Parenthetical adverbs in French

Study parenthetical adverbs in French, such as *malheureusement* (‘unfortunately’) in declaratives and interrogatives.

**Example**

(1) a. Marie est *malheureusement* venue.
     ‘Mary unfortunately came’

   b. Qui est *malheureusement* venu ?
     ‘Who unfortunately came?’
Claims

- Parenthetical adverbs are located at the consequent of a conditional at the CI tier (Bonami and Godard 2008).
- The semantics of *wh*-questions and parentheticals interact to yield a semantic contribution reminiscent of unconditionals.
- Parenthetical adverbs are only compatible with a particular type of negative polar questions.
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Outline

1. Data
2. Background
3. Proposal
4. Conclusion
Parenthetical adverbs in French can be placed between the auxiliary and the main verb. They are grammatical both in declaratives and interrogatives.

**Example**

(2) a. Marie est *malheureusement* venue.  
   ‘Mary unfortunately came’

   b. Qui est *malheureusement* venu ?  
   ‘Who unfortunately came?’
Data

Other languages (e.g. English and Spanish) do not allow parentheticals in questions.

Example

(3)  a. #Who unfortunately came?
     b. #¿Quién ha venido desgraciadamente?
Data

The parenthetical is not interpreted inside each of the propositions that constitute the denotation of the *wh*-interrogative (Karttunen 1977).

Example

(4) a. Qui est malheureusement venu ?
b. #Who is the $x$ such that it is unfortunate that $x$ came?
c. #\{Unfortunately, John came, Unfortunately, Mary came, Unfortunately, Peter came\}

(5) a. Qui est certainement venu ?
   ‘Who came for sure?’
b. Who is the $x$ such that it is for sure that $x$ came?
Data

Scenario: two friends organized a party, which had to be canceled at the last minute and not all the guests were aware of this fact.

Example

(6) a. Qui est malheureusement venu ?
   ‘Who unfortunately came?’

   b. Est-ce que Marie est malheureusement venue ?
   ‘Did Mary unfortunately come?’
Data

However, negative questions, like negative assertions, are generally not allowed:

Example

(7)  a. # Marie n’est pas malheureusement venue.
     ‘Mary did not unfortunately come.’

    b. # Est-ce que Marie n’est pas malheureusement venue ?
     ‘Didn’t Mary unfortunately come?’

    c. # Qui n’est pas malheureusement venu ?
     ‘Who unfortunately did not come ?’
Background

Multi-dimensional semantic model

The meaning conveyed by linguistic expressions can be composed in two different domains (or tiers):

- **At-issue tier**: truth-conditional meaning (has a truth value, corresponds to the asserted content).
- **CI tier**: conventionally-implicated meaning (does not have a truth value, although the speaker is committed to it).

(8) This **damn** machine is not working properly.

a. **At-issue tier**: The machine is not working properly.
b. **CI tier**: Speaker has a negative attitude toward the machine.
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a. **At-issue tier**: The machine is not working properly.

b. **CI tier**: Speaker has a negative attitude toward the machine.
Bonami and Godard (2008): main claims

- Parenthetical adverbs take as argument a proposition $p$ and convey that if $p$ holds, then it is unfortunate that this is so.
- They constitute ancilliary commitments: they must be composed semantically at the CI TIER.
- They are placed in the commitment set of the speaker, without being placed in the Question Under Discussion list.
Background

Bonami and Godard (2008): main claims

- They cannot be judged to be true or false by the addressee.

(9) Paul a malheureusement perdu l’élection.
‘Paul unfortunately lost the election.’

(10) a. Non, c’est pas vrai.
‘No, it’s not true.’

b. #C’est faux, je trouve que c’est une très bonne nouvelle.
‘That’s not true, I think it is very good news.’

c. C’est vrai, mais moi, je trouve que c’est une très bonne nouvelle!
‘Yes, but I personally think it is very good news.’
Background

Bonami and Godard (2008): negation

- Prosodically integrated parenthetical adverbs only take scope to their right.
- The unacceptability of negative assertions follows from the following incongruence.

\[(11)\]
\[\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \#\text{Marie n’est pas malheureusement venue.} \\
\text{b. } & \text{AT-ISSUE TIER: } \neg \text{come(Marie)} \\
\text{c. } & \text{CI TIER: } \text{come(Marie)} \rightarrow \text{unfortunate(come(Marie))}
\end{align*}\]

\[(12)\]
\[\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \#\text{Mary did not go to the party. If Mary went to the party, I’m sure it was a lot of fun.} \\
\text{b. } & \#\text{Mary is not tall. If Mary is tall, she can be a great basketball player.}
\end{align*}\]
Proposal

Schema

- **At-issue tier:** $p$ or $\pi$ (a proposition or a set thereof, depending on the clause type)

- **CI tier:** `force operator($p$ or $\pi$) & \forall * . p \rightarrow parenthetical(p)`, where * is a potential variable to be bound.
Proposal

Assertions

(13) Marie est malheureusement venue.

