

## Fundamentals of French syntax

Christopher Gledhill

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**FUNDAMENTALS OF FRENCH SYNTAX**

**Christopher Gledhill**

## **Preface.**

Knowledge of syntax is useful to language students for two reasons. Firstly, syntax provides a metalanguage – a way of talking about the complexities of language in a shorthand way which allows linguists to explain problem areas efficiently. Secondly, syntax is important as an academic discipline in its own right. Proofs and discussions of the best way to analyse a sentence are worthwhile exercises because they belong to the scientific activity of argument, demonstration and explanation. These skills are relevant beyond the field of linguistics, but also happen to make syntax one of the most interesting and enjoyable specialisms in linguistics.

This book sets out a simple system which can be used to analyse the fundamental structures of French, with practice sentences and model answers. Syntax is unusual in the academic study of language, in that for many sentences there is a correct analysis (as long as that analysis is consistent with the system presented). However, the real interest for the advanced learner lies in the complexities which cannot be covered by the core system. For this reason I have included for each model answer some open-ended comments which discuss potential difficulties and points of interest. For students who are interested in following up their studies of syntax (in project dissertations, for example), in the final part of the book I have also included a discussion of areas of current interest in the theory and analysis of syntax.

Christopher Gledhill , St. Andrews, July 2001

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## French Syntax 1: Phrases

### **1.1 A Fundamental Notion of Syntax.**

Syntax is the study of how words and phrases combine to form meaningful units in a language. Even in languages which do not have rigid word orders (such as Latin and American Indian languages), syntax is important because it examines the relations which emerge between sequences of words. Syntax is essential to our understanding of French, because it teaches us a great deal about the ‘grammar’ of the language (the correct and incorrect uses of particular words). But syntax also provides a scientific way to analyse language. This is an important point, because the syntactician’s job is not only to spot patterns, but also to understand and explain the complexities of language.

One of the simplest ways of exploring syntax is to observe what happens when the normal rules of the language break down. For example, most speakers of French would reject such a sentence as \* *Je toujours bois café*, although its literal translation would be fine in English: *I always drink coffee* (an asterisk \* indicates an ungrammatical construction). The sentence obviously means something in French, but a native speaker would reject it, and prefer *Je bois toujours du café*. French speakers intuitively know that grammatical adverbs (such as *toujours*) cannot separate the subject of the verb (*je*) from the verb (*bois*), and that a common noun (*café*) cannot be used without an article (*du*). So, in any explanation about what makes a valid sentence in French, we are obliged to refer to **syntax**, our implicit knowledge about how words are ordered into meaningful sequences.

To understand syntax is to understand one of the most fundamental characteristics of language. Many linguists consider syntax to be a central area in linguistics. They claim syntax constitutes the highest level of structure in the mechanisms of language (over and above sounds, morphemes and words discussed in other areas of linguistics). They also argue that syntax reveals the way the human mind works, especially the way we express thoughts or propositions. In the 1950s, the American linguist, Noam Chomsky, claimed that these properties could be found in all languages in one form or another. This idea was first proposed by the rationalist *Port Royal* grammarians in France and is known as **universal grammar**. This is not a ‘grammar for all languages’, but an attempt to find the underlying properties shared

by all human languages. For instance, all languages appear to express ideas through **transitivity**, that is through a perspective of Subject - Verb - Object, although the order of these elements and their functions vary greatly from one language to the next. For example, Latin prefers the order Subject – Object – Verb, whereas Japanese tends to express a general ‘Topic’ instead of an explicit subject. In addition, all languages appear to be able to **paraphrase**, that is they express the same idea in a variety of ways for stylistic effect. For example *Ce vase a été acheté par ma mère* is a paraphrase of *Ma mère a acheté ce vase*. A similar process involves **recursion** in which the speaker can compress or expand information (*Ce mur gris* > *C’est le mur qui est gris*).

