

Temporal information marks person in a Northern Lazio Italian variety

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Castiglione in Teverina (CiT) Italian, like other varieties of Northern Lazio Italian, has *raddoppiamento sintattico* (RS)—gemination at word junctures in running speech. Though originally explained with reference to syntactic constituency (e.g., Nespor & Vogel, 1986), RS is now usually considered purely prosodic. As a prosodic phenomenon, it is subject to blocking. Yet, when raddoppiamento is linked to new meaning it will lexicalize (*a bórdo* “on board” → *abbórdo* “I accost”) and thus become categorical. We believe to have found something like lexicalization of RS in CiT Italian, albeit to signal syntactic relations. In CiT Italian, 2nd and 3rd SG auxiliaries in present perfect constructions are confusable because 2nd person [aj] reduces to [a] in running speech where full independent pronouns are also rare. Speakers compensate for this confusability by geminating the onset of the participial verb form in 3rd person; a fact we confirmed experimentally. Our elicitation experiment with 9 CiT speakers further indicated that such gemination is preserved even under narrow prosodic focus, which blocks auxiliary reduction. Specifically, our speakers produced simple clauses with present perfect verb forms first under broad prosodic focus and then in response to a corrective focus prompt. The clauses, repeated 3 times in random order per condition, included 24 different main verbs with initial /f, m, s, n/. Results indicated the expected strong effect of person, but no interaction with focus condition on consonant duration (Figure 1). This result could indicate the stored representation of supralephical units with their own temporal patterning.

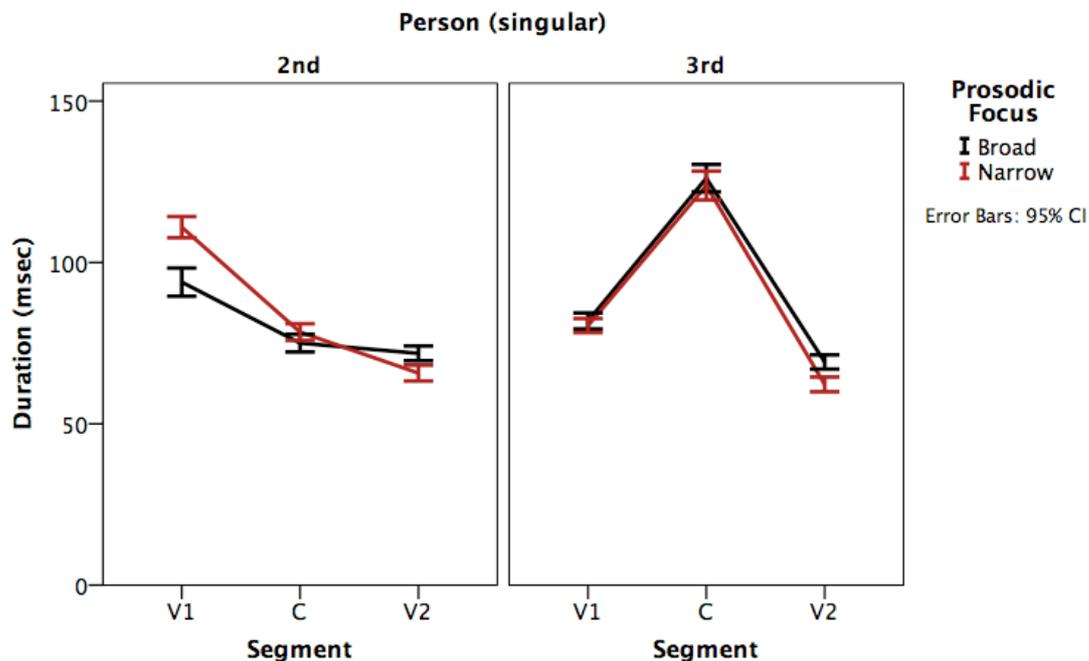


Figure 1. Initial consonant (C) duration of participial verb form is shown relative to the preceding (auxiliary) vowel (V1) and following unstressed vowel (V2) for the broad and narrow focus conditions. Narrow (corrective) focus was elicited by feigning confusion over whether “he has *verbed*” or “you (fam. sg.) have *verbed*” for the 2nd and 3rd person targets, respectively.