

Multiple wh-questions in Greek

**Interface Approaches to Information
Structure**

UCL

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➤ **The empirical question**

Why multiple wh-questions are excluded as direct questions in Greek, along with certain focus-focus patterns.

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Why multiple wh-questions are excluded as direct questions in Greek, along with certain focus-focus patterns.

What is the structure of sentences with more than one focused elements in Greek?

(primary-primary or primary-2OF)

➤ **Domain Theory of Primacy
(Büring 2008)**

More than one foci with maximal scope:
phonological defaults take over.

The unavailability of (direct) multiple wh-questions in Greek is a consequence of a specific phonological default, namely to align NPA with the wh-item.

Structure of talk

- Background on Information Structure in Greek and the properties of wh-questions.
- Sentences with more than one free/maximal focus.
- Second occurrence focus.

Broad Focus

(1) Q: *ti tha kanete apopse?*

‘What are you doing tonight?’

A: [*F tha pame sinema me ti MARIA*]

will go.1pl cinema with the.acc Maria.acc

‘We’re going to the cinema with Maria’

Narrow Focus

(2a) [*i Elena xorepse me ton ORESTI*]_F BROAD F

the_{nom} Elena danced_{3s} with the_{acc} Oresti_{acc}

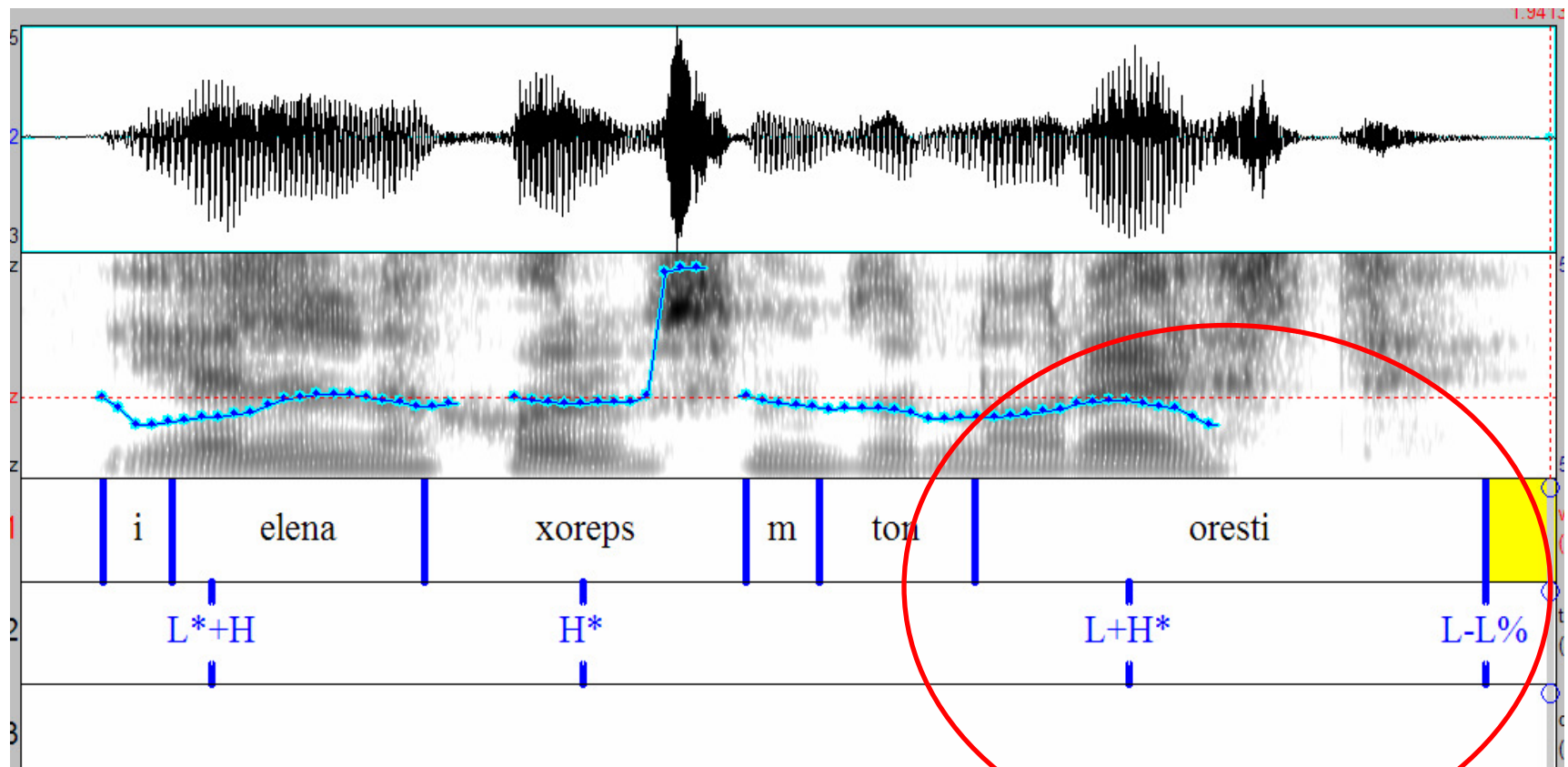
‘Elena danced with Orestis’

