

INVERSION IN FRENCH: A CARTOGRAPHIC APPROACH

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Inversion in French: short overview

- **Stylistic VS** (Kayne 1972, Kayne and Pollock 1978/2001)
= **extraction-triggered VS** (Bonami, Godard and Marandin 1999)
- (1) a. *Quand partira ton ami?*
lit. When will leave your friend?
'When will your friend leave?'
- b. *Je me demande quand partira ton ami.*
lit. I wonder when will leave your friend.
'I wonder when your friend will leave.'
- (2) a. *Du château sortirait un groupe de soldats.*
from-the castle came-out a group of soldiers
- b. *Du château, Paul croyait que sortirait un groupe de soldats.*
from-the castle, Paul believed that would come out a group of soldiers.
'Paul believed that a group of soldiers would come out of the castle.'
(Bonami, Godard and Marandin 1999:38)
- **"Unaccusative inversion" (Marandin 2001)**
- (3) a. *Le silence se fit. Alors sont entrés deux hommes.*
lit. [The silence was made.] Then have entered two men.
'Silence fell. Then, two men entered.'
(Marandin, 2001: 195)
- b. *Je veux que soit invitée Marie.*
lit. I want that be-Subj invited Mary.
'I want that Mary be invited.'
(Bonami, Godard and Marandin, 1999: 21)

- **No extracted element, verb ≠ unaccusative**

- (4) *Le pays fut tranquille pendant les premières semaines de l'année. Puis l'envahirent les armées américaines.*
 lit. The country was calm during the first weeks of the year. Then it invaded the American armies.
 'The country was calm during the first weeks of the year. Then the American armies invaded it.'
 (Lahousse 2011)

- **Exhaustive focus VS¹**

- (5) a. **Focus particle *ne ... que / seul* (= 'strong focalization VS')**
*Ne donneront de l'argent à ceux qui en ont besoin *que* [les pauvres].*
 Neg will-give money to those who need it only the poor.
 'Only the poor will give money to those in need.'
 (Gross 1975:93ft)
- d. **The postverbal subject is a definition / enumeration (= 'elaborative VS')**
Rendront un devoir [les élèves qui ont raté l'examen de chimie].
 lit. Will hand in an assignment the pupils who have failed the chemistry exam.
 (Marandin, 2003)

➔ Very different syntactic and interpretive properties than the preceding types of inversion.

➔ Cartographic analysis (Lahousse 2006/2011): preposed verb phrase is in a topic-position in the left periphery + postverbal subject in a focus-position in the left periphery

~ Belletti (2004) for inversion in Italian in which the postverbal S has a contrastive/corrective focus interpretation

- **In this talk: (1)-(4)**

(all properties described hold for (1)-(4))

¹ Exhaustive focus VS includes cases known as 'heavy NP subject inversion' (Bonami, Godard and Marandin 1999), 'elaborative inversion' (Kampers-Manhe et al. 2003) and "strong focalization SI" (Kayne and Pollock 2001).

1.2. Previous analyses

1.2.1. LOW analysis: subject in SpecVP²

- **Mechanism**

See Déprez, 1988; Déprez, 1990; Valois and Dupuis, 1992; de Wind, 1995
See also Cardinaletti 2001 for similar analysis for Italian

- (6) a. $[_{VP} \text{ subject } [_{V^o} \text{ verb }] [_{YP}]] = \text{base-generated positions}$
→ movement of the verb from V° to T°
b. $[_{IP} [_{T^o} \text{ verb}] [_{VP} \text{ subject } [_{V^o} t_{\text{verb}}] [_{YP}]]] = \text{VS word order}$

- **Evidence**

(7) **subject auxiliary *tous* participle**

Les enfants sont tous venus

Lit. The children have all come.

(7') *** auxiliary *tous* participle subject**

- a. * *Quand ont tous fini les enfants?* (Déprez, 1990: 56)

lit. When have all finished the children?

>< *Quand ont fini tous les enfants?*

lit. When have finished all the children

- b. * *Alors sont tous arrivés les enfants,...*

lit. Then have all arrived the children,...

