This study seeks to fill this gap and offer evidence about how prosody between syntax and prosody in French.

1. Quel élément est-ce qu'elle a mis au milieu? which shape QUES  she has placed
2. Quel élément a-t-elle mis au milieu? she has placed which shape

French is aligned to right edge. Why do we observe deaccenting at the end of the sentence?

Recent investigations of interrogatives have targeted prosody as one of the central factors accounting for cross-linguistic variation in wh-in-situ movement (Cheng & Rooryck, 2000; Kučerová, 2007; Poertschy, 2000; Richards, 2006; Wagner, 2005, 2006). French offers a unique empirical testing ground, since it allows both moved wh-in-situ and wh-in-situ questions.

French Interrogatives

Cheng and Rooryck (2000)’s proposal:

French Interrogatives: Strong Q Feature in Sentence-Initial C

Q spelled out as est-que, checked and specified by:
Q checked by underspecified intonation morpheme: [Q: ]

Nuanced support for Cheng & Rooryck (2000)’s claims about rising intonation:

- Contour of wh-in-situ content questions is higher than falling declarative, but lower than rising questions, especially in Group 1
- Deaccenting following H* pitch accent on wh-in-situ appears to mask the rise.
- H* on wh-word followed by falling contour (Beyssade et al., 2007)
- Distressing lexical material around wh-word (Hamlaoui, 2008)
- Pitch compression in wh-domain between wh-word and complementizer (Richards, 2006)

Example of context and target sentences:

Possible patterns are not only psychological: Emma doesn’t place a round, a square or a triangle on a table...

Participants: 12 native French speakers (5 F; 7 M; age: early 20s – late 50s) recruited from Central NJ area.

Stimuli: Five 2- to 3-sentence discourse contexts for each of the 7 target sentences presenting a choice scenario, followed by the target sentence.

Sentences were pseudorandomized in 3 blocks. Words with obstructions were avoided. There were no sentence-final wh-words.

Procedure: Speakers were recorded in a sound-attenuated booth and assigned to 1 of 3 orders. Pitch accenting and naturalness were later evaluated.

Analysis: The 420 sentences were segmented and annotated in Praat. Two double-blind researchers coded all sentences for rise/fall (intercoder agreement: 90%). 40 evenly-divided windows were then created beginning from the onset of the wh-word or determiner to the end of the sentence. Average FO was calculated for each window for all speakers and sentences.

Method

Participants: 2 groups of speakers emerged: those who were perceived to give wh-in-situ a rise and those who were not.

No effects of age, gender, region, or years in US.

Selected References