On wh-extraction from 'subject islands' in French

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(with Franziska Werner; online inquiry by Elodie Winckel):

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1. Introduction

In this talk,[1] I focus on extractions of DP complements introduced by *de* 'of' out of subject DPs into direct interrogative sentences.

Subjects are considered to be strong islands (cf. Szabolcsi & Dikken 2003)

> Subject Condition (= SubjC)
> See Müller 2011:48; also cf. Chomsky 1973, 1986, Huang 1982, and Freidin 1992 quoted by Müller:[2]
>
> **"No element may be moved out of a subject."**

It seems to hold for French as well:

(1) ?* De quel linguiste est-ce que les parents __   ont   déménagé à Chartres?
      of which linguist is-it   that the parents   have moved   to Chartres
   'Of which linguist did the parents __ move to Chartres?'[3]   (Tellier 1991:89)

By contrast, **extraction out of direct object DPs is grammatical** with 'genitive *de*' (cf. Tellier 1990, Sportiche 1981, Obenauer 1984, Pollock 1989, Valois 1991, Godard 1992, Mensching in press):

(2) De quel   livre connais-tu la fin __ ?
     of which book know=you the end
     'Of which book do you know the end __?'   (Sportiche 1981:224)

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[1] Our research on extractions and long-distance dependencies in French is funded by the DFG ("Long-Distance Dependencies in French: Comparative Analyses [HPSG and the Minimalist Program]"); PIs: Stefan Müller and Guido Mensching, researchers: Elodie Winckel and Franziska Werner. Previous versions of this talk were presented in Göttingen at the *GGS* (*Generative Grammatik des Südens*) *2017* and in Bucharest at *Going Romance* XXXI (2017).
[2] This is a generalization of the original Subject Island Constraint ("Sentential Subject Constraint") by Ross (1967:243): "No element dominated by an S may be moved out of that S if that S is dominated by an NP which itself is immediately dominated by S."
[3] For illustrative purposes, we prefer rather literal translations that do not pretend to be grammatical in English.

Some discussion and counterexamples of relative clauses (with *dont* 'of whom', which is totally exempt from the SubjC) can be found in the literature. However: There are extremely few examples that show the ungrammaticality of subject island violations with direct interrogative sentences in the literature.

Exceptions (Tellier 1990: 90-91): Extraction is possible from subjects of copular and passive structures, and similar SubjC -violations are found with unaccusative verbs.[4]

What about unergative and transitive verbs?

Example from a small inquiry of speakers in Toulouse (16 speakers)

(3) a. ?? De quel linguiste est-ce que les parents __ ont déménagé à Chartres ? ESQ
         of which linguist is-it   that the parents   have moved   to Chartres
         'Of which linguist did the parents __ move to Chartres?'
     b. ? De quel   linguiste les parents __ ont-ils   déménagé à Chartres ?   CI
         of which linguist the parents   have=they moved   to Chartres
         'Of which linguist did the parents __ move to Chartres?'

Hypothesis: Grammaticality of SubjC violations depends on the type of interrogative clause

Types of French wh questions:

1. *Wh-in-situ questions* (evidently, no problem for subjects): the sentence remains in the normal word order (SVO).

   (4) Marie est arrivée quand ?
       Marie is   arrived when
       'When did Marie arrive?'

2. *Est-ce que questions* (ESQ, cf. example (1)): The string *est-ce que* 'is it that' is inserted between the *wh*-word and the subject. The rest of the sentence remains in the normal word order (SVO).

   (5) Quand est-ce que Marie est arrivée ?
       when   is-it   that Marie is   arrived
       'When did Marie arrive?

3. *Stylistic inversion* (SI): the subject in form of a full NP is inverted with the whole verbal complex (ungrammatical for transitive and unergative verbs, so the SubjC cannot be tested with this structure)

   (6) Quand est arrivée Marie ?
       When is   arrived Marie
       'When did Marie arrive?'

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[4] For similar observations concerning other languages, cf., e.g., Uriagereka (1988: 118) and Chomsky (2008: 153-154), quoted in Spyropoulos & Stamatogiannis (2011).

4. *Complex inversion* (CI): the subject in form of a full NP is placed in the preverbal position and a corresponding subject clitic directly follows the finite verb.