(2b) *i Elena xorepse* [*me ton ORESTI*]_F NARROW F

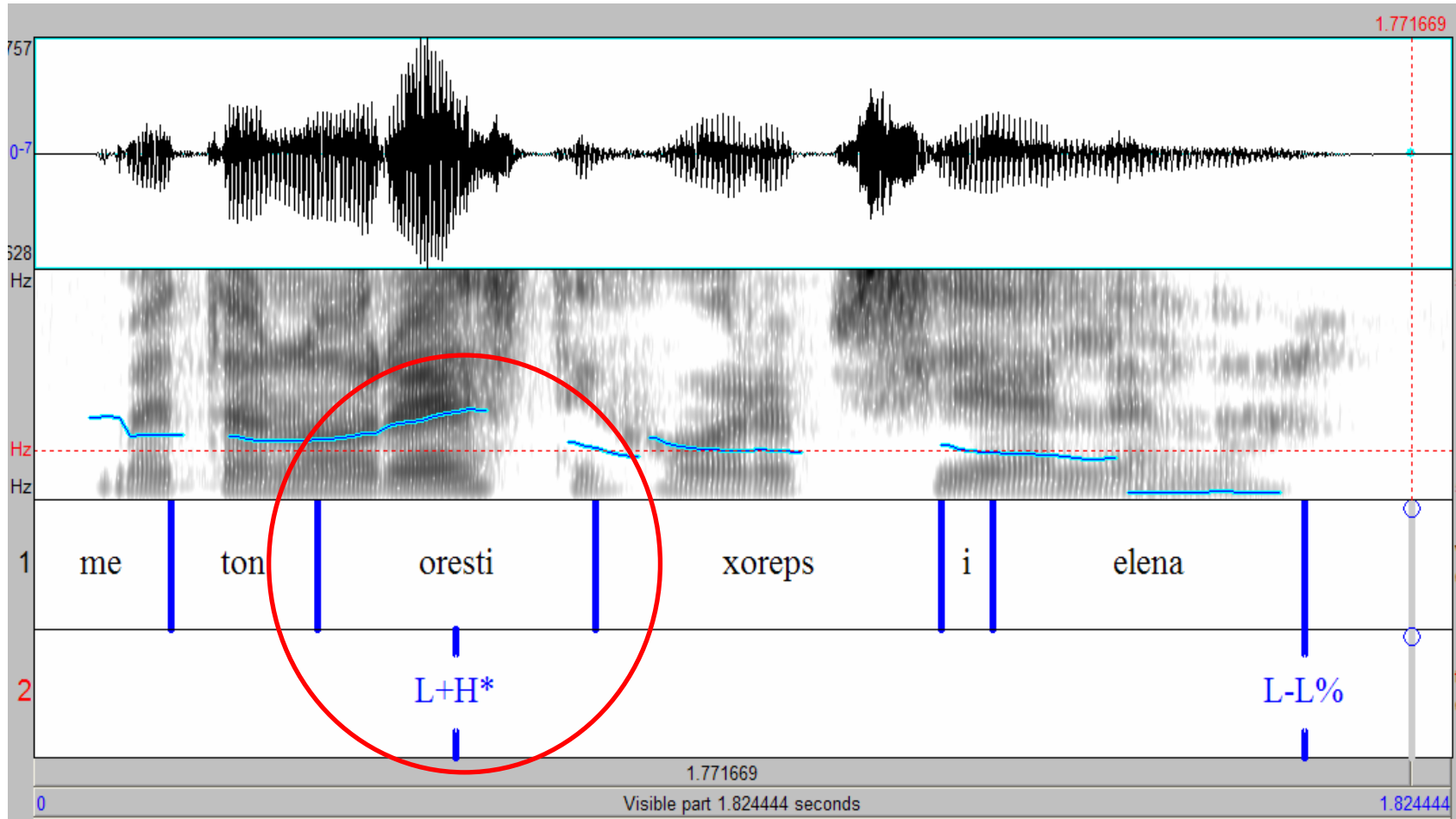
the_{nom} Elena_{nom} danced_{3s} with the_{acc} Oresti_{acc}

(2c) [*me ton ORESTI*]_F *xorepse i Elena* NARROW F

Narrow focus (SVO)



Narrow focus (OVS)



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but material preceding in-situ focus is organised in prosodic phrases with “local” pitch accents

while material following preverbal focus is de-accented and necessarily interpreted as old/given information.

