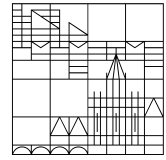


The prosody of rhetorical vs. information-seeking questions in Icelandic*



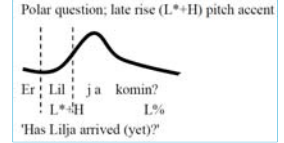
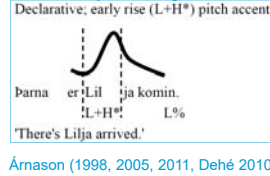
Nicole Dehé, Bettina Braun, Daniela Wochner

Background:

Information-seeking questions (ISQs):

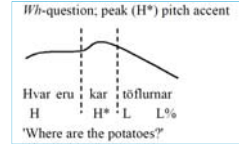
- Polar questions:** perform the directive speech act of requesting information; "request an answer that specifies whether the proposition expressed by their sentence radical holds or does not hold" (Krifka 2011)
- Wh-questions:** "create an open proposition by leaving parts of the description of the proposition unspecified" (Krifka 2011); in Icelandic, the open parameter is represented by the *hv*-pronoun (e.g. *hver* 'who'). The expected answer provides information about the open parameter.
- Rhetorical questions (RQs):**
 - are formally interrogatives, but differ from ISQs in discourse function: RQs (1) do not expect an answer, (2) have the feel of an assertion, (3) do not have to but can optionally be answered (Biezma & Rawlins 2017).

Default prosody of declaratives and ISQs



Árnason (1998, 2005, 2011, Dehé 2010)

- illocution type signaled by pitch accent, not by boundary tone



Hypotheses:

- ISQs and RQs differ in their prosodic realization.
- Phonologically, the type of nuclear pitch accent does, but the boundary tone does not, contribute to this distinction.
- Phonetically, we generally predict longer durations in RQs than in ISQs (based on, e.g., Wochner et al 2015 for German).

Production experiment:

- Materials:**
 - targets: 21 pairs of *wh*- and polar interrogatives with contexts; each polar and each *wh*-question occurred in both an ISQ and an RQ reading
 - 34 fillers (mostly exclamatives), 3 practice items
- Procedure:**
 - two experimental lists; each list contained both polar and *wh*-questions, and both illocution types; illocution type manipulated within-subjects
 - visual display of the context, read carefully by participants, target on button press (self-paced); production as naturally as possible in given context
- Participants:**
 - 17 native speakers of Icelandic (age: 22-32, Ø = 26.9; 6 male, 11 female)
- Data treatment:**
 - 645 items analyzed:
 - 313 polar:
 - 156 ISQs, 157 RQs
 - 332 *wh*:
 - 166 ISQs, 166 RQs

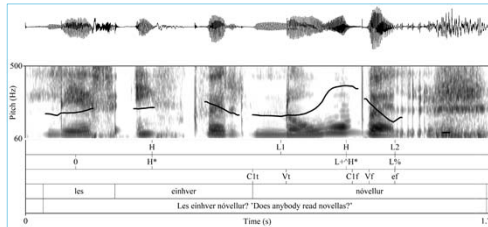


Table 1: Contexts and target polar interrogatives

Context for ISQ	Context for RQ
At a party you offer cake which contains limes. You would like to know which of your guests eat this fruit and whether they would like to try the cake.	Your aunt offers limes to her guests. However, it is well known that this fruit is too sour for it to be possible to eat it.
You say to your guests:	You say to your aunt:
Target Q:	
<i>Borðar einhver limónur?</i> ('Does anybody eat limes?')	

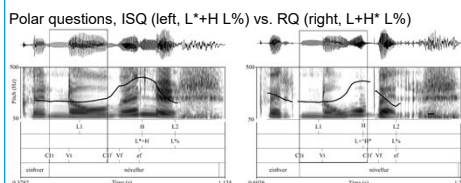
Table 2: Contexts and target *wh*-interrogatives

Context for ISQ	Context for RQ
At a party you offer cake which contains limes. You would like to know which of your guests eat this fruit and whether they would like to try the cake.	Your aunt offers limes to her guests. However, it is well known that this fruit is too sour for it to be possible to eat it.
You say to your guests:	You say to your aunt:
Target Q: <i>Hver borðar limónur?</i> ('Who eats limes?')	

Results and discussion:

1. Boundary tones do not signal illocution type: all RQs and most ISQs end in L%

	polar questions		<i>wh</i> -questions	
	ISQ (N=156)	RQ (N=157)	ISQ (N=166)	RQ (N=166)
L%	149 (95.5%)	157 (100%)	146 (88%)	166 (100%)
H%	6 (4%)	0	2 (1.2%)	0
M%	1 (0.7%)	0	16 (9.6%)	0
LM%	0	0	2 (1.2%)	0



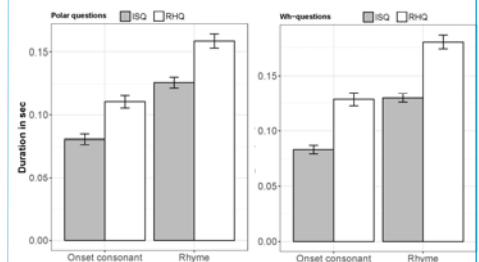
2. Nuclear pitch accents do signal illocution type:

- Polar questions:** timing of the rise in L+H accents
- Wh-questions:** monotonal vs. bitonal

	polar questions		<i>wh</i> -questions	
	ISQ (N=156)	RQ (N=157)	ISQ (N=166)	RQ (N=166)
H*	5	1	80	14
!H*	0	4	16	7
^H*	0	1	4	1
L*+H	79	23	5	3
L*+!H	0	3	0	2
L*+^H	8	18	0	6
L+H*	58	45	42	60
L+!H*	0	18	8	42
L+^H*	6	44	11	31

3. Duration does signal illocution type:

- initial word longer in RQs than in ISQs (lexical verb in polar questions, *wh*-word in *wh*-questions)
- Nuclear syllable (onset, rhyme) longer in RQs than in ISQs across question types



In addition: (4.) generally more and stronger prenuclear accents in RQs than in ISQs. (5.) more upstepped nuclear pitch accents in RQs than in ISQs.

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