

French Intonation and Attitude Attribution

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1. Introduction

Belief attribution is an important feature of the semantics of lexical items (e.g. verbs like *to imagine* vs *to believe* which trigger presupposition) or syntactic formants (e.g. *conditionnel* in French). Here we propose that it is crucially involved in intonation meaning, especially in the meaning of final contours in French. Final contours are realized over the rightmost phrase of focal domains, the rightmost phrase of the utterance in the case of all-focus utterances.

We claim that contours signal the way the speaker anticipates the reception of her utterance by the addressee. They convey the speaker's attitude as to whether her utterance is readily uptakable by the addressee or not and, when the speaker signals that she anticipates it is not, they convey her attitude as to whether she is committed or not to the content of her utterance. Such an attitude requires that the speaker has an image of what the addressee believes about the issue or the content she is conveying in her utterance. This is how intonation meaning involves belief attribution to the addressee by the speaker. Our analysis is couched in Ginzburg's Dialogue Semantics (to app.). We modified it locally, however, in order to reinforce the distinction between public commitments of the Discourse Participants (DPs) and their private beliefs.

First we briefly present the prosody of French. In §3, we introduce some data which are counter-examples (in French) to the traditional claim that contours signal illocutionary force or the more recent claim in American/English intonation studies that they signal Speaker's or Hearer's commitment. In §4 and §5, we present our proposal that we make explicit in Dialogue Semantics. Finally, we compare our approach with that of Steedman (2003) to intonation meaning in English, which enables us to state the differences between grammaticalized intonation meaning in French and in English.

Our proposal is based on the analysis of contours recorded in various corpora of spontaneous speech (telephone calls, radio or TV dialogues, elicited dialogues) and examples discussed in the French literature.¹

2. French prosody

French has three levels of phrasing: (i) a level of accentual phrases (AP) which determines the loci of stress, (ii) a level of Major phrases (MaP) which consists in one or several APs and (iii) a level of Intonation Phrase (IntP) which consists in one or several MaPs (for a synthesis, Beyssade *et al.* (2004)). Prominence is not lexically driven in French (there is no lexical stress), but it is determined by prosodic phrasing (a.o. Delais-Roussarie (2000)). We analyze contours as sequences of tones following the auto-segmental practice (cf. a.o. Ladd (1996)). We admit that the anchoring sites for the components of the contours are localized at the level of APs and that MaPs are the spanning domains of contours.

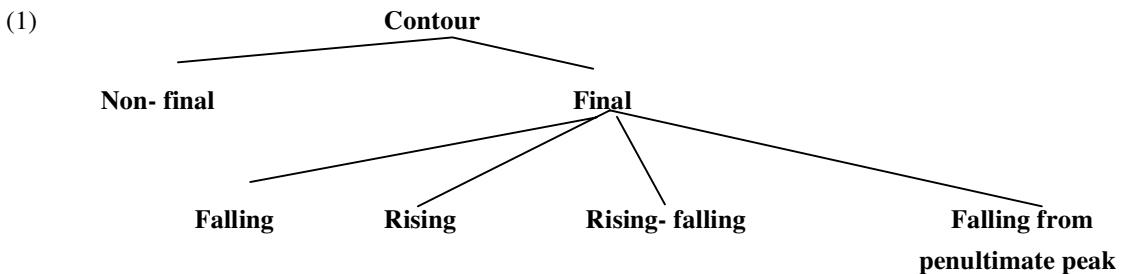
¹ These analyses have been jointly accomplished by Claire Beyssade, Elisabeth Delais-Roussarie, Michel de Fornel, Jean-Marie Marandin and Annie Rialland.

2.1. French contours

In traditional or more recent analyses of intonation, contours are listed. Pierrehumbert (1980) lists 22 contours for English. For French, Delattre (1966) lists 10 basic contours; Post (2000) also distinguishes 10 contours; the list in Delattre is different from the list in Post. Here we admit the inventory presented in Marandin (2006) and Marandin *et al.* (2004).

The inventory comprises two types of contours: final and non-final contours.² Final contours are contours anchored on the Designated Terminal Element (DTE) of the utterance, either the last word in the utterance or the last word in the focal domain (see Di Cristo (2000) for the analysis of the DTE) and Beyssade *et al.* (2003, 2004)). Final contours span over the rightmost Major Phrase of focal domains. Focal domains include the XP that contributes the focal content of the utterance. The focus XP is on the right edge of the domain. Thus, final contours occur *within* the utterance when a part of the utterance is focused; they occur *at the right edge* of the utterance when the utterance is an all-focus utterance. Non-final contours are anchored to other MaPs (descriptively, it corresponds to prosodic phrases ending with a continuation rise).