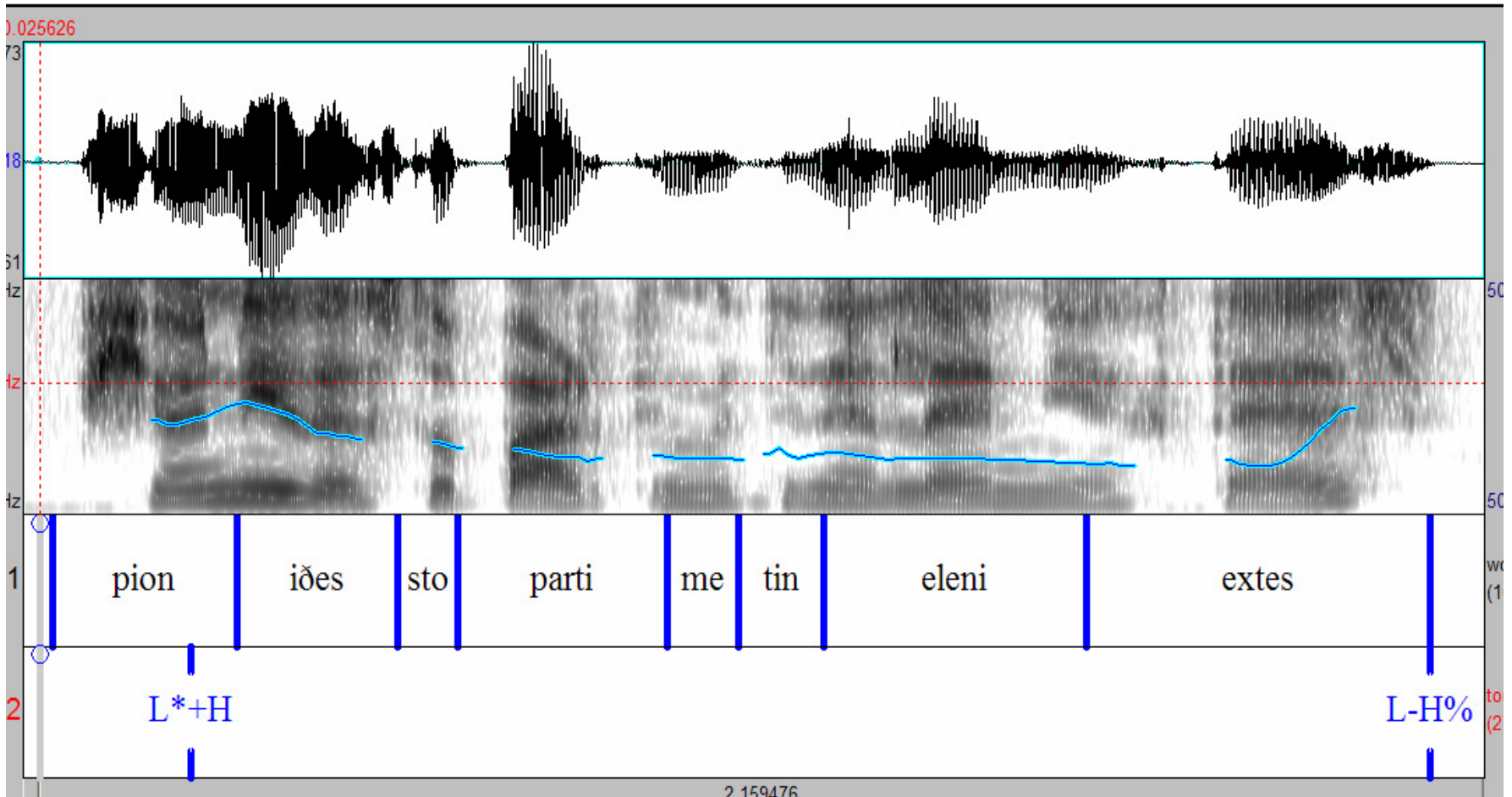
Wh questions

(6) *pión ídes sto pártý me tin Eléni ehtés?*

who_{acc} saw_{2s} at-the party with the_{acc} Eleni_{acc} yesterday

‘Who did you see at the party with Helen
yesterday?’

Wh-question



Indirect wh-questions

(7) *PIOS apelise to Yani*

who-nom fired-3sg the Yani-acc

Who fired Yanis?'

(8) *rotisa pios apelise to YANI*

asked-1sg who-nom fired-3sg the-acc Yanis-acc

I asked who fired Yanis.

(9) *ematha oti apelian to YANI*

learnt-1sg that fired-3pl the-acc Yanis-acc

I learnt that they fired Yanis.

Multiple wh-questions

(10) **pios htipise pion*

who-nom hit-3sg who-acc

Who hit who?

(11) (*pite mu*) *pios htipise pion*

tell me who-nom hit-3sg who-acc

I wanted to know who hit who.

Büring (2008): Domain Theory of Primacy

Sentences with more than one free (maximal) focus:

(12) a. Frederick the Great spoke French to his family, and German to his horses.

b. [.....German_{F1} to his horses_{F1}] ~₁ CC

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(13) A: Philippe will buy only FRENCH cheese.
B: Same here; I only buy GERman BEER.

IP-Head-Right

The head of the intonational phrase is the rightmost stress (at the next lower level) within IP.

(14) (*)IP
 (*)(*)ip
 I only buy German beer

Multiple wh-questions

- (i) wh-phrases are maximal foci;
- (ii) IP-Head-Right operative for declaratives.

(15) (pite mu) pios htipise pion
(tell me) who-nom hit-3sg who-acc

$\left(\begin{array}{c} * \\ * \end{array} \right) \left(\begin{array}{c} * \\ * \end{array} \right)$
who hit' who

(16) A: *emathes kana kutsobolio tis prokopis?*

Have you learnt any worthwhile gossip?

B: *ematha epitelus*

learnt-1sg at last

*[pios palamutiastike me pion stin perivoiti ekdromi
sto SUNIO]Focus*

Who-nom got off with who-acc at-the famous
trip to-the Sunio

(iii) In a wh-question align NPA with the first wh-phrase.

(19) *

*who hit who

The second wh-phrase necessarily falls within the de-accented domain and cannot receive any pitch accent in any prosodic phrase.

What about the answers?

Focus-focus patterns (Büning 2003).