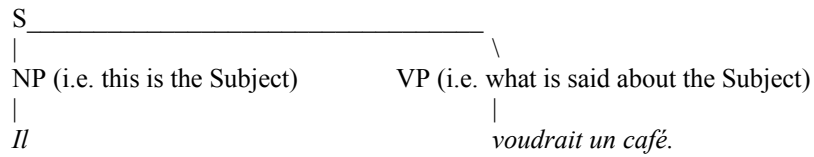
As a mathematical linguist, Noam Chomsky was interested in finding the patterns which appeared to link these universal properties of language. He argued that if two sentences were related in some way, they were related by a series of abstract rules. Instead of seeing language as hugely complex and idiosyncratic, he suggested that we are in fact dealing with a small number of rules which can be combined in different ways to produce an almost infinite variety of expressions. One purpose of this book is to demonstrate that around half a dozen rules can be seen to permeate the French language. These ‘rules’ do not account for everything that can be said or written in French, but do allow us to identify the core aspects of French syntax.

## **1.2 Phrases.**

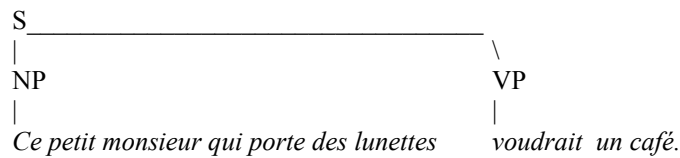
Most basic sentences in French share the same pattern, and this is reflected by our first rule:

**S -> NP VP.**

This states that all Sentences in French (**S**) consist of a Noun Phrase (**NP**) which serves as a subject (the topic or starting point of the sentence). All sentences also have a Verb Phrase (**VP**) which serves as a comment about the subject (what the subject is or what the subject is doing). This rule is usually set out as a ‘tree diagram’. Tree diagrams allow us to visualise the relationship between different parts of the sentence:



By separating NP and VP like this, this rule claims that all French sentences have the same pattern, regardless of how complex they are. The complex sentence below obeys the same rule:



The rule S-> NP VP reflects the fact that subjects and verbs are the only obligatory parts of a sentence. You can see in the sentence above that the verb *vouloir* agrees with the singular Noun *monsieur*, and this demonstrates that the main subject Noun is *monsieur* while the phrase *qui porte des lunettes* is simply part of the overall subject NP. At the same time, the NP *un café* is the object of the verb. Since some verbs do not require an object at all (as in *Il arrive*, *Elle travaille*), object NPs do not need to be represented in the rule S -> NP VP. It is for this reason that in tree diagrams, the NP directly below S is always conventionally understood as the ‘subject’, while the NP below VP is conventionally the ‘object’.

Our first rule of syntax reflects the fact that phrases combine to form sentences. A **phrase** is a sequence of words which belong together and function as a unit. All phrases orbit around one central element. For example, in Noun Phrases (NP), the noun represents the single most essential piece of information in the phrase. But NPs may also contain other information. In the following rule we account for several possibilities in French:

**NP** -> **D** **(AP)** **N** **(AP)**  
**Noun Phrase (is made up of)** **Determiner** **Adjective** **Noun** **Adjective**

This rule describes various combinations including the following:

D (AP) N (AP)

<i>Un</i>	<i>grand</i>	<i>lion.</i>	
<i>Des</i>	<i>petits</i>	<i>nains</i>	<i>curieux.</i>
<i>Quelques</i>		<i>personnes</i>	<i>prodigieuses.</i>

The NP rule states that the Noun may be preceded by an **Adjective Phrase (AP)**, or followed by an Adjective Phrase. The brackets in the rule indicate that this is an optional feature. In French, the meaning of the adjective often determines whether it precedes or follows the noun. For example, *une grande dame* ‘a great lady’ contrasts with *une dame grande* ‘a tall lady’. The length of the adjective usually dictates that longer words follow the N. But more often than not, stylistic effect also comes into play and even longer adjectives can be used before the N for emphasis: *une attente interminable* / *une interminable attente* ‘an interminable wait’.

