

### **Rhetorical questions in second language learners of German**

Rhetorical questions (RQs) are syntactically interrogatives with the pragmatic function of an assertion signalling the speaker's attitude (Biezma & Rawlins, 2017). In German, RQs can be distinguished from information-seeking questions (ISQs) through phonetic (e.g., duration, voice quality) and phonological (e.g., pitch accents, boundary tones) cues (Braun et al., 2019) as well as lexical-syntactic ones, such as discourse particles (Biezma & Rawlins, 2017).

Research on the acquisition of RQs in general and their acquisition in second language learners (L2ers) in particular is scarce. Previous research on ISQs has shown that L2ers differ from monolinguals (L1ers) on a phonological (e.g., Arvaniti et al., 2006) and a phonetic level (e.g., Kainada & Lengeris, 2015). In addition, L2ers have difficulties conveying emotions or attitudes through prosody (e.g., Chen et al., 2015).

This study investigates (i) which prosodic and lexical-syntactic cues Italian L2ers of German use when producing RQs in German and (ii) whether they produce RQs in a monolingual-like manner. 40 L2ers (mean age = 33, range 24-45) who acquired German as an L2 after the age of six and 40 German monolinguals (mean age = 26, range = 19-44) participated in an elicited production task.

In the talk, I will provide a prosodic analysis including, among other things, boundary tones, voice quality and duration as well as a lexical-syntactic analysis. Additional tasks and a background questionnaire control for factors such as length of exposure, language use, proficiency and irony comprehension. This will allow to explore the differences between L2ers and L1ers and to provide insights into L2 acquisition of prosody in general and RQs in particular.

### **References**

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