



HAL
open science

Three Deep Structures in French Complementation

Mitsou Ronat

► **To cite this version:**

Mitsou Ronat. Three Deep Structures in French Complementation. Proceedings from the Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society, Chicago Linguistic Society, pp.200-210, 1972, You take the High Node and I'll take the Low Node. Papers from the Comparative Syntax Festival. halshs-04082100

HAL Id: halshs-04082100

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04082100>

Submitted on 26 Apr 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Open licence - etalab

THREE DEEP STRUCTURES IN FRENCH COMPLEMENTATION

Mitsou RONAT
(UCLA)

Until now, it has been taken for granted that the underlying structure of a French complement was close to the one proposed by Rosenbaum (1967) for most English complements, i.e. : complements are NP's. Thus, Gross (1968) claimed that all complements had a deep structure such as :

- (1) $\left[\begin{array}{c} \left[\text{ce} \right] \\ \text{NP-Det} \end{array} \right] \left[\begin{array}{c} \left[\text{lui} \right] \\ \text{Pro} \end{array} \right] \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Qu S} \\ \text{Modifier} \end{array} \right] \right]$

An obligatory transformation would delete the pronoun [lui], and the determinant [ce] when the complement was not in a PP. His main arguments were the following : verbs taking complements generally can also have NP's in the same paradigm; complements preceded by le fait que have almost the same meaning as bare complements and the former are obviously NP's; there is a clitic pronoun le corresponding to the complement in :

- (2) Pierre voudrait que tu viennes et Marie le voudrait aussi

His hypothesis had the advantage of assimilating the structures of complements to the structures of NP's which in fact contain a relative clause.¹ If this were true, it would greatly simplify the grammar. However Gross himself indicates a number of restrictions on his rules; he accounts for these restrictions by providing for verbs, pronouns, etc., certain (ad hoc) features. At the time Gross formulated his hypothesis, the formalism of generative grammar did not offer possible alternatives, as the extended standard theory is now capable of doing. I shall here address myself to his restrictions as well as many others not previously mentioned by him, and treat them as counterexamples to his analysis.

Lack of space does not permit the consideration of the numerous problems posed by all complement structures; I shall therefore restrict myself to a study of the complements in direct object position. I shall propose an alternative analysis, primarily claiming that complements, in French, are not NP's and that instead of one kind of complements, French has at least three kinds of embedded clauses, depending on, roughly, the introductory verb.

Expanding Chomsky (1967) on bar notation, I would like to show, using arguments from my work in progress, that

the so-called emotive verbs are followed by S, verbs of knowledge and belief (cognitive verbs) introduce \bar{S} and verbs of "communication", \bar{S} ; these distinctions will result from the arguments below.

A brief summary of the restrictions on Gross' hypothesis : 1) the clitic le represents the only case in which a pronoun can refer to a complement,² and even then, not always. Compare :

- (3) { a. Pierre
b. ce départ
c. *que tu partes } m'attriste, il me fait penser à l'hiver (cf. Kayne(1972))
- (4) { a. ce départ
b. *que tu partes } , qui d'ailleurs est une erreur, plait à Paul
- (5) Pierre croit ce départ indispensable, mais Paul le croit inutile
- (6) *Pierre croit important que tu partes, mais Paul le trouve inutile (cf. Gross(1968))

Moreover, the clitic le can also refer to an adjective: Pierre est intelligent de naissance tandis que Paul le devient davantage tous les jours. Since this le does not make any agreement (feminine or plural) : les singes sont imitateurs, mais certains hommes le (/ *les) sont aussi, Marie est déjà très compétente, mais Julie le (/ *la) devient encore plus qu'elle, we can say that le is a pro-AP, distinct from the usual "pro-NP" clitic, which does not permit us to say that complements are AP's.

2) OBJECT-PREPOSING is possible with verbs of knowledge and verbs of communication, but seems less acceptable with emotive verbs :

- (7) a. ?? Que tu chantes est aimé par Marie
b. Que Jean soit venu a été cru par tout le monde
c. Que le président soit tombé est rapporté par la presse locale

However, an embedded clause can never undergo OBJECT-PREPOSING if the direct object is a complement :

- (8) a. il est important que { ce départ
 { *que tu partes } ait été
 remarqué par tout le monde
b. Jules raconte que { ton sourire
 { *que tu aies souri } a été cons-
 taté par l'inspecteur