(7) Quand Marie est-elle arrivée ?
when Marie is=she arrived
'When did Marie arrive?'

5. *Clitic inversion* (irrelevant here, since the subject is a clitic): the subject in form of a clitic pronoun is placed immediately after the finite verb.

(8) Quand est-elle arrivée ?
when is=she arrived
'When did she arrive?

==> Only two constructions qualify for extractions out of subjects: ESQ and CI.

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Main aims of this talk:
- Present a larger inquiry
- Interpret the findings within the minimalist framework of generative grammar
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2. Inquiry of speakers

Online inquiry (26 speakers)

- Setting:
  - The inquiry has been carried out to determine the acceptability of subject island violations in French questions with complex inversion as opposed to questions with *est-ce que*.
  - Variables: question type (CI and ESQ), question word (complex "de quel NP" and non-complex "de qui"); 4 conditions (16 items)
  - Only sentences with transitive verbs
  - Likert scale: 1 to 10 (with 1 being *not acceptable* and 10 *completely acceptable*)
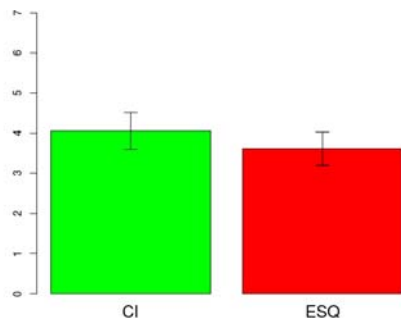
- Results:

Fig. 1: Mean value of acceptability judgements of the question type (CI vs. ESQ) with 1 being *not acceptable* and 10 *completely acceptable*

- We find that subject extraction with CI is marginally significantly better ($p<0.1$) than with ESQ.
  - CI: 4.057143
  - ESQ: 3.611429

- However, the statistical values in Fig. 1 are problematic because they include at least the following types of speakers:
  1. Speakers who have problems with extractions out of subjects in general.
  2. Few speakers who clearly prefer CI over ESQ.
  3. Even fewer speakers who prefer ESQ over CI.
  4. Speakers who judge ESQ and CI equally acceptable or unacceptable, with a tendency towards unacceptability (< 5).
  5. Some speakers of the latter type prefer CI with complex *de quel X* ('of which X') and ESQ with *de qui* 'of whom'.

- **Additional observation:** The highest note (10 = fully grammatical) was given to CI for 16 times (8 speakers), whereas the note 10 was given to ESQ only 4 times, three of which by one and the same speaker)

CI		ESQ	
de quel X	de qui	de quel X	de qui
11	5	1	4

Table 1: Judgements as fully grammatical (10)

Data from one speaker who prefers CI over ESQ
Likert scale: [1] to [10] (with 1 being *not acceptable* and 10 *completely acceptable*)

CI:

(9) a. [7] De qui les idées __ ont-elles inspiré tes réflexions ?
of whom the ideas have=they inspired your reflections
'Of whom the ideas __ have inspired your reflections?'

b. [9] De quel collaborateur l' absence __ a-t-elle perturbé l' organisation
of which coworker the absence has=she disturbed the organization
de la dernière réunion ?
of the last meeting
'Of which coworker did the absence __ disturb the organization of the last meeting?'

c. [10] De qui le fils __ a-t-il vendu sa nouvelle voiture ?
of whom the son has=he sold his new car
'Of whom did the son __ sell his new car?'

d. [10] De quelle patiente le mari __ cherche-t-il du travail ?
of which patient the husband looks.for=he of work
'Of which patient does the husband __ look for work?'

e. [10] De qui la chef __ a-t-elle créé une nouvelle filiale à Marseille ?
of whom the boss has=she established a new branch at Marseille
'Of whom did the boss __ establish a new branch in Marseille?'

f. [5] De quel ami les parents __ ont-ils ouvert une boulangerie à Paris ?
 of which friend the parents have=they opened a bakery at Paris
 'Of which friend did the parents __ open a bakery in Paris?'

g. [10]De quelle créatrice de mode les vêtements __ émerveillent-ils ta sœur ?
 of which fashion.designer the clothes captivate=they your sister
 'Of which fashion designer do the clothes __ captivate your sister?'