We distinguish four types of final contours. The proposal is in keeping with Post (2000) and has been recently confirmed by Portes (2004) thanks to a corpus study.



As for the decomposition into tones, we do not follow Post and adopt a more conservative stance (from the point of view of AMT) which concurs with Di Cristo's (2000) analysis of the notion of *pitch accent* in French. Essentially, each contour is decomposed into a pitch accent anchored on the DTE in a MaP, a phrasal tone at the left edge (see Grice *et al.* (2000) for the notion of phrasal tone) and a floating boundary tone, which appears when an appendix is realized (cf. Dell (1984)).

- (2)
- a. Falling contour: H...L* (T%)
 - b. Rising contour: L...H* (T%)
 - c. Rising-falling contour: L...LH* (T%)
 - d. Falling from a penultimate peak contour: L...H+L* (T%)

Non-final contours are analyzable as sequences such as L ... H* or L...HL* (cf. Portes (2004)).

2.2. Compositional or holistic semantics?

Morphemic status has been granted to contour constituents in English. This implies that the distinct pitch accents and edge tones have the same meaning in the different contours in which they occur in as constituents. This allows a compositional approach to contour meaning (cf. a.o. Pierrehumbert (1980)).

Despite our effort to do so, we have not been able to identify a meaning for each tone in the contours as decomposed in (2). For example, the pitch accents H* or HL* do not have the same meaning in final and non final contours; indeed, it seems that they only have a demarcative function in

² Both distribution (the type of prosodic phrase over which contours span) and contrastiveness (the contrast in discourse value) are used in the identification of contours. The contrastive approach to contour meaning is a tradition in French intonation study, cf. a.o. Delattre (1972).

non final contours. The same holds for (left) phrasal tones. As for the boundary tones, even the very general meaning "direction of the interpretation" proposed by Pierrehumbert and Hirschberg (1990) for English boundary tones does not seem to capture their semantic contribution in French contours.

Hence, we put off any attempt to propose a compositional approach to contour meaning in French and we take contours to be the basic meaningful units of intonation. Anyway, such a decision is orthogonal to the discussion about the relevance of the notion of belief attribution to account for intonation meaning.

3. What French contours do not mean

3.1. Contour and illocutionary force

It is common to use the expressions *assertion intonation* or *question intonation* to refer to falling or rising contours. Different frameworks claim that falling contours is associated with assertion or assertiveness (cf. Bartels (1999)), whereas rising is associated with question or aspects of questioning (uncertainty, ignorance, call for a response or feedback from the addressee, etc.).³

Although it is true that prototypical assertions are uttered with a falling contour and that prototypical confirmation or verifying questions are uttered with a rising contour,⁴ occurrences of assertions with a rising contour and occurrences of confirmation or verifying questions with a falling contour are far from rare in everyday conversations.⁵ We draw some illustrations from the corpora we have studied below (in contemporary standard parisian French). (3) is a case of rising assertion, (4) a case of confirmative question with a contour "falling from the penultimate peak", made on the syllable 'tre' in 'enregistrement',⁶ and (5) a case of falling confirmation question.⁷

(3) [Context: A, the grand-son, to his grand-mother B about a school concert]

A : Vous viendrez ou pas ? *Will you come or not?*

B : Je peux pas c'est pas possible faut que ce soit un samedi pour que je vienne te voir ou un vendredi soir

I can't it's not possible it has to be a Saturday for me to come and see you or a Friday evening

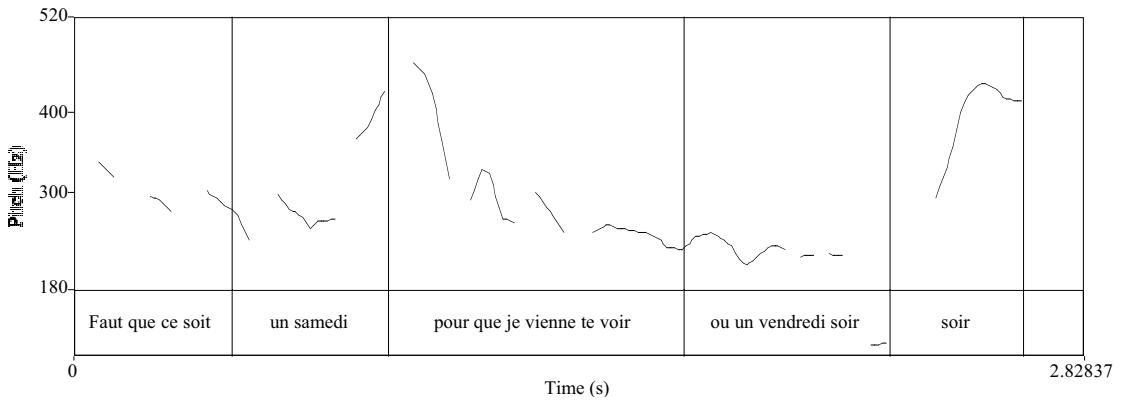
³ In compositional approaches, assertion (or assertiveness) is associated with a type of L tone or a sequence of tones including a L tone in the relevant part of the contour, question (or aspects of questioning) is associated to a type of H tone or a sequence of tones including a H tone.

