An interface approach to French *wh*-questions
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The aim of this paper is to consider the alternative according to which prosodic properties are responsible for the particular licensing of French *wh*-in-situ, as in (1), but also for the case of *wh*-movement, illustrated in (2) (*contra* Zubizarreta 1998). By concentrating on *wh*-questions at the syntax-phonology interface, the present paper is in the tradition of much recent linguistic work, since the relevance of prosodic attributes in relation to *wh*-in-situ and *wh*-movement has become prominent in the recent literature on French interrogatives (a.o. Cheng & Rooryck 2000, Adli 2004, Reglero 2004, Richards 2006). The original aspect of the proposal lies in the fact that we look at the information structure in questions and the way it interacts with prosody and syntax. More precisely, what we are claiming is in the line of what Engdahl (2006) proposes, namely that 'the information packaging of questions, just like any utterances, reflects the information state of the speaker. Different contexts require different realizations of questions. By shifting the main accent or the position of the *wh*-phrase, the speaker puts different questions up for discussion'. Although the discourse approach to questions is only in its infancy, the aim of this paper is to provide a step forward in the direction of a fully blown and comprehensive theory of discourse functions in the interrogative domain.

The details of our analysis are as follows. We adopt the view that the focus of a clause is the constituent containing the main stress of this clause (a.o. Reinhart 1995, Szendrői 2001, 2003). We argue that the stress-focus correspondence principle, which was developed with respect to declarative sentences, also holds in *wh*-questions and that *wh*-phrases have to be part of the focus (see also Arregi 2001 for a similar view about Basque, a language which contrary to French has obligatory *wh*-movement). We show that French fronted-*wh* questions are cases of wide focus (Ladd 1980) while French *wh*-in-situ questions are cases of narrow focus only. We claim that in the case of French *wh*-questions, there is a case of Blocking (Williams 1997): the existence of the fronted-*wh* question blocks the existence of the *wh*-in-situ one associated with a wide focus interpretation via focus projection (illustrated in (3) for declarative sentences).

In the case of *wh*-in-situ questions in French, the *wh*-phrase is located in the position where the grammar assigns the main stress, namely the right-edge of the intonation phrase. When material appears to the right of the *wh*-phrase in-situ, we show that it is right-dislocated constituents that are adjoined to the intonation phrase. They are therefore skipped by the main stress rule (Truckenbrodt 1999). More importantly, the material that appears before the *wh*-phrase in-situ occupies prosodically weak positions and it is obligatorily contextually bound or given (Schwarzschild 1999). This is particularly visible in the case of intervention effect data (Mathieu 1999, Boeckx 2000, Pesetsky 2000) of the type illustrated in (4a) and (5a). On the assumption that all interveners are focused elements (Beck 2006), these examples show that any material that independently needs to be prosodically prominent is not able to surface in a *wh*-in-situ question in French. In our view, the ungrammaticality of sentences (4a) and (5a) follows from a mismatch between the requirement that the elements described as 'interveners' have to be prosodically prominent and the area of the sentence in which they appear, which is associated with non prosodically prominent material by the French grammar. These examples therefore constitute a violation of the stress-focus correspondence principle.

In the case of fronted-*wh* questions, the main stress being assigned to the right-edge of the intonation phrase by the grammar, it is assigned to a constituent other than the *wh*-phrase. However, the fronted *wh*-phrase is included in the focus of the sentence via focus projection. In other words, fronted-wh questions are cases of wide focus. On the level of discourse, the non-*wh* part of a fronted-*wh* question is prosodically prominent and is part of the focus of the sentence along with the *wh*-phrase. Obligatory focus projection is the mechanism that enables the *wh*-phrase to satisfy the stress-focus correspondence principle when *wh*-movement occurs.

Bold letters indicate main stress.

(1) Il   a   bu   [**quoi**]_F, le chat?
   He has drunk   what   the cat
   'What did the cat drink?'

(2) [Qu'est-ce   qu'il   a   **bu**]_F, le   chat?
   What-is-it   that-he has drunk the cat
   'What did the cat drink?'

(3) Focus projection in declarative sentences
   A: Qu'est-ce qu'il   a   fait?
     What-is-it that-he has   done
     'What did he do?'
   B: [Il   a   bu   du   **lait**]_F .
     He has drunk PART milk
     'He drank some milk.'

   A'. Qu'est-ce qu'il   a   bu?
     What is-it that-he has   drunk
     'What did he drink?'
   B': Il   a   bu   [du   **lait**]_F .
     He has drunk PART milk
     'He drank some milk.'

(4) Intervention effects with 'only'
   a. *Seul Jean aime   [**quo**i]_F?
     only Jean likes   what
   b. [Qu'est-ce que seul Jean **aime**]_F?
     what-is-it that only Jean likes
     'What does only Jean like?'

(5) Intervention effects with negation
   a. *Il ne   mange pas   [**quoi**]_F?
     he NE   eats   not   what
   b. [Qu'est-ce qu'il   ne   mange **pas**]_F?
     what-is-it that-he NE   eats   not
     'What doesn't he eat?'

Selected references:
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