- **At-issue tier:** \( p \): Marie est venue.
- **CI tier:** assert \((p) \& p \rightarrow \text{unfortunate}(p)\).
Proposal

Wh-questions

- **At-issue tier**: standard question denotation (i.e. the set of propositions $\pi$.)
- **CI tier**: \texttt{QUESTION ($\pi$)} $\&$ “no matter which propositions in $\pi$ are true, it is unfortunate that they are.”
Proposal

Wh-questions

Combination of a question and an unconditional sentence (Rawlins in press):

(14) Qui est malheureusement venu ?
   a. Who came?
   b. Whoever came, it was unfortunate that s/he did.
Proposal
Wh-questions

- **At-issue tier:** $\lambda p. \exists x. [p = \lambda w. [\text{came}(x)(w) \& \text{to-party}(x)(w)]]$.

- **CI tier:** \text{question} ($\pi$) $\&$ $\forall p \in \pi. p \rightarrow \text{unfortunate}(p)$,
  where $\pi$ is a set of propositions generated by the $wh$-interrogative, \text{question} is a sentence mood operator of type $\langle \pi, u \rangle$ and $u$ stands for “use-conditional” (Gutzmann 2008).
Proposal

Yes/no questions

- Yes/no questions are generated by applying a question function $Q$ to a proposition $p$.
- $p$ will be the only proposition present at the antecedent of the conditional.

(15) Est-ce que Marie est malheureusement venue ?

‘Did Mary unfortunately come?’

a. **At-issue tier**: Did Mary come? = \{Mary came, Mary did not come\}

b. **CI tier**: QUESTION ($Q(p)$) & $p \rightarrow$ unfortunate($p$)), where $Q$ is of type $\langle p, \pi \rangle$. 

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Proposal

Yes/no questions

- Prediction: no unconditional interpretation.

(16) Est-ce que Marie est malheureusement venue ?
   ‘Did Mary unfortunately come?’

   a. *CI TIER:* “If Mary came, it is unfortunate that she did.”
   b. *CI TIER:* ≠ “Whatever Mary did, what she did is unfortunate.”
Proposal

Negative wh-questions

(17) a. **At-issue tier:** Who did not come? = \{Mary did not come, Peter did not come, ...\}

b. **CI tier:** QUESTION (\(\pi\)) \& \(\forall p \in \pi^*. p \rightarrow \text{unfortunate}(p)\), where \(\pi^*\) is \(\pi\) without negation.

A negative *wh*-question is incongruent:

- The universal in the conditional would be quantifying over the set of propositions derived from the positive question ‘who came?’.
- The speaker would be asking the opposite question (‘who did not come?’), which is incongruent.
Proposal

Negative yes/no-questions

(18) a. AT-ISSUE TIER: Didn’t Mary come? = \{Mary came, Mary did not come\}
   b. CI TIER: QUESTION (Q(p)) & p \rightarrow \text{unfortunate}(p),
   where \( p = \text{‘Mary came’}. \)

A negative yes/no-question is not incongruent:
- The speaker is wondering whether Mary came (or did not).
- It is not incongruent to utter a conditional assuming she may have come.
Proposal

Negative yes/no-questions

- Negative questions are non-neutral and involve biases (Romero 2006, Romero and Han 2004, Büring and Gunlogson 2000).
- Negative questions are ambiguous (Ladd 1981).
  - Interpretation 1: speaker double-checks $\neg p$ (compatible with negative polarity items).
    
    (19) Didn’t Mary come (either)?

  - Interpretation 2: speaker double-checks $p$ (compatible with positive polarity items).

    (20) Didn’t Mary (also) come?
Proposal

Negative yes/no-questions

Interpretation 1: double-checking $\neg p$.

(21) a. John won’t be able to make it to dinner. So there won’t be any phonologists.
    b. So, isn’t Mary coming either?