⁴ Confirmation or verifying questions are utterances in the declarative form with a questioning value, i.e. inviting a feedback from the addressee. Typically, they trigger a turn which sounds like a response to a polar question (*oui, ouais, non, j'sais pas*, etc.). They are regularly uttered with one of the three non-falling contours of French (rising, rising-falling, falling from a penultimate peak).

⁵ This is well known in the French descriptive tradition. Zwanenburg (1965) observes: "It is impossible to give an interrogative value to a given contour (*melodie*); a contour has such a value only when it is combined with other elements in the utterance in a given context and a given situation." Grundstrom (1973: 50) adds: "we have not succeeded in discovering a contour (*un patron prosodique acoustique*) that would be distinctive in the sense that each occurrence of this contour would be necessarily associated to a question." He also claims "that the rises, or the variant high plateau, is often the most obvious marking of a question, but all rises or high plateaux are not questions" (ibid: 41).

⁶ The use of such a contour is quite frequent in French everyday conversation (cf. Martins-Baltar (1977), Solignac (1999)).

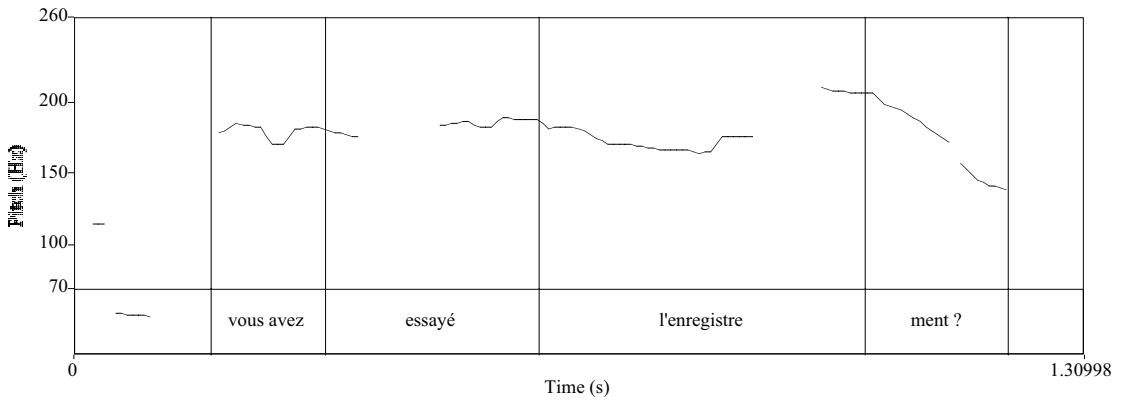
⁷ The same phenomenon has been observed in English and Dutch too by Beun (1990).



(4) [Context: after-sales service operator to a customer]

Vous avez essayé l'enregistrement ?

Have you tried the recording function?



(5) [Context: a customer and a after-sales service phone operator]

B: Que s'est-il passé ?

What happened?

A: La cassette a été éjectée.

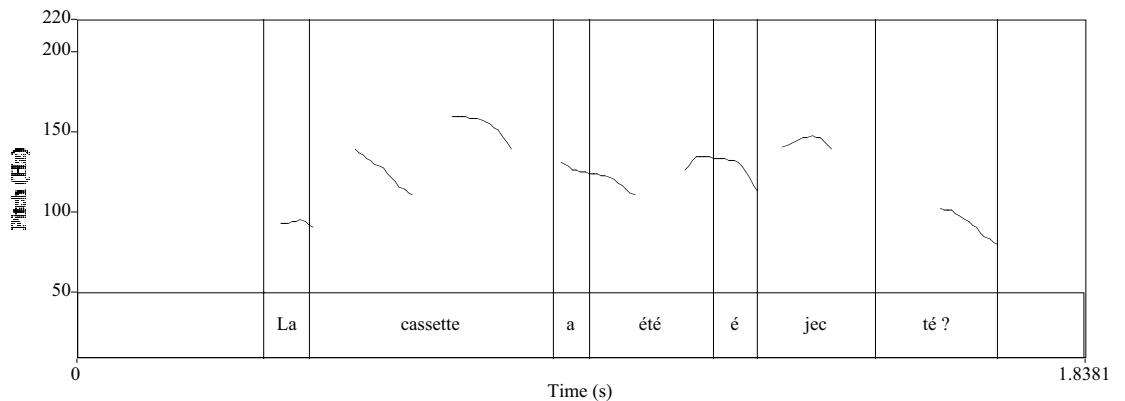
The tape was ejected.