ESQ

(10) a. [1] De qui est-ce que les parents __ ont rénové la maison de tes grands-parents ?
 of whom is-it that the parents have renovated the house of your grandparents
 'Of whom did the parents __ renovate the house of your grandparents?'

b. [5] De quelle artiste est-ce que la vidéo __ a eu un joli succès ?
 of which artist is-it that the video has had a great success
 'Of which artist has the video __ been a great success?'

c. [1] De qui est-ce que les élèves __ ont rédigé une dissertation sur Victor Hugo ?
 of whom is-it that the pupils have edited a dissertation on Victor Hugo
 'Of whom did the pupils __ edit a dissertation on Victor Hugo?'

d. [3] De quels auteurs est-ce que les textes __ ont un dénominateur commun ?
 of which authors is-it that the texts have a denominator common
 'Of which authors did the texts __ have a common denominator?'

e. [4] De qui est-ce que les enfants __ vont bâtir leur propre maison ?
 of whom is-it that the children going.to build their own house
 'Of whom will the children __ build their own house?'

f. [4] De quel collègue est-ce que l' épouse__ a préparé un bon repas ?
 of which colleague is-it that the wife has prepared a delicious meal
 'Of which colleague did the wife __ prepare a delicious meal?'

g. [1] De quel footballeur est-ce que les __ fans ont chanté l' Hymne national ?
 of which football.player is-it that the fans have chanted the anthem national
 'Of which football player did the fans __ chant the national anthem?'

- The examples with CI in (9) show values between [5] and [10] with most examples being completely grammatical (4 out of 7).
- The examples with ESQ in (9) show judgments from [1] to [5] with most judgements ≤ 4.

⇒ For this speaker, subject extractions out of CI interrogatives are mostly grammatical whereas extractions out of ESQ interrogatives tend to be ungrammatical.

Further procedure:
- Explain the grammar of this speaker (viz. the preference of complex inversion over *est-ce que*) and other speakers who show a similar behavior, and, in particular, answer the question of why complex inversion makes SubjC violations grammatical.
- Provide a (still speculative) explanation why extraction from subjects in ESQ clauses may be grammatical for some of the speakers.
- Offer some hypotheses for explaining the different preference patterns of speakers of French

3. Theoretical background

3.1 On extraction from DP in French

Extraction from direct objects is grammatical with 'genitive PPs', i.e. argumental PPs headed by *de* (cf. Grosu 1974, Tellier 1990, Sportiche 1981, Obenauer 1984, Pollock 1989, Valois 1991, Godard 1992, Kolliakou 1999):

(11) a. [PP De quel livre] connais-tu [DP la fin [PP de quel livre]] ?
 of which book know=you the end of which book
 'Of which book do you know the end __?' (cf. Sportiche 1981: 224)
 b. [PP De qui] avez-vous vu [DP une amie [PP de qui]] ?
 of whom have=you seen a photo of whom
 'Of whom did you see a picture __?' (cf. Grosu 1974: 312, fn. 3)

Mensching (in press):

1. The PP complements of N in (11a,b) are real genitives, i.e. the element *de* is not a preposition, but it is either a head of KP (case phrase) or it is inserted post-syntactically.
2. DPs are phases (see cf. Svenonius 2004; Alexiadou et al. 2007:576 ss.; Chomsky 2008; Heck 2008, 2009; Cinque 2014).
3. A French D head can have two phi probes:
 $[u\varphi_1]$ probes N (D agrees with N in gender and number)
 $[u\varphi_2]$ probes the complement of N and assigns genitive case
4. In case of extraction, $[u\varphi_2]$ is enhanced/combined with an unvalued operator feature and an [EPP]-feature so that $[u\varphi_2+uOp]$ targets a complement with a *wh* or rel(ative) feature and extracts the complement to the phase edge.[5] See (12):
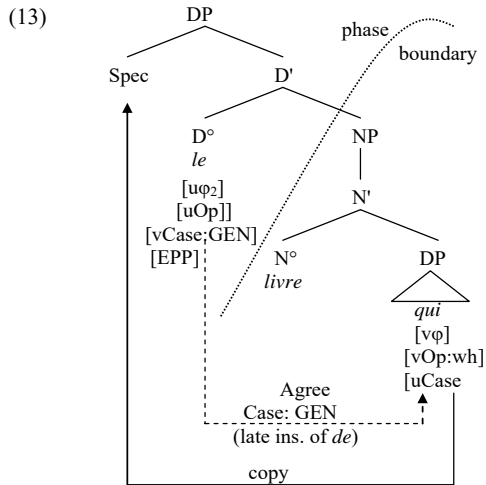
Feature composition of D heads in French (cf. Mensching in press):

