

***Prosodic, syntactic and semantico-pragmatic parameters
as clues for projection : the case of « il y a »***

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Abstract

Prosody is involved in turn-taking (Local, 1992), together with syntax (Selting, 2005) and semantico-pragmatic parameters (Auer, 1996). A sequential analysis of a syntactic construction, taking into account these parameters, may reveal its conversational functionalities, its interactional pattern and maybe its grammaticization (Hayashi, 2004). In this contribution we choose to study the French « il y a » 'there is'. We first study the so-called ya-cleft construction (Lambrecht, 1988), in which « il y a » can be involved, and then we will discuss the notion of projection (Goodwin, 2002).

*Il y a X 'There's X' (Jeanjean, 1979, Blanche-Benveniste, 1990) has been studied under various frameworks: semantic (Léard, 1992; Furukawa, 1996), informational (Lambrecht, 1988), macro-syntactic (Cappeau & al., 2001 ; Lagae & al. 2005). Within an interactional linguistics' framework, inspired by Sacks & al. (1974), and taking into account previous studies about French prosody (Simon et al., 2004) and the various types of prosodic contour (Lacheret-Dujour, 2003), we study the ya-cleft construction¹ to observe how prosody locally and sequentially signals, with syntax and semantico-pragmatic parameters, in which configuration *il y a* is involved.*

1. The ya-cleft construction : a compound TCU ?

According to Lambrecht (1988), *ya-cleft* construction is a bi-clausal construction (*il y a X qui Y 'There's X who/that Y'*) that allows one to respect the pragmatic constraint according to which one cannot, within one clause, both introduce a referent and predicate something about it (Lambrecht, 1988). Instead it allows introducing a non

¹ The *ya-cleft* construction is a presentational cleft in which « *il y a* », which is often pronounced *ya* [ja], is involved.

identifiable brand-new referent *X* in *il y a X* and then to promote it as a topic in the *qui*-phrase (*qui Y* 'who/that *Y*'), in one proposition.

We will discuss *ya*-cleft as a *compound TCU*, similar to *if X then Y* (Lerner, 1991)², in which the *preliminary component* of the pattern, *if X*, projects the following part, *then Y*, the *final component*, and doing so, invokes recipient to delay his turn-taking³.

1.1. The *ya*-cleft construction pattern

In ex. 1⁴, speaker B reacts to a question about stereotypes of French-speaking Swiss about German-speaking Swiss with a *pre-pre* (Schegloff, 1980), 1.2332 (*je peux vous répondre par une anecdote* 'can I answer you with an anecdote'). Then from 1.2336 to 1.2343, B relates a discussion with students about a school exchange, the context of the story he will tell. Then a *ya*-cleft construction is produced at this point (1.2345) with a pattern recurrently observed in our data: connector(s) (*et puis* 'and then'), *il y a X* (*il y a une élève* 'There's a pupil') and, 1.2346, a pause (0.8) and a *qui*-phrase. Furthermore, in our data, *qui* is marked by hesitations, a lengthening or repetitions.

The *il y a une élève* 'there's a pupil', in this sequential context, projects something to be said about the pupil, delaying an eventual recipient's uptake, and thereby allowing the speaker to pause or hesitate without losing her turn (see the pause 1.2345).

² Our purpose here is not to say that this similarity is semantico-pragmatic but rather that it is a similarity of format, which is bi-clausal in the both cases.

³ The preliminary component only projects the format of the final component its potential location, but not its production, because « the preliminary component allows for the production of additional yet nonfinal components » (Lerner, 1991, 444).

⁴ Data analyzed here are parts of a corpus developed in a research project at the University of Neuchâtel, named « Topic and focus constructions as resources for interaction. A grammar-in-interaction account », funded by the Swiss Research National (subsidy no. PP001-68685), which studies syntactic constructions in interaction.

