Information Focus marking in French. Acoustic predictors of postfocal deaccentuation

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Information Focus (IF)
The part of the answer which resolves the question.
(1a) All focus answers
Q: What happened?
A: [John invited Mary last night]F
(1b) Narrow focus answers
Q: Who did John invite last night?
A: John invited [Mary]F last night

French Intonational Phonology
Adapted from [3]
- Optional initial rise LHi
- Obligatory final pitch accent T*

Prosodic marking of focus in French
Consensus:
Postfocal dephrasing
Role and characteristics of the initial rise LHi?
Role and characteristics of pitch range? On the focal constituent?
- On the prefocus constituent?

Data
Answers to broad or partial questions bearing on the object O
Pattern: V (subject clitic+verb), O (Object), A (adverbial)
[“I screened the videos last night”]

Measure (on V, O, si & sf)
Mean duration, mean F0, F0 span (F0max-F0min) and mean intensity
si=first syllable of the content word of O (LHi)–sf=final syllable of the AP (T*)

Correlations
To run statistics: highly correlated variables are replaced with their first principal components

Statistics
Model: Logistic regression.
Dependent variable: Probability of deaccentuation.
Predictors: PC1(OF0mean, sfF0mean), PC2(OF0mean, sfF0mean), PC1(OF0span, sfF0span), PC2(OF0span, sfF0span), siF0mean, siF0span, Odur, vF0mean, vF0span, odrt, vInt, siDur.
Random factor: Subject’s identity.

Results
Significant predictors

Conclusion
In our Information focus data, deaccentuation is predicted by intensification of the initial rise LHi on the focal Object O.
- Double marking: left and right edge of the focal constituent.
- Compared with results obtained with contrastive focus in [3] and [4]:
  - Confirm that pitch range is higher in focal O but on LHi, not on T*;
  - Contrary to contrastive focus, no pre-focal pitch compression;
  - The shorter duration of the focus constituent remains to be explained.

References