Thus, the first discrepancy between independent and embedded clauses is shown by the fact that OBJECT-PREPOSING

is possible in the former, but not in the latter. In this case, French behaves like English. If we say, following Emonds (1970), that it is a "root-transformation" which has moved a complement from the end of the VP into an NP subject position in the grammatical instances of (7), because they are independent clauses (root S's), we can explain why this cannot happen in (8) : because of the Structure-Preserving Constraint, which prevents movement of constituents "into a position in a phrase marker where the grammatical rules of the language do not independently generate" them. Otherwise, we are obliged to put an ad hoc restriction on OBJECT-PREPOSING. 3) there are other deep or derived positions in which we could expect complements if they were NP's; but they cannot be found :

Apposition

- (9) Son activité favorite, { la peinture
 { * qu'elle peigne } , occupe
 tous ses dimanches.

V + Qu S + Adj (to compare to (6))

- (10) Pierre juge { * que tu chantes } indispensable
 { cela

AGENT-POSTPOSING 3

- (11) Jean est déçu par { * que tu partes }
 { ton départ }

STYLISTIC-INVERSION 4

- (12) *Quand est important que tu partes ?
 *Il demande quand est impoli que je chante
 (cf.: Quand est arrivé ce garçon ?
 Il demande quand est partie Marie)

The solution is : either adding ad hoc restrictions on these rules or proposing that complements are not NP's, but S's, placed under certain conditions by a well-defined rule in subject NP position. This also leads to an explanation of other facts that the previous hypothesis could not account for, e.g. all the differences between the structures of complements which are revealed here immediately by the constraints on question extraction :

- (13) a. Où veux-tu que j'aille ?
 b. Que Pierre aimerait-il que Marie lui rapporte ?
 c. Qu'appréhende-t-il que Jules fasse ?
 d. *Où Marie espère-t-elle que Paul ira ? 5
 e. *Que sait-il que Marie voit ? 6

f. *Que répond-il que Marie chante ?

g. *Quand balbutie-t-il que Paul part ? ?

(these facts are corroborated by equivalent constraints on cleft-sentence extractions).

A - Paradigm (13) immediately distinguishes two classes, (a.b.c.) in which the complement is in the subjunctive mood, and (d.e.f.g.), in which the complement is in the indicative mood. However, according to Gross (1968), this important difference is only "superficial"; for him, there is no need to distinguish these constructions, the subjunctive being only an adjunct to the indicative. Nevertheless the subjunctive never occurs in independent clauses, although we can find it, on the whole, in imperative clauses Que Paul parte !, or exclamative clauses Que Dieu soit béni !; in those cases, the constraints inside the sentence differ from the ones in subjunctive embedded sentences; for instance? *que Pierre parte en gesticulant ! (VS. je veux que Pierre parte en gesticulant) and *Que Dieu soit béni à 5 heures! (VS. je souhaite que Dieu soit béni à 5 heures).

Space does not permit further analysis of this topic.

The above distinction is corroborated by other facts. Kayne (1969) pointed out that L-TOUS is possible out of an embedded clause; actually, this is true only if it is in the subjunctive :

- (14)a. } Je veux tous qu'ils partent (= qu'ils partent tous)
 { Il faut }
 b. *Je sais tous qu'ils sont partis
 d. *Il répond tous que les garçons aiment Marie

The constraints on coreferences traditionally explained by "EQUI" (obligatory) ⁸ exist only in subjunctive clauses:

- (15)a. *tu veux que tu viennes
 b. tu espères que tu viendras
 c. Pierre_i dit qu'il_i s'amuse bien

With cognitive verbs, "EQUI" is optional, while it seems somewhat bizarre with verbs of communication :

- (16)a. tu espères { que tu viendras }
 { venir }
 b. tu as répondu { que tu viendras }
 { *?venir }

All these facts indicate that the boundaries between matrix and embedded clauses are quite different; the que introduced by the emotive verbs seems to be more "transparent" (to use Bresnan's terminology) than the others. Not quite

transparent of course, because one cannot apply PASSIVE in this way :

- (17)a. Pierre exige que Paul parte
 b. *Paul est exigé par Pierre que parte
 (cf. English : Bill is believed by Paul to be crazy)

Let us say (I am grateful to Joe Emonds for the suggestion), that the que which follows an emotive verb is not the simple complementizer that we can find in \bar{S} or $\bar{\bar{S}}$, but rather is marked by an AFFECTIVE feature of the kind proposed by Klima (1964). This (+Affect) feature would trigger STYLISTIC-INVERSION⁹; this predicts correctly that STYLISTIC-INVERSION is possible only in embedded S :

- (18)a. Pierre veut que partent les enfants
 b. *Pierre sait que partent les enfants
 c. *Pierre raconte que partent les enfants

French verbs will be subcategorized in the lexicon (following again Chomsky (1971) and Bresnan (1972)) with respect to the choice of this feature. The subjunctive mood would follow from the Affect complementizer, but this needs further analysis.

