
Uttered sentences, prosody and word order

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Consider the following examples:

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| (1) Tu veux arrêter. | (4) Veux-tu arrêter ! |
| (2) Tu veux arrêter ? | (5) Tu veux arrêter ! |
| (3) Veux-tu arrêter ? | (6) Veux-tu ! |

A long tradition describes the Subject-Verb-Inversion in (3) as an illustration of verb movement (to C) triggered by the interrogative force. But French also allows for interrogatives with the standard order, as in (2), with prosody being then the only factor differentiating it from (1) and that (4) to (6) also trigger an imperative/exclamative reading, with (4) contrasting with (3) only through prosodic marking, (4) contrasting with both (1) and (2), and (6) having an elliptical syntax and the indexical interpretation “Will you stop!”. To sum up, prosody alone can tease apart declarative/imperative/interrogative sentences. Our aim will be to question the way semantic interpretation, word-order and prosodic contours are associated one with another. Based on an ongoing corpus study, we shall discuss: i) the fact that prosody challenges the classical semantic distinction between sentences and utterances; ii) the existence of stable prosodic contours shared by various clause-types; iii) the fact that the diversity of prosodic realizations among “imperative imperative sentences” appears to match more fine-grained levels than classical illocutionary acts such as advising, allowing, requesting, ordering, challenging, encouraging, etc. ; iv) the theoretical consequences for syntax and the modeling of the relation between syntactic, phonetic and semantic form.

References: • Elordieta Gorka & Pilar Prieto (eds.) (2012) *Prosody and Meaning*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. • Lacheret, A., & Victorri, B. (2002). La période intonative comme unité d'analyse pour l'étude du français parlé: modélisation prosodique et enjeux linguistiques. In *Verbum* (Vol. 1, No. 24, pp. 55-72). • Rupp, L. (2002). *The syntax of imperatives in English and Germanic: Word order variation in the Minimalist framework*. Springer.