The main part of the NP rule states that all common Noun Phrases must be preceded by a grammatical word known as a **Determiner (D)**, as in *les pommes*, *ma pomme*, *cette pomme*. Determiners answer specific grammatical questions about the Noun Phrase such as ‘how many?’ ‘whose?’ ‘which one?’. Determiners include words which are traditionally classed as ‘articles’ as well as ‘demonstrative pronouns’: *ce / ces*, *plusieurs*, *chaque*, *certains*, *quel / quels / quelle*, *tel / telle* etc. Determiners also include numerals (*un*, *deux*, *cinquante*) and certain older expressions which have become fixed in the language (*la plupart de*, *beaucoup de*). One specific difference between NPs in French and English, is that English does not require a Determiner when a plural noun is used, as in: *I like [0] apples* – *j’aime les pommes*, *[0] apples fell from the tree* – *des pommes sont tombées de l’arbre*, or when a generic noun is used: *I like [0] wine* – *J’aime le vin*. (The symbol [0] indicates a missing or ‘empty’ category).

Not all NPs require a Determiner in French. For example, certain fixed expressions, often dating from Old French, consist simply of a single Noun (*j’ai faim*, *il a envie*, *tu lui a donné raison*, *être en panne*). In addition, **Pronouns** (shortened to **Pro**: such as *je*, *elle*, *cela*, *moi*, *vous*) replace an entire Noun Phrase and stand completely on their own, as in *Elle aime ça*. Pronouns carry the same kind of abstract information conveyed by Determiners (quantity: *tout*, *tous*, *en*, proximity: *ceci*, *cela*, *y*), but can also indicate grammatical information (first person *je*, *nous*, second person *tu*, *vous*, third person *on*, *ils*, *ça* etc.). In addition, Pronouns are never preceded by Determiners, and Pronouns effectively replace an entire NP. For example *nous* refers to ‘first person plural’, so there is no need for a determiner to specify the



plural. Similarly, **Proper Nouns** (symbolised by **PN**: *Robert, Paris, Dieu*) also typically stand on their own without a determiner. The classification of what counts as a proper noun and what counts as a generic noun is sometimes not clear, and both English and French make different distinctions for different words. For example, *Paris* does not need a determiner, as in *Je déteste Paris*, while other nouns appear to need one, as in *J'adore la France*. The general rule appears to be that generic nouns in French require a Determiner (*l'Afrique, la France, le français*), whereas in English they do not (*Africa, France, French*). These concepts appear to be much more abstract and notional than proper nouns, which tend to have a personal or unique quality. There are exceptions to this, however (as in *la Seine, the Thames*). In addition, PNs in French are frequently used with other types of determiners, in which case they appear to be treated as generic nouns (*Quel Robert? Le bon Dieu*). The definite article is also sometimes used with personal names in dialects and in very informal French, and this also appears to be the case in related languages, such as Italian.

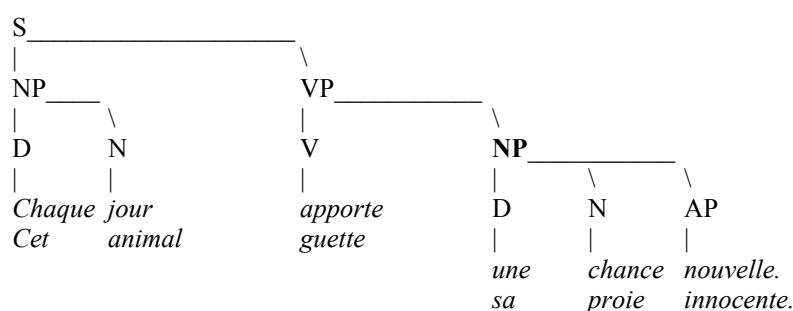
To summarise, NPs can at times consist of just one word (either N, or sub-types of N such as PN or Pro) or groups of words (D+ N +AP). The fact that some Noun Phrases require a determiner while others do not is one of most complex areas of grammar in both English and French, and poses a particular problem for speakers of non-European languages which may not have a determiner system.

As you can see, phrase structure rules such as NP-> D (AP) N (AP) appear very simple, yet also have the potential to express countless variations within Noun Phrases. To what extent can we apply this generalisation to the rest of the language? The following rule covers many of possibilities for Verb Phrases:

**VP -> (AuxP) V (NP, PP, AP, AvP...)**

This rule indicates that the verb phrase must contain a main verb (V), possibly preceded by an Auxiliary Phrase (AuxP) and optionally followed by another kind of phrase, such as a Noun Phrase (NP *tu crois cet homme*), Prepositional Phrase (PP *elle va à Paris*), Adjectival Phrase (AP *elle est si folle*) or sometimes another type of phrase, such as an adverb (AvP *il va bien*).

