

Investigating the left periphery in child French: A reply to Ferdinand (1996)

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Ferdinand (1996) claims that peripheral elements appearing in front of the finite verb in child French are always contrastively focused in the initial stages. In this paper, I present evidence against a contrastive focus analysis of preverbal elements and suggest that a template analysis of the left periphery cannot account for the data. The alternative proposed here is that (non-*wh*) peripheral elements are dislocated in (early) child French.

After outlining Ferdinand's analysis, I discuss crucial issues related to the identification of contrastive focus and address the question of the status of subject clitics in cases when the "subject" is focused. Diagnostics for the identification of contrastive focus are proposed on the basis of the preceding discussion. Section 3 evaluates Ferdinand's analysis, concentrating first on some proposed examples of contrastive focus, and then on the predictions made by Ferdinand (which are tested on two new sets of data). Section 4 summarises the distributional issues that any analysis of the left periphery in child French has to address, and this is followed in the final section by a new analysis.

1 Ferdinand's analysis

In her work on the acquisition of the subject in finite sentences, Ferdinand (1996) proposes three stages for the development of sentence-initial positions. At each putative stage, functional projections are activated, making certain positions available to the child. The structure is said to develop as follows:

stage 1: [AgrsP [NegP [TP [VP]]]]
stage 2: [WhP [FocusP [AgrsP [NegP [TP [VP]]]]]]
stage 3: [Left Disl.P /AdvP [WhP [FocusP [AgrsP [NegP [TP [VP]]]]]]]

In the first stage, no (non-clitic) constituent can appear higher than the finite verb: although AgrsP is present, its specifier cannot yet host a DP subject because, according to Ferdinand's claims, all preverbal heavy (i.e. non-clitic) subjects¹ in child French are (contrastively) focused, and thus require a FocusP to be available to the child. The type of utterances that can be produced during this stage are illustrated in (1).

- (1) a. est beau. (Grégoire 1;9.14)
 is beautiful
 '?? is beautiful.'
- b. c' est lala. (Nathalie 1;9.3)
 it is there-there
 'It's there.'

The second stage is characterised by the appearance of two extra positions hosting WhP and FocusP. In spite of this new development in the structure, the child is said to have only one non-clitic element in front of the finite verb. It can be either a subject, an adverb (including the negative words *non* 'no' and *pas* 'not'), a question word, a direct object or a PP. Ferdinand explains this restriction by claiming that all of these elements bear the feature [+ focus] in child French, and are thus in competition for [spec, FocusP]. This stage is illustrated by utterances like (2).

- (2) a. cheveux est ça. (Grégoire 1;9.28)
 hair-PL is that
 'That is hair.'
- b. une pomme de terre donne? [% unclear]² (Grégoire 2;1.25)
 a potato give [+FIN]
 'Shall I give a potato?'

The next development is said to occur at stage 3, when the child starts allowing (at most) two elements before the finite verb. The first element is either a left-dislocated constituent or a sentence-initial adverb (base-generated there); the second one is either a preverbal question-word, a preverbal heavy subject or a focus-moved element. Examples of possible sequences are given in (3)-(3-b).

- (3) a. à côté du huit qu' est ce y a? (Philippe 2;2.17)
 to side of-the eight what is it there has
 'What is there next to the eight?'
- b. auto cass[e] a tour moi pleure.³ (Daniel 1;9.3)
 car broken (th)e tower me cry [+FIN]
 'If the car breaks the tower, I am going to cry.'

Ferdinand analyses these examples as follows. In (3), a dislocated PP is followed by a *wh*-word. (3-b) is said to contain a subordinated non-finite clause followed by a contrastively focused subject.

As we have seen in the presentation above, the notion of contrastive focus is central to Ferdinand's analysis. Before turning to the theoretical and empirical problems raised by Ferdinand (1996), I would like to address a few important questions related to focus in general and contrastive focus in particular.

2 Focus

Ferdinand's proposal needs to be evaluated from two aspects. First, a definition of contrastive focus has to be spelled out and justified; second, the implications of a focus-movement analysis have to be envisaged, especially with respect to the status of subject clitics. I will address these two questions in sections 2.1 and 2.2 respectively.

2.1 Some remarks on (contrastive) focus

Ferdinand distinguishes two types of focus: informational focus and contrastive focus. This distinction is probably drawn on the basis of Rochemont (1986).⁴ The definitions given by Ferdinand (1996: p.189) are repeated below:

Informational focus is defined as the part of a sentence containing new information. If a constituent is indefinite, it can be considered as the sentential focus, since it contains new information.

Contrastive focus, however, is the type of focus involved in focus movement. A constituent can be contrastively focused, either by the highest pitch accent in the sentence, or by movement to a focus position. Contrastive focus shows that the focused element is relevant as opposed to other members of the same set.

The two types of focus may coincide, but do not need to.

I see three claims in the definitions above: (i) there is a motivated theoretical distinction between contrastive and information focus, (ii) contrastive focus is only obligatorily marked by pitch accent when the focus takes place *in situ*, and (iii) focus movement is always contrastive (in child French). The validity of the diagnostics to be used for the study of focus-moved elements in child French depend on the validity of these claims. For this reason, it is important to examine them more closely.

2.1.1 Contrastive vs. information focus

Rochemont, in his seminal 1986 book, argues against a unitary definition of focus as new information, on the basis of the fact that old information too can be focused (as illustrated in (4)). He suggests that a distinction be established between contrastive focus and presentational focus. Only presentational focus obligatorily conveys new information.

(4) John hit Mary, and then SHE hit HIM.

