

Intonational pragmatics of Greek *wh*-questions

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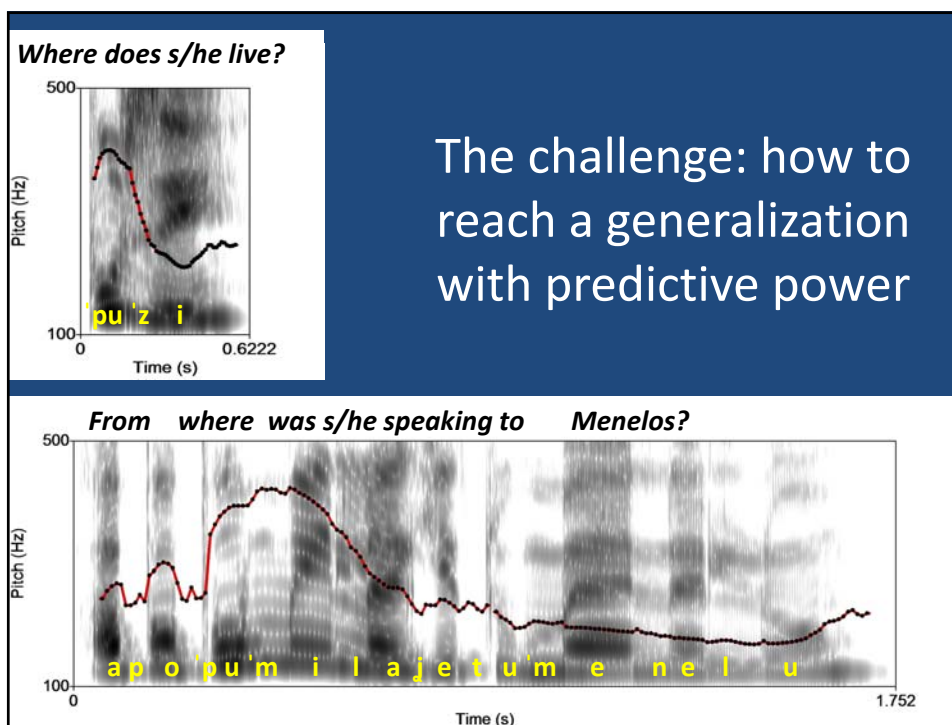
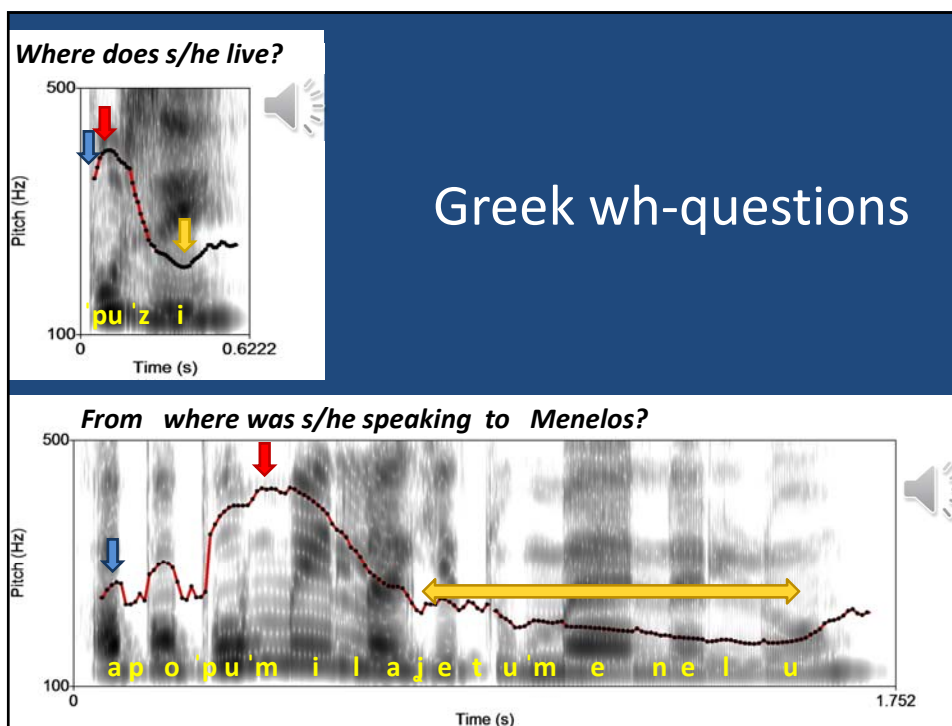
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Introduction