Much of the complexity of French depends on what ingredients the verb allows in the Verb Phrase. These are technically known as **arguments**. Most often, the arguments of a verb depend on whether it is transitive or not, whether it allows for indirect objects (*donner un livre à Marie*) or takes reflexive pronouns (*se lever, se moquer de, s'attendre à*) and so on. A **transitive** verb, for instance, must have a noun phrase after the main verb. This means that you cannot meaningfully say *?Paul veut* or *?Marie apporte* in French, because an object NP is expected to complete the sense of the verbs *vouloir* and *apporter*. The following tree diagram describes the structure of a simple transitive verb in French:

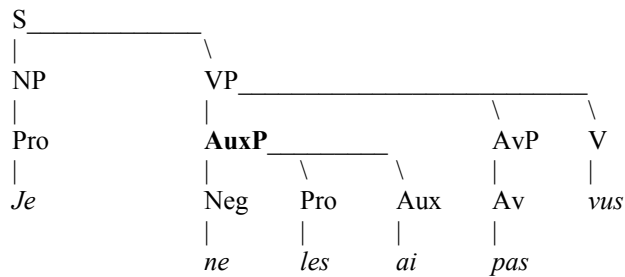


As I mentioned above, the distinction between subject and object does not need to be labelled, because this is already implicit in the relative position of phrases in the tree diagram. In the examples above, the NP directly below S is the Subject of the sentence (it is said to be the ‘daughter of S’) and the NP directly below the VP is the object of the verb (or ‘daughter of VP’).

For most sentences, the symbol V will be enough to represent the verb. But the grammar of verbs can be more complex in French, and this is represented by the rule:

**AuxP -> (Neg, Pro, Aux)**

The **Auxiliary Phrase** rule allows us to associate certain grammatical words which gather immediately before the verb in French. Each element occupies a specific place in the AuxP: the **negative particle** *ne* comes first (**Neg** *ne mange pas*), followed by personal, reflexive and object **pronouns** (**Pro** *Je me lave, Tu l’as vu*). Finally, the **auxiliary** verb precedes the main verb (**Aux** *avons mangé, est allé*). The auxiliary does not have to be present for there to be other elements in the AuxP (*tu ne les manges pas*). The full AuxP can therefore be made up of a variety of elements:



Notice that *pas* is not part of AuxP. It is important to distinguish between the negative particle *ne* and negative adverbs (such as *pas*, *jamais* and *guère*) as well as negative pronouns (such as *rien* and *personne*). These words are lexical items rather than grammatical particles, and are therefore positioned directly next to V in the VP (as in *Elle n'a rien mangé*, *Elle ne mange rien*). One reason for this is that these words can form their own phrases (*je ne les ai surtout pas vus*, *je n'ai vu absolument personne*), which the grammatical particles of the AuxP never do.

### 1.3 Other phrases

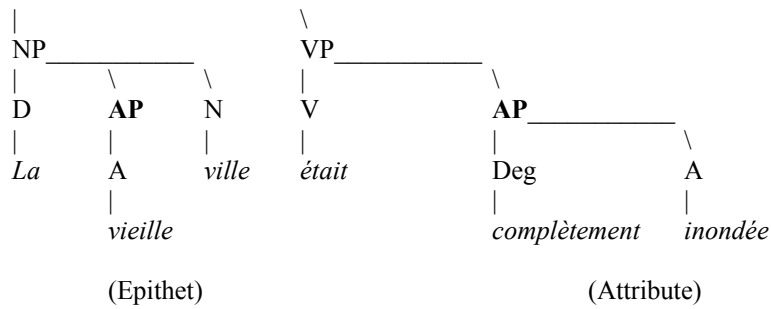
Noun and Verb Phrases are central to the syntax of French, but there are other types of phrase which have different roles to play in the overall syntax, namely Adjective Phrases (AP), Adverb Phrases and Prepositional Phrases (PP). Each type of phrase has its own rule and its own specific properties.

