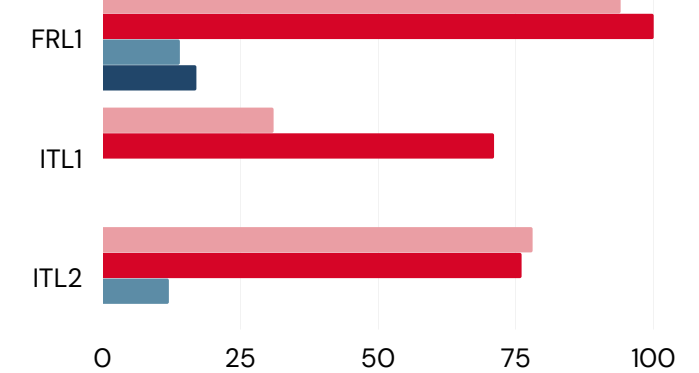
4 **categories** elaborated from PT labels (levels L, M, H + movements r, R, f, F): *falling, flathigh, rising, flatlow* (see De Paolis et al. 2022).

## 3. Results



% of different contours (**falling, flathigh, flatlow, rising**) produced by each group in 3 focus conditions: BF, IF, CF

### Syntactic marking



% of **cleft sentences** produced by each group of sp. for if-sbj (pink), cf-sbj (red), if-obj (grey), cf-obj (blue).

## 4. Conclusions

✓ The similar **mapping** of focalization on **syntax and/or prosody** in IT and FR facilitates the **early emergence** of markers in the L2 group.

*Cross-linguistic effect on the frequency level: in ITL2, as in FRL1, preference for marking through syntax.*

✗ Phonological **divergences** on the **rhythmic / intonative** level between IT and FR result in **underuse of prosodic marking** in the ITL2 group.



Is there really no prosodic marking in **absence of major f0 movements**?

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