-> B: La cassette a été éjectée ?

The tape was ejected?

A: Oui.

Yes.



Moreover, it is well known that prototypical interrogatives and imperatives are uttered with a falling contour. In this respect, French is not different from English (cf. Bartels (1999), Gunlogson (2001) or Ladd (1996)).

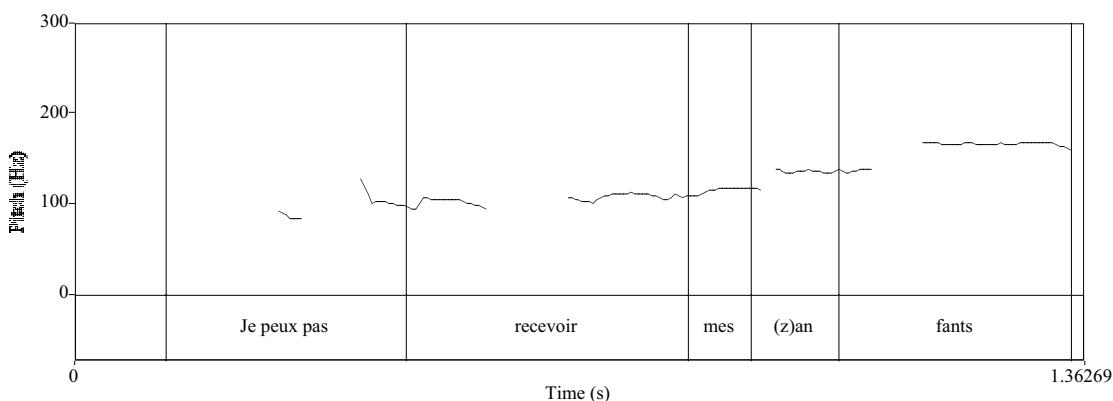
The generalization is the following: falling contour (or the relevant L tone) is not associated with Assertion, but rather with "prototypical" assertions, questions or commands. Non-falling contour (*i.e.*, the three non-falling contours in (1) above) is not associated with Question, but rather with utterances with a marked discourse value. An utterance in the declarative form may have a questioning value with either one of the four final contours, including the falling contour. In other words, none of the final contours is specifically associated with questionhood. Conversely, none is associated with assertionhood, since an utterance in the declarative form may be asserting with either one of the four final contours, including the non-falling ones.

3.2. Contour and commitment

Recently, it has been argued that intonation meaning in English has something to do with the notion of commitment. According to Bartels, who adopts a compositional approach to contours, the phrase tone L- marks Speaker's commitment. And Gunlogson (2001), who adopts a holistic approach to contours and *de facto* restricts her analysis to declaratives, claims that falling contours convey Speaker's commitment whereas rising contours convey Hearer's commitment. This latter hypothesis is taken up and reformulated by Steedman (2003), who analyses intonation in terms of Speaker's commitment and Speaker's attribution of commitment to the hearer (cf. §6 below).

This type of generalization does not hold for French. An utterance in the declarative form may convey Speaker's commitment either with a falling or a rising contour.⁸ For example, the rising assertion in (3) above and (6) below clearly commit the speaker and not the addressee.

- (6) [Context: a man in a social center interviewed on the radio]
 Nous, on est dans des centres d'hébergement. Bon, moi personnellement, j'ai trois enfants, mais je ne peux pas recevoir mes enfants.
We live in a social center. Well, personally I have three kids, but I can't have them visit me here.



