

REVIEW

by María José GONZÁLEZ RODRÍGUEZ

Universidad de La Laguna

majgonza@ull.es

DORTA, Josefa (ed.) (2013) *Estudio comparativo preliminar de la entonación de Canarias, Cuba y Venezuela*, Madrid-Tenerife, La Página Ediciones, Colección Universidad. ISBN: 978-84-15607-16-8. 292 pages.

This book forms part of a research Project, called AMPER, though it adds other necessary approaches for a broader phonetic and phonological study, which will be reported and discussed later. Before presenting the amount of graphics and data used, the authors guide us through a series of introductory chapters that greatly facilitate the reader's understanding of all the framework of operations, calculations and analysis included in them.

The introductory chapter by Josefa Dorta commemorates the first studies on the Canary, Cuban and Venezuelan varieties and the research development in this area to the creation of the Project AMPER, as well as the previous work to this book. Within the methodological framework of the macro project, these previous studies compared partially some of the areas already mentioned.

The first chapter of the book, entitled "Las modalidades interrogativas y declarativas en el español" by Elsa Mora, collects from Navarro Tomás, relevant studies and assessments on the relationship between intonation and modality in this language, and ends close to recent prosodic characterizations of the varieties under study.

The second chapter by Josefa Dorta, Chaxiraxi Díaz, Beatriz Hernández, Carolina Jorge Trujillo and Jose Antonio Martin Gómez is devoted to showing in detail the

methodology used within AMPER, methodology many readers are now familiar with. It particularly emphasizes some elements added in the study of the prosody parameters: a method of processing the data of intensity, in decibels, so that they are truly comparable across speakers; a method of labelling the duration distinguished between long and short syllables; and the system of prosodic labelling Sp_ToBI. This system, so fashionable today, is used for the description of the curve of F0 and its further interpretation in phonological terms. Nevertheless, the authors regard this system either it has not been uniformly applied by the different researchers or its application has not been sufficiently objective for the study of the F0, of which detailed analyses could be made. Therefore, the authors of the work are considering to design and present a proposal for labelling which takes as its base a great quantity of numerical and objective information to then compare the relative distances between them using the psychoacoustic threshold of 1,5 St proposed by Rietveld & Gussenhoven (1985) and verified later for the Spanish language (Pamies Bertran *et al.* 2002), rather than rely exclusively on the auditory perception of the researcher or on the analysis of few curves. The above mentioned is, undoubtedly, the great methodological contribution of the work, of special interest because, as the authors say, it does not remain closed, but may be modified as it is developed in other corpus analysis of the different areas involved.

These first chapters add great knowledge and large number of references to delve into the core of the book, which is divided into two main parts according to the study areas: a first part (Josefa Dorta, Beatriz Hernandez and Jose Antonio Martín) comparing the intonation of the Canary Islands with the Cuban one; and a second one (Josefa Dorta, Chaxiraxi Diaz, Elsa Mora, Jorge Trujillo and Nelson Carolina Rojas) linking the Canary Islands with Venezuela. The thirteen female speakers, as the male voice will be studied in a future work, belong to Havana, Santa Clara and Santiago in Cuba; Mérida, Caracas and Bolivar in Venezuela; and the capital areas of the Canary Islands. This allows a very detailed comparison between modality, varieties and the survey itself, with a common methodology. In turn, these information blocks are subdivided into chapters that correspond to the analyzed parameters: fundamental frequency, duration and intensity, appropriately ending with a summary of the most

important aspects found. The chapters dealing with F0 are related to the beginning and end of the curve, intonational nucleus and prenucleus, pitch prominence and, finally, the phonetic and phonological interpretation of pitch accents and boundary tones, which are compared with the methods of labelling studied by other authors. In the chapters concerning duration, stressed vowels are analyzed in relation to its adjacent in each phrase (noun phrase, verb phrase and prepositional phrase) and they are labelled as L (long) or B (short) attending to a perceptual threshold percentage. The same method is followed for the analysis of intensity: stressed vowels are observed according to the stress type and modality and their relation to unstressed vowels in each phrase, and, finally, each stressed syllable is labelled as strong (F) or weak (D) in each case, taking into account the threshold in decibels (dB) recommended by physicists.

All these data create a picture of how melody, duration and intensity behave in the selected key points for both modes; the initial data density successfully softens thanks to the inclusion of charts and tables that allow a more visual and straightforward comparison and, above all, the end of each chapter, which summarises, as it has been said, the preliminary data which support comparisons and final conclusions.

The final chapter by Josefa Dorta focuses briefly and with great success on overall results obtained for each area in the three parameters and their interpretations, and it refers, in turn, to each chapter to understand in more detail how and why these conclusions are drawn. The clear and rigorous methodology and the careful organization of content, together with tables, figures and authors added, make possible at all times the comparison between the two blocks and the three varieties, and provide insight into all the data collected, the analyses and the thresholds considered. This is precisely what most certainly appreciates the reader. It starts from the foundation of detailed phonetic analysis of a lot of examples placed neatly to ultimately make up the prosodic mosaic of the three intimately interrelated varieties. A preliminary study, which must be completed with future studies, as the authors point out, but of great value for studies of the Spanish prosody with the advantage that it takes very seriously the, sometimes forgotten, American varieties.

References

- PAMIES BERTRÁN, A., A. M^a. FERNÁNDEZ PLANAS, E. MARTÍNEZ CELDRÁN, A. ORTEGA ESCANDELL & M. C. AMORÓS CÉSPEDES (2002) “Umbrales tonales en el español peninsular”, in *Actas del II Congreso de Fonética Experimental*, Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 272-278.
- RIETVELD, T. & GUSSENHOVEN, C. (1985) “On the relation between pitch excursion size and pitch prominence”, *Journal of Phonetics*, 13, 299-308.