Adjective Phrases have the following pattern:

**AP-> (Deg) A**

This means that adjectives can be preceded by grammatical adverbs (symbolised by **Deg**) which are sometimes known as intensifying or degree adverbs such as '*plus grand*', '*très grand*', '*particulièrement fou*', '*tout à fait simple*' etc. Adjectives can be used to describe nouns in NPs or in VPs after verbs such as *être*, *sembler*, *paraître*. In French grammar, adjectives are known as epithets when they modify nouns in NPs, or attributes when they refer to a noun as part of the VP. Both uses are demonstrated in the following diagram:

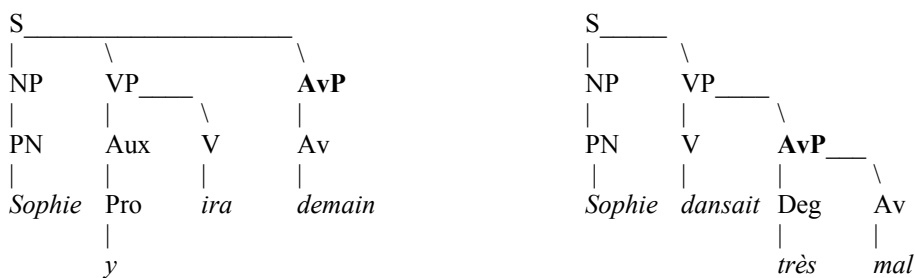
S \_\_\_\_\_



Adverbs also form phrases in a similar way to adjectives. The rule is:

**AvP-> (Deg) Av**

Adverbs are often formed on the basis of adjectives (*Ils sont rapides* – adjective, *Ils roulent rapidement* - adverb) although they differ from adjectives in that they do not agree for number or gender (*Ils roulent vite* = no agreement, therefore an adverb). As with other phrases, Adverb Phrases can consist of single words, such as *demain*, *lentement*, *hier*, *ici*, *là-bas*, or can include degree adverbs to specify the main adverb, such as *très rapidement*, *assez bien*, *plûtôt mal* and so on. Adverbs differ from adjectives in that some have the potential to move around the sentence freely. Two examples below show different uses of Adverb Phrases, one below the S (at the same level as NP and VP) , and one below the VP (as though an object of the verb):



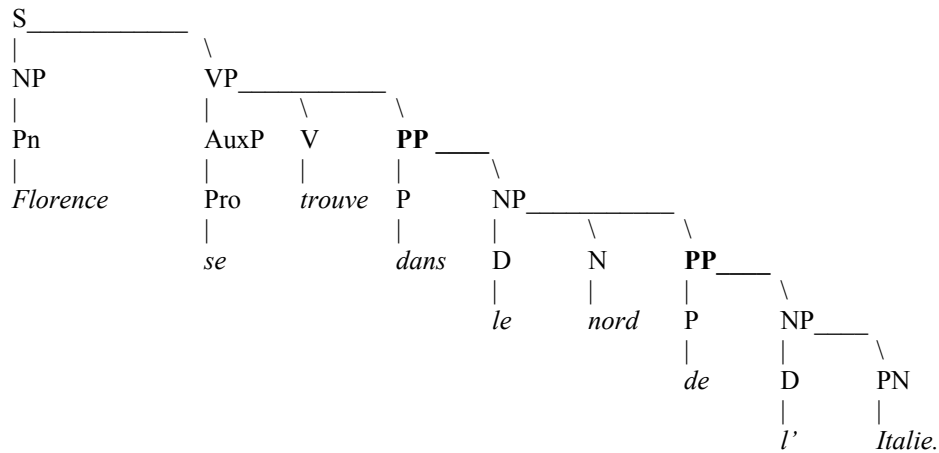
The analysis is different for each adverb, because one AvP is mobile, while the other is not. The first sentence has two possible wordings: *Sophie y ira demain* and *Demain Sophie y ira*. This kind of ‘movement’ to either side of the sentence suggests that the AvP is neither part of the subject NP nor part of the VP. It therefore deserves its own location, and we are obliged to place it directly under S to recognize both possibilities. In contrast, *\*Très mal Sophie dansait*, is not acceptable in French, so the adverb in the second example is not mobile and forms part of the VP. These examples

demonstrate that some AvPs modify the sentence (they are traditionally known as sentence adverbs) while others are typically restricted to the verb phrase (and are sometimes known as predicative adverbs).