In Rochemont's view, moved foci are always contrastive in English (whether they convey new information or not). A differing analysis is proposed by E-Kiss

(1998), who claims that English foci left *in situ* or “preposed via topicalisation” (i.e. focus-moved constituents) cannot be contrastive. E-Kiss claims that only clefted constituents are contrastively focused in English, as only they obligatorily receive an exhaustive reading. It is not clear whether this is true of French too, as illustrated by my translation of Szabolcsi’s (1981) test, used by E-Kiss as a diagnostic for contrastive focus:⁵

- (5) A: C’est un chapeau, qu’elle a pris.
 ‘It’s a hat, that she’s taken.’
 B: Non, elle a aussi pris des gants.
 ‘No, she’s also taken some gloves.’
- (6) A: UN CHAPEAU, elle a pris.
 ‘A hat, she’s taken.’
 B: Non, elle a aussi pris des gants.
 ‘No, she’s also taken some gloves.’

If focus movement can be contrastive, we expect the B sentences to be equally acceptable. This is verified in a context where B is cross-examining A as to what they know of the actions of the *she*-person. Such judgements are very fine-grained, and difficult to elicit from (non-linguist) native speakers. My impression is that focus moved elements *can* be contrastive in French, but need not to. In clear cases of contrastive focus, native speakers often report a cleft-like feel to the sentence, which is sometimes materialised by the presence of a complementiser, as in (7).

- (7) mais TANTÔT que je vais te dire.⁶ (Léa 2;11.4 - adult-like sentence)
 but later that I will to-you tell
 ‘But it’s LATER that I’ll tell you.’

If focus-moved elements are optionally contrastive, as suggested by the discussion above, we need a clear diagnostic to identify such cases. More specifically, we need a definition of (contrastive) focus that incorporates reference to the context. This is provided by Zubizarreta (1998).

Zubizarreta (1998) argues in favour of a unitary definition of focus: the focus is always the non-presupposed part of the sentence. Zubizarreta postulates the existence of a post-LF representation level called Assertion Structure. At that level, the focus structure of a sentence is articulated as two ordered assertions: 1) the background assertion (i.e. the presuppositional part of the statement), which contains a variable, and 2) the main assertion, which assigns a value to the variable of the background assertion. (8)⁷ gives an example of how this works: (8-b) is the Assertion Structure of (8-a), where the first line of (8-b) is the background assertion, and the second line of (8-b) provides a value to bind the variable in that background assertion. *Cooks* is thus the focus of the sentence given in (8-a), as indicated by the diacritic.

- (8) a. Few cooks came to the party.
 b. A₁: there are x , such that x came to the party
 A₂: few x (such that x came to the party) = cooks

On such an account, the semantic nature of contrastive focus is the same as that of noncontrastive focus. The difference lies in the fact that in noncontrastive focus, the background assertion is provided by a *wh*-question (which Zubizarreta claims can be paraphrased by substituting an indefinite for the *wh*-phrase, as in (8-b))⁸, whereas in the case of contrastive focus, the background assertion is provided by a statement. Contrastive focus has two effects: it negates the value assigned to a variable in the context statement, and it introduces an alternative value for such a variable.

The claim (endorsed by Ferdinand, 1996) that contrastive focus is not forced to convey new information remains unchallenged by Zubizarreta's proposal: what is crucial is what falls within the presupposition, not the newness of the information. This is illustrated by the example in (9), where the contrastively focused element *she* does not convey new information.

- (9) Agatha_{*i*} took Poirot's gun. SHE_{*i*} would need it in the coming hour.

The background assertion of (9) is provided by the following (presupposed) statement: "Poirot would need his gun in the coming hour." (There is an x , such that x would need (his) gun in the coming hour). A value is proposed for the variable (x = Poirot), but it is negated by the contrastive focus, which introduces a new value for the variable (x = Agatha).

What is problematical for Ferdinand's analysis is the implicit negation contained in contrastive focus: it is not sufficient to say that this type of focus shows the relevance of the focused element as opposed to other members of the same set, as argued by Ferdinand. If no implicit negation is included in the definition of contrastive focus, the distinction between information focus and contrastive focus becomes blurred. The presupposition has to include a variable to which a value is attributed by the context statement. Hence contrastive focus is not expected in answer to a *wh*-question, unless it is clear that the speaker has asked the question with a particular answer in mind, which will subsequently be contradicted by the hearer.

2.1.2 Contrastive focus and pitch accent

Ferdinand postulates that only when the focused element remains *in situ* is distinctive intonation necessary to identify contrastive focus. This enables her to make use of data for which no sound file is available, and no specific transcription convention has been systematically applied to identify emphasised elements. Assuming that movement is a sufficient criterion would not be problematic if (contrastive) focus-movement could be unambiguously identified by movement alone.

However, we have seen that this is not the case. Intonation apart, two criteria need to be relied on to identify focus-movement (in the adult language): (i) the absence of a resumptive element and (ii) evidence from the context that the moved element is not presupposed. In the case of contrastive focus, if we follow Zubizarreta (1998), this second criterion has to be further specified: the focused element (whether moved or not) must negate the value attributed to the variable contained in the context statement, and it must propose an alternative value for this variable (see section 2.1.1). We will see in section 3.1 that in child language, these two criteria are not always sufficient to determine when a fronted element is contrastively focused. In such unclear cases, only the presence of a specific prosody can ultimately determine whether there is contrastive focus or not.⁹

In Ferdinand's analysis, neither of the criteria defined above are considered essential to identify cases of contrastive focus in the data. Most cases of (contrastive) focus movement are identified on the basis of a syntactic analysis of the sentence.¹⁰ When it comes to analysing heavy-NP subjects as (contrastively) focused, further difficulties arise from the presence of subject clitics. This is what I now turn to address.

