

Continuation rises in Maltese English and influence from Maltese

Alexandra Vella, Sarah Grech and Luke Galea, University of Malta

Tunes having a rising global shape predominate in the inventory of intonational tunes described to occur in Maltese. Thus, apart from a rising tune typical in yes-no questions with a final [+focus] element, two other tunes having a rising shape have also been identified to occur in post-nuclear position in cases involving an early [+focus] element. Schematizations of these tunes are provided in Figures 1 and 2. A further rising tune, one often referred to as a “continuation rise”, is also present in Maltese but has not yet been described.

In parallel, anecdotal evidence suggests that the variety of Maltese English, MaltE, is perceived by listeners with experience of other varieties, as having a highly idiosyncratic “sing-song” nature. Early research on the phonetics and phonology of the intonation of MaltE suggests that this perception may be rooted in influence from Maltese, one likely contributor being the relatively frequent use, in this variety, of tunes which have a global shape involving some sort of rise.

The term “continuation rise” has been used in the literature to refer to a non-final intonation-group rise having, as its main function, the organisation of text into phrases (Cruttenden 1997). Characterisation of this type of rise using an Autosegmental-Metrical (AM)-type notation includes, amongst others, $L^* H-H\%$ (Fletcher et al. 2002), and $H^* H\%$ as well as a simple boundary $H\%$, but also fall-rise – possibly $H^*L L\%$ – and rise – $L^* H\%$ – contours (Chen 2007). Hirschberg (2006) refers to the paucity of research on the continuation rise for which she suggests the complex sequence: $H^* !H^* L-L\%$. Queen (2012) provides evidence for a rising tune (RT) distinct from another tune having a steeper rise (HRT): the former is used in conjunction with narrative continuation by Turkish-German bilinguals.

In this paper, we examine specifically the type of continuation rise used in non-final intonation-groups (so rises in an $[i [p]p\text{CONT } \mathbf{[p]p }]i$ context, where the phonological phrase – p – within the intonational phrase – i – containing the [+focus] nuclear element is shown in bold). The followings question are addressed:

- What are the phonetic features of the “continuation rise” in MaltE and how does this type of rise differ from other rises which occur in this variety of English?
- What tonal elements are involved in the continuation rise in MaltE and what are their phonetic implementation details?

Data from a small corpus of Maltese English Map Tasks are used. In these data MaltE speakers engage in the Map Task with a non-Maltese speaker. Within speaker rises at the end of non-final phonological phrases were identified and examined. Preliminary results suggest that:

- (1) The anchoring point of the L tone in the continuation rise in MaltE is less stable than that of both the pitch and the phrase accent rising tunes described in Vella (1995, 2003, 2009a, b) to occur in Maltese, occurring frequently on the final syllable, regardless of whether this is stressed or unstressed.
- (2) The L and H tones in the continuation rise in MaltE are scaled differently when compared to the L and H tones in other rises, with the result that the overall slope of this contour is less steep than in the nuclear question rise, whilst also being different from the tunes found in post-nuclear position.

Figures

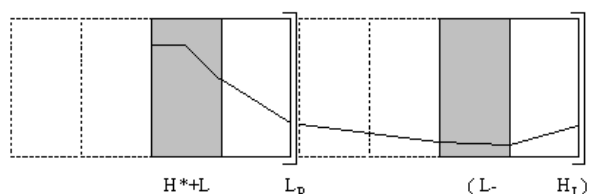


Figure 1 – Early [+focus] nuclear fall, followed by post-nuclear slight rise

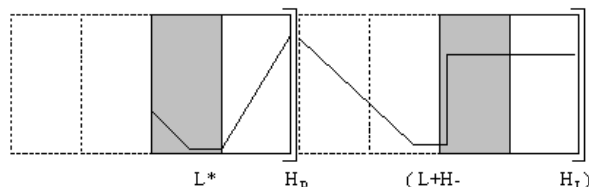


Figure 2 – Early [+focus] nuclear rise, followed by post-nuclear rise

References

- Chen, A. (2007). Language-specificity in continuation intonation. In C. Gussenhoven & T. Riad (Eds.), *Tones and Tunes II: Phonetic and Behavioural Studies in Word and Sentence Prosody*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 107-142.
- Cruttenden, A. (1997). *Intonation*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fletcher, J., Stirling, L., Mushin, I., & Wales, R. (2002). Intonational rises and dialog acts in the Australian English Map Task. *Language and Speech*, 45(3), pp. 229-253.
- Grech, S. (2015). Variation in English: perception in the identification of Maltese English. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Malta.
- Hirschberg, J. (2006). Pragmatics and intonation. In L. R. Horn & G. L. Ward (Eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd., pp. 515-537.
- Queen, R. (2012). Turkish-German bilinguals and their intonation: triangulating evidence about contact-induced language change. *Language*, 88(4), 791-816.
- Vella, A. (1995). Prosodic Structure and Intonation in Maltese and its Influence on Maltese English. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh.
- Vella, A. (2003). Phrase accents in Maltese: distribution and realisation. In *Proceedings of the 15th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences*. Barcelona, pp. 1775-1778.
- Vella, A. (2009a). Maltese intonation and focus structure. In R. Fabri (Ed.), *Maltese Linguistics: A Snapshot. In Memory of Joseph A. Cremona*. [Il-Lingwa Tagħna Vol. 1]. Bochum: Niemeyer, pp. 63-92.
- Vella, A. (2009b). On Maltese prosody. In B. Comrie, R. Fabri, E. Hume, M. Mifsud & M. Vanhove (Eds.), *Introducing Maltese Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 47-68.