>< *Alors sont arrivés tous les enfants.*

lit. Then have arrived all the children.

(Lahousse 2006)

➔ The S In SV leaves its base-generation position

- *tous* is 'stranded' in base-generation position (Shlonsky 1991, Koopman & Sportiche 1991, Sportiche 1996, Merchant 1996, McCloskey 2000)
- *tous* is in an adverbial position and binds trace left by the subject (Doetjes 1992)
(see McCloskey 1997 on both hypotheses)

² In some earlier approaches (cf. Kayne and Pollock, 1978), it is argued that the subject moves to a rightward position in VS, while Déprez (1988) and Valois and Dupuis (1992: 328-330) argue against the rightward movement of the subject. Friedemann (1997), for his part, claims that the subject in VS is base-generated in a rightward specifier of VP.

- **Note on cartography**

This analysis >< cartographic principles « according to which both the interpretation and the intonation should optimally be read off the syntactic configuration directly » (Belletti 2004)

1.2.2. **HIGH analysis: both S and IP (with trace of S) in left periphery of the clause (Kayne and Pollock 2001)**

- **Mechanism (technical details omitted)**

- (8)
- $[_{IP} \text{subject } [_{I^o} \text{verb}]]$
→ movement of the subject to SpecFP
 - $[_{FP} \text{subject } [_{F^o}] [_{IP} t_{\text{subject}} [_{I^o} \text{verb}]]]$
→ movement of the whole TP to SpecGP
 - $[_{GP} [_{IP} t_{\text{subject}} [_{I^o} \text{verb}]]] [_{G^o}] [_{FP} \text{subject } [_{F^o}] t_{IP}]]$

- **Floating quantifiers = problem**
(both under stranding and adverbial analysis)

- **Cartography**

Kayne and Pollock (2001):

left-peripheral position of the subject = position of left-dislocated element (cf. infra)

⇒ BUT: they do not motivate the movement of the S by referring to interpretation of the postverbal subjects; in fact, they (K&P2001:146) state that postverbal subjects may be foci, discursive topics and contrastive topics.

⇒ For the movement of postverbal subjects to the left-peripheral (topical) position to be entirely motivated, they should be inherently topical.

>< against the prevailing claim in the literature that postverbal subjects belong to the focal (or rhematic) part of the clause (cf. Tasmowski and Willems, 1987; Fournier, 1997; Fuchs, 1997 etc).

1.3. Goal

Cartographic approach to inversion in French similarly to that offered for VS in Italian by Belletti (2004), in which the S is in the VP-periphery inside IP, in the area just above VP : « a clause internal Focus position, surrounded by Topic positions, is identified in the lower part of the clause » (Belletti 2004)

- (9) [IP ...verb... [Focus postverbal subject] [Topic postverbal subject] [VP ...]]
(Belletti 2004/2008/2009 and references cited there)

(Cartography : Rizzi 1997, Cardinaletti 2004, Belletti 2004, Haegeman 2012 and reference cited there)

1.4. Structure

- Postverbal S is not in Rizzi's (1997) left periphery (section 2)
- Postverbal S is in a low, IP-internal position (section 3)
- Distribution of VS and the interpretation of postverbal S: it is in Belletti's IP-internal Topic or Focus position (section 4)

2. THE POSTVERBAL S IS NOT IN A HIGH LEFT-PERIPHERAL POSITION & NO REMNANT MOVEMENT OF IP

2.1. The postverbal S is not in Rizzi's (1997) left periphery

2.1.1. Not in a left-peripheral topic position

- **Kayne and Pollock (2001): postverbal subject position ~ CILd position**

(10) **CILD**

- a. * *Quelqu'un, il mangera ce gâteau.*
lit. Someone, he will eat that cake.
- b. * *Un ami quelconque, il viendra la voir demain.*
lit. A/some friend or other, he will come to see her tomorrow.
(Kayne and Pollock, 2001: 119)