(20) a. *telika pios horise pion; I Maria horise to Yani i o
Yanis ti Maria?*

In the end who divorced who; Maria divorced Yanis or
Yanis Maria?

b. **o YANIS horise ti MARIA*

the-nom Yanis divorced the-acc Maria

c. *o YANIS ti Maria*

d. *?o Yanis ti MARIA*

Focus in Wh-questions

(21) *(ithela na matho)*

wanted-1sg subj learn-1sg

pios apelise pion apo tin ETERIA

who-nom fired who-acc from the-acc company

I wanted to know who fired who from the company.

(22)

(*)

(*)(*) (*)

Pios apelise pion apo tin eteria

(23) Pite mu apo tin ETERIA pion apelisan
tell me from the COMPANY who-acc fired-3pl

(*)
apo tin ETERIA pion apelisan

Focus is unavailable in direct wh-questions (Tsimpli 1995).

(24) **me PION éfige O MANOLIS?*

the Manolis-nom with who-acc left-3s

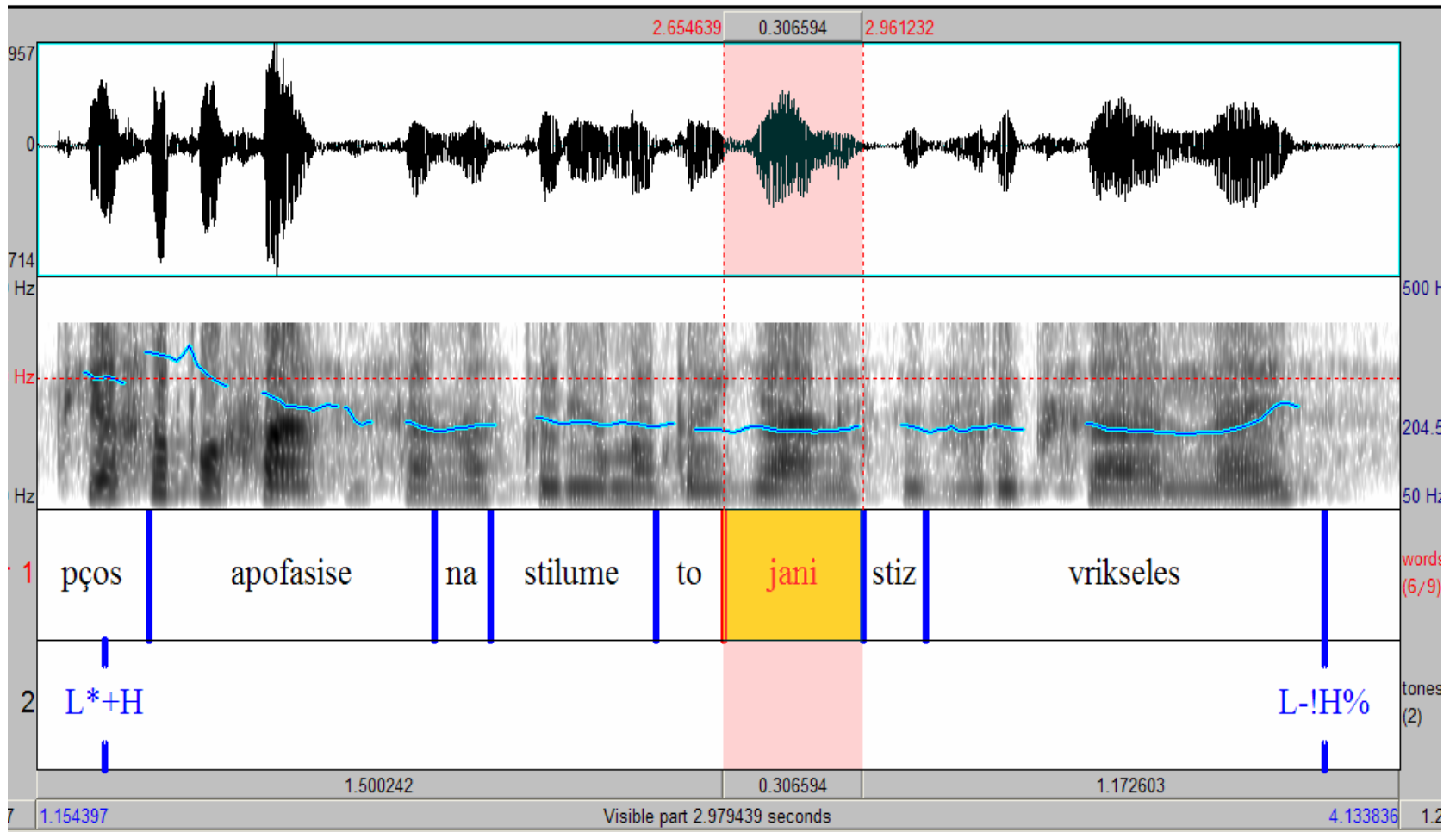
Who did Manolis leave with?

