French constituent unconditionals relativize a free choice item

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Introduction. In this contribution, we argue that the syntax of the adjunct clause of a French constituent unconditional (CU) involves a subjunctive mood relative clause (RC) whose head is a free choice item (FCI). This FCI is licensed via subtrigging, and it may be subject to RC-sluicing. Thus, French CUs have (roughly) the structure shown in (1). Our analysis makes French CUs unlike English CUs, which have been argued to involve interrogative syntax (Rawlins, 2013).

(1) $[^{CU}_{CP} \, [^{FCI}_{DP}$ *Quoi*$_i$ *(que ce soit* $t_i)]_j$ **(qu' il fasse* $t_j)$], *Lou sera contente.*
      what that it is.SBJ   that he does.SBJ   Lou is.FUT happy
    'Whatever he does, Lou will be happy.'

Previous work. That FCIs and CUs are closely related has been noticed before (Muller, 2006; Vlachou, 2007; Corblin, 2010). To our knowledge, the only explicit syntax given to constructions like (1) is due to Corblin (2010), who takes *quoi* to be a RC-modified *wh*-phrase that fronts alone both in (2a), the "long version" of the CU in (1), and in (2b), the "short version" of the CU in (1). Corblin argues that both versions are "syntactically ambiguous", which explains their distribution as CUs and FCIs respectively. We notate this ambiguity with the label CP/DP.

(2) a. $[_{CP/DP}$ *quoi*$_i$ [*que* $[_{IP}$ *ce soit* [t_i [*qu'* $[_{IP}$ *il fasse* $t_i]]]]$
           what   that   it is.SBJ   that   he does.SBJ

     b. $[_{CP/DP}$ *quoi*$_i$ [*qu'* $[_{IP}$ *il fasse* $t_i]]]$
           what   that   he does.SBJ

The structures in (2) are problematic for two reasons. First, the FCI *quoi que ce soit* is a constituent, as it passes constituency tests (e.g. it can be coordinated with another FCI: *quoi que ce soit et où que ce soit* 'anything and anywhere'), but it is not a constituent in (2a). Second, it is unclear what the FCI in (2b) is. It can neither be the whole DP (since there is no licensor for it) nor *quoi* alone (**Si je peux faire quoi...* int. 'If I can do anything...'). To overcome these problems and to capture the relationship between long and short CUs in (2), we argue that the structure in (1) is required.

① **Evidence in favor of the presence of FCIs.** The first evidence for the involvement of FCIs in CUs comes from the acceptability of *n'importe* FCIs (Muller, 2006) in the same position (3).

(3) $[^{CU}_{CP} \, [^{FCI}_{DP}$ *N'importe quoi* $]_j$ *qu' il fasse* $t_j]$, *Lou sera contente.*
            no matter what   that he does.SBJ   Lou is.FUT happy
    'Whatever he does, Lou will be happy.'

The second argument concerns the gap illustrated in (4). CUs involving bare *quand* 'when', *comment* 'how', and *pourquoi* 'why' are unacceptable (4a). Interestingly, (4b) shows that the gaps in the paradigms of CUs and *wh que ce soit* FCIs coincide, supporting our claim that CUs in which only a *wh*-phrase is visible in surface syntax in fact involve elided *wh que ce soit* FCIs.

(4) a. { **Quand/ *comment/ *pourquoi* } *qu' elle parte,*   ...   [CU gap]
           when   how   why   that she leaves-SBJ
         'Whenever/however/*whyever she leaves, ...'

     b. { **quand/ *comment/ *pourquoi* } *que ce soit*   [FCI gap]
           when   how   why   that it is-SBJ
         'whenever/whyever/however'

② **Evidence in favor of the presence of RCs.** We propose that FCIs are semantically licensed in French CUs due to *subtrigging*, i.e. the presence of a RC modifier. RCs also license FCIs in

episodic contexts (5) (Corblin, 2010). This is why the RC *qu'il fasse* cannot be dropped in (1).

