

The mirative extensions of motion verbs in
non-canonical questions
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Introduction

- ↓ Meaning of *aller* (*go*) and *venir* (*come*) used as auxiliaries in *qu'est-ce que* questions
- ↓ Show that there is a correlation between the meaning of the auxiliary (aspectual or modal) and the function of the question
- ↓ Focus on the use labelled « extraordinary » by Damourette & Pichon (1911-1936)
- ↓ Investigate the connection between the « extraordinary » meaning and surprise questions
- ↓ Why does the modal meaning arise in this type of question?
- ↓ Revisit the so-called extraordinary meaning in light of typological studies on mirativity
- ↓ Define the specific contribution of each verb in terms of deixis

What is a *qu'est-ce que* question?

Constituent interrogative about a subject complement or an object :

Qu'est-ce que c'est? What is this? **Qu'est-ce que** tu fais ? What are you doing?

In English: standard interrogative form (SAI); no other option

In French: also standard (ecq + SV), but optional; this form results from constraints on *que* and *quoi*:

a) **Qu'est-ce ?** **quoi est-ce?* what is this?/ **Que** fais-tu ? **quoi fais-tu?* 'What are you doing?'

b) **C'est que?* **C'est quoi?** It is what?/**Tu fais que?* **Tu fais quoi?** 'You are doing what?'

Quoi appears in post-verbal position. **Que** is a weak interrogative that cannot appear in postverbal position; in contemporary French, *que* tends to cooccur with the interrogative particle *est-ce que* in fronted position (*qu'est-ce que*).

This allows maintaining SV order, standard word order in French. (Druetta 2018)

What is a *qu'est-ce que* question?

- ↓ From a cleft used to reinforce interrogative marking to segmental marking of interrogative sentences (Druetta 2009)
- ↓ Semantically, strong connection between fronted interrogative and rhetorical meaning. Argumentative uses of *qu'est-ce que* (Quillard 2001)
- ↓ Syntactically, *qu'est-ce que* can be used in non-argumental questions meaning « how come » (Dekhissi 2016):

Qu'est-ce que t'as été te mêler de ça?!

what you have been interfering with this

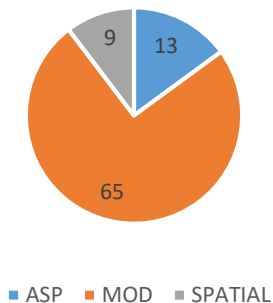
'Why the hell did you interfere?'

« Conflictual Rhetorical Question » (Dekhissi 2016); modal *aller* & *venir* highly compatible with this construction

Data

- ↓ French Ten Ten 17 via Sketch Engine: made up of texts collected from the Internet
- ↓ Extracted all *qu'est-ce que* questions with *aller*: 427
- ↓ Extracted all *qu'est-ce que* questions with *venir*: 87
- ↓ Exclamatives with *aller* as a lexical verb were manually removed (*Qu'est-ce que tu vas bien!*)

Distribution of aspectual (recency), modal and spatial meanings of **venir** in *qu'est-ce que* questions

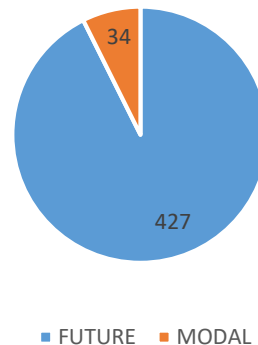


Venir (87 hits) far less frequent than **aller**

When **venir** found in *qu'est-ce que* question: tends to be modal (75%)

But can also refer to the proximal past (15%) or have a spatial meaning (10%)

Distribution of aspectual (future orientation) and modal meanings of **aller** in *qu'est-ce que* questions



Aller very frequent in *qu'est-ce que* questions (427 hits)

Aller + inf. is generally future-oriented (93%)

Modal meaning: only 7%

No spatial meaning

1. Aspectual meaning

↓ **VENIR** with aspectual meaning occurs in « incredulous » questions : *lire, dire, démontrer, faire*