So far we have seen phrases based around content words or lexical items (Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs). In contrast, prepositions such as *à, de, pour, malgré, par, dans* are grammatical items, but they can also be seen to form phrases. The following rule accounts for most possibilities:

**PP -> (Deg) P NP**

This states that, a Prepositional Phrase can be specified by a degree adverb (*très contre cette idée, presque dans la forêt, juste devant sa maison*). However, PPs have a number of specific properties. PPs can be used in Verb Phrases and Noun Phrases, as though the PP were an adjective:

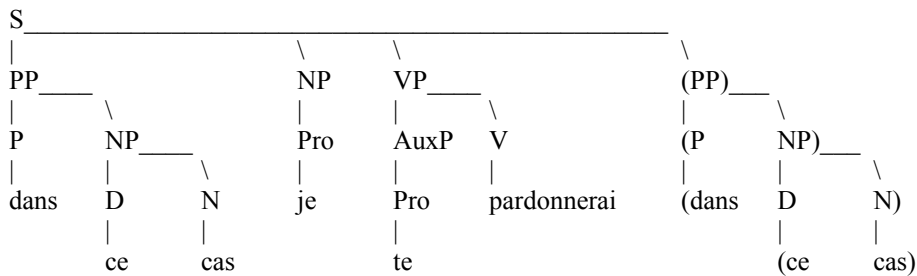


In addition, some PPs can also be mobile at the level of the sentence or at the level of the VP:

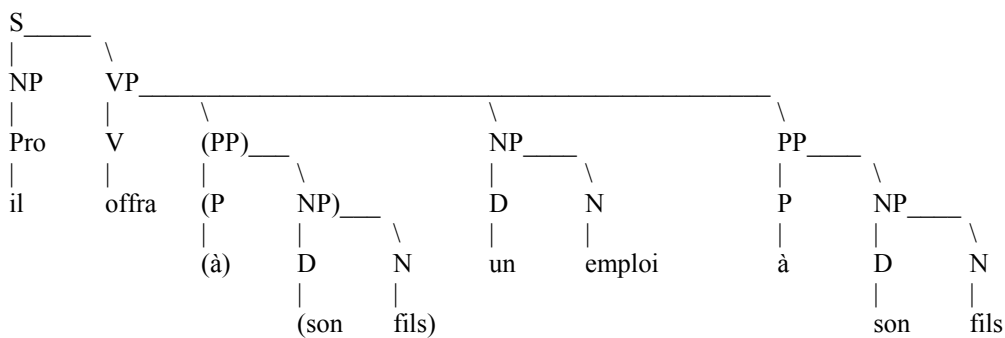
#1 *Dans ce cas, je te pardonnerai* / *Je te pardonnerai dans ce cas.* (PP mobile in S)

#2 *Il offra un emploi à son fils* / *Il offra à son fils un emploi.* (PP mobile in VP)

In the case of #1, we must analyse the PP as a mobile part of the sentence (S) in the same way that we analysed the Adverb in *Sophie y ira demain* / *Demain Sophie y ira*. PP is said to be a ‘sentence modifier’ (the same term would be used to describe an adverb in the same position), and its position is either before the NP subject or after VP (I have marked the second possibility in brackets):



In contrast, we must analyse the PP in #2 as part of the Verb Phrase. Again, I have marked the second possibility in brackets:



In this case, the PP is said to be an ‘indirect object complement’, and its presence in the VP is required by the grammar of the verb. Verbs such as *donner*, *offrir*, *mettre* are often known as ‘ditransitives’. Such verbs require two elements in the VP, as in *il met son argent dans sa poche*, where we can not just say *?il met son argent*.