(1) Example 1

2332 B je peux vous répondre par une anecdote/
I can answer you with an anecdote

2333 L ((rire))&
((laughter))

2334 Q &oui oui bien [sûr
yes yes of course

2335 A? [hm:
(1.3)

2336 B on a: . demandé à une classe (1.2) euh: (car) je suis maître
we have . asked to a class (1.2) euh (because) I am teacher

2337 de classe s'ils voulaient . faire un échange de trois semaines
of class if they wanted . to do an exchange of three weeks

2338 avec une école . bernoise\ (0.8) trois semaines l'école vient
with a school in bern\ (0.8) three weeks the school comes

2339 chez nous/ trois semaines les nôtres vont là-bas ((.h))
here/ three weeks ours go there ((.h))

2340 les programmes sont continus mais dans l'autre langue ... xx
programs are continued but in the other language ... xx

2341 ... alors bien évidemment pour faire ceci il faut que les
... then obviously to do this it is necessary that the

2342 parents jouent le jeu et qu'ils acceptent d'accueillir
parents play the game and that they agree to receive

2343 [et tout ça/
[and everything

2344 L [mhm

2345 B alors on on fait un sondage on demande aux élèves et puis il y a
they we we take a poll we ask to pupils and then there's

2346 une élève (0.8) qui: euh qui me dit ah non moi jamais un
a pupil (0.8) who: euh who tells me ah no I never a

2347 suisse allemand chez moi\
german-speaking swiss at my house\

2348 Q ((petit rire))
((little laughter))

2349 B jamais je n'accepterai jamais
never I will accept never

2350 (0.8)

2351 B [((petit rire))
[((little laughter))

2352 L [((petit rire))
[((little laughter))

This pause can be filled by a continuer (Schegloff, 1982) or an acknowledgement token (Jefferson, 1983) from the recipient. It is what we can see in the example 2 (11.869-870).

In example 2, we observe the same pattern (1.865), with a connector anchoring *il y a X* in the discourse - here it is *là là* 'here here'⁵ - the

⁵ *là* 'here' is described with the locative *il y a X*, when the referent *X* is present in the speech situation (Léard, 1992, 31), which is not the case in ex.2. This underlines our perception of *il y a X* organizing the mental space (Lakoff, 1987), and localizing *X* in it, like pointing would do in a physical space.

introduction of the referent *le mythe du perfectionnisme* 'the myth of perfectionism' after *il y a*, followed by interlocutors' continuers (ll.869-870) and the *qui* 'who', of the *qui*-phrase (l.868), *qui conduit la plume de bloomfield* 'which led the pen of bloomfield', which is repeated. The only difference here is the production of continuers (ll.869-870).

(2) Example 2

859 Q mais bon a contrario vous pensez pas que la définition de grosjean
but well on the contrary don't you think that the definition of grosjean
860 elle est un peu légère parce qu'alors à ce moment-là moi je
it is a bit broad because then I
861 pourrais me dire bilingue dans la mesure où ça m'arrive euh tous
could be bilingual insofar as it occurs to me euh every
862 les jours de lire ne serait-ce que:: . trois lignes en anglais
day to read even . three lines in english
863 R &moi ça me plaît [assez hein parce que-
I like that [rather because-
864 Q [parce que je lis des articles en anglais eu:h
[because I read articles in english eu:h
865 R &là là il y a ce ce il y a le mythe de la p- du perfectionnisme
where here there's this this there's the myth of the p- of perfectionism
866 Q ouais
yes
867 E [mhm mhm mhm
868 R [hein/ qui est qui qui qui a qui a conduit eu:h la plume
[hein/ which is which which which has which has led eu:h the pen
869 E &[mhm
870 Q &[ouais
&[yes
871 R &de de bloomfield& ((léger rire))
&of of bloomfield& ((light laughter))
872 Q &ouais ouais [ouais
&yes yes [yes
873 E [mhm
874 R & tandis que là c'est le fonctionnalisme . hein
&while here it is functionalism . hnh
875 Q [ouais/ ((interrogateur))
[yes/ ((questioning))
876 R [donc il faut il faut pouvoir fonctionner
[therefore it's necessary it's necessary to be able to function
877 & eu::h ouais/ il f- il faut
eu::h yes/ it- it's necessary
878 Q &mhm
879 R &un un bilinguisme: pas du dimanche mais le bilinguisme de tous
&a a bilingualism: not of amateur but the bilingualism of every
880 les jours/
day/

This pattern looks like the pattern of *news announcement* (Button & al., 1984), and the pattern described by Ochs & al. (1979, 254), in which a speaker introduces a referent, waits for a signal from the recipient that he has understood and accepts it, and then adds information about it. In this sense, this pattern allows negotiation on turn-taking and on the topic of the discourse.

