

---

## Focus and Givenness in Turkish Sign Language (TİD)

---

Serpil Karabüklü<sup>1</sup>, Aslı Gürer<sup>2</sup> & Burak Çavuşoğlu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Chicago, <sup>2</sup>Istanbul Bilgi University

skarabuklu@uchicago.edu, asli.gurer@bilgi.edu.tr,

burak.cavusoglu@bilgi.edu

In spoken languages, the prominence of focused constituents is boosted, whereas given constituents are nonprominent (Büring 2009; Féry & Samek-Lodovici 2006). In sign languages, a few studies found the boosting effect of focus in modulations of manual signs (Kimmelman, 2014), yet there are no studies on the comparison of focus and givenness. This study investigates how focushood, prefocal, and postfocal givenness shapes the manual prosody of TİD. Twenty participants (17 female, 10 DoD, 10 DoH) answered questions eliciting broad focus (BF), presentational focus (PF), and contrastive focus (CF) in the syntactic roles of SOV.

Data was analyzed with linear mixed-effects models in R where participant and item were treated as random effects. We found that a focused manual sign is significantly longer in duration ( $t=8.44$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than a non-focused sign. Only focused CF constituents are longer than their BF counterparts ( $t=3.429$ ,  $p=.002$ ) and focused PF counterparts ( $t=2.99$ ,  $p=0.007$ ). As for the non-focal domains, PF subjects were shorter than BF subjects when the focus was on the object ( $t=-3.971$ ,  $p=.001$ ) or the verb ( $t=-4.001$ ,  $p=.001$ ). CF verbs were significantly shorter than BF verbs when the focus was on the subject ( $t=-3.612$ ,  $p=.006$ ). There was no significant effect of focushood on the production of nonmanuals in the data.

Taking the BF condition as the baseline, the PF condition is on par with the BF condition, but the CF condition has higher values. Additionally, PF is marked via prefocal compression and CF via postfocal compression. Finally, we argue that this study's prefocal and postfocal compressions cannot be analyzed as a pure givenness marking strategy. The compression effect is not always observed in all the comparisons, although the target signs are always given. As the first study investigating the givenness effect on manual prosody, this study shows that speakers and signers apply similar strategies in distinct modalities.

**References:** • Büring, D. (2009). Towards a typology of focus realization. In M. Zimmermann and C. Féry (Eds.), *Information Structure: Theoretical, Typological, and Experimental Perspectives*. 177–205. Oxford: Oxford University Press. • Féry, C. & Samek-Lodovici, V. (2006) Focus Projection and Prosodic Prominence in Nested Foci. *Language* 82(1): 131–150. • Kimmelman V (2014) *Information Structure in Russian Sign Language and Sign Language of the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam dissertation.