Incredulous questions	Evidence that p P contrary to S's expectations	Not P in the CG P unsuspected to be the case but A ignores CG
<i>venir</i>	Mais qu'est-ce que je viens de lire! <u>Tu dessines en plein cours_p!</u> C'est quoi ça! C'est pas sérieux! What did I read! You draw pictures in class! What the hell! It's not serious!	Toto continue de marcher et il voit un billet de 1000fr: - grand-mère je peux le ramasser??? – toto, qu'est-ce que je viens de dire? (dit la grand-mère très très nrv)- oui oui je sais <u>ce n'était pas bien de ramasser ce qu'il y a par terre</u> _{not p} Little Johnny keeps walking and sees a 1000Fr note – Granny, can I pick it up??? – Johnny, what did I say? (the grandmother said, very very annoyed) – yes yes I know it is not good to pick up things off the ground.
Deontic implication	<i>You should not p</i>	<i>You should know that not p</i>
Question function	<i>Question seeks explanation for p</i>	<i>Question seeks reassertion of not p</i>

Aspectual *venir* in incredulous questions

↓ Recency: identification + restriction (Dominicy 1983)

Venir identifies the goal of movement as the deixis center. As an aspectual marker, it reduces the temporal distance between T_0 and the time of the event described (Bourdin 1999); proximal distance between the anterior process and the reference point of the auxiliary

DE: relative movement out of the right boundary of the process. endpoint coincides with T_0 . Post-process phase (Gosselin 2011)

→ Retrospective abstract motion (Langacker 1987), Bres & Labeau (2018)

↓ Questions: not information-seeking as speaker knows the answer

Would be information-seeking with *quoi* in an in-situ:

Je viens de lire quoi? I have read what (I don't know, I don't understand)

Je viens de dire quoi? I have said what (I have forgotten)

With *qu'est-ce que*: focus on the content of an object that does not match the speaker's expectations, either because p deviates from the norm or because p has just been introduced into the CG.

Problem with a content that coincides with endpoint of *lire, dire, faire, démontrer*

Aspectual *aller*: answer-seeking and rhetorical questions

Information-seeking	Self-addressed	rhetorical
<p>« Alors qu'est-ce que tu vas faire maintenant? » demanda Newt. « Et bien je vais me reposer, pour commencer, et puis je vais partir du Refuge. » « So what are you going to do now? » Newt asked. Well I'll take a break to start with, and then I'll leave the Refuge.</p>	<p>Chaque soir c'est la sempiternelle question devant son frigo: mais qu'est-ce que je vais bien pouvoir faire à manger ce soir? Every evening it's always the same question in front of my fridge: what am I going to cook tonight?</p>	<p>a) J'attends des résultats d'analyse, au fond je m'en contrefous, qu'est-ce que ça va apporter de plus, hein? I am waiting for medical test results. Actually I don't care a straw, what's in it for me? → Answer: rien / nothing</p>
		<p>b) c'est lamentable 17 ans déjà connu des services de police, qu'est ce que ça va être dans 10 ans. Marseille et ces autres villes ça devient Chicago, pauvre France. It's pathetic. 17 years old and already known to the police. What are we in for in 10 years? Marseille et those other cities are becoming like Chicago, poor France. → Answer: multiple; in any case, far worse, extreme</p>
<p>S does not know the answer Seeks answer from A</p>	<p>S does not know the answer Reflexive ranging over set of</p>	<p>S knows the answer Argumentative function</p>

Prospective aspect in questions

↓ Prospective aspect: state indexed to T_0 (Franckel 1984), pre-process phase (Gosselin 2011)

Je vais partir demain / I'll leave tomorrow → *demain* = ulterior endpoint of a pre-process phase that is located at T_0 .

Je vais partir maintenant / I'll leave now → *maintenant* = endpoint of pre-process phase coincides with T_0 , marks discontinuity

↓ Prospective aspect in questions:

a) **Information-seeking** : alors *qu'est-ce que tu vas faire maintenant / demain?*

Seeks information about content of ulterior eventuality viewed prospectively from T_0

Prospectively: only initial boundary considered; set of possible answers is aspectually heterogeneous: *Faire* in a question can serve as a dummy for any type of eventuality :

Activity: Je vais faire un gâteau / I'll bake a cake

Accomplishment: je vais cuisiner / I am going to cook

Achievement: je vais démissionner / I'll resign

b) **Self-addressed** question: mais *qu'est-ce que je vais bien pouvoir faire à manger ce soir? / what the hell am I going to cook tonight*

S fails to identify an object, statement of ignorance at T_0

Prospective aspect in questions

c) Rhetorical questions: 2 types

- qu'est-ce que ça va apporter / changer? What difference is it going to make?

implies negative answer; knowledge that whatever the efforts, no endpoint to current course of things

- Qu'est-ce que ça va être dans 10 ans? What is it going to be like in 10 years?