B - Differences between (13.d.e.) and (13.f.g.) are illustrated in that the latter, but not the former, can take sentential adverbs :

- (19)a. Jean dit qu'évidemment Paul est parti avant la
 b. Julie a répondu qu'heureusement Paul était ^{fin} là
 c. *Pierre sait qu'évidemment Marie part
 d. *Marie espère que naturellement Julie viendra
 (cf. *je veux qu'évidemment Marie parte)

I shall give other facts of the kind below.

C - Now I should like to explain why I use a hierarchy for describing the three kinds of complements : S, \bar{S} , and $\bar{\bar{S}}$, rather than the reverse, for instance. Intuitively, we feel that S is less "free" than \bar{S} , and \bar{S} less free than $\bar{\bar{S}}$. S is a more closely bound part of the higher clause, both in allowing extraction into that clause, and in excluding certain sentential adverbs and other independent clause constructions.

I shall use also some concepts of Williams' (1971), transposed into French Grammar. A property of introductory verbs heretofore unnoticed, at least to my knowledge, is their possible co-occurrence with the "small clauses". Gross (1968) restricted his investigation to direct and indirect object (Prep= à, de). The emotive verbs cannot take PP_i like (Place) and (Time); the verbs of knowledge and belief can take these PP_i but cannot take

certain kinds of French participles (the (tout) en étant construction); the verbs of communication can take both $\bar{10}$:

(20) *Marie { a aimé } { à 5 heures } que tu chantes
 { veut } { chez elle }
 { en lisant }

(21) Marie a su à 5 heures que Paul était parti
 *Marie a cru tout en lisant que Julie était là

(22) Marie a raconté à 5 heures tout en travaillant
 qu'elle avait visité toute l'Italie

(The same constraints occur when complements are taken as subjects; although a corresponding semantic or contextual situation can easily be imagined, as well as in (20)-(22), these are syntactically ungrammatical:

(23) *Que Pierre soit là a déplu à Paul à 5 heures
 *Que Pierre soit là a démontré à Jean dans sa
 chambre qu'il avait été trompé)

These facts lead me to postulate that the emotive verbs are, for instance, V , cognitive verbs are \bar{V} , and verbs of communication, $\bar{\bar{V}}$. The underlying forms of (13) are :

(24) X [vouloir [Y]]
 V

(25) X [savoir [Y]]
 \bar{V}

(26) X [répondre [Y]]
 $\bar{\bar{V}}$

It follows that the base grammar has to be reconsidered: I no longer think that $\bar{\bar{V}} \rightarrow \bar{V}$, or $\bar{N} \rightarrow N$, but that V , \bar{V} , $\bar{\bar{V}}$, and N , \bar{N} , $\bar{\bar{N}}$, etc., are alternative derivations of the rewriting rules : $VP \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \bar{V} \\ \bar{\bar{V}} \dots \end{array} \right\}$, etc.

At the same time, since the notation refers to possible co-occurrences, this would simplify the subcategorization rules in the lexicon : each item is not only marked by its categorial feature, but also by its hierarchical level. My notation also means that, except for the ease of exposition, I no longer make the binary distinction between VP and V (verb phrase and verb), because each level of the hierarchy is to be understood both as X-phrase and X with specific properties.

Williams (1971) bases his hierarchy on increasing freedom of the X-phrase along with increasing distance to the head. I recall his paradigm :

- (27) John hasn't offended Bill by telling jokes since
 returning home
 * " " " Bill since returning home
 by telling jokes
 ** " " " by telling jokes Bill since
 returning home
 *** " " " by telling jokes since retur-
 ning home Bill
 **** " " " since returning home Bill
 by telling jokes
 ***** " " " since returning home by
 telling jokes Bill

I add the idea of "increasing complexity" : items of a higher hierarchical level can occur with more types of modifiers and complements than items of a lower level.

From the same work in progress, I extract a tentative principle, simply sketched here :

- (28) Hierarchic Principle : In the base grammar,
 $X^n \neq Y^m, m > n$, if X is a non-cyclical node.