2.1.3 Focus movement and contrastive focus: the case of subjects

The second claim made by Ferdinand's definition of contrastive focus is that "it is the type of focus involved in focus movement". It is not clear whether this is intended to hold for adult French, so I will consider it for child French only.

Ferdinand (1996, p.199) explains the limitation on the number of elements that can appear in the left-periphery of the sentence by postulating a restriction on focus in child French. This restriction is twofold: (i) only one element per phrase can receive contrastive focus and (ii) only one element may be focused in each sentence. Ferdinand further postulates that both preposed *wh*-expressions and preverbal heavy NP-subjects bear the feature [+ focus] in child French.

In the case of preverbal nonclitic subjects, the justification for a [+ focus] feature is found in the claim that such heavy subjects are only present (in the child's speech) when the subject needs emphasis.¹¹ In particular, Ferdinand claims that preverbal heavy pronouns coreferential with the subject are always focused in child French, whether the subject clitic is present or not. The main argument proposed by Ferdinand is that such strong pronouns cannot be in [spec,AgrsP] when the clitic is absent, because they are not in the Nominative case.¹² In De Cat (in progress), I argue that preverbal heavy pronouns coreferential with the subject are dislocated rather than focused.

Things are less clear when it comes to non-pronominal heavy-NP subjects. As no Case marking is apparent (even in adult French), nothing suggests at first sight that such subjects are not in the canonical subject position [spec,AgrsP]. A peripheral analysis of non-pronominal heavy-NP subjects is all the more difficult to argue for if one adopts, as Ferdinand does, an affixal analysis of subject clitics

(as argued for in e.g. Auger, 1994), where subject clitics are heads adjoined to AgrS, leaving the [spec,AgrsP] position available to heavy-NP subjects. On such an account, the presence of a subject clitic gives no indication as to the position of the heavy-NP subject.¹³ This is addressed in the section 2.2, where I argue that preverbal NPs coindexed with a subject clitic are dislocated and cannot be focused. I do not dispute the claim that “real” heavy-NP subjects (i.e. not coindexed with a subject clitic) can be focused in spoken French. What I mean to show is that heavy-NP subjects and heavy NPs coindexed with a subject clitic alike are compatible with *wh*-movement in both child and adult French (see section 5). The apparent mutual exclusion of *wh*-elements and heavy-NP subjects in early child French is, to my sense, due to sampling effects.

2.2 On the ban on resumptive pronouns in focus-movement : the case of subject clitics

One well-known similarity between focus-movement and *wh*-movement is that neither allows a resumptive pronoun in languages like French. This is illustrated by the contrasts in (10).

- (10) a. (i) Qu'est-ce que tu as pris?
 what is it that you have taken
 'What did you take?'
 (ii) *Qu'est-ce que tu l'as pris?
 what is it that you it have taken
 b. (i) UN MERLE, j'ai vu. Pas une grive.
 a blackbird I have seen not a thrush
 'I have seen a BLACKBIRD, not a thrush.'
 (ii) *UN MERLE, je l'ai vu. Pas une grive.
 a blackbird I it have seen not a thrush

Resumptive pronouns are equally bad in subject questions (as illustrated in (11-a)). This suggests that the same should apply to focused subjects (as in (11-b)).

- (11) a. *Qui il est venu?
 who he has come
 b. *SA_i MÈRE, elle accompagnera [chaque enfant]_i
 his/her_i mother she will-accompany each child

In the case of subject questions as in that of focused subjects, it is not clear whether movement takes place overtly or not. *Qui* 'who' is sometimes claimed to remain in the subject position (See Plunkett, 2000).

We have seen in section 2.1.3 that Ferdinand does not consider the presence of a clitic to impede the focusing of a heavy subject. Under a pronominal analysis

of subject clitics, this is predicted to be impossible. And indeed, all my (non-linguists) informants agree on the judgement given for (11-b), as contrasted with that of the answer in (12).¹⁴

- (12) Q: Je voudrais savoir qui accompagnera chaque enfant.
 I like[COND] know[-INF] who accompany[FUT] each child
 'I would like to know who will accompany each child.'
 A: SA_i MÈRE accompagnera [chaque enfant]_i.
 his/her mother accompany[FUT] each child
 'HER MOTHER will accompany each child.'

In naturalistic data, clear examples of contrastively focused subjects are extremely rare. In a random sample of 10123 utterances extracted from the York and the Cat corpora (introduced in section 3.2), not a single case of contrastively focused subject was found amongst the adult utterances.¹⁵ The rarity of contrastively focused subjects in the adult data suggests either that the children studied by Ferdinand behave very differently to adult French speakers with respect to the focussing of subjects, or that (at least some of) the cases analysed by Ferdinand as focused subjects have been wrongly identified.

Further work is required to determine whether heavy subjects can be focused when they are coindexed with a clitic in child French (see De Cat, in progress). However, because of contrasts like that between (11-b) and (12), and because of the rarity of contrastively focused subjects in adult French, I will assume that the subjects identified by Ferdinand as contrastively focused are (at best) unclear when the subject is 'doubled' by a clitic.¹⁶

2.3 Identifying contrastive focus in child French

In light of the discussion above, I would like to propose that the following criteria must be satisfied in order to identify contrastive focus of a preverbal element in child French.¹⁷ (i) The preverbal element has to receive the highest pitch accent of the sentence; (ii) The sentence cannot contain a resumptive pronoun coindexed with the preverbal element; (iii) The context must clearly indicate that the preverbal element is not included in the presupposition of the sentence; (iv) The focused element has to be in (at least implicit) opposition with another element present in the context.

