Pre-focal givenness and accentuation in Estonian
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A well-known factor affecting sentence prosody is Information Structure, including the givenness vs. newness of the information conveyed by a constituent. In many languages, givenness is expressed prosodically either by deaccentuation (e.g. [1]) or by a less prominent realisation of the accent, which may be achieved either by phonological means like accent type (e.g. [2]), or by phonetic means like reduced pitch range (e.g. [3]). Studies on the prosodic expression of Information Structure in Estonian ([4], [5]) have found that post-focal given information is deaccented, whereas pre-focal given information is accented, but the accent is acoustically less prominent than the corresponding new information accent; no phonological correlates of givenness in terms of pitch accent type have been found.

The previous studies on Estonian examined the prosodic effects of pre-focal givenness in the sentence-initial topic position, which may independently call for accentuation (due to topicality or to the preceding prosodic boundary). It should therefore be verified whether pre-focal given information is accented also in non-topical and non-initial positions. Also, the previous studies established the prosodic effects of pre-focal given information on the basis of a comparison with new information included under broad focus. It is thus not clear whether the observed acoustic effects were due to givenness or to non-focality.

The aim of the present study is therefore to examine the prosody of pre-focal given information in sentence-medial non-topic position, trying to keep apart the effects of backgroundedness and givenness. We test three hypotheses: first, that pre-focal given information is accented, second, that the accent is acoustically less prominent than a new information accent under broad focus, and third, that the accent is also less prominent than a pre-focal new information accent. The study is based on data elicited with a production task and consisting of identical sentences produced with different Information Structure. To test the hypotheses, the prosodic features of a given constituent in a sentence-medial pre-focal position are compared with those of an identical constituent elicited as post-focal given information, new information under broad focus, and pre-focal new information.

References