

Intonation of alternative constructions and Information Structure

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The three possible constructions with a disjunction in French (see (1), (2) and (3)) are often assumed in the literature to differ with respect to final tonal contours, a continuation rise being realized at the end of the non-final conjuncts (see, among others, Di Cristo 2016): a fall to low in a statement with a disjunction (1), and a fall (to mid) in alternative questions (2), and a rise in the case of yes/no questions (3).

- (1) *L'année prochaine, mes voisins veulent faire un grand voyage en Amérique du sud. **Ils iront au Guatemala, en Colombie ou en Argentine*** (statement with a disjunction, SDij, fig. 2)
- (2) *J'ai entendu dire que tes voisins iront faire un voyage en Amérique latine. Tu en as parlé avec eux ? **Ils iront au Guatemala, en Colombie ou en Argentine** ?* (alternative quest., AltQ, fig. 3)
- (3) *Pour la réunion de bilan, j'ai les avis de tous les membres du service comptabilité, à l'exception de Pierre. Sais-tu ce qu'il fait ? **Il sera disponible mardi ou jeudi** ?* (yes-noAltQ)

After showing that the non-final rising contour also differs across these construction types (contra Di Cristo 2016), we will argue that the intonational pattern observed in AltQ in French results from the informational status of the conjuncts, which are always F-marked.

Rising contour at the end of non-final conjuncts and F-marking in French

A pilot study designed to compare the realization of the rising contours at the end of non-final conjunct(s) in statements (1) and AltQ (2) showed differences across constructions: larger pitch range and steeper rise in questions than in statements (see fig. 1). Despite certain syntactic and semantic analyses of alternative questions which consider the conjuncts as clause (see Cornulier 1982 and Truckenbrodt 2013 among others), it will be shown that the difference cannot be explained in terms of syntax-phonology mapping, an IP boundary occurring at the end of a conjunct in AltQ, and not in SDij.

The distribution and form of the rising contours would derive from pragmatic and semantic information and more specifically from the fact that each conjunct is F-marked in AltQ, and the sentence of a whole carries a Q-marker (question), (for F-marking in French, see Beyssade et al. 2004, Di Cristo and Jankowski 1999). A parallel with the tonal patterns observed in cleft sentences used as a statement (fig.4) or as a question (fig. 5) confirms this analysis.

Illocutionary contour, final conjunct, and closure

In cleft sentences and in sentences with a postfocus sequence, the illocutionary tone is copied so that questions end with a rise (see fig. 5). In the case of alternative questions, the last conjunct is also F-marked, but it constitutes the last alternate to which the addressee commit himself. The falling contour can thus be considered as indicating the closure of the alternative set (or a kind of marker for 'assertiveness', see Bartels 1995). A production study, which will be presented at the workshop, is currently performed in order to see whether the realization of the falling movement will differ depending on an exclusive or a non-exclusive interpretation.

Selected References

- Bartels, C. (1999). *The intonation of English statements and questions*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing.
- Beyssade, C.; Delais-Roussarie E.; Doetjes J.S.; Marandin J.-M. & Rialland A. (2004), Prosody and information in French. In: Corblin F.; Swart H. de (Eds.), *Handbook of French Semantics*. Stanford: CSLI publications. pp. 477-500
- Cornulier de, B. (1982) Sur le sens des questions totales et alternatives. *Langages* 67: 55-109.
- Di Cristo, A. (2016). *Les musiques du français parlé*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