3 Discussion of Ferdinand's data

In this section, I apply the diagnostics above to Ferdinand's data.¹⁸ In section 3.1, I show that some of the examples for which Ferdinand crucially relies on a contrastive focus reading do not meet the criteria justifying such an analysis. In section 3.2, new data is examined to test the predictions of Ferdinand's analysis. The conclusion is that the presence of preverbal elements in early child French

is not restricted by a (child-specific) condition that they should be (contrastively) focused.

3.1 Ferdinand's stage 2

Ferdinand argues that at stage 2, children can only realise one element in front of the finite verb. This element must be (contrastively) focused. The structure determined by the then active functional projections is said to be as follows:

- (13) [WhP [FocusP [AgrsP [NegP [TP [VP]]]]]]

The examples below are all given by Ferdinand to illustrate this stage. However, as we will see for each of them, they fail to satisfy the criteria for a contrastive focus analysis. The first two examples are alleged cases of contrastively focused subject.

- (14) a. Christian a deux ans. (Grégoire 1;3.0)
 Chrisitan has two years
 'CHRISTIAN is two years old.'
- b. (le monsieur il va s' en servir et) après le monsieur il
 the mister he will REFL. of-it use and then the mister he
 va descendre. (Philippe 2;6.13)
 will go-down
 'The mister is going to use it and then THE MISTER will go down.'

Leaving aside the question of the resumptive pronoun (that could already rule out (14-b)), the essential condition to be met by *Christian* and *le monsieur* is that they be in opposition to another candidate as defined by the context statement. But this is invalidated by the context in both cases. *Christian* could be a noncontrastive focus, as it is the only nonpresupposed part of the sentence (Grégoire has been answering *deux ans* at random to all the questions asked of him), but it cannot be a contrastive focus, as no one has implied that somebody other than Christian was two years old. As for (14-b), the nonpresupposed part of the sentence is what the character is going to do, not that it is this character who is going to do it.

The two examples in (15) are potentially better candidates for (contrastive) focus, as they involve object fronting.

- (15) a. une pomme de terre donne? [% unclear] (Grégoire 2;1.25)
 a potato give +FIN
 'Shall I give a potato?'
- b. celui-là on lève, comme ça. (Philippe 2;1.26)
 that one one lifts like that
 'We lift THAT ONE, like that.'

Example (15-a) is uttered after Grégoire has made a first attempt at giving a potato to his mother. Unfortunately, she already has enough potatoes. But it is not the case that she needs something else, or that Grégoire has something else to offer (and yet he would still prefer to offer the potato - hence implying a contrast). *Une pomme-de-terre* can thus not be contrastively focused. A simple focus reading is quite difficult to justify too, as the action has been revolving around potatoes for a while and the mother is not asking Grégoire to give her anything. This suggests that Ferdinand's argument for an analysis of (15-a) in terms of focus-movement is purely syntactic: the fronted element is an indefinite, so it cannot be involved in a clitic-left-dislocation (CLLD).¹⁹ I would like to suggest that if the conditions necessary to contrastive focus are not met, an alternative explanation has to be found for the fact that *une pomme-de-terre* is preposed in (15-a).

As for (15-b), the context is that Philippe has been lowering various things, and now he is lifting something else. The point of (15-b) is that the object is going to be lifted (rather than lowered). *Celui-là* is part of the context: Philippe has a series of objects in front of him, and he moves them all in turn.²⁰

In all the examples above, a contrastive focus reading of the moved element has been shown not to be possible in the context in which the sentences occur. This suggests that Ferdinand's explanation for the limitation on the number of elements that can appear preverbally at this stage does not hold. Some of the cases examined could be accounted for by a noncontrastive focus analysis, but it is not clear that focus movement would apply in all cases even then.

In section 5, I suggest the very existence of stage 2 needs to be questioned. I also propose that examples (14-b) and (15-b) can be accounted for in terms of left-dislocation, and that this analysis might be extended to (15-a).

3.2 Investigating new data

In this subsection, the validity of Ferdinand's stage 3 is tested on two new sets of data, for which I had access to sound files. The data come from the longitudinal study of four monolingual children from different dialectal areas (Belgium, Canada and France), collected at the rate of half an hour every fortnight for a period of 18 months minimum, starting where possible at the onset of the two-word stage. The York corpus contains data for Léa (Belgium), Max (Canada) and Anne (France). The Cat corpus contains data for Tom (Belgium).²¹

I examine here two of the predictions made by Ferdinand's definition of stage 3: (i) left-dislocations and fronted adverbs are in complementary distribution (because they share the same position) and (ii) fronted *wh*-elements and heavy subjects are in complementary distribution (because they are both focused).

3.2.1 Left-dislocations and fronted adverbs

At stage 3, the active structure is said to be the following:

- (16) [Left Disl.P / AdvP [WhP [FocusP [AgrsP [NegP [TP [VP]]]]]]]]

Ferdinand's analysis predicts that left-dislocations are then in complementary distribution with left-peripheral adverbs. This is based on the claim that at this stage, the child can have at most two elements, the first one being either a left-dislocated element OR an adverbial, and the second element being a *wh*-moved element, a focus-moved element OR a preverbal heavy-NP subject.

Examples like (17) and (19) suggest, *contra* Ferdinand, that adverbs and left dislocations do not occupy the same structural position.

- (17) et là, les chaussures, 0²²mettre là. (Anne 2;6.18)
 and there the shoes put[-FIN] there
 'And the shoes, there, (I will) put them over there.'

In (17), the only possibility offered by Ferdinand's analysis is that *les chaussures* be contrastively focused. However, the context indicates that this is not the case: Anne has been sorting out a little bear's clothes one by one, and in this particular case, there is no question of something other than the shoes being placed in this very space. The adult equivalent of this sentence seems to be (18), with a CLLD instead of a focus-moved element.

