

***Vorei volare come le rondini*: phonetic analysis of rhotic degemination in Elba Island Italian**

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Rhotic degemination is a marginal and recessive phenomenon in the varieties of Italian spoken in Tuscany. Despite its limited scope, the geolinguistic distribution of this phenomenon remains underexplored. Notably, [1] and [2] identified certain areas where degemination is more pervasive and recognizable, including Elba, the largest island in the Tuscan archipelago.

This study aligns with [3], while integrating insights from [4], to investigate the realizations of *r* in a sample of five speakers from two Elban towns (Portoferraio and Capoliveri), with a particular focus on cases of rhotic degemination. The corpus was elicited using the ALI questionnaire [5], comprising 868 sentences per speaker (2 male, 3 female). Each sentence contained at least one instance of intervocalic tap /r/ (Type A: 140 contexts) or, not for all speakers, intervocalic phonological geminate /rr/, including phonosyntactic long /r/ derived from the assimilation of /nr/ clusters, as well as phonosyntactic /r#r/ sequences (Type B: 10/12 contexts). Tokens were manually annotated and classified following the model proposed by [6] and [7].

Analysis of the 140 intervocalic /r/ tokens revealed that approximately 50% were realized as clear interruptions (<50 ms). Another 35% combined a strong interruption associated with an approximant phase, characterized by a long transition into the following vowel. A further 10% displayed complex dynamic patterns within a generally short duration, maintaining the perception of abruptness. For the Type B contexts, trilled *r* was present in only 25% of cases, while long articulations – including approximant variants, typically of the [ʁ̥] type – accounted for 37%. Degemination occurred in 63% of instances, including 39% with tap realizations (acoustically like the patterns observed for /r/), 9% with a short approximant, and 14% featuring approximant phases combined with abrupt energy variations.

These findings highlight the variable nature of rhotic articulation in Elban variety, with particular attention to the phenomenon of degemination.

References

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