Interpretation 2: double-checking $p$.

(22) a. At dinner I’d like to talk to some phonologist. Other that John, do you know if someone else is coming?
    b. Isn’t that postdoc from UB coming too? Mary?
Proposal

Negative yes/no-questions

Interpretation 1: double-checking $\neg p$.

(21)  
  a. John won’t be able to make it to dinner. So there won’t be any phonologists.
  b. So, isn’t Mary coming either?

Interpretation 2: double-checking $p$.

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  a. At dinner I’d like to talk to some phonologist. Other that John, do you know if someone else is coming?
  b. Isn’t that postdoc from UB coming too? Mary?
Proposal

Negative yes/no-questions

- Interpretation 1: double-checking \( \neg p \).

(23) a. Didn’t Mary come either?
    b. #Marie n’est-elle pas non plus malheureusement venue ?

- Interpretation 2: double-checking \( p \).

(24) a. Didn’t Mary come too?
    b. Marie n’est-elle pas malheureusement venue aussi ?

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Negative yes/no-questions

- Romero and Han (2004):
  - Negative questions contribute an epistemic operator \textsc{verum}.
  - Ladd’s ambiguity is a scopal ambiguity.
Proposal

Negative yes/no-questions

- Interpretation 1 (double-checking \( \neg p \)):
  \[ \text{VERUM (epistemic operator)} \gg \neg \text{negation} \]

(25) \{“it is for sure that Mary is not coming”, “it is not for sure that Mary is not coming”\}

- Incongruence again between double-checking \( \neg p \) and placing \( p \) in a conditional.
Proposal

Negative yes/no-questions

- Interpretation 2 (double-checking $p$):
  \[
  \text{negation} \gg \text{VERUM (epistemic operator)}
  \]

(26) \{“it is for sure that Mary is coming”, “it is not for sure that Mary is coming”\}

- No incongruence between double-checking $p$ and placing $p$ in a conditional.
Conclusions

- We have examined the (non-)occurrence of parentheticals in question environments in French.
- The same core semantics of parentheticals in declaratives and polar questions is maintained.
- We have related the semantics of parentheticals in *wh*-questions with the semantics of unconditionals.
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- We have related the semantics of parentheticals in \textit{wh}-questions with the semantics of unconditionals.
Conclusions

Open issues

- Why are parenthetical adverbs ungrammatical in questions in some languages?

- In Catalan, falling intonation and a $Q$-particle in polar questions make the parenthetical more acceptable. Why should this be so?

(27) Did Mary unfortunately come?
   a. #Ha vingut, per desgràcia, la Maria? ↗
   b. Que ha vingut, per desgràcia, la Maria? ↘
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(27) Did Mary unfortunately come?

   a. #Ha vingut, per desgràcia, la Maria?
   b. Que ha vingut, per desgràcia, la Maria?
Conclusions

Open issues

(28)  * Quin amic de la Maria ha vingut, per desgràcia, a la festa?
   ‘Which friend of Mary unfortunately came to the party?’

(29)  a. Scenario: the speaker is the quizmaster of “Who wants to be a millionaire?”

   b. Quin corredor català va perdre, per desgràcia, la final dels jocs de Rio de 2016?
      which runner Catalan lost unfortunately the final of the games of Rio of 2016
Thank you!

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Büring, D. and Gunlogson, C.: 2000, Aren’t positive and negative polar questions the same? UCSC/UCLA.


References (2)


(30) Mary will be worried if, unfortunately, Paul is late.
   a. **AT-ISSUE TIER:** Mary will be disappointed if Paul is late.
   b. **CI TIER:** If Paul is late, it is unfortunate that Paul is late.
   c. **CI TIER:** # It is unfortunate that Paul is late.

(31) Mary will be worried if it strange that Paul is late.
   a. **AT-ISSUE TIER:** # Mary will be worried if Paul is late.
(30) Mary will be worried if, unfortunately, Paul is late.
   a. **At-issue tier:** Mary will be disappointed if Paul is late.
   b. **CI tier:** If Paul is late, it is unfortunate that Paul is late.
   c. **CI tier:** # It is unfortunate that Paul is late.

(31) Mary will be worried if it strange that Paul is late.
   a. **At-issue tier:** # Mary will be worried if Paul is late.
(32) a. It is unfortunate that Paul has a wife, if he has one.  
b. #Paul is unfortunately late, if he is late.