- (18) et là, les chaussures, je vais les mettre là.
 and there the shoes I will them put there
 'And the shoes, there, I'll put them over there.'

The only way in to account for (17) in this context is to analyse it as containing a peripheral adverb and a left-dislocated element.

The examples in (19) contain two adverb-like elements in the left periphery.

- (19) a. là, après, je fais un poisson tout neuf. (Anne 2;5.18)
 there afterwards I do a fish all new
 'Afterwards, I'll do a brand new fish there.'
 b. ici # en haut # c' est quoi? (Max 2;2.9)
 here at-the top it is what
 'What is there at the top?'

Ferdinand's analysis predicts that the second adverb would have to be contrastively focused in both cases. However, a focus analysis is impossible for the second adverb in either case. The focused element in (19-a) is clearly *un poisson tout neuf*. Anne is announcing what she is going to draw next, not that the drawing of the new fish is going to happen after something else (as opposed to before or at the same time). As for *en haut*, in (19-b), it could only be contrastively focused if Max wanted to emphasise that he's wondering what the object at the top is, not another object present in the surrounding. The context justifies no such contrastive reading of *en haut*, as Max is asking this question out of the blue.

In order to account for (17) and (19), Ferdinand's analysis could be modified in two possible ways: either stage 3 could be taken to allow for three elements in the left-periphery (allowing for the left-dislocation/adverb position to be recursive), or another factor than complementary distribution would have to be invoked to explain the limitation to two left-peripheral elements. Alternatively, one could claim that the children are beyond stage 3 at the time of (17). But this is very unlikely at least for (19), as for both children this sentence appears in the first recording in which more than one preverbal element is present in the child's speech.

I would like to suggest instead that there is no absolute limitation on the number of left-peripheral elements allowed at this time of the child's language development in the way postulated by Ferdinand (1996). In section 5, I propose that the absence of sequences involving three left-peripheral elements is either fortuitous, or motivated by more general principles regulating what is realised in the child's speech.

3.2.2 Fronted *whs* and heavy subjects

The following example contradicts another prediction of Ferdinand's analysis: heavy subjects are said to be in complementary distribution with fronted *wh*-elements. The following example clearly shows that this is not the case.²³

- (20) et pourquoi # les lunettes s' étaient xx envolées? (Tom 2;6.12)
 and why the glasses [REFL] were ?? flown
 'And why had the glasses been blown away?'

One might argue that Tom has passed the end of stage 3 by this age. Note however that we have no means of assessing this, as Ferdinand does not give any indication as to what would mark the end of stage 3. Nor does she explain what would then tell the child that heavy subjects do not have to be always marked as contrastively focused any more.

Cases of heavy subjects cooccurring with a fronted *wh*-element are extremely rare in adult French too. Out of 3997 *wh* questions in the York and the Cat corpora, only 36 contain a heavy subject. Only 3 *wh*-questions containing a heavy subject also involve overt *wh*-movement. And in all 3 cases, the *wh*-word is non-thematic (and the heavy subject is a name): 2 cases are with *pourquoi* 'why' and one with *comment* 'how'.²⁴

Before turning to an alternative to Ferdinand (1996), I would like to underline the accuracy of the observations that led her to propose such an analysis. Any alternative explanation will have to account for the facts observed.

4 Distributional issues

As observed by Ferdinand (1996), some sequences are extremely rare in the (very) early data. (i) There is a time when no more than one element appears in the periphery of the sentence. In Ferdinand's analysis, this applies only to the left-periphery, but we will see below that this observation holds for the left- and right-peripheries alike. (ii) A fronted *wh*-element hardly ever occurs in a clause containing a heavy subject or a left-dislocated element. In Ferdinand's analysis, fronted *wh*-elements are said to be in complementary distribution with heavy subjects (whether or not they are doubled by a subject clitic) at all stages. We have seen that the combination of these two elements was possible for the child (ruling out a complementary distribution account), but that it occurred extremely rarely in both child and adult French, and never in the very early data.

Contrary to Ferdinand, however, I have not found in the York nor the Cat corpora any evidence for an initial stage during which no peripheral element is allowed in front of the finite verb. In Ferdinand's account, stage 1 is extremely short in the children for whom it is attested (all the examples come from a single recording session for each child)²⁵ and it is not attested at all for Daniel, who seems to be at stage 2 from 1;8.1 (i.e. the earliest data reported), nor for Philippe. This suggests either that stage 1 only lasts for a few days, or that the absence of left-peripheral elements in the early data is due to sampling effects. The latter is much more likely, especially as the number of relevant utterances is so low in the first recordings.

To Ferdinand's observations, I would like to add three more. The first two are related: in child French, when two non-clitic constituents occur in front of the finite verb, it is very rare that one of them be either a 'true heavy subject' (i.e. not doubled by a clitic) or a fronted *wh*-element. (i) In the York and the Cat corpora, preverbal sequences involving a 'true heavy subject' together with another peripheral element are only attested in the Belgian child Léa. There are two instances only (given in (21)). The leftmost element might be focus-moved in both cases.

- (21) a. TOUJOURS, ma maman me le dit. (Léa 3;8.26)
 always my mum to-me it says
 'My mum ALWAYS says this to me.'
- b. À UNE HEURE que Luc s' est réveillé,, dis eh! (Léa 2;9.5)
 at one hour that Luc [REFL] is awoken say eh
 'Luc woke up at ONE A CLOCK!'

(ii) In the same corpora, preverbal sequences involving a fronted *wh*-element together with another peripheral element (as in (22)) are also very rare, and they do not appear before 3;1.4 in any of the children for whom they are attested.

