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## Wh-questions in Spanish : Meanings and Configuration Variability

Sosa, Juan Manuel

**Abstract:** This paper describes the distinct tonal configurations of wh-questions in Spanish and discusses their possible correlations with pragmatic and interactional meanings. The data consisted of both read and spontaneous speech from four Latin American varieties. Two of the dialects, Mexican and Colombian, as opposed to Venezuelan and Puerto Rican, showed a marked preference for rising contours in read speech, while in interviews virtually no such contours occurred for any of the speakers. A different kind of rising contour did regularly occur in the natural speech data, a globally rising contour without a dip before the final high rise, used for confirmation or reprise whquestions. The conclusion of this study is that the unmarked configuration is indeed the gradually descending one, as described in the literature. This applies to all the dialects here examined, in spite of the variability of the contours, which is context-induced and related to information structure.

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**Keywords:** prosody ; intonation ; meaning ; information structure ; wh-questions ; tonal configurations ; contour variability ; Latin American Spanish.

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