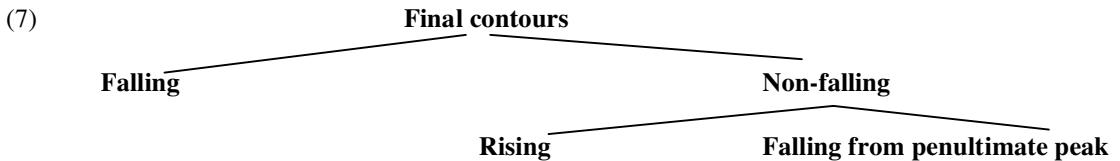
⁸ Data concerning the felicity conditions of questioning declaratives are different in French and English. For example, it is not true that, in French, rising declaratives can be used as confirmative questions only in contexts where the addressee is already publicly committed to the proposition expressed in the utterance (Gunlogson (2001)). Rising contours are differently used in French and English, which implies that their meaning is different.

4. Final contour meaning in French

The core of our proposal is the following: the choice of contour enables the speaker to signal how she anticipates Addressee's reception of her utterance. This is so because it is crucially based on her image of Addressee's belief about the current issue or activity. Such an image implies the attribution of beliefs to the addressee by the speaker.

4.1. Proposal

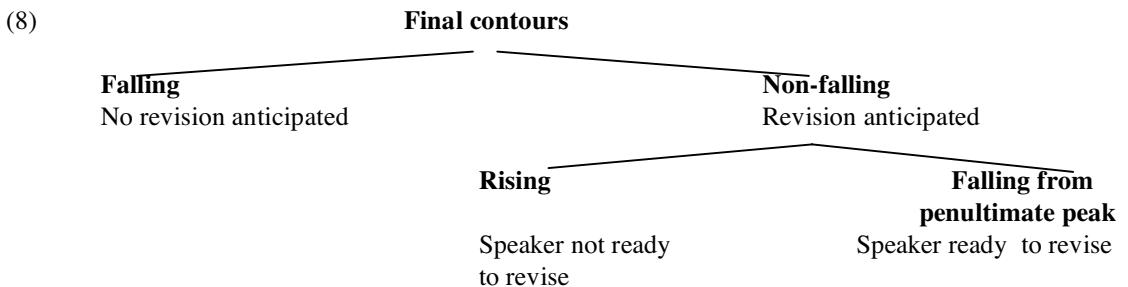
Assuming a contrastive approach to final contour meaning, we propose two levels of contrast. This is schematized under (7) below:



First, the contrast between falling and non-falling contours signals how the speaker anticipates the reception of her utterance by the hearer. By using a falling contour, the speaker presents her utterance as non contentious and signals that she does not anticipate any revision of the commitment she expresses in her utterance,⁹ whereas, by using a non-falling contour, she signals that she anticipates a possible "conflict" between herself and the addressee.

The second level of contrasts holds among non-falling contours. By using a rising contour, the speaker signals that she is not ready to revise her commitment, even though she anticipates that it may be incompatible with what she assumes to be the addressee's belief.¹⁰ By using a falling from a penultimate peak contour, the speaker signals that she anticipates that she may have to revise her own commitment.

Then, the whole proposal may be schematized as follows:



If contour meaning pertains to the reception that the speaker anticipates for her utterance, it crucially involves Speaker / Addressee asymmetry and, more precisely, their different statuses with respect to commitment in dialogue. The speaker is committed to the propositions or the issues conveyed by her utterances, whereas the addressee may refuse them, challenge the content or address the issue of their relevance for the current activity. If the addressee is in the position of not accepting a commitment of her partner, the speaker is also in the position of anticipating such a refusal. Such an

⁹ Commitment to the content of the utterance in asserting declaratives; commitment to the issue raised by the question in questioning utterances.

¹⁰ There are two types of rising contours: simple rise contour and rising-falling contour (rise-falling on the last syllable of the phrase), the latter corresponds to "contour d'implication" in Delattre (1966). Both convey the meaning that the speaker is committed to the content of the utterance and not ready to revise her commitment. There is a difference in discourse value we leave aside here.

anticipation crucially involves belief attribution to the addressee. Such an attribution belongs to the unpublicized information state of the speaker: the speaker knows or fears that the addressee disagrees, the speaker wants to provoke the addressee by attributing her the possibility of disagreeing (polemic use) or the speaker wants to clear space for the addressee for disagreeing (polite use), etc. We will see in § 5 how to account for this in a model of dialogue.

4.2. Empirical support

4.2.1. Contours and speech acts

The association between falling contours and prototypical speech acts is readily explained by our proposal. As for assertions, a prototypical assertion consists in the uttering of a declarative sentence that conveys a proposition that both the speaker and the hearer are supposed to admit without discussion. In other words, it is taken to express a joint commitment; there is no room for dissent. In a parallel fashion, a prototypical question consists in the uttering of an interrogative sentence that both the speaker and the addressee will add to the questions under discussion at uttering time. Once again, there is no room for dissent about the relevance of the query or the questioned content.

