

Wh-question strategies in Colloquial French: Against syntactic optionality

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Modern Colloquial French (MCF) has at least two distinct strategies for forming information-seeking wh-questions. The wh-word can either remain in-situ, (1a), or be fronted, (1b).

(1) ‘Who have you seen?’

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|----|--------------|----------|-------|----|-----|--------------|----------|
| a. | T’as | vu | qui ? | b. | Qui | t’as | vu ? |
| | 2SG=have.2SG | see.PTCP | who | | who | 2SG=have.2SG | see.PTCP |

The in- and ex-situ variation has been traditionally attributed to free variation (Adli 2006), D-Linking à la Pesetsky (1987) and/or to the syntax-prosody interface (Cheng & Rooryck 2000). However, Faure & Palasis (2021) have recently argued for a semantic difference between (1a) and (1b). In their account, (1b) requires its answer set to be restricted by a semantic operator expressing exclusivity.

In my talk, I will present the design and results of recently conducted online studies on this hypothesis and present possibilities of further work on question formation in MCF.

References

- Adli, Aria. 2006. French wh-in-situ questions and syntactic optionality: Evidence from three data types. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 25(2). 163–203.
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- Pesetsky, David. 1987. Wh-in-situ: Movement and unselective binding. *The representation of (in) definiteness* 98. 98–129.