

From Sound to Sense: 50+ Years of Discoveries in Speech Communication
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[S07] **Interaction of focus and interrogative meanings in Mandarin.** Fang Liu¹ & Yi Xu²,
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Recent research has demonstrated the importance of focus in shaping the overall F_0 profile of declarative sentences. This study further investigates how focus interacts with different interrogative meanings in determining the overall F_0 contours of questions. Eight native speakers of Mandarin produced statements, yes-no questions with and without a question particle, wh-questions, incredulous questions and confirmation questions. In each sentence, either the initial, medial, final, or no word was focused. The tonal components of the sentences are all High, all Rising, all Low or all Falling. Preliminary results of detailed F_0 contour analyses show that, in both statements and questions, the pitch range of the focused word is expanded, that of the post-focus words compressed and lowered, and that of the pre-focus words largely unaffected. The difference between questions and statements is manifested as a moderate raise in pitch range starting from the focused word. Focus thus serves as a pivot point at which statement and question contours start to diverge. F_0 of both statements and questions with no narrow focus is similar to those with final focus, i.e., showing the greatest difference between statements and questions in the final syllable of the sentence. This is interpreted as evidence that the widely recognized question intonation with an extensive final rise is only a special case of the interaction between focus and interrogative meaning. Finally, there is initial evidence that pitch range raising by interrogative meanings is greater in bare questions and incredulous questions than in confirmation questions.