

Where does the question begin?: Initial and final intonation cues in Peruvian Spanish interrogatives



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INTRODUCTION

Questions are expressed via several means:

- Lexical (interrogative pronouns)
- Morphological (interrogative suffix)
- Syntactic (inverted word order)
- Suprasegmental (final rising intonation)

There are at least two basic question types:

Pronominal questions
(contain interrogative pronoun)
Where are you going?

Yes/No questions
(allow positive/negative response)
Are you going to the store?

Spanish varieties may be characterized by the realization of the final contour

Pronominal questions	Yes/No questions	Variety
Fall	Rise	Prototypical Castilian system
Fall	Fall	Prototypical for Caribbean varieties
Rise	Rise	Many varieties - expresses politeness for pronominals
Rise	Fall	? (attested?)*

Other contours possible:
e.g., Final circumflex, in Yes/No ?s

***Factors to consider:** Speech mode (read vs. spontaneous), pragmatics

(Escandell Vidal 1999; Navarro Tomás 1948:229-230; Quilis 1987, 1993; Sosa 1991, 1999, 2003; Willis 2003, and forthcoming).

Other intonation features in interrogatives examined

Higher initial peaks compared to statements (Prieto 2003)

Upstep of nuclear pitch accent, tonal alignment of yes/no questions, interrogative tonal range (Willis 2003, and forthcoming)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In addition to the final contour, are there other suprasegmental cues earlier in the interrogative?

Given the variety of realizations of the final contour in dialects Spanish, can the direction of the final contour be influenced in cases of language contact?

EXPERIMENT

Examines interrogatives in two varieties of Peruvian Spanish:

- Lima – 5: all native Spanish speakers
- Cuzco – 15: 7 native Spanish speakers, 5 Quechua-Spanish bilinguals, 3 native Quechua speakers

Read speech mode

Questions written on index cards (followed by target declarative)

- 40 pronominal questions per speaker (e.g., ¿Quién moverá los barriles? – Who will move the barrels?)
- 72 yes/no questions per speaker (e.g., ¿El obrero moverá los barriles? – Will the worker move the barrels?)

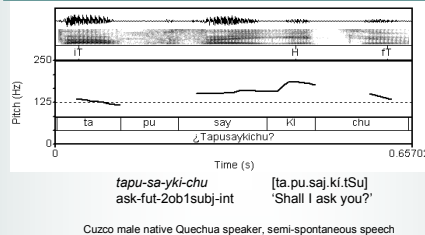
Measurements (in Hz)

- Initial F0 height (IT)
- First peak (H1)
- Final F0 height (FT)

Comparisons made

- Of data points (IT, H1, FT) in both question types with broad focus declaratives
- Between variety in relatively less contact with Quechua (Lima) and variety in more contact with Quechua (Cuzco) according to knowledge of Quechua

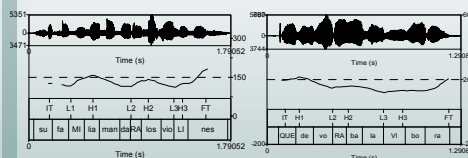
Questions in Quechua



Current findings support previous impressionistic descriptions (Parker 1969; Calvo Pérez 1993; Cerrón-Palomino 1987; Cole 1982; Cushmanán 1976, 2001; Samanez Flórez 1996):

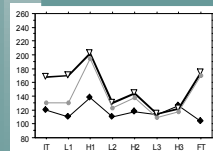
- Quechua pronominal questions – final fall
- Quechua yes/no questions – final fall
- Also has obligatory interrogative suffix *-chu*

Questions in Peruvian Spanish



Yes/No question in read speech mode

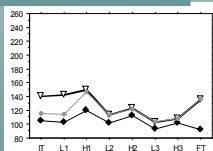
High final F0 height, Lima native Spanish speaker L04



Lima native Spanish speaker (L03) Mean F0 height (Hz)

Pronominal question in read speech mode

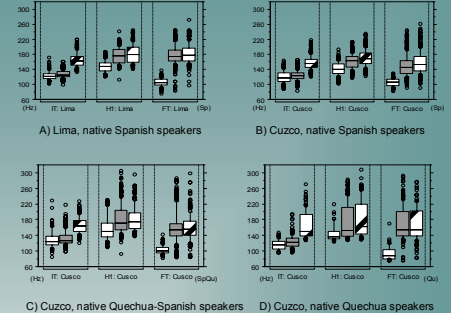
High final F0 height, Lima native Spanish speaker L01



Cuzco native Spanish speaker (C03) Mean F0 height (Hz)

— Pro Questions — Y/N Questions — BF Declaratives

RESULTS



□ BF Declaratives □ Y/N Questions □ Pro Questions

F0 height at beginning (IT), first peak (H1) and end (FT) for questions vs. declaratives.

Findings

Compared to broad focus declaratives,

- Yes/No questions show higher F0 at the very beginning
- First peak in questions is higher for both question types
- Both question types end in a rise
- Differences are significant for groups and individual speakers (although a few individual exceptions are found).

Conclusions

- Questions are signalled earlier in the utterance
 - Pro (IT and H1)
 - Yes/No (H1)
- Final contour is not influenced by contact with fall from Quechua; rise observed for both Lima and Cuzco, and for all Cuzco groups and individuals

Further study

Remaining questions:

- If there is earlier signaling of questions, is this cue used in the perception of questions versus declaratives?
- If questions are signaled earlier, does the final contour encode more pragmatic meaning in Spanish? Does this account for the degree of variation across dialects and speech modes?
- Are the earlier cues for questions a shared feature across dialect and speech modes – i.e., a pan-Spanish trait?

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