- Intonation is treated as a “half-tamed savage” (Bolinger, 1978)
- Some popular models claim that intonation does not require a phonological representation; e.g. Xu (2005)
- In phonological analyses of intonation, contrasts are often posited on the basis of systematic differences in form but with little consideration for meaning
- Here we present production and perception results that bear on the pragmatics of Greek *wh*-questions and argue against the above views

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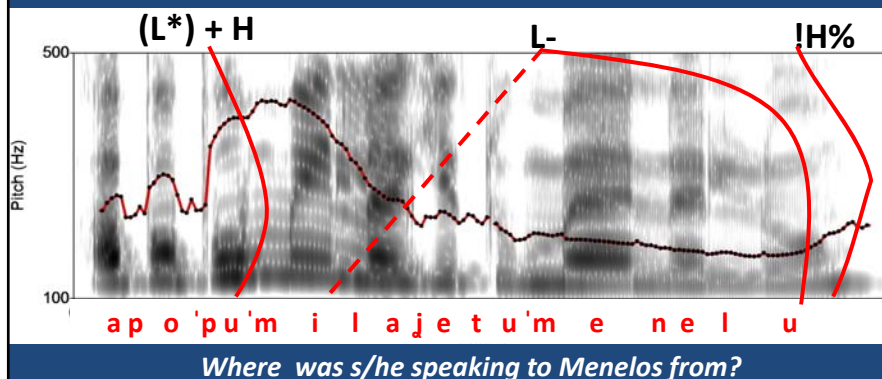


The autosegmental-metrical (AM) framework of intonational phonology

- Intonation is the linguistically controlled and pragmatically meaningful modulation of F0 that spans entire utterances
- Phonologically, melodies composed of discrete L and H tones that associate with prosodic heads (roughly stressed syllables) and phrasal boundaries
- Phonetically tones are realized as two-dimensional tonal targets
 - **scaling** (F0 value)
 - **alignment** (position relative to utterance-specific segments)

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An AM analysis of the melody used with wh-questions



Arvaniti & Ladd (2009)

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!H%- and L%-ending variants

Arvaniti & Ladd (2009) note the rare occurrence of L%-ending tunes (8% of their data, used mostly by the male talkers)



Arvaniti & Ladd (2009)

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Remaining questions

- Is there a !H% that is distinct from L%?
- Or could !H% be really a meaningless return to a default F0 setting (e.g. Grabe 1998)?
- Is L*+H the appropriate representation for the accent?
- Could the accent be better analyzed as H* or L+H*?

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Hypotheses

- The !H%-ending melody is the default; it is appropriate for information-seeking questions
- The L%-ending melody is appropriate for both information-seeking and non-information seeking questions
 - L%-ending questions can indicate questioner bias for a particular answer
- The L%-ending melody, being less polite, is not as appropriate for female as for male talkers (Arvaniti & Baltazani 2005)

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Perception Experiment 1

- Six questions in !H%- and L%-ending versions produced by two female and two male talkers
- Listeners (N = 88) heard a story and then a question
- Task: to evaluate each question using a 1-7 Likert scale
 - appropriateness for the story
 - politeness
- Stories and questions were crossed (96 trials) so that each question was heard after:
 - a story that made asking for information a plausible action
 - a story that did not necessitate information-seeking action

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Timeline and an example

Lena, who is visiting Athens for the first time, stops a passerby to ask for directions:

How will I get to Syntagma?



