Prosody across sentence types

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Summary

Broad context: meaning components of different types of speech acts, how they arise, and how they are realized cross-linguistically

Main empirical point: In Russian, the prosodic peak that appears in "intonation-only" yes/no questions can also appear in imperatives; such imperatives can be friendly, but invested requests, but not disinterested suggestions (cf. English-style rising imperatives, which can be both)

Main theoretical point: the Russian Q-Peak realizes an operator that asks the addressee to react to the speaker's speech act

Point of departure

Typological generalization in Rudin 2018; Rudin & Rudin 2022:

- Languages in which **rising declaratives** (L* H-H%) comprise non-canonical yes/no questions (YNQs), like **English** and **Bulgarian**, also allow for **rising imperatives**:

(1)
a. You poured me wine$_{L^* H-H\%}$?   **non-canonical question**
b. Pour me wine$_{L^* H-H\%}$?   **tentative, but invested request**
c. A: What should I do while I'm waiting for you?
    B: I don't really care. Pour yourself wine$_{L^* H-H\%}$? Take a nap$_{L^* H-H\%}$?   **disinterested suggestion**

- Languages in which rising declaratives comprise regular YNQs, like **Macedonian**, don't have such rising imperatives:

(2)
a. Ke odiš na kino$_{L^* H-H\%}$?
    FUT go.2SG to cinema
    'Are you going to the movies?'   **canonical question**
b. #Daj mi edna sigara$_{L^* H-H\%}$?
    give.IMP me a cigarette
    Intended: 'Give me a cigarette?'
c. A: 'What should I do today?'
    B: #Piši go referatot$_{L^* H-H\%}$? Odi na plaža$_{L^* H-H\%}$?
    write.IMP it paper.DEF go.DEF to beach.DEF
   Intended: 'Write your paper? Go to the beach?'

Q-Peak in questions

Declarative string YNQs in **Russian** (default YNQ strategy):

- A special prosodic peak, **the Q-Peak**, on the locus of prosodic focus marking ($\neq$ focus marking in assertions—e.g., Meyer & Mleinek 2006)
- E.g., for **polarity-seeking YNQs** (can be unbiased, no non-trivial parent QUD) vs. **explanation-seeking YNQs** (Esipova & Romero 2024):
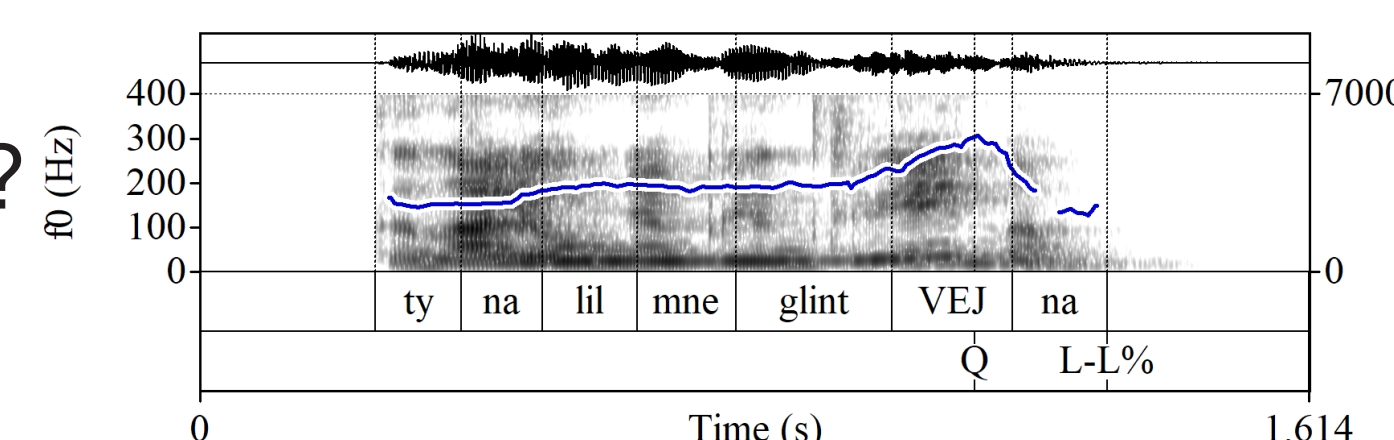
(3) *You were supposed to pour me mulled wine. Asking if you did (no bias either way).*