This principle explains why vouloir cannot be followed by qu'effectivement Paul part. It also accounts for :

- (29) * $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{la ville} \\ \bar{N} \end{array} \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{de la construction par Louis} \\ \bar{N} \end{array} \right] \right]$

in the NP, and for :

- (30) * $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{la robe} \\ \bar{A} \end{array} \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{verte} \\ \bar{N} \end{array} \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{de l'usure} \\ \bar{N} \end{array} \right] \right] \right]$ ll

in the AP.

Thus this analysis of the three deep structures \bar{S} , \bar{S} , and \bar{S} , not only describes the differences between complements, but fits into a general explanation of other, independent grammatical facts.

D - Finally, I would like to point to a somewhat different application of the above principles. These different structures concern directly a theory of literature because, after all, these verbs introduce dialogues, statements, wishes, stream of consciousness, etc. French acts differently from English in \bar{S} cases; according to Banfield (1973), for instance

- (31) *Richard protested that, Lord! he didn't like it.
 is ungrammatical; I would maintain that (32) is quite possible in French :

- (32) Il protesta que bon dieu! il n'aimait pas ça.

(It is true, however, that, like English, French cannot have "incomplete clauses" in indirect discourse :

- (33) *Clarissa whispered that there
*Clarissa murmura que là)

Moreover, Emonds (personal communication) brought to my attention that LEFT-DISLOCATION is possible in \bar{S} :

- (34) Jean dit que Marie, Paul va l'épouser
(cf. *Jean sait que Marie, Paul va l'épouser
**Jean veut que Marie, Paul aille l'épouser)

This is confirmed by the fact that in French, only \bar{S} must have a de dicto reading (following Partee (1971) and Hanfield (1973)), while S and \bar{S} are ambiguous as regards de dicto and de re readings. In :

- (35) Oedipe pense que sa mère est belle

Oedipus may or may not know that his mother is in question, but in :

- (36) Oedipe dit qu'heureusement sa mère est très belle

Oedipus must know that his mother is in question (of course, if sa refers to Oedipe), as well as in :

- (37) Oedipe dit : "Ma mère est belle".

In order to be universal, the constraints of Emonds (1970) must be redefined for French grammar; in fact, Emonds (to appear) argues that if certain kinds of embedded clauses may undergo "root transformations", as in (34) here, classical arabic or German, this is due to the fact that these peculiar clauses, as opposed to all others, are derived through other kinds of operations, possibly generalized transformations with specific insertional constraints. I would claim that \bar{S} , but not S or \bar{S} , are the kinds of "S's" that act like embedded root S's referred to by Emonds. This^{is} a plausible alternative for French. I leave this question open.

In conclusion, we have seen 1) that an analysis claiming that the French complements are NP's is unable to explain all the discrepancies between the complements I have brought out : an analysis which distinguishes three kinds of complements is (if not perfect) better than an analysis which does not; 2) that the implicit idea of the previous analysis, i.e. that French behaves exactly like English, is due perhaps more to the History of Modern Linguistics than to the History of Indo-European languages : the similarities between French and English

are much more abstract, and belong to the Universal Grammar (see : (8)).

In any case, these comparisons will have to be taken into account by writers sufficiently daring to undertake translations to and from English and French.¹²

FOOTNOTES

1) Although Gross (1968) insists on the distinction "complement/relative clause" that we feel in the ambiguity of:

- (a) je suis content de ce qu'elle achète
 (=1) du fait qu'elle achète)
 (*2) des choses qu'elle achète)

the principal argument supporting the existence of [lui], which never appears in the surface structure of complements, is its occurrence in the other parts of the grammar, namely in demonstrative pronouns, which are obligatorily followed by a "modifier" -ci/-là, or a relative clause :

- (b) celui { -ci
 que j'ai vu }

2) Cela seems to refer to a complement, although we can find it where complements are impossible : je crois cela important, il faut que cela soit fait. It is more likely to refer to an independent clause :

- (c) Je sais ceci : { Marie part
 *que Marie part }
 { *que Marie part, } je sais cela
 Marie part. }

*que Pierre parte, je veux cela

* j'aime ceci : que Marie chante

(but : j'aime ça, moi, que tu chantes !)

See also Kayne (1972).

The clitics en, y, are pro-PP's, as Kayne (1969) showed. Consequently, en and y cannot be arguments for proving that complements are NP's, even if we have Pierre s'attend à ce que tu partes, mais Paul ne s'y attend pas, and Marie s'est aperçue de ce que Pierre était là, mais Paul ne s'en est pas encore aperçu.

