This dissertation provides an account of polar questions in Italian dialects from a typological, theoretical, and empirical perspective. Both data from the existing literature and new data from the author’s fieldwork are included in this study. In the first part of this dissertation, it is shown that Italian dialects display a large number of typologically diverse yes/no question-marking strategies, as opposed to Standard Italian and Romance. The variation found in Italian dialects is surprising, given that they are closely related from a typological point of view. Furthermore, it is shown that several Tuscan, Central and Southern Italian dialects use a construction that poses a challenge for standard typological classifications of polar questions in the world’s languages. The second part of this dissertation focuses on the syntax and prosody of this yes/no question-marking strategy. A theoretical analysis is proposed in order to account for its syntactic properties. Although this construction includes two fully-inflected verbs, it is argued that it should be analyzed as a monoclausal utterance. A number of syntactic tests are developed to shed some light on its underlying structure. Further evidence for the proposed analysis comes from the results of empirical testing. A production experiment was carried out to investigate the phonetic realization of this construction. The results of the experiment show that this construction patterns with specific prosodic cues, which unambiguously signal its monoclausal status.

This study is of relevance to anyone interested in descriptive typology, theoretical syntax and experimental phonetics, as well as Italian dialectology.