

The prosody of interrogatives in French

Claire BEYSSADE
 Elisabeth DELAIS-ROUSSARIE
 Jean-Marie MARANDIN

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Introduction (1)

Aim of the talk :

- compare the intonation of declaratives and the intonation of interrogatives;
- show the resemblances and differences pertaining to the association of the nuclear contour and the utterance.

Declaratives and *interrogatives* refer to two sentence types defined as the association of a type of semantic content (proposition vs propositional abstract) and various syntactic forms.

(Ginzburg & sag 2001; Beyssade & Marandin 2006)

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Introduction and objectives (2)

Our proposal is based on the analysis of 265 interrogatives recorded in various situations. They are drawn from the following corpora :

- Ester (radio news/talk shows)
10 h, 175 tokens.
- Corpus MdF (phone calls, CA type corpus)
1 h, 15 tokens.
- Corpus CP (recorded texts for laboratory phonology experiment) 60 tokens.
- Corpus ACI (elicited utterances recorded in psycholinguistic experiments) 20 tokens.

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

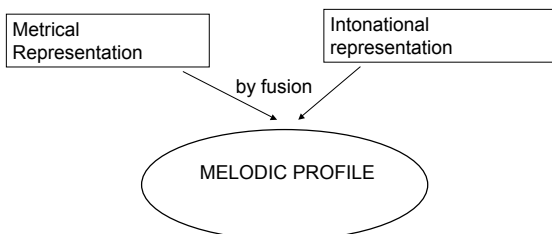
Outline of the talk

- Assumptions
- From declarative to interrogative sentences
- Analysis of the data
- Conclusion

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Background : the melodic profile



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Metrical representation

Le jeune frère de Marie est venu.

Metrical Grid :

(cf., among others, Bonami&Delais, 2007)

					*			*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
le	jeune	frère	de	ma	rie	est	ve	nu

Le jeune frère) de marie) est venu)

X X X

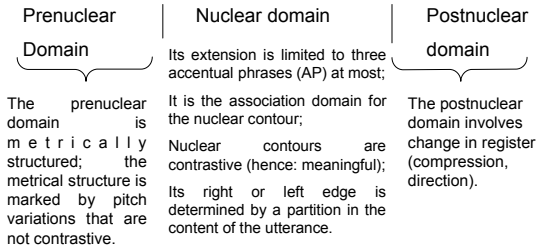
Realization
 F0 movement,
 Duration, etc.

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Intonational representation

The intonational representation involves three zones :



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Nuclear contours

Form of the Nuclear Contour :

T- T* T%

Inventory

H- L* T%
L- H* T%
L- HL* T%
L- H+L* T%

Le jeune frère de Marie est venu. (answer to Who came ?)

Le jeune frère de Marie est venu.

H- L* L% } Nuc. Dom L%

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Melodic profile

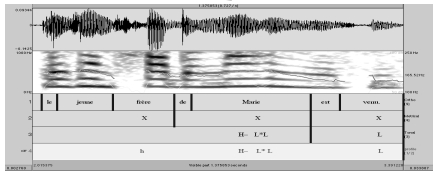
Metrical Representation

Le jeune frère) de marie) est venu)
X X X

Intonational Representation

Le jeune frère de Marie } est venu.
H- L* L% } L%

by fusion



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

From Declaratives to interrogatives

In declaratives :

The propositional content is partitioned into a functional part and an argument (i.a. Jackendoff, 1972; Jacobs, 1984).

<Propositional Abstract, Argument>

Such a partition corresponds to the Focus/ Background partition : the argument is the Focus.

Example :

Qui est venu ? Marie est venue

Marie] est venue.

Qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Marie est venue

Marie est venue]

Right edge of the XP contributing the focal content

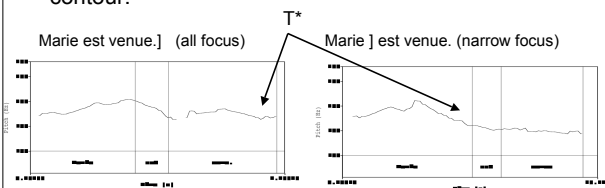
12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

From declaratives to interrogatives

- The right edge of the Focus coincides with the right edge of the nuclear domain.

- The right edge of the nuclear domain is the anchoring site of the pitch accent of the nuclear contour.



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

From declaratives to interrogatives

- Does this analysis extend to interrogative sentences ?
- What is the partition of the content in interrogatives ?
- What is the contribution of the content partition to the delimitation of the Nuclear Domain and accordingly, to the association of the Nuclear Contour ?

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

WH-Interrogatives (1)

The content of WH-interrogatives is partitioned into a functional part and a restriction (Krifka, 2001).