Implies multiple answers (He'll be a terrorist, a murderer etc.)

Knowledge that the situation will be extreme in the future, based on current course of things; normal-to -extreme scale conjured up

Summary on aspectual *aller & venir* in *qu'est-ce que* questions

- ↓ Not a single type of question: information-seeking, self-addressed, rhetorical, incredulous
- ↓ However, 2 features in common: ∞ all concerned with the transition from one phase to the other
∞ all referential

- *Venir de* + inf:

The resultant state clashes with the speaker's expectations or with situational evidence. S knows the answer to the question. Question is about the cognitive integration of the resultant state in the post-process phase that coincides with T_0

Either S wants the resultant state to be integrated (*qu'est-ce que je viens de dire*) or dismissed (*qu'est-ce que je viens de lire*)

Only *venir de* can question this integration by highlighting the transition from the process to the post-process phase

Perfect with *avoir* would not clearly relate the resulting state to T_0 . Question could be interpreted as a self-addressed question about the identity of the object of a process located in the past:

Qu'est-ce que j'ai lu? What have I read ? (I don't remember what I read)

Summary on aspectual *aller & venir* in *qu'est-ce que* questions

- *Aller* + inf:

Answer-seeking questions are about identifying the nature of the transition from the pre-process phase to the initial boundary of the process.

Rhetorical questions stress that :

- either the boundary from the pre-process phase to the initial boundary of the process cannot be crossed
- or it will be crossed in an extreme way; some issue is growing out of proportion

2. Modal meaning of *aller* and *venir* in *qu'est-ce que* questions

↓ Modal **aller**: « extraordinary » meaning in surprise questions

	Constative: p is observed	Non-constative: p is contemplated
argumental	<p>T'es pas français? C'est Blanc-Mesnil, ta terre. Mais qu'est-ce que tu vas chercher? Ça change quoi de savoir d'où tu viens? Ça t'aidera pas à savoir où tu vas.</p> <p>Aren't you French? Blanc-Mesnil is your hometown. Why are you making such a fuss? What difference does it make to know where you come from? It won't help you to know where you're going.</p>	<p>Dites-moi, les amis, qu'est-ce que j'irais faire à Paris?</p> <p>Tell me, guys, what the hell would I do in Paris?</p>
Non-argumental	<p>Non mais, t'as un stérilisateur neuf pour 120 euros 96. Qu'est-ce que tu vas chercher une vieille merde?</p> <p>Look, you can have a new sterilizer for 120,96€. Why the hell are you trying to get an old shit? [what you go look for an old shit]</p>	
	<p>Perceptual or linguistic evidence</p> <p>Ongoing action, movement under way to accomplishment</p> <p>Negative judgement of that action, path chosen considered inadequate</p>	<p>Situational awareness</p> <p>Path considered and rejected or avoided</p> <p>Inadequacy of a path and circumstances (adjuncts)</p>

2.1. Constative uses of *aller* + infinitive

- ↓ No prospective orientation, no pre-process phase
- ↓ « Extraordinary » Damourette & Pichon (1911-1936 §1652): process of the verb in the inf. viewed as « disturbing with respect to the expected course of events »
- ↓ Constative modalisation: assert the existence of a modalised event. Discourse content or perceptual observation is the starting point of abductive reasoning; attempt to look for a cause to account for event Larreya (2005)
- ↓ based on ongoing process (verb in the infinitive); meaning of *aller* connected with its spatial meaning, not its aspectual meaning (Bres & Labeau 2013; Larreya 2005)

Constative argumental uses

- ↓ Typically found with 2nd person subject and activity verbs: *chercher* (look for), *faire / foutre* (do), *imaginer, inventer, chanter* (meaning tell)
- ↓ *Qu'est-ce que* question cannot denote a set of answers as the process is already ongoing and witnessed by S; focus on pointless character of the path the A is engaged on. *Foutre* as negative polarity version of *faire*

Toi qui en as rien à foutre de la religion, **qu'est-ce que tu vas foutre** dans un truc pareil?