(11) **VS**

- a. * *Quel article critiquera quelqu'un?*
lit. What article will-criticize someone?
- b. * *Quel gâteau a mangé quelqu'un?*
lit. What cake has eaten someone?
- c. * *Je te dirai quand sera venu la voir un ami quelconque.*
I will tell you when will have come to see her a/some friend or other.
(Kayne and Pollock, 2001: 119)

⇒ But: interrogative context (11a-b) & indirect question selected by *dire* 'to tell'

• **But: indefinite postverbal S in other VS contexts**

(12) **Nonspecific indefinite postverbal S in non-wh contexts**

- a. *L'air que fredonnait quelqu'un m'a soudain rappelé mon enfance.*
lit. The tune that was humming somebody reminded me of my youth.
'The tune that somebody was humming reminded me of my youth.'
(Kampers-Manhe et al., 2004:78)
- b. *Je te le montrerai au moment où sera venu la voir un ami quelconque.*
lit. I will show it to you at the moment when will have come to see her
a/some friend or-other
'I will show it to you at the moment when a/some friend or other will have
come to see her.'ⁱ
- c. *les hommes ont appris à se lever quand s'avance une femme.* (Matzneff)
lit. the men have learnt to get up when advances a woman
'...the men learned to stand up whenever a woman came forward.'
- d. *Alors arriva un homme.*
Lit. Then arrived a man.

⇒ Ban on nonspecific indefinite subjects in VS only holds in interrogative contexts (independent constraint in interrogatives)

⇒ Not an argument for position of the postverbal S in the same left-peripheral position as CLD elements

- **Postverbal S ≠ in CILD position: confirmation**

- (13) a. **VS**
... quand s'affrontaient différentes milices, il n'y avait plus de loi ni d'ordre.
 lit. .. when clashed different militias, there not was no longer law nor order. (*Le Monde*)
 '... whenever the various militias clashed with each other, there was no more law and order'
- b. **CILD**
 * *Différentes milices, elles s'affrontaient...*
 lit. Different militias, they clashed ...

2.1.2. Not in a left-peripheral focus position

VS in (1)-(5): do not have the corrective/contrastive interpretation and intonation typically associated with left-peripheral foci (Kiss 1998, Belletti 2004).

2.2. V S complement order: no remnant movement of IP

- **Postverbal S can be followed by complements => indication that no remnant movement of IP took place (~ Belletti 2004 on Italian VS)**

- (14) a. *Que dira Pierre à Michèle?*
 lit. What will say Peter to Michèle?
- b. *le livre que conseille mon professeur aux étudiants*
 lit. the book that recommends my professor to the students
- c. *Il y a cela à quoi vous pensez tous les deux quelquefois, quand passe un enfant sous la fenêtre,...* (Guehenno, Frantext)
 lit. ... when passes a child under the window,...
 'There is what you both think about sometimes when a child goes by under your window,...'

- **Belletti (2004): French >< Italian**

- (15) Italian VS
- a. (?) *Sta parlando Maria a qualcuno*
 is talking Maria to somebody
- b. (?) *Sta parlando Maria a Jean Jaques*
 is talking Maria to Jean Jaques
 (Belletti 2004)

- (16) French VS: counter-indefiniteness effect on post-S PP
- a. *?*Qu'a avoué Pierre à quelqu'un?*
what has confessed Pierre to somebody
 - b. *Qu'a avoué Pierre à Jean Jaques?*
what has confessed Pierre to Jean Jaques
- (Belletti 2004; K&P (140)a,b, quoted from Cornulier (1974))

- **But: in interrogatives only**

- (17) a. (?) *Marie avait envie de lire le livre qu'avait donné Pierre à quelqu'un / un ami.*
lit. Mary wanted to read the book which had given Peter to somebody / a friend.
- b. (?) *Le livre qu'avait donné Pierre à quelqu'un, Marie avait envie de le lire.*
lit. The book that Peter gave to somebody, Mary wanted to read it.