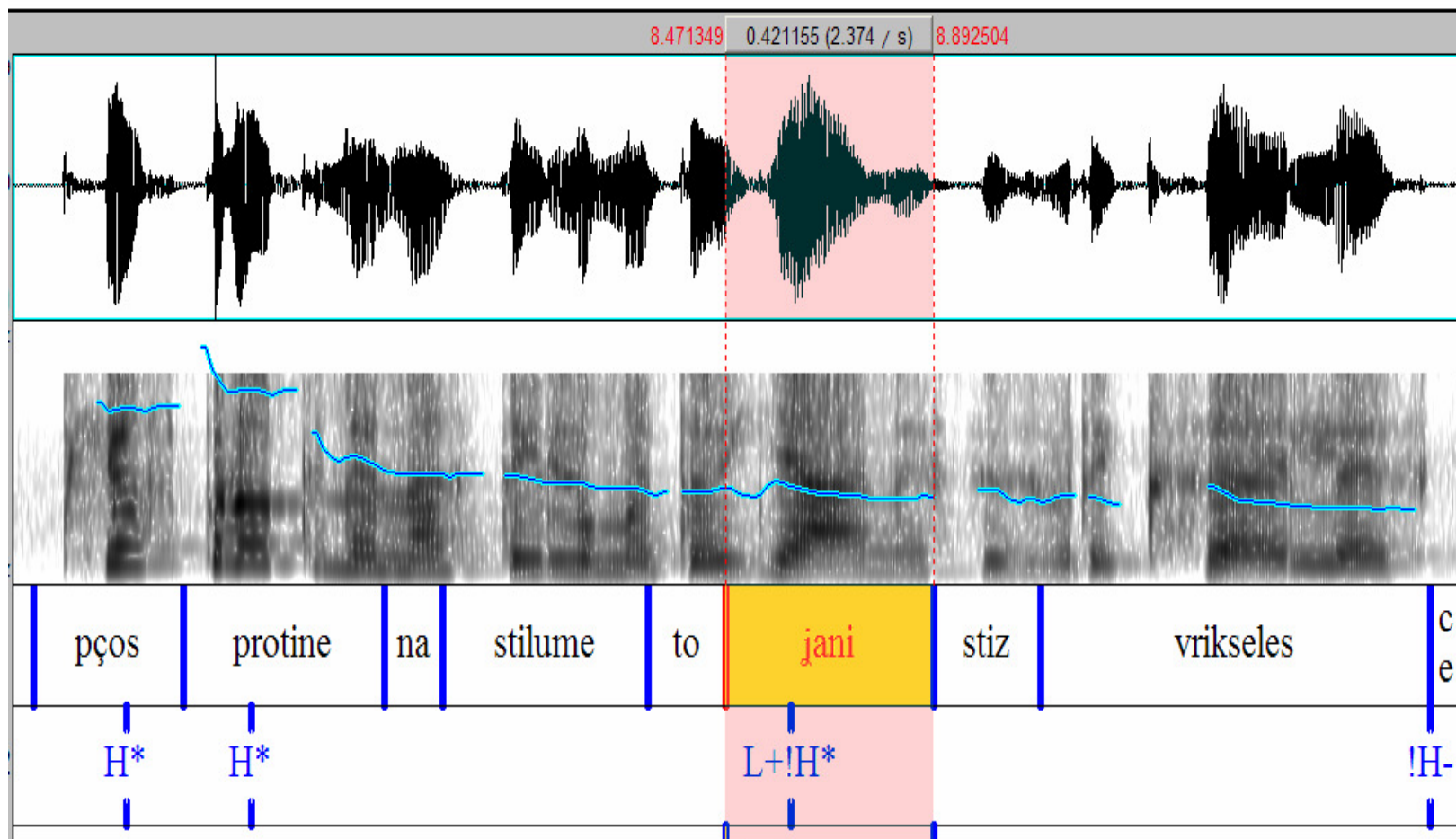
(cf. Who did JOHN leave with?)

(25) a. *PIOS protine na stilume to yani*
who-nom suggested subj send-1pl the-acc Yanis-acc
stis vrixeles
to-the Brussels
Who suggested to send Yanis to Brussels?

b. o *PETROS itan aftos pu epise tin epitropi*
the Petros was dem that convinced-3sg the committee
na stilume to yani stis vrixeles
subj send-1pl the-acc Yani to-the Brussels
PETROS was the one who convinced the committee to
send Yanis to Brussels.

	No focus (ms)	Focus (ms)
Whole sentence	2084	2794
Pios (who)	246	302
Na (to)	122	118
Stilume (send)	363	416
To (the)	147	157
Yani (Yanis)	306	421
Stis (to)	136	214
Vrixeles (Brussels)	870	789





Semantically 2OF has non-maximal scope.

(28) [the FACULTY_{F1} [only_{F2} quote the faculty_{F2}]]~₁CC

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Brussels]]?~₁CC

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(28) [the FACULTY_{F1} [only_{F2} quote the faculty_{F2}]]~₁CC

