

Two types of NP preposing in French

We contrast two types of utterances with a preposed NP in French in a construction based HPSG grammar. They differ with respect to several grammatical aspects (syntax, semantics, pragmatics and phonology; we leave aside phonology here), which cluster uniquely into constructions. Both are colloquial (a reason why they have been recognized only recently, see Zribi-Hertz 1986, 1996, Sabio 2006); accordingly, we rely for the data on spoken corpora (Corpaix, CFRP) as well as on our intuitions.

1. Syntactic properties

The two constructions (cx 1 vs cx 2) are illustrated in (1).¹ The preposed NP is associated with a grammatical function within the sentence, contrasting with a hanging topic (as in (1c)).

- (1) a. les conjugaisons j'aimais bien. [Corpaix] (the conjugations I liked well) [cx 1]
b. dix-sept ans il a [Corpaix] (seventeen years he has) [cx 2]
c. euh la mairie de Saintes on connaît le le candidat socialiste qui vient de se déterminer [CFRP]
(hum the town council of Saintes we know the the socialist candidate who has just made his decision)

Sentences (1a,b) contain a predicate with an unrealized syntactic argument : an object in (1). We analyze the NP as a filler in cx 2 (1b) and a left-dislocated NP in cx 1 (1a). Both sentence types allow for a long distance dependency (2a), (3a), but only cx 1 presents the hallmarks of an extraction: the sentence remains grammatical if the NP is absent ((2b) vs (3b)), or if the unrealized NP is in an island configuration (such as a relative clause) ((2c) vs (3c)).

- (2) a. Le chocolat, elle prétend qu'elle adore. (the chocolate, she pretends that she adores) [cx 1]
b. Sp. A : Tu aimes le chocolat ? (you like the chocolate?)
Sp. B : J'adore. (I adore)
c. Le chocolat, je ne connais personne qui n'aime pas. (the ch. I know nobody who does not like)
- (3) a. Huit ans, je crois qu'il avait à l'époque. (eight years I think he had at the time) [cx 2]
b. Sp. A : Il avait quoi, huit ans, à l'époque ? (he had what, eight years, at the time?)
Sp. B : *Il avait. (he had)
c. *Huit ans, je ne vois personne qui ait ici. (eight years, I see nobody who has here)

(4a-b) confirms the filler gap dependency, since it contains an object of the form *de N*, which is only licensed by negation or the extraction of a specifier. In cx 2, the filler can correspond to a predicative complement (4c) and is not necessarily an NP (4d).

- (4) a. Trois heures, il avait [de retard] le train (3 h, it has of delay, the train) [cx 2]
b. * Il avait de retard, le train.
c. [Extrême-gauche]_{NP}, elle était. (extreme-left she was) [cx 2]
d. [A moitié-anglaise]_{AP} elle était. (half British she was)

On the other hand, cx 1 behaves like a left dislocation, with an anaphoric relation between the preposed constituent and some pronominal element. As is the case with clitic-left-dislocations, we can have another left-dislocated NP with free ordering of the preposed NP:

¹ We give glosses rather than translations.

- (5) a. *Moi, le chocolat, j'adore.* (me, the chocolate, I love) [cx 1]
 b. *Le chocolat, moi, j'adore.* (the chocolate, me, I love)

Following Zribi-Hertz (1986, 1996), we propose that the object in cx 1 is a null pronoun, interpreted like *ça* (that). The unrealized object regularly alternates with *ça* in this construction. For instance, in (2), (5) and (7), *ça* is possible. We call it the ‘*ça*-dislocation-construction’.

2. Semantic Properties

Both constructions involve a partitioned meaning, with the preposed NP being highlighted, but it is used in different ways by the grammar. In cx 1, it is the basis of a categorical proposition, where the preposed NP is the (sentence-) theme. This is not the case in cx 2, where the proposition isthetic. In addition, cx 1 involves a general proposition, while cx 2 is not so constrained.

With cx 1, the content of the sentence is general; neither the NP nor the predicate can denote a particular (object or situation). The NP denotes a kind ((1a),(2a),(6a)), or an object type (7a), an abstract object generally. Instead of an NP, one can have a preposed infinitival VP, denoting a situation type (6c). In addition, the verb is typically an individual level predicate regarding the object (Kratzer 1995). It can be a stage level predicate only if there is quantification and/or an implicit habitual or iterative aspectual operator. In other words, cx 1 expresses regularities. Neither cx 2, nor the dislocation with an explicit pronoun (other than *ça*) are similarly constrained, see (8).