As for the marked value of assertions or questions with a non-falling contour, it is explained as follows: the choice of a non-falling contour signals that the speaker anticipates that the addressee may not be ready to uptake her utterance. Such a choice may force the DPs to some tuning about the content or the relevance of the turn. As shown by conversationalists, the choice of public dissent, even a hint of dissent, is always marked in everyday conversation.

4.2.2. Falling contour with verifying questions

Verifying questions (cf. examples (4) and (5) above) are interesting because they are a thorny issue for intonation and question semantics. They have a questioning value (they do elicit a feedback from Addressee), but they are regularly realized with a falling contour. The choice of a falling contour is directly explained by our proposal: the speaker presents the content of her utterance as uncontentious. Their questioning value is entirely due to the attribution of knowledgeability or authority among DPs: the utterance is taken to be questioning only if the addressee is taken by the speaker or by herself or by both DPs to be more authoritative or knowledgeable about the content of the utterance. This can be part of the structure of situations with pre-allotted roles, e.g. dialogues at information desks, dialogues in institutional settings (teachers / pupils, patients / doctors...).

4.2.3. Interaction with attitude discourse markers

Finally, we are in a position to explain the interactions with discourse particles whose meaning involves Speaker's attitude. Consider (9) below. In (a), the parenthetical *à mon humble avis* is a litotic way to indicate that the speaker is not ready to change her opinion; a rising-falling contour would be rather odd here. In (b), the modifier *sans doute* is regularly used to indicate that Speaker has doubts about the content of her utterance, here a rising contour would be rather odd but a rising-falling contour is possible. Both contrasts are expected given our proposal: in (a), the speaker indicates that she is not ready to revise her commitment (and the belief pertaining to that commitment); in (b), the speaker indicates that she is not fully committed to the content of the proposition; should she choose a rising-falling contour, it would underline her lack of commitment. Both utterances may be realized with a falling contour since the signaling of anticipated revision is never compulsory.

- (9) a. Chirac, *à mon humble avis*, gardera Raffarin
Chirac, to my opinion, will keep Raffarin
 Falling: ok, Rising: OK, Falling from penultimate peak: ??
- b. Chirac gardera *sans doute* Raffarin
Chirac will probably keep Raffarin
 Falling: ok, Rising: ??, Falling from penultimate peak: OK

5. Modelisation in a dialogical framework

5.1. Dialogical framework

We propose to account for intonational meaning from a dialogical perspective. From that perspective, the main contribution of an utterance is to trigger an update of the commitment store of the speaker (what Ginzburg calls the speaker's public gameboard) and to open the possibility for the addressee to accept or to discuss the commitment put forward by her interlocutor.

Ginzburg (forth) proposes to analyze the conversational interaction in terms of information states of the participants. The information state (IS) of each conversation participant is partitioned into two component parts: a public one and an unpublicized (or private) one.

(10)

$$\left[\text{IS} \begin{array}{l} \left[\text{Dialogue Gameboard (DGB)} \right] \\ \left[\text{Unpublicized IS (UNPUB)} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

The dialogue gameboard (DGB), which corresponds to the public part, records the commitments of the speaker and it is split into three component parts (see (11)): (a) Shared Ground (SG) records the speaker's version of the commitments accepted by the DPs so far;¹¹ (b) Questions under discussion (QUD) records the speaker's version of the list of live questions at uttering time and (c) Latest move (LM) describes the speaker's interpretation of the turn that precedes her taking the floor.

(11)

$$\left[\text{DGB} \begin{array}{l} \left[\text{SHARED GROUND} \right] \\ \left[\text{QUD} \right] \\ \left[\text{LATEST MOVE} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

The unpublicized part of the information state of a participant (UNPUB) is partitioned into two components (see (12)): (a) GOAL describes the goal of the speaker in uttering her utterance and (b) Background (BKGROUND) records the unpublicized knowledge or belief store of the participants. We depart from Ginzburg's original proposal by giving more structure to BKGROUND. We make a distinction between SP, which is what the Speaker knows or believes, and ADD, which corresponds to what the speaker assumes that the addressee knows or believes. This last distinction is crucial for characterizing the context signalled by the choice of a contour.