(5)   *J'*   *ai*   *lu* $[_{DP}\,[^{FCI}_{DP}$ *quoi$_i$ que ce soit* $t_i\,]_j$ **(qui t_j pouvait*   *être*   *pertinent)]*
     I   have   read   what that it is.SBJ   that   could.IMPF be.INF relevant
     'I read anything that could be relevant.'

One well-known property of French RCs is that their form is syntactically conditioned: while subject RCs must use *qui*, object RCs must use *que*. That subject-FCI (6a) and object-FCI (6b) CUs show the same form alternation supports our claim that they involve relativization.

(6)   a. $[^{CU}_{CP}\,[^{FCI}_{DP}$ *Quoi$_i$ (que ce soit* $t_i)]_j$ *{ qui/*que }* t_j *fasse*   *ce*   *bruit* $],\,...$ [S]
             what   that it is.SBJ   that   makes-SBJ this sound
        'Whatever is making this sound, ...'

      b. $[^{CU}_{CP}\,[^{FCI}_{DP}$ *Quoi$_i$ (que ce soit* $t_i)]_j$ *{ qu'/*qui }* *il*   *fasse* $t_j\,],\,...$ [O]
             what   that it is.SBJ   that   he does.SBJ
        'Whatever he does, ...'

③ **Proposal: FCIs, relativization, and sluicing.** We assume *wh que ce soit* FCIs relativize a *wh*. Under the raising analysis of RCs (Kayne, 1994; Bianchi, 1999), *que* is a relative D° that selects a *wh*. This DP moves to Spec,XP below C°, and the *wh* moves to Spec,CP. A high D° selects the CP.

(7) $[^{FCI}_{DP}\,D°\,[_{CP}$ *quoi$_i$* $C°_{([E])}\,[_{XP}\,[_{DP}$ *que* $t_i\,]_j\,X°\,[_{IP}$ *ce soit* $t_j\,]]]]$ [FCI]

Once *wh que ce soit* FCIs are analyzed as in (7), long and short FCIs can be given an analysis in terms of sluicing. Under Merchant's (2001) analysis, sluicing is licensed by an ellipsis feature $[E]$ on the head whose specifier hosts the remnant *wh* and whose complement is elided. Given that *que* is included in the sluice, we assume that $[E]$ is on C° (7). Crucially, these assumptions allow us to give a unified analysis of the long and short versions of both FCIs and CUs, and the CP/DP ambiguity: CUs relativize a potentially sluiced FCI, but do not themselves involve a high D° (8).

(8) $[^{CU}_{CP}\,[^{FCI}_{DP}$ *quoi$_i$ (que ce soit* $t_i)\,]_j\,C°\,[_{XP}\,[_{DP}$ *qu'* $t_j\,]_k\,X°\,[_{IP}$ *il fasse* $t_k\,]]]$ [CU]

Though sluicing is usually associated with *wh*-questions, it has been shown that RCs may also be sluiced (Lipták and Aboh, 2013). Moreover, it has been shown that sluicing is able to delete copular structures (van Cranenbroeck, 2009). These results support the analyses in (7-8).

A note on *quel*. The unified analysis we pursue in this work predicts that all CUs involve a FCI that is independently attested. However, the *quel*-CU in (9) does not seem to be related to any FCI.

(9) $[^{CU}_{CP}\,[^{FCI}_{DP}$ *Quel$_i$ (*que ce soit* $t_i)]_j$ *que soit*   *son*   *rêve* $t_j\,],\,...$
             which   that it is.SBJ   that is.SBJ her/his/their dream
        'Whichever her/his/their dream may be, ...'

We tentatively propose that the above CU involves the FCI *quoi que ce soit* and that the obligatoriness of ellipsis is due to the change *quoi>quel*, a change that can also take place in copular *wh*-questions with a full DP subject (*Quel est son rêve?* 'What is her/his dream?').

Conclusion. In this contribution, we show that the syntax of French CUs involves the relativization of a (sluiced) FCI. A similar process seems to be at work in Spanish (Quer and Vicente, 2009).

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