(12) [D]
 $[u\varphi_1]$

 $\begin{pmatrix} [u\varphi_2] \\ [vCase:GEN] \\ \begin{pmatrix} [uOp] \\ | \\ [EPP] \end{pmatrix} \end{pmatrix}$, where $\begin{bmatrix} \ \end{bmatrix}$ indicates optionality
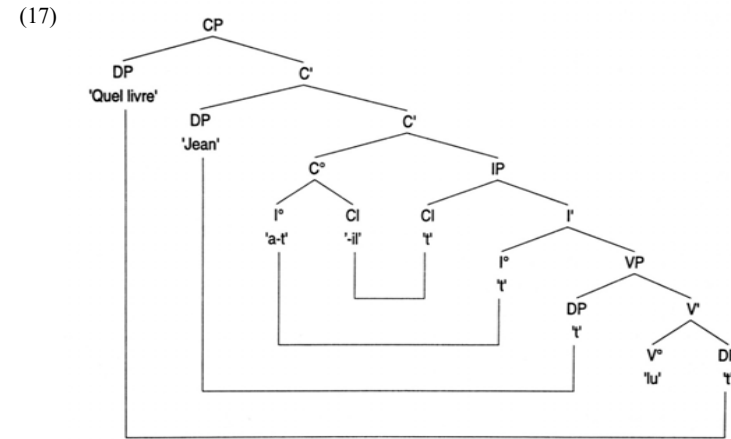
5. At the DP phase edge, [vOp] is visible for higher probes ([uOp]) in v° and C°.

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[5] For a similar assumption concerning French relative *dont*, see Heck (2008, 2009).

Extraction mechanism:

(13)

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Relevant point for this paper:
In the minimalist framework adopted here, extraction of a constituent out of a DP presupposes prior movement of the extractee to the edge of DP:

(14) [PP De quel livre]ᵢ connais-tu [DP *tᵢ* la fin *tᵢ*] ?

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3.2 Complex inversion in French

Example for complex inversion:

(15) Quel   livre   Jean a-t-il   lu __?
      which book   Jean has=he   read
      'Which book did Jean read?'   (Rizzi & Roberts 1989:1)

The in-situ version is:

(16) Jean   a   lu   quel   livre ?
      Jean   has read which book
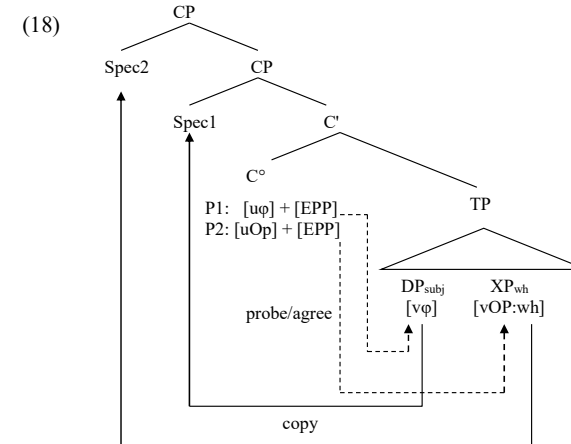   'Which book did Jean read?'

Description:
1. The *wh*-constituent appears at the left edge of the clause
2. The *wh*-constituent is immediately followed by the subject
3. The subject is doubled by a subject clitic enclitic to the finite verb

Analysis by Rizzi and Roberts (1989), tree structure by Lalande (1997:101):

(17)

– (Phrasal/argumental) subject is merged in [spec,VP], clitic (double) in [spec,IP]
– Clitic incorporates with I° in C°
– *Wh*-expression → [spec,CP]
– Subject → adjoined to C' (several problems here)
– Subject gets case under spec-head agreement/m-command from I° in C°; clitic gets case via incorporation into C°

Some ideas towards a minimalist interpretation:

2 probes: - Unvalued operator ([uOp]) feature in C°, targeting *wh*-constituents (with [vOp:wh])
               - A second probe (phi probe?) that targets the subject
               → The clitic might then be the spell out of the second probe.