You don't care about religion, so what the hell are you doing in such a place?

Question stresses the mismatch between the location of the A and a property of the A (not caring about religion) ; judgement of incongruity (Kay & Fillmore 1999)

- ↓ Also found in negative utterances. The verb is not within the scope of negation; actualized event:

Ah mais **qu'est-ce qu'on va pas inventer** pour se faire de la thune de nos jours

People will make up any stories to make money nowadays

Evidence of a lie, evaluated as an invention

Negation bears on the proposition. Modal negation encodes negative evaluation: « it is unbelievable/unacceptable that some people should invent just anything to make money nowadays »

Constative non-argumental uses

Dekhissi (2016): « conflictual rhetorical questions »; synonymous with *how come*, *pourquoi*, more expressive

- intransitive verbs (*se faire chier / bother*)

Tu veux de l'info alter, alors, **qu'est-ce que tu vas** te faire chier avec les mendiants de la presse mainstream, qui ne savent que vivre des subsides de l'Etat.

You want alter information, so why the hell are you messing with the beggars of the mainstream press, who only live on State subsidies.

- Transitive verbs with a complement (*voir ce genre de trucs, chercher une vieille merde, parler de jeux défensifs, craindre que, raconter des histoires*)

Tu sais quand même ce qu'ils veulent, **qu'est-ce que tu vas raconter** des histoires de plages et de dodos?

You know what they want, so why the hell do you tell them stories of beaches and dodo birds?

Incongruity judgement induces search for a reason

- Both verb types incompatible with negation: would block the reason question

2.2. Non-constative uses of *aller* + infinitive

↓ What triggers the judgement of incongruity?

Not an ongoing process, but disturbing situational evidence inferred from the state of affairs:

Dites-moi, les amis, **qu'est-ce que j'irais** faire à Paris?

Tell me, guys, what the hell would I do in Paris?

Aikhenvald (2004: 198) « one may be surprised at an ongoing process, or at an inference made on the basis of some visible evidence. »

Qu'est-ce que question: reject actualization of inadequate eventuality, even with the present:

100 Go pour les programmes Linux ! **Mais qu'est ce que tu vas installer ?** Réserve plutôt 10 Go pour ton système libre, et 90 Go pour Home.

100 Go for Linux programs! What the hell are you going to install? Keep rather 10 Go for your free system, and 90 Go for Home.

Eventuality contemplated only to be rejected

2.3. Non-aspectual *venir* + infinitive

Spatial meaning	Modal meaning
a) Physical motion Qu'est-ce que tu viens faire ici, Jeffrey? What have you come here for, Jeffrey?	a) Argumental use Mais qu'est-ce que ça vient faire dans un article encyclopédique? What the hell is this doing in an encyclopaedic article?
b) Figurative motion Qu'est-ce que cela vient dire sur lui? What does it tell us about him?	b) Non-argumental use Hey, qu'est-ce que tu viens te poser sur moi, j'attends pas de courrier merci! [to a bird] Why have you come and landed on me, I'm not waiting for any mail, thanks!
Information-seeking questions	Rhetorical questions

Venir de + inf: aspectual, post-process phase

venir + inf: either spatial or modal meaning, onset of the process

2.3. Non-aspectual *venir* + infinitive

- ↓ Larreya (2005), Bres & Labeau (2018): « extraordinary » derived from the motion meaning and not aspectual meaning
- ↓ « Extraordinary » retains deictic orientation of the motion verb: goal coincides with position of S
- ↓ Less productive than *aller*; *aller* accounts for 80% of the uses of the extraordinary meaning, *venir* for 20% (Bres & Labeau 2012, 2013)
- ↓ however, affinity with *qu'est-ce que* rhetorical questions: 75% of hits of *venir* are modal
- ↓ Like *aller*, *venir* occurs either in argumental and non-argumental uses
- ↓ **Argumental** uses are not about an activity negatively evaluated. Systematically about a mismatch between an entity and its location, either with an animate or an inanimate subject:

Qu'est-ce que tu viens foutre dans notre manif?

