



Cukier-Goldstein-Goren Center for Mind, Cognition and Language,
School of Philosophy, Linguistics and Science Studies,
Department of Linguistics

THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday 11/07/24

16:15-17:45

Webb 103

Maria Esipova, Bar-Ilan University

Lend me your ears?

Rudin (2018); Rudin & Rudin (2022) discuss a typological generalization that languages in which rising declaratives comprise non-canonical yes/no questions (YNQs)—like English and Bulgarian—also allow for rising imperatives, used as friendly/polite/tentative, but invested requests or as disinterested suggestions, as shown in (1), but languages in which rising declaratives comprise canonical YNQs, like Macedonian, don't allow for such rising imperatives.

- (1) a. Did you pour me wine L* H-H%? (canonical question marked via auxiliary inversion)
b. You poured me wine L* H-H%? (rising declarative as a non-canonical question)
c. Pour me wine L* H-H%? (rising imperative as a tentative, but invested request)
d. 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%? (rising imperatives as disinterested suggestions)

In this talk, I will look at another Slavic language, Russian, further expanding and fine-tuning the typology of how different languages realize various meaning components of different types of speech acts. While, like in Macedonian, Russian canonical YNQs are formed via an "intonation-only" strategy, said intonation doesn't involve a rising tune, but rather a prosodic peak of a special kind that I will call the Q-Peak. I will show that, despite marking canonical YNQs, the Q-Peak can also be used in friendly, but invested requests like (1c)—but not in disinterested suggestions like (1d). I propose that the Q-Peak realizes an operator that asks the addressee to react to the speaker's speech act—appropriate in (some) questions and invested requests, but not in disinterested suggestions. The Russian Q-Peak is therefore distinct from the English-style rising tune, which in Rudin (& Rudin's) terms, simply "call[s] off the speaker's commitment to their utterance" and thus can have a wider range of meaning effects and brings a different source/flavor of politeness/tentativeness to imperatives.

Click [here](#) to see the colloquium program.