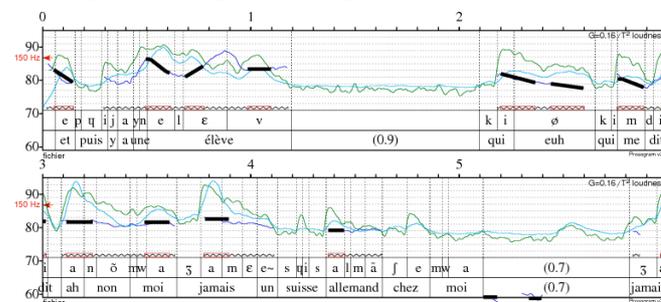
Repetitions, like those of *il y a* (l.865) and of *qui* (l.868), can be used to avoid overlaps (Schegloff, 1987) or to delay the pursuit of the turn

until the recipient pays attention to the speaker (Goodwin, 1980). Thus, like the pause and the continuers, these repetitions may reveal the interactional roots of *il y a X qui Y* pattern.

Furthermore, we observe a recurrent prosodic contour of this pattern (cf. fig.1 & 2), a pitch accent (a static or a glissando, dynamic or not, Lacheret-Dujour, 2003, 42)⁶ at the end of X. In ex.1, 1.2345, we observe a dynamic glissando on the [e] and the [ɛ] of *élève* (fig.1) and, ex.2, 1.865, on the second [i] of *perfectionnisme* (fig.2). Then, we observe a reinitialization on the *qui* of the next *qui*-phrases (fig.2). Like pointing (Simon et al., 2004, 91), this accent could designate the referent to be proposed as a topic and submitted to the recipient's acceptance. Thus it signals that something more will be said about this referent.

Example 2 is part of a debate about two definitions of bilingualism between several speakers, in which R, 1.865, produces *il y a le mythe du perfectionnisme* 'there's the myth of perfectionism' which seems to summarize the preceding debate and adds a comment about the definition of Bloomfield (1.865-867). As a pivotal utterance (Jefferson, 1984), it permits avoiding preference of producing a second pair part to the first pair part initiated by the question of speaker Q, about the definition offered by Grosjean (1.859-861).

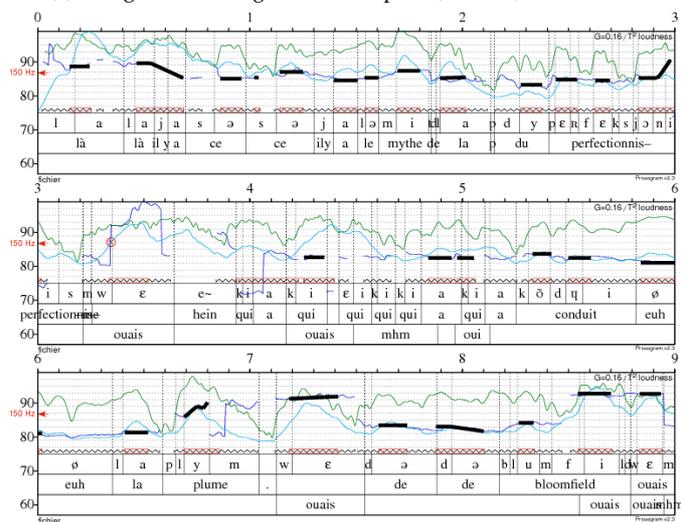
(1) Figure 1 : Prosogram of example 1 (line 2346)⁷



6 The prosodic analysis in this article have been synchronized phoneme by phoneme with the help of an aligner on PRAAT (<http://latlcul.unige.ch/phonetique/>) and then analyzed with the prosograph (Mertens, 2004) which offers a simulation of the human perception. We only use prosograms as an objectification of our own perceptual analysis which remains to our view, the only relevant one.

7 The glissando level chosen by Mertens (2004) as the most relevant is $G = 0.32/T^2$. When our perception was different from the prosogram, we used a different glissando level ($G = 0.16/T^2$), the standard threshold determined in laboratory which sometimes overestimates average listeners' perception (cf. Mertens, 2004).

(2) Figure 2 : Prosogram of example 2 (line 858)



Thus, if we do not deny the fact that *ya*-cleft permits promoting a non-identifiable referent to topic status (Lambrecht, 1988), we think that it rather « designates a mental space in which a conceptual entity is to be located » (Lakoff, 1987, 542)⁸ in a dispreferred sequential position an unexpected referent or event, or presented as such, (cf. the event⁹ *il y a une élève qui me dit* 'there's a pupil who tells me', ex.1, l.2345).