3. THE SUBJECT IS IN A LOW IP-INTERNAL POSITION

3.1. The postverbal S did not move through the preverbal position

- (18) Decomposition of the preverbal subject field (Cardinaletti 2004:154)
- | | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|
| SpecSubjP | SpecEPPP | SpecAgrSP* |
|-----------|----------|------------|
- ➔ If S moved through SpecSubjP → checked subject-of-predicate feature just as a preverbal S
 - ➔ If S moved through SpecAgrP → checked phi-features just as preverbal S

3.1.1. The S in VS did not check the subject-of-predicate feature in SpecSubjP (Cardinaletti 2004)

General consensus that the postV subject
 ≠ subject of predication
 ≠ interpreted as "what the sentence is about", Rizzi & Shlonsky (2005):
 "About DP, I'm reporting event XP". (see Lahousse 2011 for references on French, Cardinaletti 2004 on Italian)

- (19) Q: *Que sais-tu à propos des grosses araignées?*
 'What do you know about big spiders?'
 A: # *En septembre apparaissent les grosses araignées.* (Simon, Frantext)
 Lit. In September appear the big spiders.
- (20) Q: *Que sais-tu à propos d'Alexandre?*
 'What do you know about Alexandre?'
 A: # *Ainsi écrivait Alexandre.* (Pennac, Frantext)
 'IN THIS WAY wrote Alexander.'

3.1.2. The S did not check phi-features in SpecAgrSP

- The postverbal subject can only be 3rd person plural or singular

- (21) a. VS * *L'aventure que vivez Marie et toi fait scandale.*
lit. The adventure that live_{2p} Mary and you_{2p} is scandalous.
SV *L'aventure que Marie et toi vivez fait scandale.*
lit. The adventure that Mary and you_{2p} live_{2p} is scandalous.
'The business in which Mary and you are involved is scandalous.'
- b. VS * *Dans cette maison n'avez habité ni Jean ni toi.*
lit. In this house lived_{2p} neither John nor you_{2p}.
SV *Dans cette maison, ni Jean ni toi n'avez habité.*
lit. In this house, neither John nor you_{2p} lived_{2p}.
(see Kayne and Pollock 2001, p.c. Dominique Sportiche, for more examples)

⇒ Natural account of these facts

- If S stays in a low position
- checks phi-features against those of AgrS via covert movement (Chomsky 1995) or long-distance Agree (Chomsky 2000, 2001) (cf. Ledgeway 2010: 270)
- and AgrSP is the place where number features are checked (whereas person-features are checked in SubjP), see Shlonsky (2000)

3.2. Postverbal S follows low adverbs

Just as in Italian (Belletti 2001/2004, Cardinaletti 2001), the postverbal S in SI follows low adverbs (Cinque 1999):

- (22) a. ? *Capirà completamente [Maria]*
will understand completely Maria
b. * *Capirà [Maria] completamente*
will understand Maria completely
(Belletti 2004)
- (23) a. ? *Capirà bene [Maria]*
will explain well Maria
b. * *Capirà [Maria] bene*
will understand Maria well
(Belletti 2004)

- (24) a. *la tâche qu'ont complètement achevée [les étudiants]*
lit. The task that have completely finished the students
b. * *la tâche qu'ont achevé [les étudiants] complètement.*
Lit. The task that have finished the students completely
- (25) a. *Le travail qu'ont bien fait [les étudiants]*
lit. The work that have well done the students
b. * *Le travail qu'ont fait [les étudiants] bien*
lit. The work that have done the students well

3.3. Floating quantifiers again (adverbial analysis)

- (26) a. *L'homme à qui les linguistes ont tous parlé, c'est Jean.*
lit. The man to whom the linguists have all spoken, it is John.
b. * *L'homme à qui ont tous parlé les linguistes, c'est Jean* (Hulk & Pollock 2001: 8)
lit. the man to whom have all spoken the linguists, it is John
c. * [_{CP} à qui [_{I°} ont [_{AdvP} tous [_{parlé} [_{SpecFocP} les linguistes [_{SpecVP} t]]]]]]

4. INTERPRETATION OF THE POSTVERBAL S AND DISTRIBUTION OF VS IN MAIN CLAUSES

(on VS in embedded clauses, see Lahousse 2003/2010, also Haegeman 2012)

4.1. Observation: 2 licensing contexts of VS (from an IS point of view)

From corpus research on VS introduced by PPs or adverbs, complements of the copula, etc. and large descriptive works on VS in French.