What the hell are you doing in our demonstration?

Si c'est l'objectif de PSL, **qu'est-ce que ça vient faire dans l'intro de l'article sur Dauphine?**

If it is the objective of PSL, what is it doing in the intro of the article on Dauphine?

The surprise question stresses that the referent of the subject is located in the wrong place; irrelevant

Non-aspectual *venir* + infinitive

↓ **Non-argumental** uses highlight an activity that is evaluated negatively, (cf. *aller*) (Lansari, in press)

Second person subjects

verbs: *nous parler* (talk to us), *la ramener* (stick your oar in)

nous les casser, *m'emmerder*, *nous saouler*, *me faire chier* (bother me/ us, piss me off)

polluer (pollute), *te poser sur moi* (land on me) *me pisser dessus* (piss on me)

Flucke s'il te plait, ferme ta bouche. Si on voulait débattre on en avait le droit, et puis on a eu la maturité de stopper la conversation, **qu'est ce que tu viens la ramener ?**

'Flucke, please, shut up. If we wanted to debate we had the right to do so, and then we were mature enough to stop the conversation. Why the hell are you sticking your oar in?

Non-argumental construction close in meaning to the one with *aller*: activity evaluated negatively by S triggers search for a cause; stress that no cause can be found; strong disapproval

However, one difference: deictic orientation; the activity is performed by the A (2nd-person subject) and is detrimental to the subject referent: pronouns *me/nous*.

Contrast with *aller*: **qu'est-ce que tu vas te faire chier / qu'est-ce que tu vas raconter des histoires**

Putting things together

- ↓ Extraordinary *aller* & *venir* in questions: encode the gap between the S's expectations and reality; surprise questions
- ↓ Connection between emotion and grammatical construction:
 - No mirative category in the tense-modal system of French; mirative extension of spatial meaning in conventionalized constructions
 - **incredulous** questions with aspectual *venir* are triggered by a reaction of surprise, but *qu'est-ce que* remains referential; they are not surprise questions
 - by contrast, **surprise** questions with *aller* and *venir* are not referential; they convey judgement of incongruity in a conventionalized way; highlight the lack of reason for the process in non-argumental uses.
- ↓ In surprise questions, *venir* retains a deictic component that accounts for significant differences with *aller*: either question stresses the wrong location of an entity (including discursive entity, ie a topic) or it stresses that some activity is detrimental to the S
- ↓ Crosslinguistic evidence that motion verbs encode mirativity by emphasizing the onset of the event denoted by the embedded predicate : Wiklund (2009), Lemmens & Sahoo (2017)

Concluding remarks

- ↓ Munaro & Obenauer (2002), Obenauer (2004, 2005, 2006) argued for surprise questions as a specific type of questions based on syntactic features in Bellunese dialects. In French, surprise questions are not always syntactically marked (except in non-argumental uses). However, even argumental uses of *qu'est-ce que* are not referential. Results of a production experiment (Celle & Pélissier submitted) confirm that non-referential *qu'est-ce que* questions differ from IS questions prosodically when ambiguous syntax
- ↓ According to Rohde (2006), 3 felicity conditions for rhetorical questions: obvious answer, un informativity of the answer, sufficient similarity of the S's and A's answers
- ↓ Rohde's definition applies to « evaluative » rhetorical questions (Léon 1997). However, this definition does not hold for surprise questions: not informative, but request explanation; triggered by a judgement of incongruity that is generally not shared by the A: disapproval, disagreement; prosodic difference also confirmed by results of production experiment (Celle & Pélissier submitted)
- ↓ Surprise questions reflect a tendency to respond to unexpected evidence using an expressive question, not an exclamative. Cf. Alcazar (2017) on Basque. Dialogical potential of questions

Thank you for your attention!

Food for thought...

je suis censé être un méchant, vilain, pas beau, aigri, barbichu, colonialiste, raciste et esclavagiste, **qu'est-ce que tu vas me casser l'Obama en me faisant dévoiler mes instants de faiblesses ???**

I am supposed to be nasty, mean, ugly, embittered, bearded, colonialist, racist and pro-slavery, why the hell are you bugging me by forcing me to disclose my moments of weakness???

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