

## Segmental versus suprasegmental cues in Tunisian Arabic polar questions

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(joint work with Nadia Bouchhioua and Rana Almbark)

Tunisian Arabic (TA) displays an apparent ‘text-tune adjustment’ phenomenon in yes-no questions, which was not reported in prior work on TA intonation (Ghazali, Hamidi, & Knis, 2007). In corpus data collected in Tunis with 12 speakers (6 female), all L1 TA speakers fluent in French (Hellmuth & Almbark, 2017), the nuclear contour in yes-no questions typically shows rise on the accented syllable of the utterance-final word (L+H\*) followed by level or slightly falling boundary (!H% or H!H%) and the boundary tone is frequently accompanied by an epenthetic vowel appended to the last word (Hellmuth, in preparation). In previous work (Hellmuth, in press), we showed that the presence/absence of the utterance-final epenthetic vowel is not due to tonal crowding, but occurs regardless of number of syllables or segmental content in the target word. Instead, the vowel behaves like a question particle, being found in yes-no questions only. Nevertheless, in the corpus data, collected with speakers who had lived all their lives in Tunis, the incidence of epenthesis co-varies with gender: female speakers display more epenthesis (76%) than male speakers (32%). In this paper we report the results of a perception study designed to determine the relative contribution of epenthesis, complex intonation contour and perceived gender (operationalised in terms of pitch range) to listeners’ identification of an utterance as a question (or not).

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