In this part we described a prosodic and interactional pattern of *ya*-cleft construction (fig.3), in which prosody and semantico-pragmatic parameters project more to come and open a space for negotiation between interactants about topics.

(3) Figure 3 : pattern of *ya*-cleft construction

- phase 1** connector(s) + *il y a* (+ repetitions of *il y a*) + referent X (with (ascendant) (dynamic) glissando)
- phase 2** + pause (+ continuer of the recipient)
- phase 3** + relative pronoun (+ repetitions of relative pronouns) + phrase

⁸ « A mental space is, however, not a location; it is a medium in which there are many locations. » (Lakoff, 1987, 542)

⁹ We will not discuss here the event-reporting *ya*-cleft (Lambrecht, 1988), but it seems that interactional and prosodic patterns described here could be clues to make this distinction.

1.2. Parenthesis

As discussed in Lerner (1991) with *if X then Y*, parenthesis can be included in the course of a *ya*-cleft construction.

Example (3) is about language learning in immersion. N takes the floor on line 1005, and produces the connector *alors que* 'while'. Then *il y a* is followed by *surtout du côté des romands* 'especially among the French-speaking Swiss', which do not constitute an X but an insert. According to Duvallon & al. (2005, 53), inserts and parentheses « tend to be placed in slots where the syntactic and semantic incompleteness of the utterance is readily evident ». Thus *il y a* is followed by a first site of projection that we will not discuss here¹⁰.

(3) Example 3

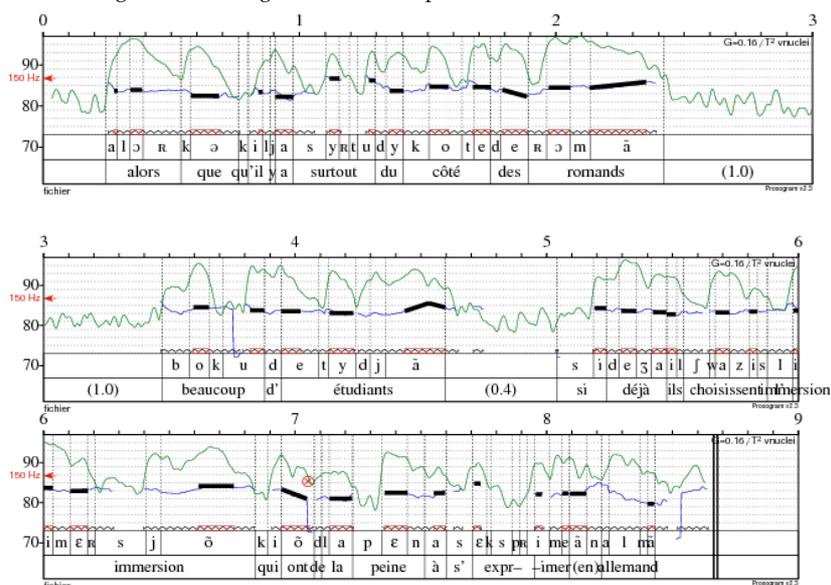
1005 N alors dans notre système d'immersion ils sont en principe TEmus à
then in our system of immersion they are normally REquired to
 1006 s'exprimer dans: . dans [la langue du cours\
*speak in: . in [the language of the course\
 1007 B [oui bien sûr oui
 [yes of course yes
 1008 N étrang- donc . [dans leur langue étrangère\
*strang- therefore [in their foreign tongue\
 1009 B [ouais . tout à fait
 [yes . absolutely
 1010 Q mhm
 1011 N alors que . qu'il y a surtout du côté des romands/ (1.0)
while . there is mostly on the side of the french speaking swiss/ (1.0)
 1012 beaucoup d'étudiant:ts .. si déjà ils choisissent l'immersion:/ .
a lot of student:ts .. if even they choose immersion:/ .
 1013 qui ont de la peine à s'exprimer [en allemand\
*who have difficulties to speak [german\
 1014 L [ouais ça je pense [alors
 [yes I think [then
 1015 C+B [mhm
 1016 N OU . justement une autre conséquence/ c'est que j'arrive plus
OR . by the way another consequence/ it is that I don't manage anymore
 1017 parfois à: . à déchiffrer ce que ça veut dire/
*sometimes to: to interpret what it means/****

This insert is followed by a pause (1s) and, l.1012, by *beaucoup d'étudiants* 'a lot of students'. Once again, we observe a lengthening, an ascending dynamic glissando on the last syllable on the [ã] of *étudiants* 'students' (fig.4) and a pause. Then, a second insert which we will focus on, is added *si déjà ils choisissent l'immersion* 'if they choose immersion'. Finally the *qui*-phrase is produced l.1013.