(29) GR: [WHO_{F1} suggested [to send Yanis_{F2} to
Brussels]]?~₁CC

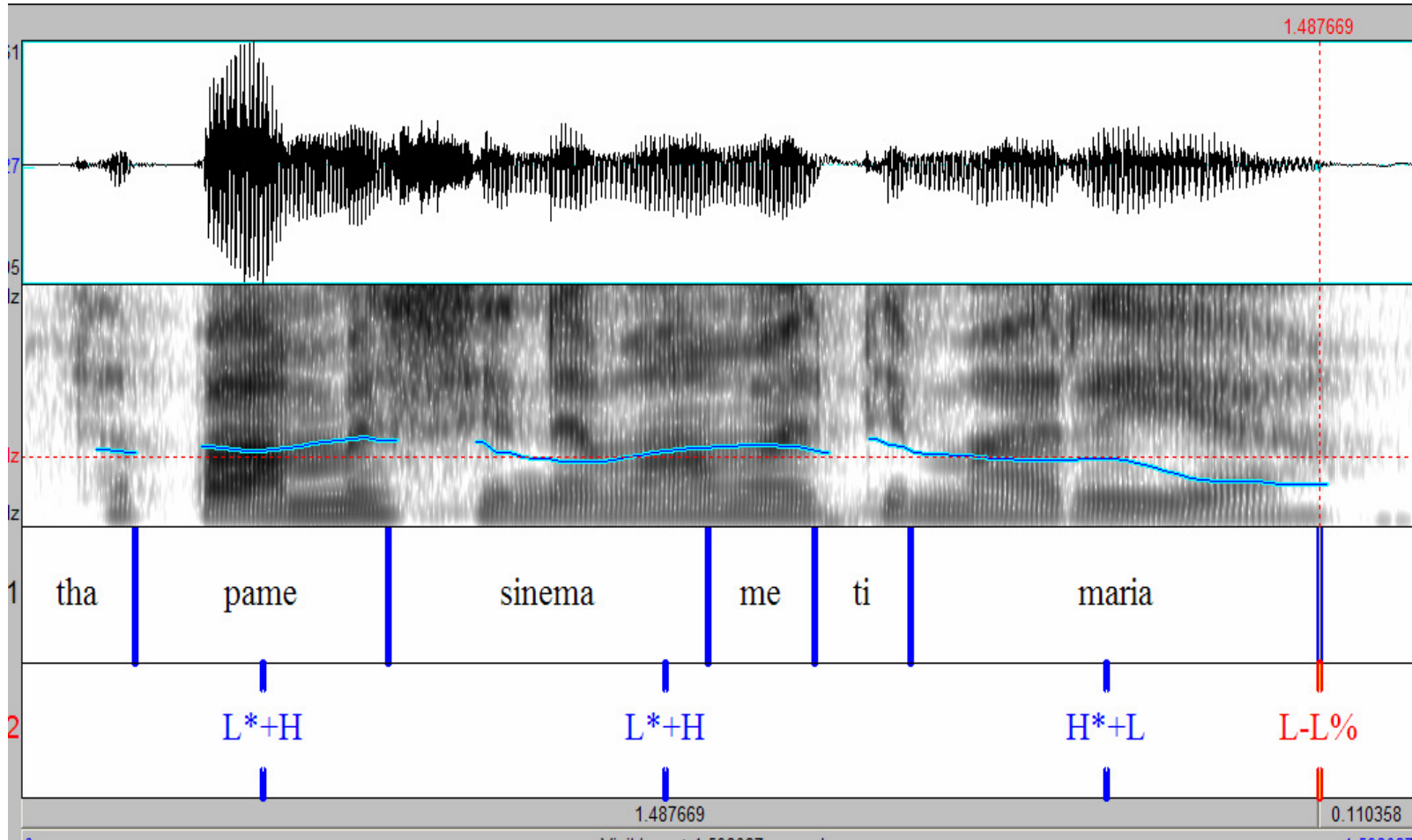
(30) *PIOS protine na stilume pion stis Vrixeles?
who suggested to send who to-the Brussels