- **Licensing elements of VS belong to two classes only:**

I. A stage topic³

Defined as: "A stage topic (sTOP_t) defines the spatio-temporal parameters of the utterance. (Erteschik-Shir 1999:124). "The term "stage" here (...) refer[s] to the Time/Place at which the event expressed by the sentence takes place." (Erteschik-Shir 1997:26-27)

- (27) *En septembre apparaissent les grosses araignées. Elles tissent leurs toiles scintillantes et polygonales d'une branche à une autre.*

'In September come the fat spiders. They spin their glittering polygonal webs from branch to branch.' (Simon 1981)

II. A wh-element or a contrastive focus

- (28) *Quand partira ton ami?*

lit. When will leave your friend?

'When will your friend leave?'

- (29) *Il [Alexandre] écrivait avec une sorte de distraction concentrée, comme on crayonne sur le bloc du téléphone: on écoute de moins en moins et c'est le dessin qui s'impose. Ainsi écrivait Alexandre (...).*

lit. SO wrote Alexandre.

'He wrote with a kind of distracted concentration, like when you doodle on a phone notepad: you listen less and less and it's the drawing which takes over. That's how Alexander wrote,...

(Pennac, Frantext)

➔ Interpretation: he wrote in this way (and not in another way)

- (30) *Je supplie le lecteur, ..., de ne pas s'imaginer, car grande serait sa déconvenue, se trouver avec 'Candy', en face de quelque spectacle pornographique ou d'inspiration érotique.*

lit. ... since huge would be his disappointment...

'I beg the reader, ..., not to suppose — for he'd be in for a huge disappointment — that he'll find in 'Candy' a show that is pornographic or erotic in any way.'

(Paris-Match, cited in Jonare 1976:94)

➔ Interpretation: your disappointment would be huge (and not small)

³ Or abstract spatial

(i) a. *A chaque élément correspond un dossier différent.*

Lit. to each element corresponds a different file.

b. *Au père succéda le fils.*

Lit. to the father succeeded the son.

- **When no such element is present, VS is not allowed:**

Adverbs without spatio-temporal interpretation, and which cannot be contrastively focused :

(31) * **Attitude adverbial V S**

- a. * *Bruyamment sont entrés des enfants handicapés.*
lit. Noisily entered handicapped children.
- b. * *Joyeusement sont apparus deux enfants.*
lit. Cheerfully appeared two children.

* **Sentence adverbial VS**

- c. * *Cependant est venue la fille que tu n'avais pas invitée.*
lit. However has come the girl that you did not invite.
'However, the girl that you did not invite came.'

* **Domain adverb VS**

- d. * *Légalement peuvent être organisées des élections.*
lit. Legally can be organized elections.
'Legally, elections can be organized.'

* **Causal adverbial VS**

- e. * *A cause de la pollution sont morts des poissons, des oiseaux et des milliers d'insectes.*
lit. Because of the pollution have died fish, birds and thousands of insects.

PPs which do not denote "Time/Place at which the event expressed by the sentence takes place" (Erteschik-Shir 1997:26-27):

- (32)
- a. * *Vers la ville s'étend un marais nauséabond.*
lit. Towards the town stretches a putrid swamp.
 - b. * *Hors du fleuve sautèrent des poissons de lune.*
lit. Out of the river jumped sunfish.
 - c. * *Dans le ravin se jetaient les soldats acculés par l'ennemi.*
lit. Into the ravine jumped the soldiers cornered by the enemy.
 - d. * *Dans la pièce entra Jean.*
lit. Into the room entered John.
(Marandin 1997, chapter IV)

4.2. Correlation

Two contexts ~ two types of alternations with other word order patterns

I. Spatio-temporal topic SV

- (33) *Le silence se fit. Alors, deux hommes sont entrés.*
lit. [The silence was made.] Then two men have entered.
'Silence fell. Then, two men entered.'