<Propositional Abstract, Restriction on the Argument>

In WH-interrogatives, the restriction is contributed by the WH-expression.

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

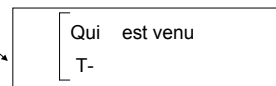
WH-Interrogatives (2)

Example : *Qui est venu ?*

Qui est venu
Restriction Function

< λx . venir (x) , {x : human} >

The XP contributing the restriction (i.e. the WH) determines the left edge of the Nuclear Domain and the anchoring site of the phrasal tone of the Nuclear Contour.



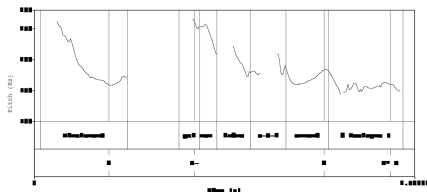
12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Wh-interrogative / falling contour

Finale^{ment}, qui mon frère a-t-il emmené à Boulogne ?
Finale^{ment}) qui mon frère) a-t-il emmené) à Boulogne)
Finale^{ment}, [qui mon frère a-t-il emmené à Boulogne

H- L* L%



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

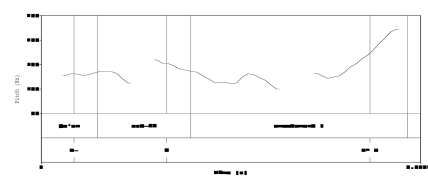
Wh-interrogative / rising contour

Qu'en est-il exactement ? (Ester)

Qu'en est-il) exactement)

[Qu'en est-il exactement

L- H* H%



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Polar interrogatives (1)

The content of polar interrogatives is partitioned into a proposition and a restriction (Krifka 2001 simplified here). The restriction pertains to the polarity of the proposition (positive or negative). It corresponds to the two answers *yes* and *no*.

<Proposition, {oui, non}>

As we saw above for declaratives, propositions can be partitioned. The type of partition gives rise to two types of questions.

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Polar interrogatives (2)

- Polar partial question (or Narrow Focus question): a part of the content is specifically questioned.
- Polar total question (or All Focus question): the whole content is questioned.

Example : *Est-ce que Marie est venue ?*

Partial (narrow focus)

Total (all focus)

<< λx venu (x), Marie>, {oui, non}>

<< λpp , venu (marie) >, {oui, non} >

Est-ce que Marie est venue
H-

Est-ce que Marie est venue
L-

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Partial polar question

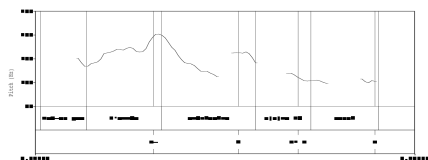
The XP contributing the argument (in the propositional part of the content) indicates the LEFT edge of the Nuclear Domain and the anchoring site of the phrasal tone of the Nuclear Contour.

Est-ce que l'armée américaine sera là aussi ? (Ester)

Est-ce que l'armée) américaine) sera là) aussi)

Est-ce que [l'armée américaine sera là aussi

H- L* L%



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Total polar question

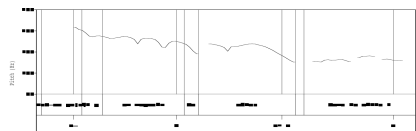
The left edge of the Nuclear Domain corresponds to the AP including the lexical identifier of the sentence type (*est-ce que*, the verb with encliticized subject pronoun).

Est-ce qu'il y a un magasin de vélos dans la ville ?

Est-ce qu'il y a) un magasin) de vélos) dans la ville)

[Est-ce qu'il y a un magasin de vélos dans la ville

H- L* L%



12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

In a nutshell (1)

- In both declaratives and polar interrogatives, the Nuclear Contour goes to the argument. In both cases, the argument may be either a part of the content (Narrow focus) or the whole content (All focus).
- In WH-interrogatives, the Nuclear Contour goes to the restriction.

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Conclusion (1)

In interrogatives as well as in declaratives, the association of the Nuclear contour is determined by the partition of the semantic content conveyed by the sentence.

Differences :

- In declaratives, the partition contributes the right edge of the nuclear domain;
- In interrogatives, the partition contributes the left edge of the nuclear domain.
- In declaratives, the partition determines the anchoring of the pitch accent of the nuclear contour;
- In interrogatives, the partition determines the anchoring of the phrasal accent of the nuclear contour.

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07

Conclusion (2)

Resemblance :

The contour goes to the part of the content that is specifically affected by the illocutionary act : the focus of asserting or the focus of questioning. This is the case even with utterances used indirectly (questioning declaratives or asserting interrogatives).

12 - 14 sept 07

Interface Prosody & Discourse 07