¹⁰ In some contexts, *il y a* is not followed by a X: *si on voit hein .. qu'est-ce qu'il y a/* 'whether we see .. what there is/'. In this case the syntactic (and prosodic) context is different from the one of the pattern discussed here.

Following Duvallon & al. (2005, 53), the localization of this parenthesis at this place is a strong argument to consider the pattern described as a compound TCU. Another argument would be the possibility of a collaborative production of this pattern (Lerner, 1991), and this is what we will see in the next section.

(4) Figure (4) : Prosogram of the example 3



1.3. Additional final component and collaborative production

Example 4 is part of a discussion about the localization of language in the brain. Speaker Q addresses a question to J between lines 358 and 365. At 1.366, J evokes *trucs* 'things' in our memory and, at 1.367, things we cannot remember. After the connector *pis* 'then', J introduces the referent *des trucs* 'some things'. As this phrase is underspecified, "semantically light" (Hayashi, 2004, 1348), a specification is expected and is provided by the restrictive relative clause *qu'on sait pas* 'which we don't know' which participates in the shaping of reference. There's no pause between *trucs* and *qu'on sait pas*, and thus no space for a recipient's continuer.

(4) Example 4 :

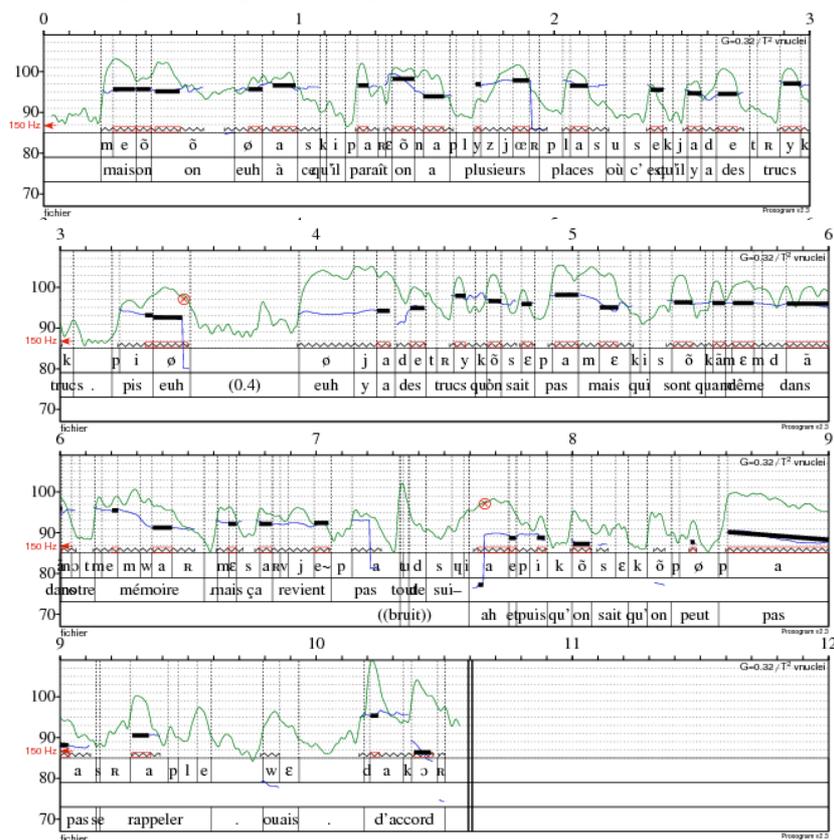
358 Q donc . pour toi aussi les langues c'est quelque chose ..&
 therefore . for you too languages it's something ..&
 359 &[PARMI/
 &[amongy
 360 X [(qu'il faut)
 [(which has to)
 (0.8)
 361 Q d'autres choses comme les mathématiques comme le sport et tout ça\
 other things like mathematics like sport and everything\
 362 . vous pensez que c'est bien localisé dans le cerveau/
 . you think that it is well localized in the brain/
 363 X mhm
 364 D? mhm
 365 Q à une place définie
 in a place specified
 366 J mais on o-^à: ce qu'il paraît on a plusieurs places où c'est qu'il
 but we we-^it is said that we have several places where it is that there
 367 y a des trucs pis .. euh y a des trucs qu'on sait PAS mais qui
 are things and .. euh there are things we DON'T know but which
 368 sont quand même dans notre mémoire\ . mais ça revient pas
 are even in our memory\ . but it does not come back
 369 [tout de suite
 [right now
 370 Q [ah et puis qu'on sait- qu'on peut pa::s . rappeler ouais .
 [ah and then that we do not- that we do not . remember yes .
 371 D'ACCORD
 OK

