

Rises and rise-plateau-slumps in Trevigiano

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A preliminary analysis of intonational contours in Trevigiano, a Romance dialect of northeast Italy, reveals a predominance of rises and rise-plateau-slumps in both declarative and interrogative utterances. Key exceptions are narrow focus/emphatic declaratives and WH-interrogatives, which are characterised by falling pitch accents. These patterns are quite distinct from central and southern varieties of Italo-Romance, including Standard Italian, and provide further evidence against universal form-meaning relationships in intonation.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a preliminary sketch, within an Autosegmental-Metrical framework, of some key intonational contours of Trevigiano, a Romance dialect spoken in northeast Italy. While investigations of Italian within an Autosegmental Framework exist for Standard and certain Central and Southern varieties (cf. Avesani 2003 for Standard and Tuscan Italian, Grice 1995 for Palermo Italian, d'Imperio 1997, 2003 for Neapolitan Italian, Grice and Savino 1995 for Bari Italian), little, if any, work has been carried out on northern varieties. Furthermore, the intonational contours of Italo-Romance *dialects* have, in the main, been subject only to impressionistic analysis. These dialects are distinct from regional varieties of Italian, although a regional variety will often contain various phonological and phonetic features of the dialect which is spoken in the same area. Together, the large and divergent group of Italo-Romance dialects spoken in Italy, and the many regionally distinct varieties of Italian, constitute a rich ground for cross-linguistic comparison of intonation systems. While any cross-linguistic comparison can give insight into whether there exists a universal common core (cf. Ladd 1996, especially chapter 4), comparison between *closely related* languages can provide a particular perspective. These are language systems which are structurally and phonetically divergent but which are often (but not always) mutually intelligible and which may influence each other through contact, bilingualism etc. By examining both the micro-variation that exists between these systems and those differences that are more dramatic, we can fine-tune our analysis of the form-meaning relationship in intonation and deepen our understanding of which parameters of variation are possible and how these parameters interact with other aspects of grammar (e.g. the availability of morpho-syntactic devices to signal interrogativity).

The aim of the investigation was to conduct a preliminary analysis of the intonational patterns of a northern dialect. The Venetan dialects are spoken in the Veneto region (and contiguous areas) in the northeast of Italy (see the map in (1) below). The intonation of Venetan speakers, both when speaking dialect and when speaking Italian, is quite distinct from other dialects and varieties of Italian, and is often reported as being 'sing-songy'. There are indications that, underlyingly, the patterns may be more distinct; for example there are anecdotal reports (c.f. Canepari 1980) that this pattern may lead other Italians to the mistaken belief that Venetans are asking questions. Within the Venetan group of dialects, there are distinct sub-groups centred on the major cities, but distinctions are also made between rural and urban dialects and between dialects spoken in mountainous areas (in the north) and on the