Conclusion

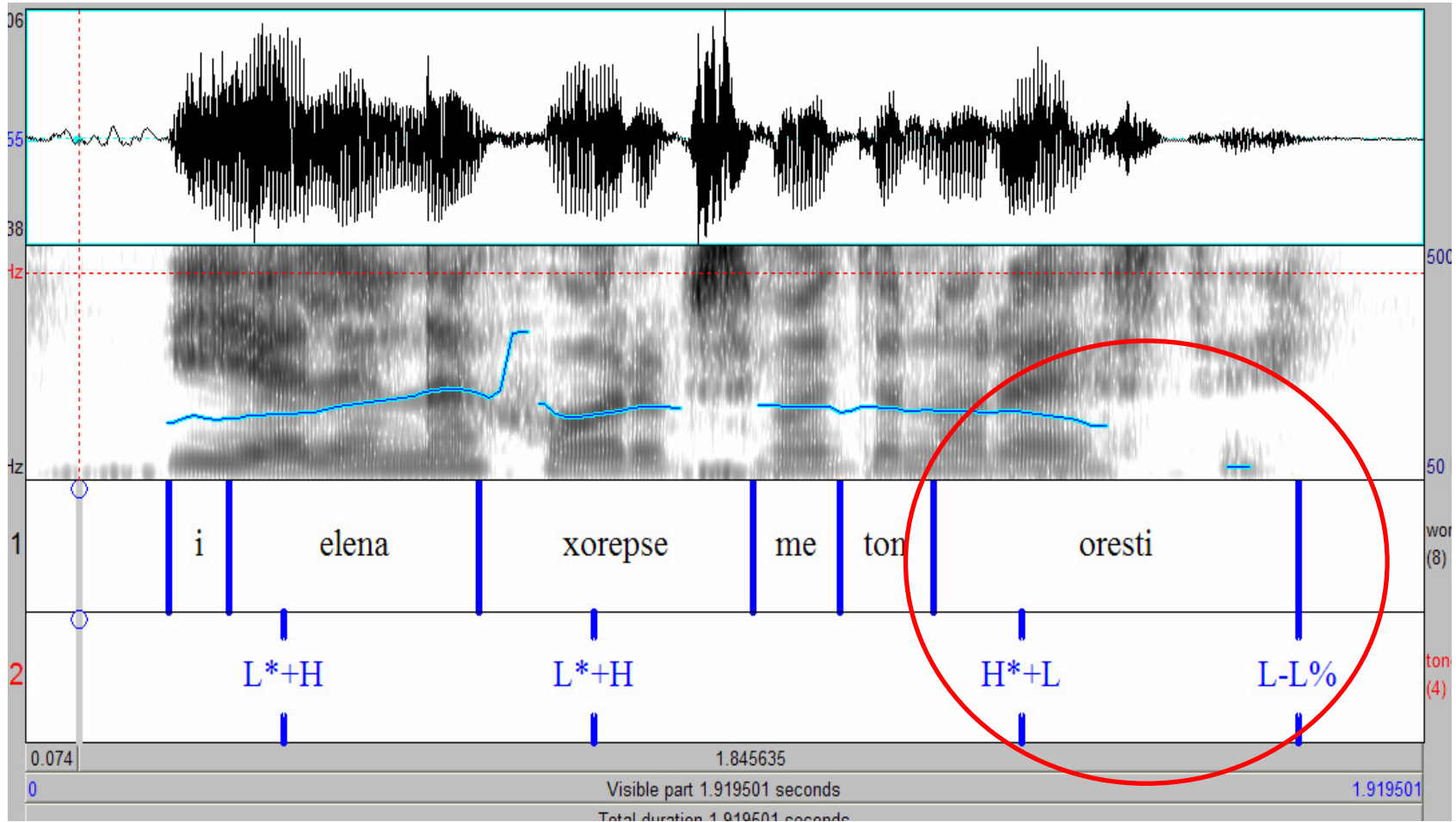
- Maximal foci need to bear NPA in some prosodic phrase, not necessarily the IP.
- Where this is not possible, the structure fails: multiple direct questions in Greek.
- 2OF is available in Greek wh-questions; it appears to involve not just intensity and duration, but a postnuclear pitch accent.
- But 2OF stress cannot be employed for multiple wh-questions because it reflects scope embedding of 2OF while wh-phrases need to take maximal scope.

Thank you!

