

The variety spoken in *La Spezia* at the 'boundary' between Northern and Tuscan varieties: does this position affect intonation features?

As shown by Pellegrini's cartographic representation (1977) of the distribution and differentiation of *vernaculars* (dialetti) spoken in Italy, a distinction is traditionally made between the Romance vernaculars spoken on either side of a hypothetical line connecting La Spezia and Rimini. Although more recent studies have shown that, as far as intonation is concerned, it is not possible to identify homogeneous macro-areas similar to those found for *vernaculars* (Gili Fivela et al., 2015; Savino, 2012), to the best of our knowledge, intonation features of varieties spoken in close areas located around the boundary of a hypothetical bundle of isoglosses have not yet been investigated.

The present work aims to investigate the intonation system of the variety of Italian spoken in La Spezia as well as to determine which similarities/differences it shows when compared with systems found in nearby towns, belonging to the same or to different isoglosses. Our hypothesis is that, it may be possible to identify similar patterns (e.g. in yes-no questions), which, however, occur with variable frequency in the various towns. This implies that the typical pattern may differ across towns and that this may ideally allow to distinguish sub-areas even within a given isogloss, possibly highlighting fuzzier isogloss boundaries.

Data have been collected by audio recording 5 speakers in La Spezia and 5 in Imperia (San Bartolomeo la mare - IM) - 2F, 3M, aged 25-35 years, in line with the criteria used in Gili Fivela et al. 2015. Their intonation systems, which had never been described, allowed a comparison between the intonation systems of La Spezia and Imperia with those of Genova, Pisa and Florence (previously described in the scientific literature, cf. Gili Fivela et al. 2015; Savino, 2012; Crocco 2011). All participants were first recorded while producing spontaneous utterances during a Discourse Completion Task (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) and then while reading aloud sample utterances fitting the same contexts.

Phonetic and phonological features were identified (based on the data collected for the present investigation and the descriptions available in the scientific literature) with reference to the Auto-segmental-Metrical theory (Pierrehumbert, 1980) and, in particular, to the proposal developed for Italian (Gili Fivela et al., 2015). Results of the analysis of broad focus and corrective-contrastive focus statements, yes-no questions, wh- questions, imperatives and vocatives show the main features of the phonological system of La Spezia and Imperia. Moreover, these results reveal that, apart from some patterns in use within the whole area in question (and Italy as a whole, e.g. in broad focus statements), considering e.g. information-

seeking yes-no questions, it is possible to find a pattern (i.e. H*+L LH%) which may be used in all the places we investigated, except Florence; however such a pattern is typical and very frequent in La Spezia (and Imperia), while it is only rarely attested in Pisa. This work suggests a gradual differentiation in terms of intonation patterns within the investigated area, confirming that the typical pattern may differ across sub-areas and highlight a fuzzy isogloss boundary (following work in perception may then show how much this participates in distinguishing varieties spoken around La Spezia and across isogloss boundaries). Moreover, this work builds upon and expands previous investigations by describing the phonological inventory of two varieties, which had not been previously analysed, i.e. those spoken in La Spezia and Imperia.

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