

## **The intonation of rhetorical questions in Italian: elicited production in monolingual and heritage speakers**

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Rhetorical questions (RhQs) differ from canonical information-seeking questions (ISQs) in that they are not a true request of information, but they are used by the speaker to signal that the answer to the question is obvious given the context (Biezma/Rawlins 2017). While their interpretation is pragmatic in nature, RhQs may be characterised by some additional linguistic cues, including different intonational and prosodic marking when compared to ISQs (Dehé et al. 2022).

In this talk, I will examine the intonational and prosodic properties of ISQs and RhQs produced in an elicitation task by 40 adult monolingual speakers of Italian and 40 heritage speakers of Italian living in Germany, exploring the features of Italian RhQ prosody and, for heritage speakers, the potential effects of cross-linguistic influence. The elicited questions were annotated using the ToBI system for the annotation of intonation, focusing on nuclear pitch accents and edge tones. Additionally, questions were analysed for speech rate, pitch range and voice quality.

Results show that RhQs and ISQs are distinguished by i) different edge tones (mostly low for RhQs, mostly high or rising for ISQs), ii) partially different pitch accents, iii) pitch range (smaller for RhQs), iv) speech rate (slower for RhQs). Heritage speakers' productions mostly followed the same pattern as monolinguals, but some instances of transfer from the typical German 'rhetorical' intonation contour (Braun et al. 2019) were observed.