- (22) a. pourquoi le papa grenouille, il est attaché? (Anne 3;1.4)
 why the daddy frog he is attached
 ‘Why is the daddy frog attached?’
 b. papa,²⁶ où il est? (Anne 3;2.9)
 daddy where he is
 ‘Where is Daddy?’

(iii) The third and last observation to be added is that before any two non-clitic constituents can precede the finite verb, ‘bidirectional dislocations’ start appearing in the child’s speech. By ‘bidirectional dislocation’, I mean one dislocation to the left, and one to the right, both in the same clause.²⁷ These two elements can be coreferential (as in (23-a)) or not (as in (23-b)).

- (23) a. lui, il fait dodo là, lui. (Anne 2;4.20)
 him he makes sleep there him
 ‘That one sleeps there.’
 b. moi, # (je) veux l’ essayer, lui@d. (Max 2;2.9)
 me (I) want him try him
 ‘I want to try that one.’

At any one point in development, bidirectional dislocations outweigh double monodirectional dislocations,²⁸ where two elements appear either in the left periphery (as in (24-a)) or in the right periphery (as in (24-b)).

- (24) a. là, ça, c’ était un petit bébé. (Anne 2;5.18)
 there that it was a little baby
 ‘That one there was a little baby.’
 b. c’ est quoi, là, la petite ligne? (Tom 3;0.6)
 it is what there the little line
 ‘What’s the little line there?’

On the whole, however, double dislocations remain rare, especially in the early data: only 7% of dislocations are double dislocations in the York corpora, between the ages of 2;0 and 2;6.

Let us now turn to an alternative analysis of Ferdinand (1996).

5 An alternative analysis

I have argued elsewhere (De Cat, 2000) that children acquiring French produce dislocations from very early on, perhaps as early as the two-word stage. I suggest in De Cat (2000) that not only right-peripheral elements but also left-peripheral elements are adjoined to the top XP projected by the child. When CP is projected, the dislocated element can be adjoined either to CP (as in (22-b)), or to IP (as in (22-a)).²⁹ I will now show that a dislocation analysis can account for the cases in which Ferdinand’s contrastive focus analysis cannot be justified.

If the analysis proposed in De Cat (2000) is correct, i.e. if dislocations are derived by adjunction, there is no need for a template such as that proposed by Ferdinand for the structure of the left-periphery in child French. This is all the more desirable as it accounts for the relative freedom of ordering of left-peripheral elements, as illustrated in (25), where the dislocated *moi* can appear before or after the embedded complementiser, and be doubled by a right-dislocated counterpart.

- (25) a. tu sais, Parrain, que moi, j'ai des bobos, moi? (Léa 3;6.4)
 you know Grandad that me I have INDEF wounds me
 'Do you know, Grandad, that I have wounds?'
 b. tu sais, moi, Parrain, que j'ai des bobos? (Léa 3;6.4)
 you know me Grandad that I have indef wounds
 'Do you know, Grandad, that I have wounds?'

Crucially, a dislocation analysis enables us to account straightforwardly for cases such as (22-a), where the fronted *wh*-element can precede a left-dislocated subject (which Ferdinand would analyse as a heavy-NP subject): the *wh*-element is in [spec,CP], while the NP *le papa grenouille* is adjoined to IP, following the view that the subject clitic is not a mere affix on the verb. Cases involving two left-peripheral adverbs (like (19)) or a fronted adverb and a dislocation (like (17)) are also accounted for: more than one element can be adjoined to IP or CP. As for the cases which have been shown not to involve contrastive focus (in Ferdinand's stage 2), they involve either a left-dislocation of the subject (as in (14-b)) or of the object (as in (15-b) and perhaps even in (15-a)).

Further research is needed to confirm the validity of the intonation criterion to identify cases where a preverbal heavy NP coreferential with the subject is dislocated in the absence of a resumptive clitic (as in (14-a)) (De Cat, in progress). In the meantime, or in the absence of sound files, other cues will have to be relied upon. In (2-a), for instance, *cheveux* cannot be in [spec,AgrsP] in the corresponding adult equivalent, as shown by the contrasts in (26-c):

- (26) a. *les cheveux sont ça.
 the hair[PL] are that
 b. *le cheveu est ça.
 the hair[SG] is that
 c. les cheveux, c' est ça.
 the hair[PL] it is that
 'That's the hair.'

Only the sentence containing a subject clitic is grammatical. This is one of the instances where a left-dislocation is obligatory in adult French (De Cat, in progress). If we postulate that the differences between child and adult language are minimal, (2-a) is to be taken as a child version of (26-c), with only the determiner and the clitic missing (which is typical of early child language - see e.g. Müller, 1994;

Hamann et al., 1996). *Cheveux*, then, is left-dislocated with no resumptive clitic. An analysis in terms of left-dislocation accounts straightforwardly for the fact that *cheveux* is not contrastively focused, as indicated by the context: before uttering (2-a), Grégoire had been pointing at his own hair, then at his mum's, and then back at his own, saying *cheveux* every time. *Cheveux* is thus clearly in the presupposition of the sentence, and cannot be focused in (2-a).

What a dislocation analysis does not do is provide an explanation for the apparent restriction as to the number of elements that can appear in the left-periphery. Nor does it explain why, if restriction there is, it only applies to the left-periphery. But is there really such a restriction at play in the child's grammar?

I have observed elsewhere that initially, the child seems to be unable to produce left-dislocations in *wh*-questions (De Cat, 2000). But it is crucial to note that this is true whether the *wh*-element is fronted or whether it remains *in situ*. In De Cat (2000), I propose that left-dislocations have to be adjoined to CP when the *wh*-element is referential, and that it is only when the child starts implementing CP that such left-dislocations can be derived. This restriction does not apply to other types of constructions: left-dislocations appear in declaratives and yes/no questions from very early on.