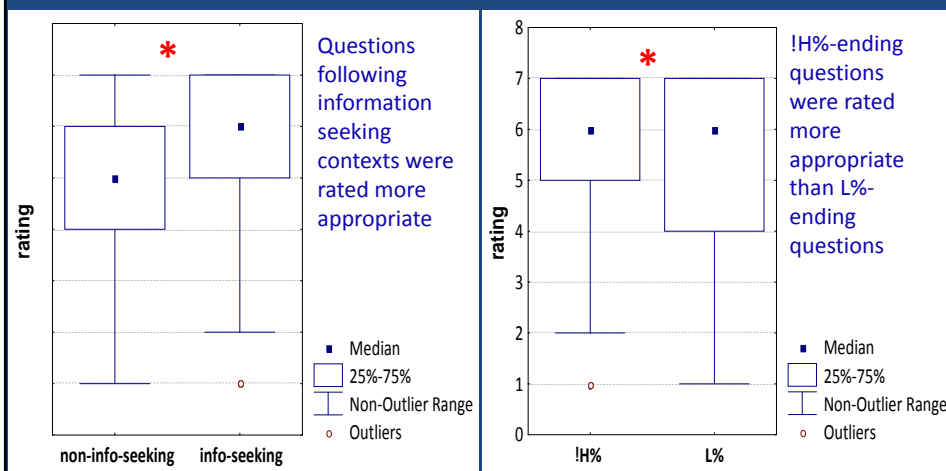
A protest march in Syntagma is scheduled for the time Kostas has an interview there; as they listen to the news, Kostas tells his wife:

How will I get to Syntagma?



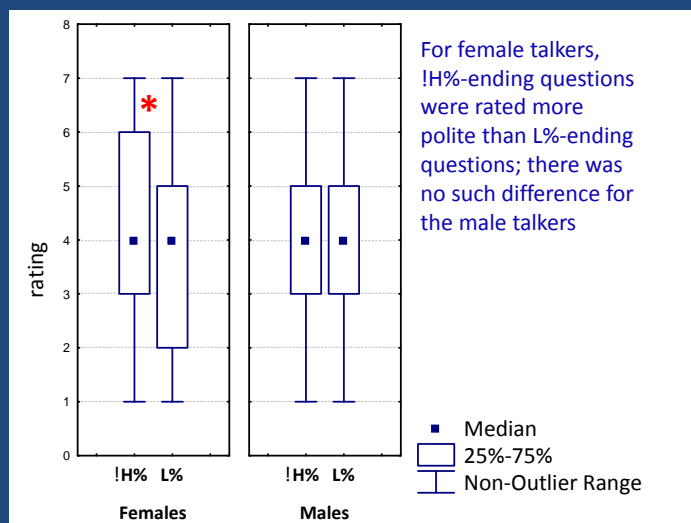
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Results: Appropriateness



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Results: politeness



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Perception Experiment 2

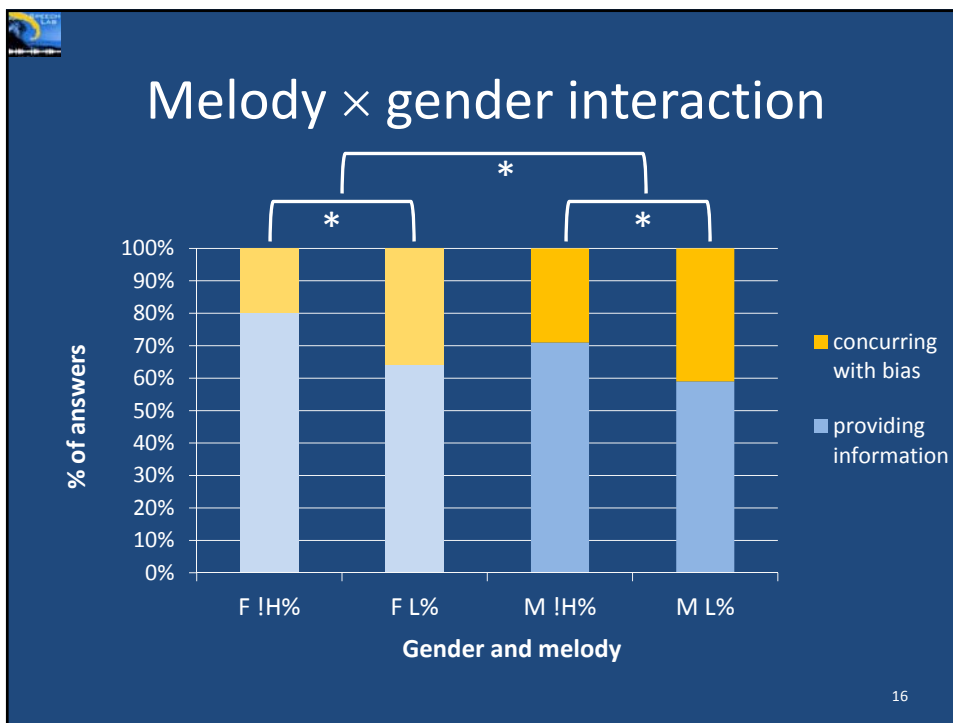
- The same questions as in Perception Experiment 1
- Presented out of context
- Listeners (N=79) had to choose one of two possible responses (48 trials)