    Ty nalil$_Q$ mne glintvejna$_{L-L\%}$?
    you poured me mulled-wine
    'Did you pour me mulled wine?'
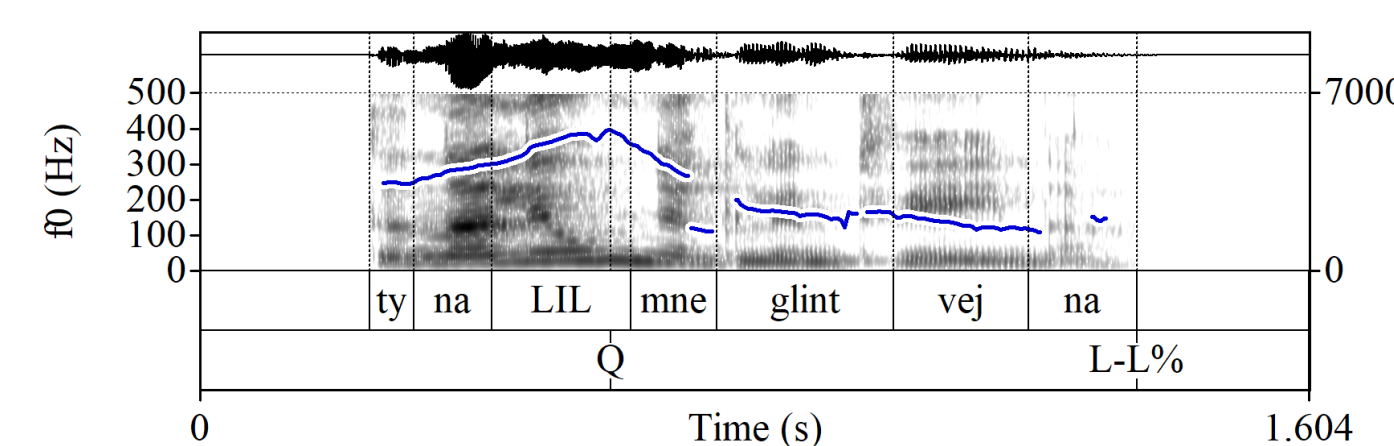
(4) *I stepped away at dinner and return to a glass of mulled wine by my plate. Asking for an explanation.*

    Ty nalil mne glintvej$_Q$na$_{L-L\%}$?
    you poured me mulled-wine
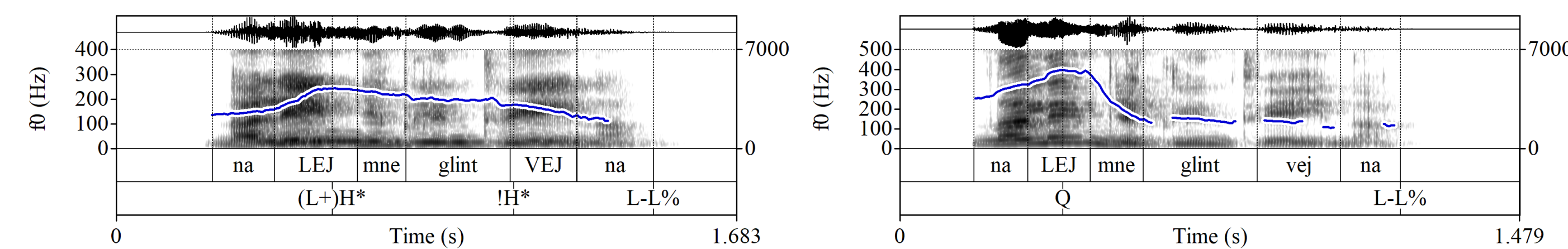   'Did you pour me mulled wine?'

Q-Peak in invested requests

The Q-Peak can be used in **friendly, but invested requests**:
- **Imperatives:**

(5) Nalej mne glintvejna
    pour.IMP me mulled-wine
    a. Command (by default; 'Pour me mulled wine!')
    b. Friendly request ($\approx$'Pour me mulled wine[, will you]?')

- **FUT.1SG** (apparent) declarative string YNQs used as permission requests (permission expected to be granted):