II. * Contrastive focus/wh-element SV

- (34) [same context as (29)] ... * *AINSI Alexandre écrivait.*

- (35) a. *Quand sont venus Pierre et Paul?*
lit. When came Peter and Paul ?
b. * *Quand Pierre et Paul sont venus?*
lit. When Peter and Paul came ?

4.3. Why is this so? Two contexts: two IS-distinctions

Literature on information structure

I. Sentences introduced by stage topic = all-focus / thetic

Connection between all-focus (or thetic) sentence and the presence of a spatio-temporal topic (Erteshik-Shir 1997/1999, Kuroda 1992, Kaneko 2002, Pinto 1994/1997, Adger 1996, Lambrecht 1994, see also Cardinaletti 2004)

- In this context, the postverbal subject is part of an all-focus clause following the spatio-temporal element.

II. Sentences introduced by wh-element / contrastive focus = focus-background

Both wh-elements and preposed foci impose a focus-background partition to the clause, in which everything that follows is interpreted as the background.

- In this context, the postverbal subject is part of the background. Background cannot contain a focus (Lambrecht 1994, Erteshik-Shir 1997/1999)

4.4. Confirmation: question-answer pairs

I. Spatio-temporal topic

- (36) a. Q: *Qu'est-ce qui se passe en septembre?*
'What happens in September?'
A: *En septembre apparaissent les grosses araignées.*
'In September appear the big spiders'
- b. Q: *Quels animaux apparaissent en septembre?*
'Which animals appear in September?'
A: *En septembre apparaissent les grosses araignées.*
'In September appear the big spiders'

→ S is (part of) new information focus

II. Contrastive focus-preposing

- (37) [in context (29)]
- a. Q : *Comment écrivait Alexandre?*
lit. How did Alexander write?
A: *AINSI écrivait Alexandre.*
lit. SO/IN THIS WAY wrote Alexander. → preposed *ainsi* = focus
- b. Q: *Qui écrivait ainsi?*
lit. Who wrote in this way?
A: # *AINSI écrivait Alexandre.*
lit. SO/IN THIS WAY wrote Alexander. → postverbal subject ≠ focus

4.5. Conclusion

- postverbal subjects in French are not in a high left peripheral, but in a low, IP-internal position (sections 2 & 3)
 - Postverbal subjects are interpreted as (part of the) focus OR background (=given topic) (section 4)
- ⇒ postverbal subjects in the I-contexts are in Belletti's (2004) IP-internal Focus position, whereas those in the II-contexts are in Belletti's (2004) IP-internal Topic position:

4.6. Extension: two contexts, two ways of satisfying the subject-of-predication feature (Cardinaletti 2004)

I. Stage topic VS = athetic sentence:

subject-of-predication feature does not have to be checked

Cardinaletti (2004:151): "it is fair to assume that in thetic sentences, no XP in the clause checks the subject-of-predication feature"

II. (Contrastive) focus VS:

subject of predication from the preceding context

Cardinaletti (2004:151) "a categorical sentence in which the subject of predication is the one of the preceding context, which is negated by the contrasted element".

5. CONCLUSION

Data with respect to

- Position of postverbal subject with respect to complements
- Distribution of floating quantifiers
- Distribution of VS (in main clauses)
- Position of the postverbal S with respect to adverbs
- Interpretation of the postverbal subject

Lead to the conclusion that the (non-exhaustively focused) postverbal S in French VS is not in a high left-peripheral position, but in a low, IP-internal Topic or Focus position independently advocated for by Belletti (2004).

(38) Stage topic VS

[_{IP} ...verb... [_{Focus} postverbal subject] [_{Topic}] [_{VP} ...]]
(Belletti 2004/2008/2009 and references cited there)

(39) Wh-element / Contrastive focus V S

[_{IP} ...verb... [_{Focus}] [_{Topic} postverbal subject] [_{VP} ...]]
(Belletti 2004/2008/2009 and references cited there)

⇒ The difference between VS in NSL (Italian) and non-NSL (French), can be ultimately reduced to the availability of expletive pro (Cardinaletti 2004).

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