

## Frédérique Berthelot - Abstract workshop Bucharest Aug.2022.

The aim of my presentation is

- to produce experimental data assessing the status of Long Subject Questions (LSQs) in French,
- to offer a syntactic account of why short and long subject questions differ in acceptability status.

I adopt the freezing approach developed in Rizzi and Shlonsky (2007).

In a first section I present a controlled experiment where the grammatical category of the *wh* moved DP (object vs subject), the form of the complementizer (*que* vs *qui*) and the register of the stimuli are manipulated. Participant variables are also encoded: age class and, for two subgroups, professional exposure to older form of the language (scriptwriters vs medievalists). The task consisted in giving a grammaticality judgment on a 5 point scale.

The main finding of the experiment is that LSQs with *qui* have a middle-of-the way status, scoring significantly better than LSQs with *que* without reaching the level of long object questions with *que*. Change in progress failed to be detected by the register, age or profession variables. An important variability was observed both across items and across participants.

I will then turn to discussing the following issue: Assuming that one and the same device allows short and long subject movement to bypass the freezing position, how come that LSQs are degraded with respect to short subject questions? The length of the derivation cannot be in cause given the near-optimal status of long object questions.

I will propose that the *qui* variant of the complementizer bears a nominative feature. Capitalizing on Sheehan (2011), I will argue that selected clauses need Case (contra Stowell 1981). As a result, a Case conflict arises in the embedded complementizer of LSQs. Case stacking being a UG compatible option, the derivation is not barred. Yet, the lack of morphological evidence of this option in French explains the difficulty for the speaker to determine the status of LSQs.

### References :

- Rizzi, L. and U. Shlonsky, (2007). Strategies of Subject Extraction. In U. Sauerland, *Interfaces+Recursion=Language?* (pp. 115-160). Berlin, New-York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Sheehan, M. (2011). A Note on Case-assignment to CP. *Snippets* 24, 19-19.
- Stowell, T. (1981). *Origins of Phrase Structure*. PhD Thesis: MIT.