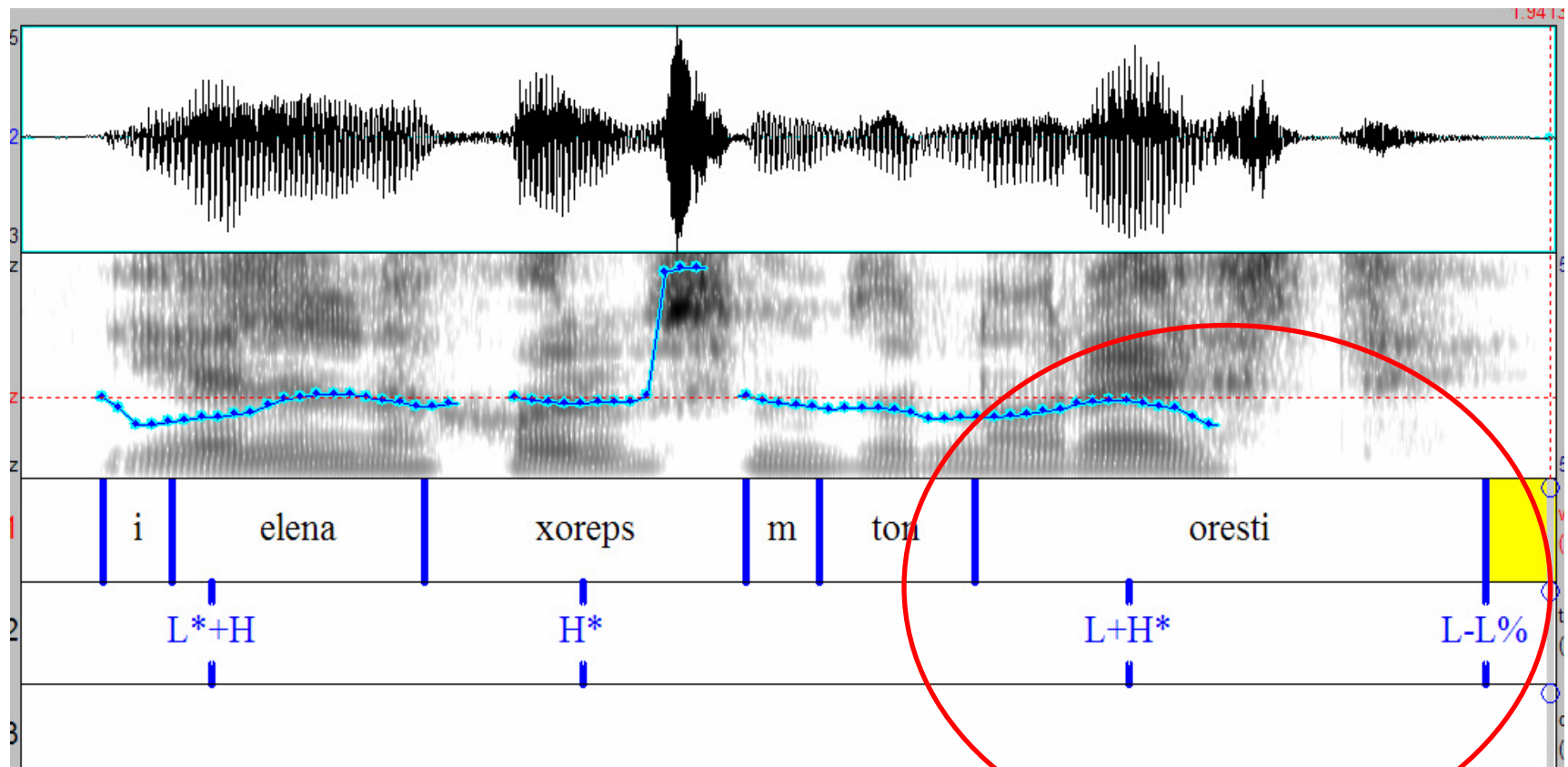
Broad focus SOV sentence



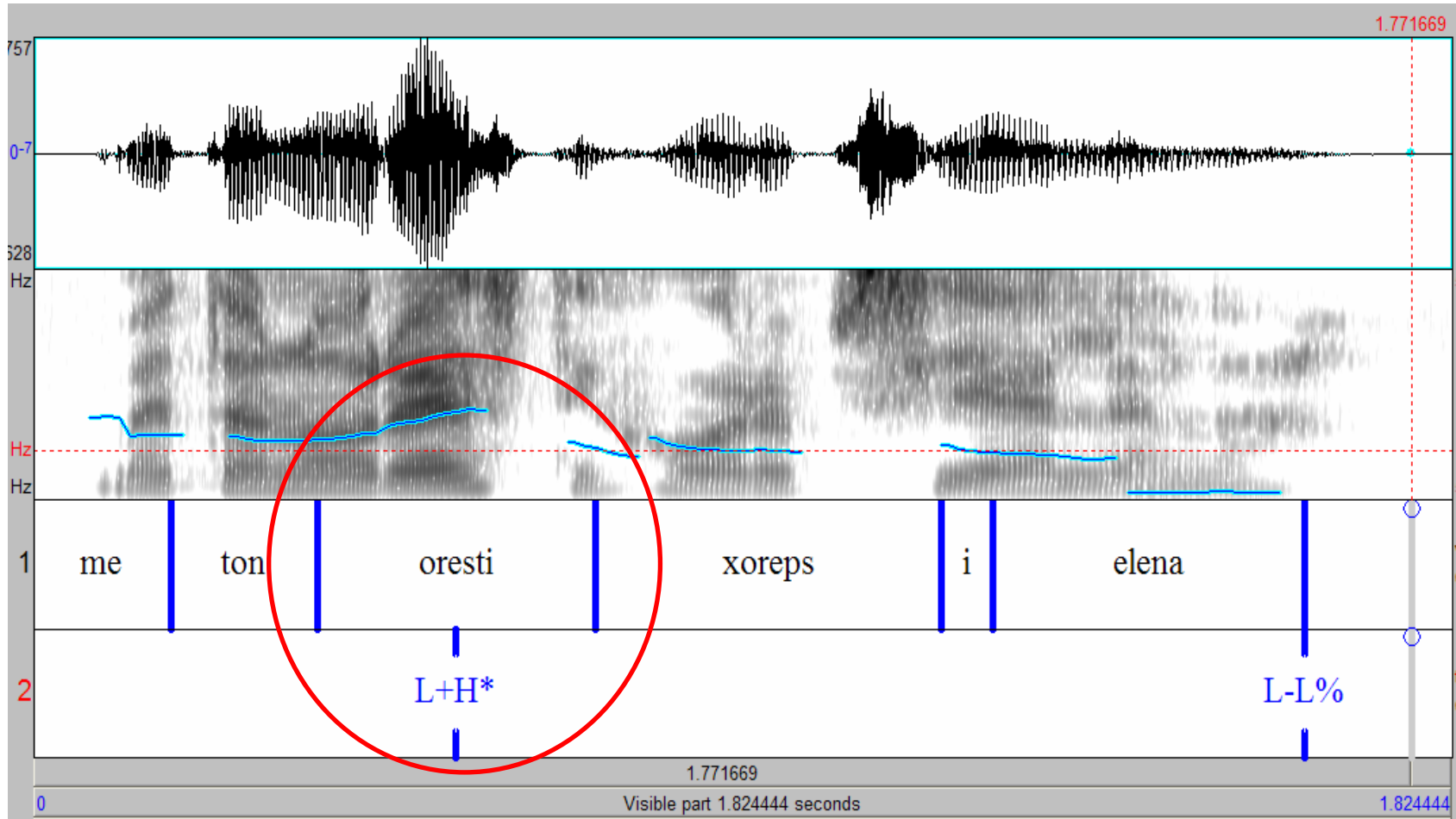
All new sentence (SVO)



Narrow focus (SVO)



Narrow focus (OVS)



(4) (a) *ti Maria, tin ide o PETROS*
the Maria_{acc} her-clit saw the Peter_{nom}

(b) ??*ti Maria, ---- ide o PETROS*

‘As for Maria, Peter saw her.’

(5) (a) *TI MARIA ---- ide o Petros*

(b) **TI MARIA tin ide o Petros*

‘It was MARIA that Peter saw.’