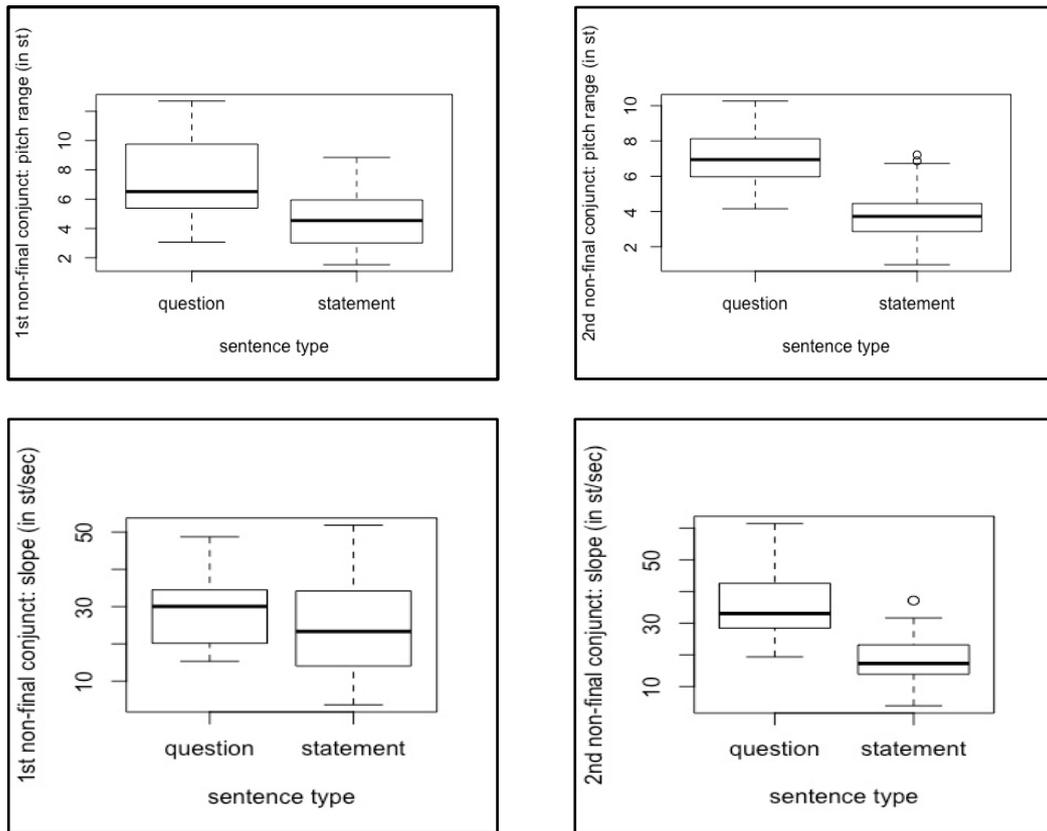


Figure 1. Pitch range (top panels) and slope of the rise (bottom panels) on the first non-final conjunct and on the second non-final conjunct in questions vs. statements.

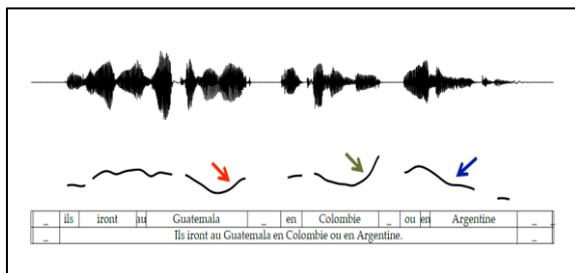


Fig.2 : Statement with a disjunction. *Ils iront au Guatemala en Colombie ou en Argentine.*

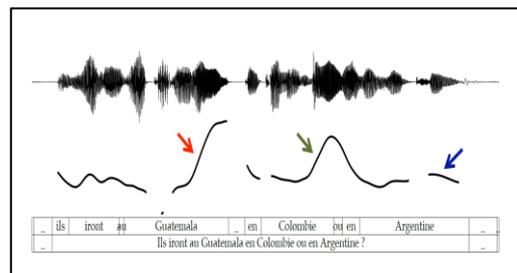


Fig.3 : Alt Question. *Ils iront au Guatemala, en Colombie ou en Argentine ?*

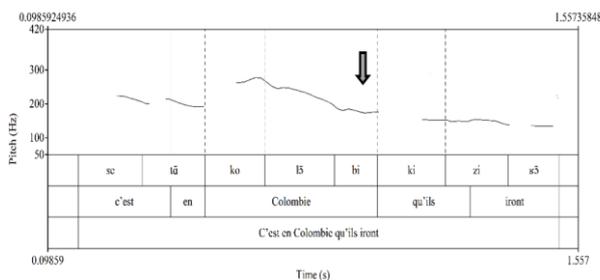


Fig 4: Narrow focus in a cleft-sentence used as an assertion *C'est en Colombie qu'ils iront.*

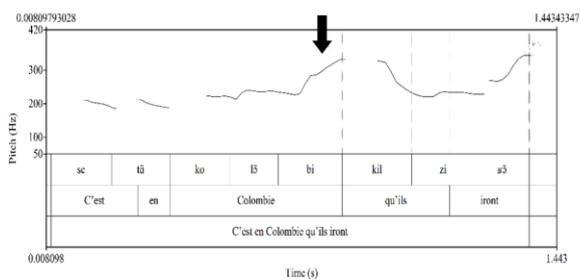


Fig. 5 Narrow focus, cleft used as a question *C'est en Colombie qu'ils iront ?*