What then are the restrictions on peripheral elements at play in early child French? We have seen in section 4 that double dislocations do not appear in the very early data. This is not a restriction bearing on the left-periphery only: bidirectional dislocations are not attested in the York and the Cat corpora before 2;0.14 at the earliest, which suggests that if there is a restriction at play, it applies (at least at first) to the sentence periphery in general. Double left-dislocations appear a little later, and double right-dislocations either a little later still or not at all in some children for the period studied. This is illustrated in Table 1,³⁰ where LL stands for '2 left-dislocations' (as in (24-a)), RR: '2 right-dislocations' (as in (24-b)), LR (same): '2 dislocations, bidirectional and coreferential' (as in (23-a)) and LD (diff.): '2 dislocations, bidirectional and non-coreferential' (as in (23-b)).

	LL	RR	LR (same)	LR (diff.)
Anne	2;5.4	2;4.2	2;0.27	2;0.27
Max	2;2.9	/	2;0.14	2;2.9
Tom	2;6.22	2;1.11	/	2;1.11

Table 1: *The emergence of double dislocations*

If, as suggested by the observations above, the restriction applies at first to the periphery in general, how are we to explain it? I would like to suggest that sequences involving more than two elements in the left-periphery of the sentence are not ruled out by the child's grammar. The fact that they are not attested in the

data does not mean that they are impossible for the child. Part of the explanation is likely to be that there is a limitation on the realisation of sentence constituents, which might be due to a combination of discourse-pragmatic and processing factors (this is suggested for instance by Allen, 2000). More work is required to explain why double left dislocations are slower to emerge.

6 Conclusion

This paper has argued against a contrastive focus analysis of the restricted presence of preverbal non-clitic elements in early child French. This restriction cannot be accounted for by postulating the existence of a template of the left-periphery in the way proposed by Ferdinand (1996): (i) the order of left-peripheral elements is not rigidly fixed, and (ii) the position hosting left-dislocated elements is recursive (to a certain extent, as always in human language).

The alternative analysis proposed is that (non-*wh*) peripheral elements are dislocated in (child) French (even sometimes in the absence of a resumptive), except in the rare instances where the prosody and the context indicate that a focus interpretation is required. This accounts straightforwardly for (i) and (ii) above. The absence of certain types of left-peripheral elements in the early data cannot be fully explained by restrictions on the peripheral elements themselves. The explanation is probably to be found in more general restraints on the realisation of constituents in child French, and in child language in general.

Endnotes

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1. Throughout this paper, 'preverbal' is to be taken in the sense of 'preceding the finite verb'. Heavy elements include straight DPs (i.e. D + N) and strong pronouns, both in Ferdinand (1996) and in this paper.

2. Following the CHILDES conventions of transcription, comments are entered in square brackets, after a % sign. Here, the comment indicates that the utterance is unclear, which puts into perspective the discussion surrounding it (see section 3.1).

3. In this example, the [e] in the transcription given by Ferdinand indicates an ambiguous ending between a past participle and an infinitive.

4. Ferdinand cites Escobar (1995), who cites and follows Rochemont (1986).
5. This test has its limitations: it cannot be used with all copular sentences, as illustrated in (i). In (A), the sentence is clearly contrastive, and yet the (B) reply is anomalous.
 - (i) A: C'est sur la chaise, qu'elle est.
'It's on the chair, that it is.'
 - B: #Non, elle est aussi sous la table.
'No, she's also under the table.'
6. See note section 3.2 for a description of the corpus containing this example.
7. This example corresponds to (10) in Zubizarreta (1998, p.5).
8. In that sense, A1 of (8-b) is the equivalent of *Who came to the party?*. The advantage of a paraphrase like (8-b) is that it clearly states what the variable is.
9. See Zubizarreta (1998) about the differences in phrasal stress rules between noncontrastive focus and contrastive focus (and emphasis).
10. See in particular the discussion of example (15-a) = (2-b).
11. Emphasis and contrastive focus are similar in so far as they share prosodic properties, and they both contain a judgement of the truth of the presupposition contained in the context statement (see Zubizarreta, 1998, for more detail). However, emphasis alone is not sufficient for contrastive focus to be identified, as shown in section 2.1.1: there has to be (implicit) negation of a value assigned to the variable in the context statement, together with a new value proposed for that variable.
12. I consider this argument to be valid only when the prosody indicates that the strong pronoun has been dislocated. This was the case in all the instances found in the corpora I have studied, which suggests that a peripheral analysis of strong subject pronoun is valid for child French. I make no claim as to whether it should be so in other languages.
13. If we do not adopt the affixal analysis of subject clitics, the presence of such clitics is an indication that the heavy-NP coreferential with the subject clitic is in a dislocated peripheral position. This is the position I take in this paper. For a detailed argumentation, see De Cat (in progress).
14. This example comes from Zubizarreta (1998). The variable contained in the subject *sa mère* needs to be bound by the distributive QP object (here *chaque enfant*). Zubizarreta (1998, pp.11-13) argues that the subject has to be indefinite for a distributive QP object to take scope over it. She claims that the subject in (12) can only acquire indefinite status if it is focused.
15. The diagnostics used for the presence of a contrastive subject were the presence of the highest pitch accent on the subject, together with the (implicit) negation of another value assigned to the variable in the context statement (i.e. the

focused element had to be in competition with another element in the context).

