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Information   Discussion

Map Tasks in Italian : Asking Questions about Given, Accessible and New Information

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Abstract: This paper confirms that in Bari Italian an intonational distinction is made between polar questions asking about new information (QUERY-YN moves in the HCRC Map Task coding scheme) and those asking about given information (prototypical CHECK moves in the same coding scheme). The former, where the speaker believes that the information is not shared and therefore mutually inactive, employ a rising pitch accent (L+H*). The latter, where the speaker believes that the information is mutually active, are expressed with a falling accent (H*+L or H+L*). The situation is more complicated for moves classified as CHECKS which are asking about information which has been mentioned earlier in the dialogue as opposed to the prototypical CHECKS where the information is given immediately before the current turn. These CHECKS, asking about textually accessible as opposed to given information, as well as those asking about something which can only be inferred from the context, can have either rising or falling pitch accents. The intonational variation is related to the degree of speaker confidence that confirmation being sought in the question will be provided.

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