Even if we once again observe an increase of the frequency of 4 semitones between the [e] of *des* and the [y] of *trucs* (fig.5), the following phrase *qu'on sait pas* 'which we do not know' remains entirely static at the same F0 that the [y] of *trucs*. After *pas* 'not' (1.367), there is a 4 semitones decrease of F0, e.g. a reinitialization on the connector *mais* 'but' (1.367) at the beginning of the next *qui*-phrase, *mais qui sont quand même dans notre mémoire* 'but which are anyway in our memory'. Thus, prosody is involved in shaping the topic and signalling what is submitted to the negotiation with the recipient, which is here *des trucs qu'on sait pas* 'things we don't know' rather than *des trucs* 'things'¹¹.

The addition of several *qui*-phrases, organized prosodically and one of which produced by the recipient, illustrates the format of the unit projected. Indeed, on 1.370, Q produces an early start of her turn (Schegloff, 1987) in overlap and adds another additional final component, *qu'on sait- qu'on peut pas rappeler* 'which we know- which we cannot remember', which initiates the closure of the sequence, reformulating what has been said by L.

¹¹ Like in foot-note 8, a sequential and prosodic analysis seems to provide cues to distinguish restrictive relative clauses from *qui*-phrases containing predications.

(5) Figure 5: Prosogram of example 4



Thus *ya*-cleft constitutes a compound TCU illustrating how prosody (Local, 1992) and syntax (Selting, 2005), together with semantic-pragmatic parameters (Auer, 1996), signal a projection of the pursuit of the turn to recipient(s).

2. *il y a X* pattern: syntax, prosody and semantico-pragmatic parameters' involvement in projection

In addition to *ya*-clefts, *il y a* is involved in various other constructions, more or less grammaticized, that we will not discuss here. There range from the configurations in which the *qui* 'who/that' of the *qui*-phrase is substituted by the dummy pronoun *il* 'he/it' (Cappeau & al., 2001; Lagae & al., 2005) to the ones projecting a whole segment of discourse rather than a single clause in which *X* is

specified by a pseudo-cleft or a colon effect (Declerck, 1988), or is presented as a kind of title, which Dik (1997) would call a topic. Following Hayashi (2004, 1365), we think that the « turn-constructional practices designed for projection (...) might be grammaticalized, to a varying degree into grammatical construction », thus projection can explain some constructions.

Though, *il y a X* has sometimes no continuation (which is also the case for *if X*, Lerner, 1991, 443) (ex. 6).

(6) Example 6

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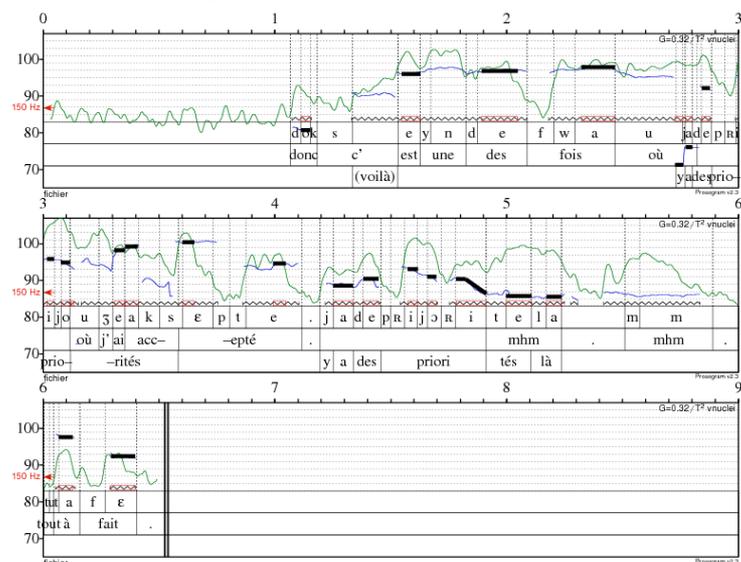
1298 G mais en tant que prof d'italien . j'ai^j'ai pas corrigé\ (1.0)
      but as a teacher of italian . I've I've not corrected\ (1.0)
1299 donc [c':est une desá
      thus [it:: is one of thes
1300 L [(voilà)\ ... y a des priorités
      [(indeed)\ ... there are priorities
1301 G &fois où::[: où j'ai accepté\
      &times when::[: when I have accepted
1302 L [y a des priorit[és là\
      [there are priorit[ies here\
1303 Q [mhm mhm
1304 G [mhm .. tout à fait\
      [mhm .. indeed\
1305 (1.5)
1306 ((noise of papers))
1307 Q (mais) par rapport à ça si je vous sOUmets euh . deux définitions
      (but) about that if I submit you euh . two definitions