Provisional adaptation of Rizzi & Roberts's solution to the MP:

(18)

4. Why should extractions out of subjects be (more) grammatical with complex inversion?

Based on (18), we obtain roughly the following structure in (19b) for (19a) (post-syntactically inserted material marked in italics):

(19) a. De qui les parents __ ont-ils   déménagé à Chartres ?
       of whom the parents   have=they moved   to Chartres
       'Of whom did the parents __ move to Chartres?'

   b. [$_{CP}$ [$_{DP}$ *De* qui]$_i$ [$_{C'}$ [$_{DP}$ les parents t$_i$]$_j$ [$_{C°}$ ont$_k$-*ils* [$_{IP}$ [$_{DP}$ les parents t$_i$] t$_k$ [$_{vP}$ t$_j$ déménagé$_l$
      [$_{VP}$ t$_l$ à Chartres]]]]]] ?

But: this would amount to a SubjC violation!

Solution: the whole subject DP moves (with "secondary wh-movement" within the DP)

Basic idea:

- In order to be visible for the operator probe (uOp) in C°, the *wh*-marked complement of N has to move to the phase edge of the DP (cf. Section 3.1). Thus:
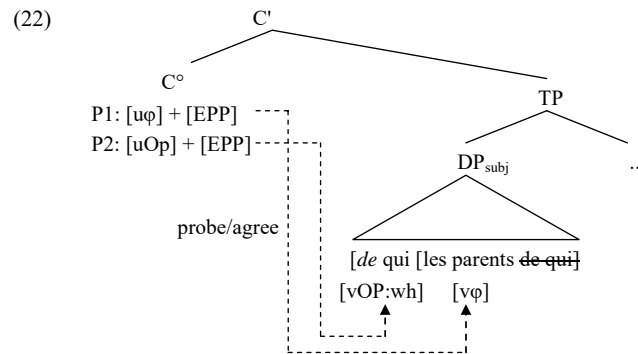
(20) [$_{DP}$ les [$_{NP}$ parents [$_{DP}$ *de* qui]]] $\Rightarrow$ [$_{DP}$ [$_{DP}$ *de* qui]$_i$ [$_{DP}$ les [$_{NP}$ parents t$_i$]]]

- According to Rizzi & Roberts (1989), in a French complex inversion structure, **the <u>subject</u> moves to the CP** (attracted by a phi probe in our adaptation in (22))
- In this case, **the whole DP (with the *wh*-constituent at its left edge is moved)**[6]
- At the end, both the subject and the *wh*-constituent are in the CP (but only one spec differently from (18) above). This yields the right surface order:

(21) [$_{CP}$ [$_{DP}$ [$_{DP}$ *de* qui]$_k$ [$_{DP}$ les parents t$_k$]]$_i$ ont$_j$-ils [$_{TP}$ t$_i$ t$_k$ ...]]]

Why should we have one movement instead of two? $\Rightarrow$ Subject Condition!

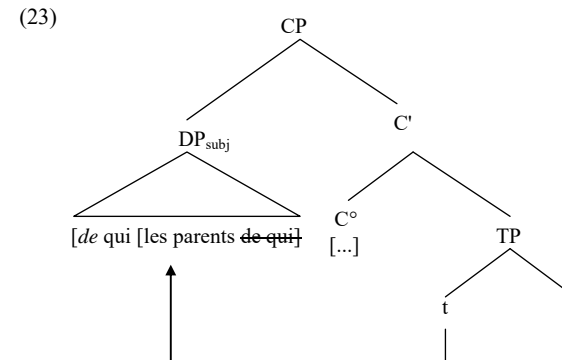More detailed illustration:

(22)

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[6] Similar to the operation assumed by Heck (2008) (although in this case it is another type of pied piping!)

[Potential problem: P1 attracts the whole DP to [spec, CP], thus preventing P2 from probing.

Possible solutions: a) The whole DP moves and the feature of P2 is checked as a kind of free rider;
            b) P1 and P2 probe simultaneously or merge into one probe;
            c) The probing order is inverse (i.e. P2 probes before P1).[7] If this is correct, then "regular" CI (like in (19) would be a case of "tucking in" (Richards 1999) of the subject.