(6) Ja nalju$_Q$ sebe
    I pour.FUT.1SG myself
    glintvejna$_{L-L\%}$?
    mulled-wine
    $\approx$'I'll pour myself mulled wine[, OK]?'
    (lit.: 'Will I pour myself mulled wine?')
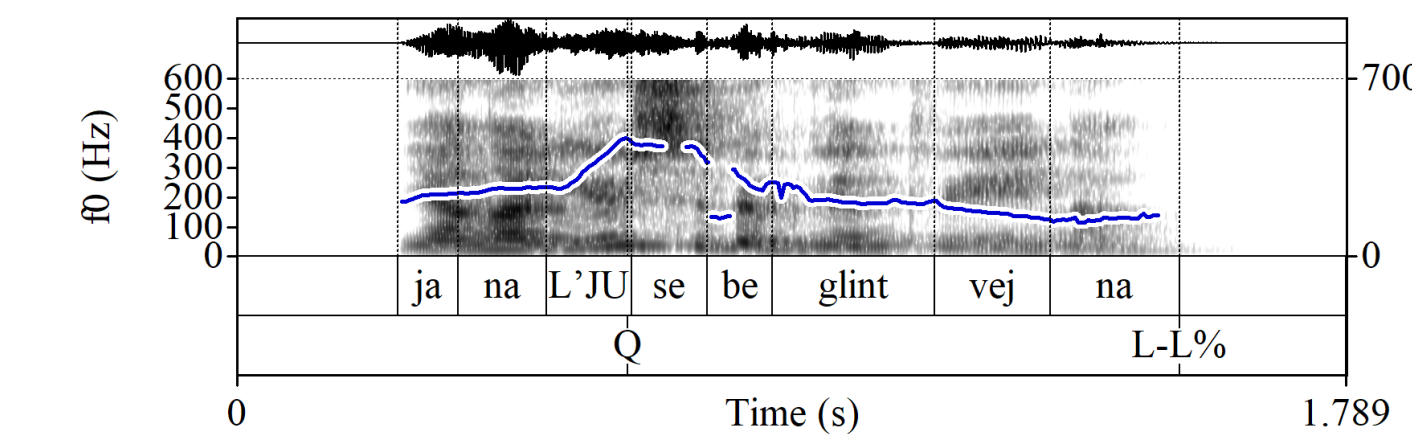
- Other cases, briefly:
  - **FUT.2** YNQs as requests ($\approx$'Will you pour me mulled wine?'; null subject preferred, unlike info-seeking YNQs); also w/negation ($\approx$'Will you not pour me mulled wine?'; no preference for null subject)
  - **FUT.1PL** joint action requests ($\approx$'Let's drink mulled wine[, shall we]?'): "hat" contour by default (like (5a)), friendlier with the Q-Peak

No Q-Peak in disinterested suggestions

**Disinterested suggestions** in Russian:
- Unlike the English-style rise, the Q-Peak cannot be used in these, regardless of placement (in imperatives, sentence-level Q-Peak is *)
- While Russian has English-style rising declaratives, their uses are limited, and rising imperatives don't seem very natural
- The most natural tune to signal disinterest is a **mid-plateau** (cf. "disinterested lists"—Beckman & Ayers 1997; downstepped plateaus in imperatives—Jeong & Condoravdi 2017)

(7) A: 'What should I do while I'm waiting for you?'
    B: Da mne bez raznicy. Nalej sebe glintvejna
    ADVERS me without difference pour.IMP self mulled-wine
    'I don't care. Pour yourself mulled wine?'

(i) Q-Peak on locus of polarity: #
(ii) sentence-level Q-Peak: *
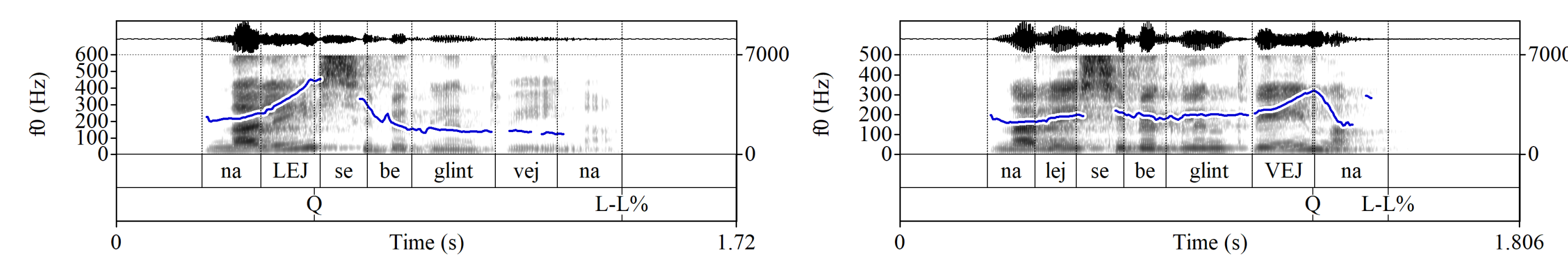
(iii) Rise: ??
(iv) Plateau: OK
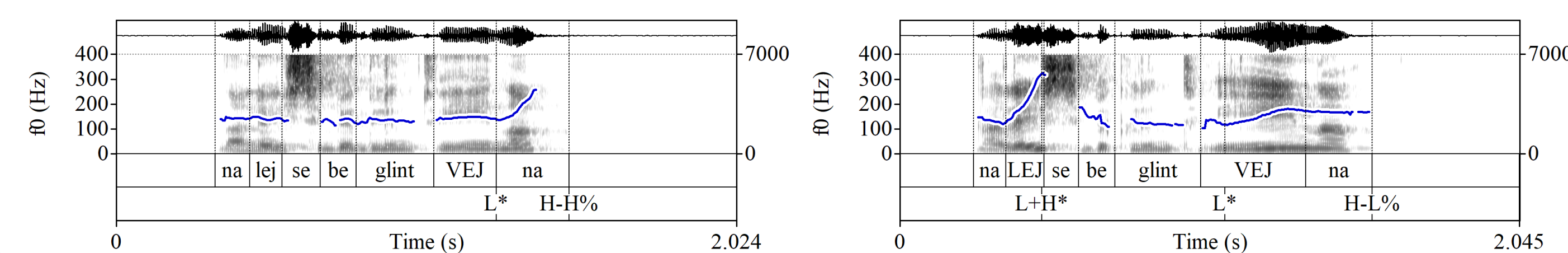
What does the Q-Peak do?