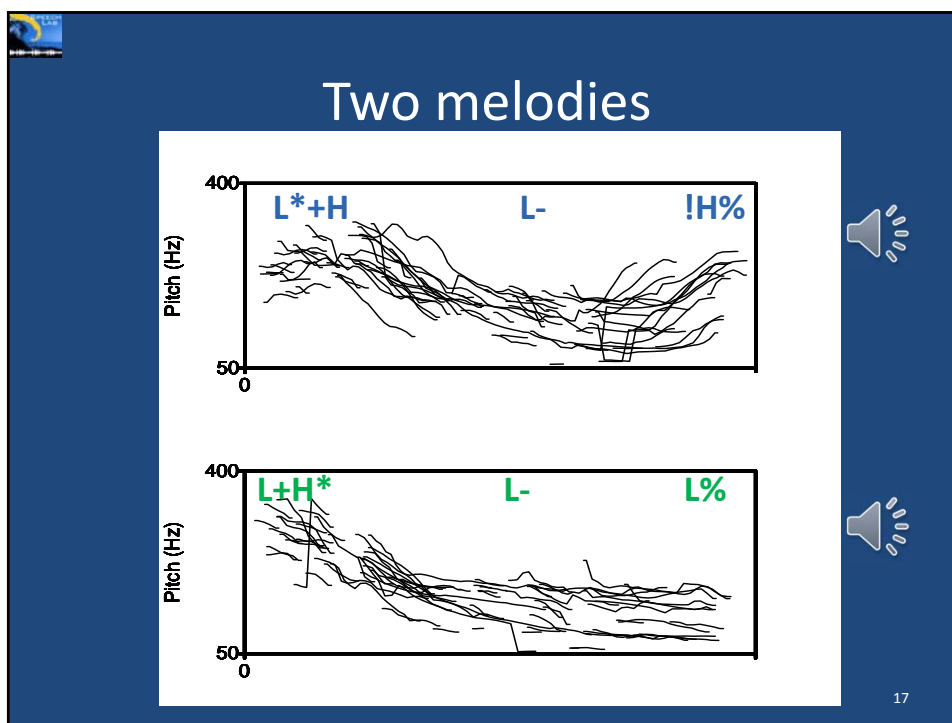
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Example and trial timeline

	Q & A	Interpretation
!H% Question	<i>How will I get to Syntagma?</i>	Seeks information
L% Question	<i>How will I get to Syntagma?</i>	Indicates questioner bias
Response A	<i>You will take line 3 and get off at (stop) Syntagma.</i>	Gives information
Response B	<i>You're right, you can't go. There'll be mayhem.</i>	Agrees with bias

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A preliminary pragmatic analysis

- **L*+H L- !H%**
 - L*+H generally marks new information in Greek
 - !H% marks the utterance as incomplete
 - Thus these questions are more likely to be interpreted as requiring an answer
- **L+H* L- L%**
 - L+H* conveys that the accented item (and not some alternative) should be believed and marks the remainder of the utterance as common ground (Georgakopoulos & Skopeteas, 2010)
 - L% at the end marks the utterance as complete
 - Thus, the question need not function as such



Discussion

- A phonological analysis is necessary to account for systematic differences in our data
- The phonological representations, L^*+H $L- !H\%$ and $L+H^*$ $L- L\%$, reflect differences in the pragmatic nuances the melodies add to string-identical questions
- Crucially, talker gender shaped these pragmatic nuances
- This suggests that intonational pragmatics does not depend only on the interaction of melody with syntax, semantics and context but can be affected by additional factors
- Such effects can clearly influence discourse

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Conclusion

Our results have shown that closer attention is due to the systematic differences in meaning that relate to melodic variations and to interpretations that go beyond speaker intent

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