(12)

$$\left[\text{UNPUB} \begin{array}{l} \left[\text{GOAL} \right] \\ \left[\text{BKGROUND} \begin{array}{l} \left[\text{SP} \right] \\ \left[\text{ADD} \right] \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

An utterance has two impacts: an impact on Speaker's gameboard and another on Addressee. The former can be captured with the notion of speech act. By making an assertion, the speaker makes it public that she increments her public representation of the joint commitments shared in the current dialogue. By making a question, the speaker makes it public that she increments her public representation of the set of questions under debate (QUD) in the current dialogue. The latter can be

¹¹ SHARED GROUND (SG) is more restricted than Ginzburg's FACTS. Ginzburg's FACT is more or less the equivalent of the Common Ground. The notion of Common Ground encompasses both public belief (the commitments) and unpublicized belief of the speaker. By restricting SG to commitments, we reinforce the divide between the public and the unpublicized character of belief.

captured with the contrast "asserting vs questioning": a questioning move requires a feedback from the addressee, whereas an asserting move does not.

5.2. *Contours in context*

As we have argued in §4, contour meaning crucially involves an appreciation by the speaker of the context of her utterance, in particular an appreciation of the addressee's attitude towards the current issue. This explains why it is impossible to state a deterministic relation between a type of situation and a contour. Actual situations or contexts are always viewed through Speaker's perspective. Hence, we will define the context in which each contour is appropriate in terms of the information state of the speaker. Essentially, the context can be characterized in terms of the compatibility or incompatibility of the content of what we have called SP and ADD above. In other words, it is linked to whether the speaker assumes that the addressee is ready to take up the content or the goal of her utterance.

BKGROUND is split into SP(eaker) and ADD(ressee) (cf. (12) above). We also assume that the current issue *i* selects among the elements of BKGROUND those that are ABOUT *i*. They are selected in SP and ADD; we note ThemS_{Speaker} and ThemS_{Addressee} the two subsets of elements of content about the issue: what the speaker specifically knows/believes about the current issue and what she assumes the addressee knows/believes about the issue.

$$(13) \quad \begin{aligned} \text{ThemS}_{\text{Speaker}} &= \{s \in \text{SP}, \text{About}(q, s)\} \\ \text{ThemS}_{\text{Addressee}} &= \{s \in \text{ADD}, \text{About}(q, s)\} \end{aligned}$$

Now, the choice of a falling or non-falling contour reflects a difference in DP's information states that is reminiscent of the difference between defective and non-defective contexts in Stalnaker (1978). From our perspective, it characterizes the unpublicized information state of the speaker:

- (14) a. Nondefective context:
The elements making up ThemS_{Speaker} and ThemS_{Addressee} are compatible.
b. Defective context:
The elements making up ThemS_{Speaker} and ThemS_{Addressee} are not, or may not be, compatible.

Falling contours are used when the speaker presents the context of her utterance as a non-defective context. On the other hand, non-falling contours are used when the speaker presents the context of her utterance as a defective context. Thus, contours are a means for the speaker to express how she envisions the addressee's attitude towards the commitment she makes with her utterance. It always reflects the belief she attributes to the addressee.

Rising contours are used when the speaker presents the content of her assertion or the issue of her question as a member of ThemS_{Speaker}, whereas falling from a penultimate peak contours are used when the speaker presents the content of her assertion or the issue of her question as being not a member of ThemS_{Speaker}.

6. A comparison

Steedman (2003) proposes a semantics for pitch accents and sequences of edge tones in English. As we saw above (§2.2), we are not in a position to give a morphemic analysis of French contours. Hence, we will compare the overall value of contours in English and in French. His analysis bears some family resemblance with ours (which we have developed independently). Comparing both of them will enable us to sort out the dimensions that are relevant to account for intonation meaning and the differences between French and English intonation. Steedman's analysis is restricted to declarative utterances with an asserting value, while ours is devised to account for all illocutionary types. Here, we restrict ourselves to assertions.

According to Steedman, the meaning of pitch accents is crucially sensitive to the dimension "whether or not the particular theme or rheme to hand is mutually agreed – that is uncontentious"

(Steedman 2003: 3).¹² The contrast "agreed / non agreed" is similar to the contrast "readily uptakable / non readily uptakable" we have associated with the contrast "falling / non-falling contours". The only difference is that Steedman's analysis is formulated in static terms referring to information status, whereas ours is framed in a dynamic framework. As noticed by Steedman, "[this] dimension of discourse meaning [...] has not usually been identified in the literature" (*ibid.*). We agree with Steedman on the fact that this is a major drawback of intonation semantics, since it is a dimension associated with the major aspect of contours (types of pitch accents in English, the contrast "falling / non-falling", that we consider the root contrast in the hierarchy of contours in French).