Depending on the solution of the problem, one [EPP]-feature might remain unchecked. If this is the case, one may think of movement of the *wh*-phrase to a second (outer) specifier of the CP. Note that this would not count as a violation of the SubjC because [spec,CP] is not a subject position.]

In any case, the final structure should be (27):[8]

(23)

$\Rightarrow$ **There is no extraction from a subject position.**

5. Tentative analysis of the extraction from subjects in *est-ce que* questions

<u>Observation</u>
For some speakers, *wh*-extraction from subjects yields high grammaticality scores.

<u>Hypothesis:</u>
These speakers analyze *est-ce que* as complex (compositional) in the sense of Munaro and Pollock (2005), whereas the type of speaker that do not accept subject extraction out of *est-ce que* interrogatives

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[7] In this case, P2 would actually find the goal and perform the operation Agree; however, movement would not occur because of the SubjC.
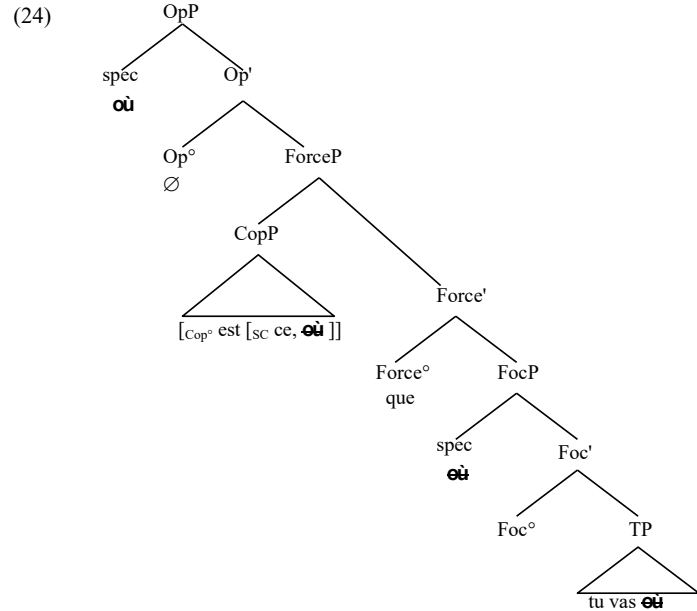[8] There is independent evidence for this analysis. According to Elodie Winckel (p. c.), the insertion of an adverb between *de qui* and the NP is always worse (if not ungrammatical) than positioning it behind the DP:
 i. De qui   les parents __malheureusement ont-ils   déménagé à Chartres ?
    of whom the parents   unfortunately   have=they moved   to Chartres
    'Of whom did the parents __ unfortunately move to Chartres?'
 ii. ?* De qui   malheureusement les parents __ ont-ils   déménagé à Chartres ?
    of whom unfortunately   the parents   have=they moved   to Chartres
    'Of whom did the parents __ unfortunately move to Chartres?'

analyzes *est-ce que* as a question particle in C° or Foc°/Force/Int° (cf. Rooryck 1994, Kellert 20015, 2017).

<u>Compositional analysis of *est-ce que*</u> based on Munaro & Pollock (2005).
[I have changed Op1P for FocP, following Rizzi's (1997) idea that the landing site of *wh*-items is [spec,FocP]. Also unlike Munaro & Pollock we follow Rizzi in assuming that *que* is in Force°. Note that Force° could also be Rizzi's (2001, 2004) IntP. OpP is Munaro & Pollock's Op2P]

(24)

Application to extraction from subject islands → see (25) on the next page!

① Movement of the whole DP to FocP.