- (6) a. *La musique classique, je (ne) connais pas bien / j'apprécie beaucoup.* [cx 1]
 (the classical music, I don't know very well / I appreciate a lot)
 b. *??Ton offre / Ton frère, tu sais que tout le monde apprécie.*
 (your offer / your brother, you know that everybody appreciates)
 c. *Moi [travailler seule] je supporte pas [CFRP]* (me working alone I cannot stand)
- (7) *Ce genre de repas, simple mais avec de bons produits,* [cx 1]
 (this type of meal, simple but based on good products)
je n'avais encore jamais mangé à Paris. / on trouve rarement aujourd'hui. / ??j'ai justement mangé hier.
 (I had never eaten in Paris, yet / one does not find easily nowadays / I ate yesterday, actually.)
- (8) a. *et là, tu sais ce qui lui est arrivé – une antenne ils lui ont jeté sur la tête* [Corpaix] [cx2]
 (and then, you know what happened to him – an antenna they threw on his head)
 b. *La musique classique, j'en ai justement écouté hier.* (the classical music, I listened to some yesterday)

We take the distinction betweenthetic *vs* categorical sentences to be semantic rather than structure informational (see Kuroda 1972, Ladusaw 1994; Kim 1998 argues that the distinction may induce different truth conditions). In a categorical proposition, a property is predicated of (the referent of) an argument, which is a ‘(sentence) theme’ (distinct from the discourse topic). It is notoriously difficult to associate distinctive properties with the notion of theme (Jacobs 2001). We rely on four properties: (i) the theme is a semantic argument of the predicate; (ii) it occurs to its left and is the last to saturate it; (iii) it shows an affinity with definite NPs; (iv) a categorical proposition favors individual level predicates (specially dispositions) (Marandin 2003).

Cx 1 exhibits the four properties. The null pronoun semantically contributes a variable, turning the sentence into a predicate, which is saturated by the preposed NP. In addition, the preposed NP is definite (9a):

- (9) a. *??un repas simple, avec de bons produits, on sert rarement au restaurant à Paris.* [cx 1]

- (a simple meal, based on good products, we rarely find in a restaurant in Paris)
- b. Onze heures elle est restée chez les juges. [*Canard Enchaîné*, 2006] [cx2]
(eleven hours she stayed with investigating magistrates)

Cx 2 has properties (i) and (ii), the gap is turned semantically into a variable, and the predicate is saturated by the filler. But the parallelism stops there. The NP is preferably an indefinite; in particular, measure expressions are frequent (denoting duration, temporal localization, frequency, age, a sum of money) (9b), and the NP can be non referential. Definite NP are not impossible, but not favored. Moreover, dispositions are not favored, most propositions being particular (as in (8a)). There is a strong intuition that the filler is highlighted, but the partition is taken advantage of in the pragmatics rather than the semantics.

3. Discourse and Pragmatic properties

The two constructions differ crucially concerning their illocutionary properties. While cx 1 is not specified, cx 2 is pragmatically characterized.

Our analysis is based on the following observations:

- (i) Contrary to cx 1, cx 2 cannot be embedded (10a) vs (10b).
(ii) It can only be a declarative clause (neither an interrogative, nor an imperative) (10c), contrasting again with cx 1 (10d). It can have a questioning or directive value in context (we consider these cases as indirect speech acts). Clearly, cx 2 is defined as an utterance type rather than a sentence type.

- (10) a. *On m'a raconté qu'une antenne on lui avait jeté sur la tête. [cx 2]
(I was told that an antenna they threw on his head)
b. Tu sais bien que le chocolat, j'adore depuis toujours. [cx 1]
(you know that the chocolate, I have always adored)
c. *Une antenne, pourquoi / est-ce qu' on lui a lancé sur la tête ? [cx 2]
(an antenna, why did / is it the case that they throw on his head)
d. Le chocolat, est-ce que tu aimes toujours ? [cx 1]
(the chocolate is it the case that you still love)

(iii) Cx 2 is not a segment in a narrative discourse. A continuation by a sentence where the NP is pronominalized is not appropriate ((8a) is not followed by (11a); see also discourse (11b)).