Interestingly, in order to give content to this parameter, Steedman is led to make a partition in what he calls the speaker's knowledge: "I'll assume that the speaker's knowledge can be thought of as a database or set of propositions [...], divided into two subdomains namely: a set S of information units that the speaker claims to be committed to and a set H of information units which the speaker claims the hearer to be committed to" (*ibid.*). Indeed, the very notion of agreement or contentious character of a unit of information requires that at least two points of view be distinguished. For the same reason, we have been led to postulate a similar divide, and assign it in the unpublicized part of the information state of the speaker (cf. (12) above). In our proposal, the speaker attributes a belief to the addressee; she does not attribute a commitment. This turns out to be a major difference between both analyses, which we address below.

In Steedman's analysis, the distinction between Speaker and Addressee is also crucial to account for the meaning of the sequence of edge tones, *i.e.*, the sequences L, LL%, HL% on the one hand and the sequences H, HH%, LH% on the other. The former signals Speaker's commitment whereas the latter signals commitment attribution to Addressee. "Crucially, the system grammaticalizes a distinction between the beliefs that the speaker claims by their utterance that the speaker is committed to, and those that the hearer actually is committed to. It is only the latter set that includes Mutual beliefs." (*ibid.*) In French, we have already seen that the choice of non-falling contours does not signal Hearer's commitment nor attribution of commitment to Hearer (cf. §3.2.).

The definition of *commitment* in terms of responsibility¹³ is not very precise. We propose to redefine it as the public attribution of a belief by the speaker to herself. The speaker is committed to p when she publicly attributes to herself the belief that p. Under that definition, the dimension of commitment criss-crosses the contrasts holding in the hierarchy of French contours. A speaker presents herself as committed to p when she uses a rising or a falling contour.

When she uses a rising contour, she signals that the content of her utterance may be contentious, but does correspond to what she is ready to present as her public belief. When she uses a falling contour, she signals that the content of her utterance is not contentious, and, as such, she commits herself to the belief that the content is a joint commitment. On the other hand, when she uses a falling from penultimate peak contour, she does not signal attribution of a commitment or of a belief to the addressee. She merely signals that she is not committed to the content of the utterance (hence the effect that she is ready to revise her belief about the issue addressed in her utterance). If Steedman's and our description are correct for English and French respectively, this would be a major difference between French and English: French does not grammaticalize the attribution of a commitment to the addressee as does English.

According to Steedman, the source of conflict is not grammaticalized in English, *i.e.*, English does not grammaticalize who the content is contentious for. Steedman claims: "The responses involving a L* pitch-accent mark the rheme as being not agreed. However, the pitch accent itself does not distinguish who the opposition is coming from." (*ibid.* p. 8). In this respect, French makes another choice. The contrast between the rising contours and the falling from penultimate peak contour precisely signals the potential source of the "readily uptakable / not readily uptakable" character of the utterance. By using a rising contour, the speaker signals that she expects the addressee not to be ready

¹² Here we leave here aside the partition into theme and rheme. We have no empirical ground to adopt the theme/rheme partition for French.

¹³ "I'll also try to argue that the intonational boundaries [...] fall into two classes respectively distinguishing the speaker or the hearer as responsible for, or [...] committed to the corresponding information units". Steedman (2003: 3).

to admit the content of her utterance, thus designating the addressee as a potential source of contention. By using a fall from penultimate peak contour, she signals that she does not commit herself to the content of the utterance, designating herself as a potential source of contention.

7. Conclusion

The contrast "readily uptakable vs non readily uptakable" plays a central role in our analysis of contour meaning in French. According to Steedman, it is also crucial to analyze English contour meaning (at least, the choice of the pitch accent in the contour). Such a dimension *de facto* implies that Speaker attributes beliefs to Addressee. According to our analysis, belief attribution remains in the realm of the unpublicized information state of the speaker in French, whereas it is grammaticalized in English as the meaning of the edge tones at the right edge of contours according to Steedman. In both cases, belief attribution by the speaker to the addressee is at the root of intonation meaning. This has an implication for Intonation Semantics: it must give full status to Speaker / Addressee asymmetry, *i.e.*, it must be rooted in a modelization of Dialogue. Moreover, if contour meaning is sensitive to the contrast between public or unpublicized belief attribution, it should give full status to the Public / Private distinction. These two requirements are not met in approaches which are based on the notion of Common Ground.

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Proceedings of the 2004 Texas Linguistics Society Conference: Issues at the Semantics–Pragmatics Interface

edited by Pascal Denis, Eric McCready, Alexis Palmer, and Brian Reese

Cascadilla Proceedings Project Somerville, MA 2006

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