

Rhetorical questions in German political speech

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Rhetorical questions play an important role in structuring political speech. Especially in plenary sessions - which see the members of parliament speaking to an audience who rarely interacts - rhetorical questions seem to be a very productive mean to convey information and keep the audience interested and involved. But how can we recognise a rhetorical question in a communicative context where no answers are ever expected? And how can we then tell them apart from regular, information-seeking questions? In order to classify questions in German political speech we can use a taxonomy which takes into account different parameters such as context, question-answer relations and vocabulary.

Following this categorisation, the second part of the project is concerned with a prosodic analysis of these questions. Through the observation of F0 and therefore intonation contours questions will be analysed and compared to check for similarities and differences. The hypothesis is that, at least to some extent, rhetorical questions should have peculiar contours which differentiate them from information-seeking questions and that a particular type of rhetorical question (the topic-setting question) should present contours closer to those of assertions.