- (11) a. #Elle était complètement fichue. (it was completely ruined, where it = the antenna)
b. Deux justificatifs de domicile il me faut [Pohl]. ? Ils sont nécessaires pour l'inscription sur les listes électorales. (two documents attesting my official residence, I need; they are necessary to be registered on the electoral roll).

(iv) It is typically associated with speaker's attitudes (surprise, admiration, disgust, justification etc.).

(v) The cx can be used information structurally: the preposed NP can be a narrow focus (12), but it is not always the case: it can be included in an all focus utterance (8a), (12b) (first utterance in a service encounter), and is often used as a kind of summary of the situation.

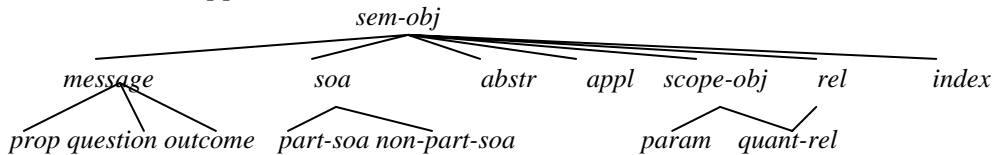
- (12) a. donc on retrouve on a retrouvé en 95 une une jeune fille qui était momifiée – Juliana ils l'appellent – qu'on a vue au musée de d'Arequipa [CFRP]
(so we find we found in 95 a a young girl who was momified – Juliana they call her – whom we saw at the Arequipa museum)
b. Deux justificatifs de domicile il me faut [Pohl].

Our analysis of cx 2 is as follows: first, it involves a clause type, which we call a *centered-clause* (a sub-type of declarative clause), which involves a partitioned meaning, where the highlighted element is a ‘center’); second, a centered clause gives rise in the pragmatics to two different uses: the center is identified with a narrow focus (the partition is interpreted information structurally); or, it is interpreted as a figure, in an all focus utterance. A figure is the element of a situation which the speaker zooms in on.

4. HPSG analysis

4.1. Partitioned meaning

We assume the following hierarchy of semantic objects (based on Ginzburg et Sag 2000; *abstr(action)*, *appl(ication)* from Webelhuth 2007):



Partitioned meanings correspond to a *part(itioned)-soa* (we add the partition dimension to the hierarchy of soas). A partitioned soa describes a situation which supports the ascription of a property to an object. Partitioned soa, application and abstraction are as follows:

$$\text{partitioned-soa: } \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{QUANTS list(quant-rel)} \\ \text{NUCLEUS application} \end{array} \right] \text{ application: } \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{FUNC abstraction} \\ \text{ARG sem-obj} \end{array} \right] \text{ abstraction: } \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{VAR param} \\ \text{BODY soa} \end{array} \right]$$

The parameter in the abstraction is identified with an index of an argument of the predicate (e.g. the subject in French), or of an element in the SLASH value, or a parameter in STORE; the body is the *soa* of the head daughter (see Webelhuth 2007). A categorical proposition has a partitioned soa; in addition, it has a feature THEME. The content of a centered clause also includes a partitioned soa (the nucleus), where the argument is identified with the center.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{categorical-proposition} => \\ \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SIT } s \\ \text{SOA } \textit{part-soa} | \text{NUCLEUS} | \text{ARG [1]} \\ \text{THEME } \langle [1] \rangle + L \end{array} \right] \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{centered-clause} => \\ \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{IC } + \\ \text{CONT } \textit{prop} | \text{SOA } \textit{part-soa} | \text{NUCLEUS} | \text{ARG [1]} \\ \text{CENTER [1]} \end{array} \right] \end{array}$$

