

The prosody of Spanish *¿no?*-tags from a pragmatic perspective

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I. Introduction. The Spanish negative adverb *no* can be used as a question tag paraphrasable as ‘right?’ or ‘don’t you think?’. Although it is most commonly added to assertions (1), it can be hosted by a wider range of speech acts as well (rhetorical questions (2), cohortatives (3), weak imperatives (4), commissives (5), exclamatives (6)), with varying degrees of acceptability, provided that they are not performative (11). However, genuine questions (7), strong imperatives (8), declarations (9), and expressives (10) cannot host *¿no?* (Osa 2017).

✓	✗
(1) Bueno, tú tienes un buen coche, <i>¿no?</i> ‘Well, you have a good car, right?’	(7) Cómo te llamas, <i>#¿no?</i> ‘What’s your name, #right?’
(2) Pero qué se cree, <i>¿no?</i> ‘But what does he think, right?’	(8) Ven aquí, <i>#¿no?</i> ‘Come here, #right?’
(3) Venga, vamos a otro sitio, <i>¿no?</i> ‘Come on, let’s go somewhere else, right?’	(9) Os declaro marido y mujer, <i>#¿no?</i> ‘I declare you husband and wife, #right?’
(4) Ponte el vestido nuevo para la fiesta, <i>¿no?</i> ‘Why don’t you put on your new dress for the party?’	(10) Muchas gracias, <i>#¿no?</i> ‘Thanks a lot, #right?’
(5) Te ayudo, <i>¿no?</i> ‘I’ll help you, OK?’	(11) Te lo prometo, <i>#¿no?</i> ‘I promise it to you, #right?’
(6) ¡Oye, qué frío hace aquí!, <i>¿no?</i> ‘Hey, it’s freezing in here, isn’t it?’	

This distribution is supposed to have pragmatic reasons. According to Osa (2007), *¿no?* makes the whole discourse move tentative, to which the speaker cannot commit herself immediately, whereas Kiss (2018) claims that that by adding *¿no?* to an utterance, the speaker attributes the whole illocutionary act conveyed by the utterance to the addressee, *i.e.* the speaker checks if the addressee would perform the same illocutionary act (a possible paraphrase would thus be “I say F(p) and you would say F(p) too, wouldn’t you?”). Authors concentrating on pragmatic aspects (García Vizcaíno 2005, Kiss 2018) assume that *¿no?* tags are pronounced with a rising or (more rarely) with a rising-falling intonation, but this observation is based on introspection, rather than on empirical studies. Estebas-Vilaplana & Prieto (2010) observe that in Castilian Spanish, confirmation-seeking questions containing a tag contain a final rise (L* H%). They provide an example containing the tag *¿eh?*. The present paper presents an empirical study of the prosody of *¿no?*-tags, taking into consideration all speech act types it can be added to. The results are then related to the above mentioned pragmatic factors.

II. The prosodic experiment was conducted with 21 speakers (19 female, 2 male) of Castilian Spanish at the University of Cáceres, Extremadura. All of them were native speakers of the local dialect. They acted out 13 mini-dialogues containing a *¿no?* tag interrogative in pairs. The recordings were analyzed using *Praat* (Boersma & Weenink 2010). Although most *¿no?*-tags were indeed pronounced with a rising intonation, there were falling-rising, flat and falling tags as well. The key aspect in the analysis is a differentiated representation of the shape of the rising tone (steep or light). This was achieved with the following steps. **1)** The tags were analysed as parts of the nuclear configuration (the part between the nuclear pitch accent and the final IP boundary tone), constituting their own intermediary phrase (ip). Contrary to the original AM (Autosegmental-Metrical) model on intonation (Pierrehumbert 1980), where every ip contained minimally a pitch accent, no pitch accent was assumed, firstly because it could not be clearly separated from the final boundary tone in the case of a monosyllabic element, and secondly, because *¿no?* is supposed to be phonologically reduced. It was thus analysed as a sequence of an ip and an (ip)IP boundary tone, where the latter could be bitonal in the case of falling-rising tags.

Both the ip and IP boundary tones followed the 4-level distinction proposed by Estebas-Vilaplana & Prieto (2010): L- M- H- \downarrow H-; L% M% H% \downarrow H%. **2)** The labelling was based on the difference between 3 pitch (Hz) values (those at the ip/IP boundaries at the beginning/end of the tag, and, in the case of rising-falling tags, the minimum value) expressed in semitones that were gained automatically from *Praat*. Configurations exhibiting the same intonation pattern were grouped together based on the pitch difference identified in the rising part (x).

A) steep rising tags ($x > 3$ semitones in the rising part): L- H%, M- \downarrow H%, H- L \downarrow %, M- LH% ...

B) light rising tags ($1,5 < x < 3$ semitones in the rising part): L- M%, H- LM%, M- MH% ...

C) flat tags ($x < 1,5$ semitones): L- L%, M- M%, H- H% ...

Falling tags were marginal and as such, discarded from the analysis.

III. Results. Comparing the different speech act types w.r.t. the amount of A, B and C patterns in the prosodic realization, they can be organized into a hierarchy starting with the most A patterns (and least C patterns) and ending with the most C patterns (and least A patterns):

Exclamative (contextual > opinion) > Commissive > Assertive (factual statement) > Rhetorical question > Weak imperative (warning > suggestion) > Assertion (subjective statement)

IV. Discussion. I adopt Kiss' (2018) attribution-based analysis and assume that the prosodic realization of the tag reflects the speaker's confidence in the success of the attribution of the given speech act. Since high boundary tones are associated with openness, incompleteness, doubt or uncertainty, whereas low ones with finality (Ladd 2008), more steep realizations are supposed to signal lower confidence, and fewer steep realizations (and more flat ones) indicate higher confidence. The analysis is inspired by the notion of *credence level* (Farkas & Roelofsen 2017), with which the authors account for the extent of bias in English rising declaratives and tag questions. The results suggest that assertions expressing subjective statements have the highest attribution potential, followed by suggestions and warnings, which are also paraphrasable as assertions (Searle & Vanderveken 1985) 'You also know that you should/shouldn't...' and rhetorical questions that arguably also have assertive illocutionary force (Asher & Reese 2007). Assertives expressing a factual statement and turned into a question by \downarrow no? are more difficult to attribute, since a negative answer is also conceivable, and this is also the case of certain commissives (offer). Finally, the high number of steep rising tones by exclamatives cannot be explained by attributability alone: the default intonation of the host clause type (exclamative) is also supposed to play a role.

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