Some of the **meaning components** a matrix question can have:
1. **Creating a partition/raising an issue**; in YNQs: $\{p, \neg p\}$—core component of interrogatives
2. **Asking the addressee to react** to the speaker's speech act; in info-seeking questions: respond to the issue raised—optional in questions, i.e., can arise pragmatically w/o being syntactically represented
3. **Focus**; in YNQs: signals how this issue fits into a larger discourse structure, specifically, its parent QUD (e.g., 'What is the truth value of p?' vs. 'What is the explanation for s?' in (3) vs. (4))—not specific to questions, but crucial for interpreting them properly

Main insight: The Q-Peak realizes component 2 (via the shape of the Q-Peak itself) and component 3 (by being the main prominence)

Additional evidence: Russian declarative string YNQs cannot be used as conjectural or self-addressed questions, unlike **li YNQs**, which can't have the Q-Peak (see Esipova & Korotkova 2023)

Applying the insight:
- For **declarative string YNQs**, a few options:
  - (i) The Q-Peak also realizes component 1
  - (ii) Component 1 contributed by a silent operator
  - (iii) No component 1, i.e., they don't raise (non-singleton) issues
- Note: depending on the choice b/n (i)–(iii), one might need additional constraints (e.g., selectional), to account for distributional restrictions on the Q-Peak (impossible, e.g., in li YNQs, wh-questions)
- For **FUT.2/1SG/1PL** Q-Peak-marked requests, which have the same form as declarative string YNQs, same analysis (?) + further pragmatic reasoning (cf. *Could you pass me the salt?*)
- For **imperative Q-Peak-marked requests**: if imperatives can't raise non-singleton issues, that'd exclude (i) for declarative string YNQs
- Regardless of the specific choices above:
  - **The Q-Peak makes imperatives less imposing**, because it asks the addressee to react, thus, highlighting that they can say no
  - **The Q-Peak doesn't work in disinterested suggestions**, because asking the addressee to react to your suggestion signals that you are, in fact, interested in whether or not they will pursue it

Cross-linguistic picture

- **English/Bulgarian:**
  - Component 1 realized by Aux inversion/li (same in Russian li YNQs)
  - The rising tune, following Rudin (& Rudin), "call[s] off the speaker's commitment to their utterance" and has a wider range of meaning effects; different sources and flavors of tentativeness/friendliness in English-style rising vs. Russian Q-Peak-marked imperatives
- **Macedonian:**
  - The rising tune has been conventionalized to realize component 1?
  - Partition-creating/issue-raising operators cannot combine with imperatives (if universal, we can't have option (i) above for Russian)?

Selected references

Beckman & Ayers. 1997. Guidelines for ToBI labelling. **Esipova & Korotkova.** 2023. *FDSL 16.* **Esipova & Romero.** 2024. Prejacent truth in rhetorical questions. *BLS 43.* **Jeong & Condoravdi.** 2017. *BLS 43.* **Meyer & Mleinek** 2006. *Journal of Pragmatics.* **Rudin & Rudin.** 2022. *FASL 29.* **Rudin.** 2018. *PhD thesis.*