3) A well-formed construction should be :

- (d) Jean est amusé par ce que tu achètes

but in this case, ce is felt as the object of achètes.

(d) would be impossible if the embedded clause had an intransitive verb :

- (e) *Jean est amusé par ce que tu partes

We must say here either Jean est amusé de ce que tu partes, which is not a real passive, or Jean est amusé parce que

tu pars, which means "because you are leaving".

4) cf. Kayne (1972). He convincingly argues in favor of two distinct transformations for inversion in interrogative clauses; one, STYLISTIC-INVERSION, which moves a full NP subject to the end of the VP, and the other, SUBJECT-CLITIC-INVERSION, which reverses the finite verb (or the Aux) and the subject clitic (very roughly):

(f) Quand est $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} -il \\ *Jean \end{array} \right\}$ parti $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *-il \\ Jean \end{array} \right\}$?

5) croire is a strange verb for this purpose :

(g) ? Où crois-tu qu'il va ?

* Où Pierre croit-il que Marie va ?

However, croire can be followed by either the subjunctive or the indicative without any noticeable change in the meaning of the verb, although there may be a change in the presupposition :

(h) Crois-tu qu'il vienne? (Moi, je pense que non)

Crois-tu qu'il viendra? (Moi, je pense que oui)

to compare to :

(i) Sais-tu $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *qu'il vienne \\ qu'il viendra \\ s'il viendra \end{array} \right\}$?

6) Of course :

(j) Quand a-t-il su que Marie part ?

is grammatical if quand goes with the matrix verb, il a su à X heures que Marie part.

7) The interrogative form is not possible either with an independent clause containing a sentential adverb :

(k) *Quand heureusement Marie part-elle ?

Without going further into the problem of independent clauses, we can suppose that no [+Affect] is ever present in \bar{S} .

8) For some evidence that EQUI may not exist at all in FRENCH, see Ronat (to appear)

9) Added to which, Kayne's [FWH] permits distinction between yes-no questions and \bar{S} complements from real indirect questions :

(l) je demande $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} que parte Paul \\ quand part Paul \\ *si part Paul \end{array} \right\}$
 je sais $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *que part Paul \\ *si " " \\ quand part Paul \end{array} \right\}$

10) Many verbs are ambiguous; they may be used in two categories, sometimes three. In those cases, we have to

control them by means of the criteria established above, in order to be sure of their use. Each time there is also a slight difference of meaning. Il a décrété que Paul parte means "he decreed...", but il a décrété que Paul était parti means "he got it in his head that..."; and il balbutia que Paul parte means "he stammered out the order...", but il balbutia que Paul était parti means "he muttered that...", etc.

11) It was Richie Kayne who first suggested to me the idea that a principle might exist to account for this precise example.

12) I would like to thank Lora Weinroth for her valuable help in avoiding gallicisms in this paper.

REFERENCES

- BANFIELD, Ann, 1973, "Narrative Style and the Grammar of Direct and Indirect Speech", Foundations of Language (to appear); French translation in Change n°16, Seghers/Laffont, Paris.
- BRESNAN, Joan, 1972, Theory of complementation in English Syntax, doctoral Dissertation, M.I.T.
- CHOMSKY, Noam, 1967, "Remarks on Nominalization".
-----, 1971, "Conditions on Transformations", mimeo.
- GROSS, Maurice, 1968, Grammaire Transformationnelle du Français, syntaxe du verbe, Larousse, Paris.
- EMONDS, Joe E., 1970, Root and Structure Preserving Transformations, doctoral Dissertation, M.I.T.
-----, to appear, Root and Structure Preserving Transformations, M.I.T. Press
- KAYNE, Richie S., 1969, The Transformational Cycle in French Syntax, doctoral Dissertation, M.I.T.
-----, 1972, "Subject Inversion in French Interrogatives", Generative Studies in Romance Languages, Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- KLIMA, Edward S., 1964, "Negation in English", in The Structure of Language, Fodor & Katz, eds. Prentice Hall
- PARTEE, Barbara Hall, 1971, "The semantics of belief-sentences", to appear in Morarsik and Suppes.
- RONAT, Mitsou, 1973, Hiérarchie de base et Mutations en Grammaire Française (tentative title), Doctorat de 3° Cycle, Vincennes.
- WILLIAMS, Edwin S., 1971, "Small Clauses in English", mimeo.