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This example is taken from a debate between language teachers about tolerating mistakes. In l.1298, G deals with a workshop in which she has tolerated many mistakes. In l.1300, L produces an acknowledgement of G's turn, with *voilà* 'indeed' and adds *y a des priorités* 'there are priorities' in overlap with G's turn. She repeats it l.1302, at the end of G's turn, followed by *là* once again (cf. foot-note 3). In these cases, L does not present this referent as a first topic for further talk, but rather comments on G's turn in order to close the sequence of conversation. In this context, *il y a des priorités* does not create a semantico-pragmatic expectation as to some type of follow-up. Thus the floor is finally free and Q takes it (l.1307) to begin a new sequence. The same type of lack of projection occur when semantics of referents bear a predication (*il y a un bombardement*, 'there's a bombing', Léard, 1992), when the predication is implicated in the shared knowledge (*il y a un frelon [qui peut te piquer]* 'there's a hornet [that could sting you]', Charolles, 2002, 156) or in the discourse (*y'a Beth qui veut y'aller*, euh *y'a y'a Jean-marc*, *y'a moi, bon* 'there's Beth who wants to go, euh there's there's Jean-Marc, there's me, well', Lambrecht, 1988, 154).

Furthermore, *priorités* (l.1302) bears, on its antepenultimate syllable, a dynamic falling glissando, until the infra-grave level, signalling the closing of G's turn (fig. 7)¹².

(7) Figure 7: Prosogram of the example 6



Thus, prosodic and semantico-pragmatic parameters signal whether or not more discourse will follow *il y a X*. Furthermore, this underlines, in the case of *il y a*, the weakness of syntax as a cue to signal projection, because *il y a X* can have continuation or not.

3. Conclusion

Prosody is thus an interactional resource signalling whether or not more discourse will be produced and pointing out which stretch of speech is being submitted to recipient's acceptance. As a cue for projection (Goodwin, 2002), prosody has to be studied sequentially (Local, 1992), locally and jointly with syntax, and semantico-pragmatic parameters (Auer, 1996; Selting, 2005). In the case of *il y a*, these parameters, associated within the pattern described, signal whether or not more has to be said about the referent localized in the discourse. It allows keeping the floor and cuing which part of discourse is submitted to negotiation with recipients, which the syntactic structure

¹² Prosody only signals end of a turn in which the last TCU is initiated by a *il y a*, and not the end of each TCU initiated by *il y a* (cf. the first *il y a des trucs*, ex. 4 l.367, which ends a TCU but not the turn of the speaker, and then does not bear an ending accent).

il y a in itself, only localizing a referent in a mental space, would not be able to do without prosody. Thus projection may explain the various syntactic configurations in which *il y a* is involved (Hayashi, 2004).

Transcription Conventions

[overlap
{.h}	audible aspiration (breathing)
::	elongation of the preceding sound
/	audible decreasing prosodic contour
\	audible increasing prosodic contour
.	micro-pause (less than 0.2)
{0.4}	duration of a silent pause
xx	inaudible segment
jam-	cut-off or self-interruption
jamais	stress or emphasis
{(laughter)}	description of event of the transcriber
{(because)}	uncertainty of the transcriber
&	latched turns with no gap or overlap, or continuation by the same speaker from non-adjacent line
JE PEUX	higher volume

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