② Extraction of the *wh*-constituent to the SC inside the CopP.
   Extraction is possible now
   either a) because the DP is not in a subject anymore[9]
   or b) because now we extract into a copular clause
   (and copular clauses are often argued to be exempt from the Subject Condition)
   Prior to extraction, the *wh*-constituent moves to [spec, DP] to overcome the phase boundary, see Section 3.1.
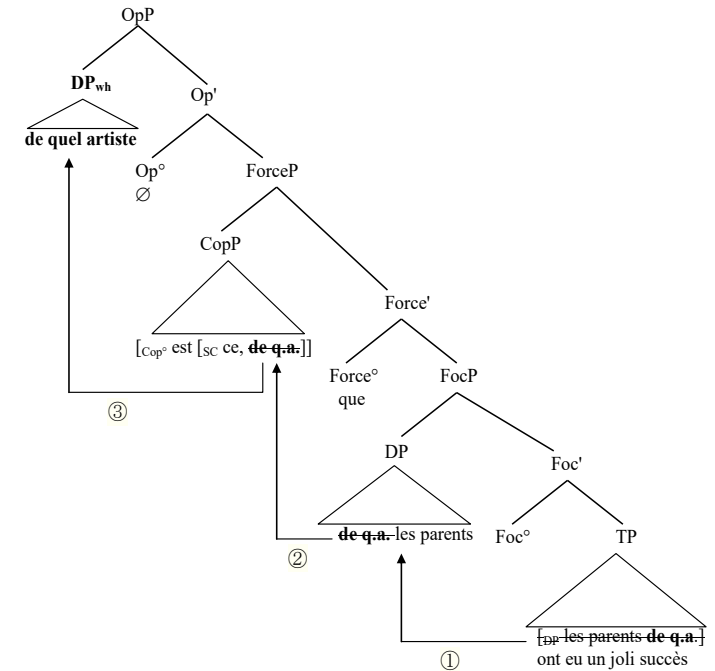
③ Movement of the *wh*-phrase to [spec, OpP] as assumed by Munaro and Pollock (2005)[10]

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[9] Cf. Müller (2011:49): "Options [for the Subject Condition] include certain designated positions (e.g., being in Specv, or in SpecT), or certain argument-structural properties (e.g., being the last-merged item of a subcategorization list, or being introduced into the structure by v)."

[10] Further evidence that extraction from a non-subject position (here: FocP) is possible may come from A. Grosu's (p.c.) examples (see footnote 3):

By contrast, for speakers who analyze *est-ce que* as a question particle in C°, extraction from subjects should be ungrammatical, because extraction must occur from a subject position.

(25)

6. Brief reflection on speaker types and speakers' preferences

GRAMMAR A	GRAMMAR B
same rule for CI	
ESQ is Q°	compositional analysis of ESQ

Table 2: Two grammars

- Speakers with grammar A (like the speaker whose data we reported in (9) and (10)) should allow extractions from subjects in CI but not in ESQ structures.

- Speakers with grammar B should, in principle, allow extractions from subjects both in CI and ESQ structures.

(i.) De qui   est-il exclu   que [la   femme __] se   soit   enfuie ?
    of whom is=it excluded that the wife   REFL= is.SUBJ run.away
    'Of whom is it excluded that the wife __ has run away?'
In a cartographic framework, we may assume that the whole subject DP is first moved to the left periphery of the subclause. From this position (a non-subject position), extraction to the higher clause is possible.

There still remain some puzzles:
- Why is extraction from subjects in complex inversion structures not grammatical for all speakers?
- Why do some speakers prefer *est-ce que*?

Problem: Many other factors are involved. The issue is very complicated, and more research is needed on the distribution of the question types. Interesting study by Myers (2007): OT analysis of the preferences for French interrogative structures.

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Subject+ Verb+ X
X=Q
[+/-ANS] [+/-ACT] [+/-EXP]
[+/-Interlocutor-addressed] [+/-quoted]
Register= "colloquial"/ "formal" / "informal"
Intention=[+neutral, -neutral/formal, -neutral/informal]
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Fig 2: Input parameters (OT) according to Myers (2007:202)
AND = answerability; ACT = activation; EXP = expectedness

All these factors can determine the choice of a specific interrogative structure (a great challenge for our future research)!

Here I just consider two additional factors:

1. Register: *Est-ce que* is limited to spoken French, whereas very colloquial registers do not use complex inversion.

2. Complexity: The ESQ structure in grammar B is more complex than CI.

⇨ - Possibly, some speakers with grammar A are reluctant to accept CI for register reasons, while ESQ is ungrammatical, so they have poor grammaticality results for all cases.
   - Similarly, some speakers with grammar B may generally prefer the *est-ce que* structure for register reasons, but prefer CI (the less complex structure) in case of additional complexity (the *de quel* X-case!).

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