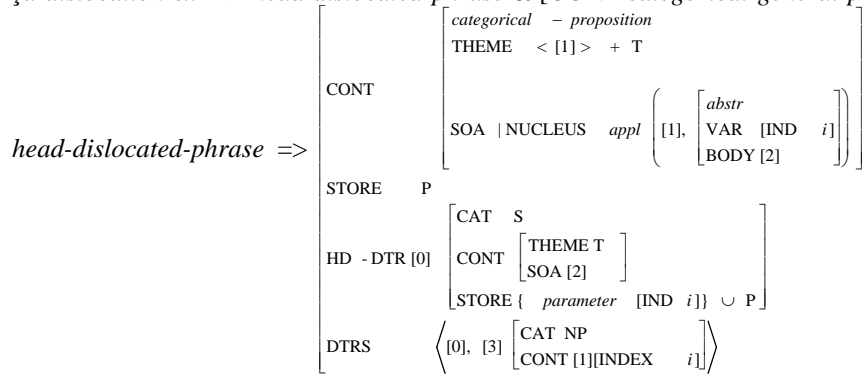
As there can be several themes, the value of THEME is a list; we adopt the notion of relative thematicity from Webelhuth (2007). Dislocation is compatible with interrogative and exclamative as well as declarative clauses ((10d); *Le chocolat, qu'est-ce qu'elle aime ?* Chocolate, how much she likes). We assume that the whole cx (rather than the head-daughter only) corresponds to the proposition on which the question is built (see Ginzburg and Sag 2000 for the analysis of questions, Marandin 2008 on exclamatives). This move is independently necessary to account for certain initial adverbs in French (Bonami and Godard 2007)).

4.2. Left-dislocated constructions

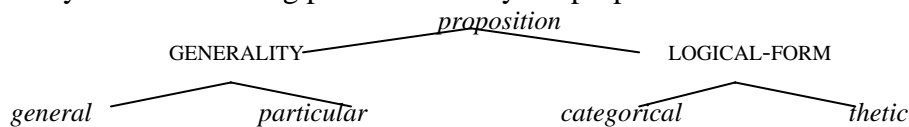
There is a specific head-dislocated-phrase (see also Engdhal and Vallduví 1996). Pronominal elements optionally put a parameter in their STORE value, parameter which is coindexed with the left-dislocated phrase. The pronoun *ça* itself has an abstract-index (if indices are distinguished into sub-types); in the *ça*-dislocation with a null object illustrated here, the null *pro* has a non-canonical synsem, with an abstract index.

$$\textit{ça} => \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{CONT } \textit{parameter} [1][\text{IND } \textit{abstract-index}] \\ \text{STORE } \{([1])\} \end{array} \right] \quad \textit{pro} => \left[\begin{array}{l} \textit{non-canonical} \\ \text{CONT } [1] \textit{parameter} [\text{IND } \textit{abstract-index}] \\ \text{STORE } \{([1])\} \end{array} \right]$$

ça-dislocation-cx => *head-dislocated-phrase* & [CONT *categorical-general-proposition*]

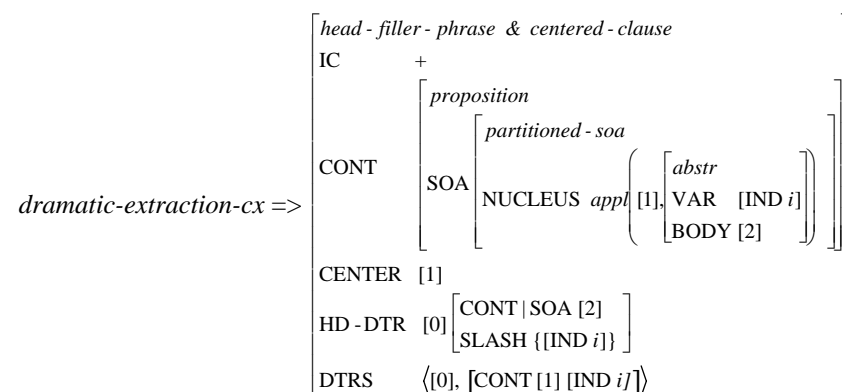


We rely on the following partial hierarchy for propositions:



4.3. Dramatic extraction construction

We call *cx 2* the dramatic extraction *cx*, which (i) is a head-filler phrase, and (2) relies on a partitioned *soa*. It gives rise to an assertion or an indirect speech act.



Conclusion

The contrast in (1) shows the need for (at least) two types of saliency, semantic and pragmatic, both relying on a partitioned meaning. If these are two separate ways of highlighting a constituent, we expect them not to always cluster in the same way. This is what we find, since *thetic* propositions and all focus utterances are not always correlated. We can have a *categorical* proposition with an all focus *IS* (*God is eternal*), and a *thetic* proposition with a figure ([What's going on?] *C'est la police qui arrête le voisin* (it's the police who is arresting the neighbor)).

Selected References.

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