16. My intuition is that the difference between (i) contrastively focused subjects and (ii) non-contrastively focused subjects in spoken French is that only in (i) is the rest of the sentence presupposed. (ii) is, I believe, an instance of 'all-focus sentence' (as defined by e.g. Vallduví, 1992; Lambrecht, 1994), where the subject alone is not focused - it is the sentence as a whole that is.

17. The first three criteria are sufficient to diagnose noncontrastive focus.

18. Only the data from Grégoire and Philippe (available on CHILDES (MacWhinney, 2000)) are considered here, as I did not have access to Patsy Lightbrown's corpus (which is also investigated by Ferdinand). The data from Grégoire come from the Champaud corpus (Suppes et al., 1973). The data from Philippe are from the Leveillé corpus.

19. The dislocated element must be definite in CLLD. See Zubizarreta (1994).

It is interesting to compare (15-a) with (i) below:

- (i) un petit bébé, je sais pas c' est quoi +//. (Max 2;7.25)
 a little baby I know not it is what
 'I don't know what the little baby (is called).'

The context clearly indicates that this interrupted utterance should have been continued with *qu'il s'appelle* 'that he is called', as indicated by the bracketted part of the translation. If we follow Ferdinand's logic in analysing (15-a), despite the presence of a resumptive pronoun, we would analyse (i) as involving focus-movement on the grounds that an indefinite cannot be a topic (except with a generic reading, which does not apply here). This cannot be the right analysis here because this sentence comes just after the observer has asked Max *comment il s'appelle, le petit bébé ?* ('what is the little baby called?'): the new information is that Max does not know, not that it is a little baby. *Un petit bébé* is not contrastive either in (i): it is not the case that Max knows what another puppet or character is called. This example thus suggests rather that definiteness has not yet been mastered by Max. Caution is needed when the analysis of a particular construction rests on the use of a definite (or an indefinite) by the child. In this case, *un petit bébé* is a clear instance of dislocation, in spite of its contravening the definiteness restriction on dislocation. Such facts cast doubt on Ferdinand's analysis of (15-a).

20. I would analyse *celui-là* 'that one' as an instance of List Dislocation (as defined in De Cat, in progress), where the dislocated element is part of a set, the members of which are evoked in turn, each time in a different sentence / clause. This is what creates the feeling of contrast in this type of dislocation.

21. Transcription conventions used in the York and the Cat corpora: (i) Parentheses indicate unpronounced material, (ii) The use of a capital distinguishes *là* 'there' from *Là*: the latter cannot be stressed and is used to mark the preceding

word as present in the foregrounded discourse, (iii) The sign [!] indicates that the preceding word is emphatically stressed, (iv) 0 stand for a missing elements, (vi) # indicates a short pause, (vii) xx indicates an unintelligible word, (viii) Double commas are used to isolate a tag from the rest of the sentence, (ix) The coma is used to indicate a syntactic juncture or a dislocation, (x) Names of persons are not capitalised in a dislocation, (which distinguishes them from vocatives), (xi) *lui@d* ‘him’ is the Canadian variant of the homonymous pronoun, which can refer to inanimates as well as animates (This is impossible in European French), (xii) +” indicates that the following utterance is quoted (from a book, for instance), (xiii) +//. indicates a self-interrupted utterance.

22. *Les chaussures* is said with a typical enumeration intonation (Anne has been sorting various things, and this is one of them), which clearly indicates that it cannot be in the subject position under a passive reading of *mettre* ‘put’.

23. In (20), I have relied on the intonation to determine that the subject clitic was altogether absent, and not omitted (see De Cat, in progress, for a preliminary acoustic analysis justifying the use of this diagnostic). At this stage, clitics are very rarely omitted in Tom’s speech, which suggests that my interpretation is correct. On the whole, true heavy subjects remain rare in the child data, as they are in the adult data (they do not exceed 5% of cases in total, across utterance types, for either group of speakers).

24. These 3 questions are given below. Note that (i-a) is read from a book, which suggests that it should even be excluded from the analysis (as it is representative of written French).

- (i) a. +” tiens,, pourquoi Olga ne se réveille+t elle pas?
 well why Olga [NEG] [REFL] wakes-up+t her not
 (Catherine (Can))
 ‘Well, why does Olga not wake up?’
- b. pourquoi Crocro est pas sur le lit? (Catherine (Can))
 why Crocro is not on the bed
 ‘Why is Crocro not on the bed?’
- c. comment Crocro a fait pour apporter la surprise s’i(l) est
 how Crocro has done to take the surprise if he is
 là+bas? (Catherine (Can))
 over-there
 ‘How did Crocro bring the surprise if he’s over there?’

On the interaction of such *wh*-elements with dislocations, see De Cat (in progress) (see also the discussion of (22)).

25. Stage 1 is attested at 1;9.14 for Grégoire, and at 1;9.3 for Nathalie.

26. In (22-b), *papa* is not a vocative: Anne’s dad is absent, and she is enquiring about him. In the York and the Cat corpora, vocatives but not dislocations start

with a capital.

27. I will justify the use of the term 'dislocation' in section 5.

28. Out of 157 double dislocations observed in the York and the Cat corpora, 17% involve a double left-dislocation, 13% a double right-dislocation, 33% a bidirectional dislocation with coreferential elements, and 37% a bidirectional dislocation with non-coreferential elements.

29. Note that IP-adjunction is only possible in a *wh*-question when the *wh* word is non-referential. This applies to both child and adult French. In (De Cat, in progress), I show that this restriction is due to pragmatic factors (more specifically to the relative positioning of focus and dislocated topics), and that it applies to referential *wh*-elements only.

30. Léa is not considered in this table, as we only have data for her from 2;8.22. Note that, like Max, she does not have any attested instances of double right dislocations.

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