The two previous examples show that mobility in the sentence is a key defining feature of the phrase. This gives us the **movement test**: if a group of words can be moved together grammatically within a sentence, it is likely to constitute a single phrase. The preposition in both of these examples does not move on its own. Instead, it brings with it the entire Prepositional Phrase (with an NP inside it). This explains why prepositional phrases are treated as independent phrases, on a par with NPs, VPs and the like.

A further particular property of prepositions in French is that the PP never consists of a Preposition alone, whereas in English a preposition can be isolated. We can say *They came in* and *This is the box we left it in* while French does not allow these prepositions to be isolated: *\*Ils sont entrés dans*, *\*C'est la boîte laquelle nous l'avons laissé dans*. It seems that English allows parts of the PP to be taken away, while in French the PP must remain as a unit. It is worth pointing out here that such examples as *Tire-lui dessus!* (Shoot at him!) and *Je l'ai laissé dedans* (I left it inside) do not involve prepositions, and the words *dedans* and *dessus* are instead considered to be adverbs. This is demonstrated by the fact that, unlike PPs, these words never form phrases with NPs: *\*dedans la voiture*, *\*dessus ma tête* and so on.

#### 1.4 Remarks.

In Part One I have introduced a number of core rules in French which are technically known as **phrase structure rules**. These are not quite the same as grammatical rules, such as 'the past participle agrees with the preceding direct object' or stylistic rules, such as 'do not begin a sentence with *and*'. Both grammatical and stylistic rules are often broken, and when they are there is usually no danger of confusion. Syntactic rules on the other hand are more abstract, but also more central to the core mechanisms of the language. They capture the properties of related phrases, starting with the most general (Sentences) and working their way to more specific types (AuxP, PP and the like). Not all phrase types are the same, and we have seen that although the rules are very simple there are varying ways of combining phrases within the sentence. In fact, part of the task of the syntactician is to see which combinations are possible for different types of phrases.

The following seven rules can now be used to describe thousands of basic sentences in French. Although I shall be modifying them somewhat in later sections, these can be used to analyse the practice sentences in Exercise 1:

1. S           ->    NP            VP
2. NP          ->    D        (AP) N        (AP or PP)
3. VP          ->    (AuxP )     V        (NP or AP or PP or AvP)
4. AuxP       ->    (Neg, Pro, Aux)
5. AP          ->    (Deg)        A
6. AvP         ->    (Deg)        Av
7. PP          ->    (Deg)        P        NP



### Exercise 1 : Phrases.

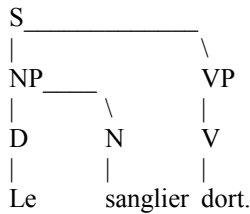
Draw a labelled tree diagram for each sentence below. You will find it easier if you break down the sentences by using the phrase structure rules set out at the end of Part One.

- 1) Le sanglier dort.
- 2) C'est juste.
- 3) Plusieurs grandes personnalités sont arrivées.
- 4) Ma tortue m'a mordue.
- 5) Certains guitaristes jouent assez mal.
- 6) L'espionne grecque est tombée de l'arbre.
- 7) José prépare une omelette aux champignons.
- 8) Cette architecture est basée sur une idée de fluidité consumériste.
- 9) Son bateau prit la mer malgré la tempête.
- 10) Ils voteront pour les présidentielles dimanche.
- 11) Tu couleras toujours dans la douloureuse vallée.
- 12) Le chevalier a donné une grande gifle à son adversaire.

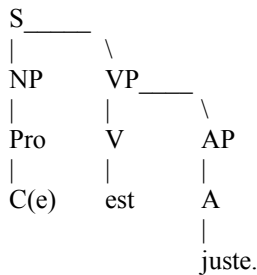
### Model answers to Exercise 1 : Phrases.

NB: Since the model introduced in this book is built up over several sections, certain elements of analysis in Parts 1 and 2 need to be modified after the reader has worked through the final chapters (Parts 3 and 4). Those sentences which will need substantial changes are marked +. Most of these revisions concern the position of VG, as well as complements and modifiers. The reader should consider these changes to be refinements rather than corrections.

#### 1) Le sanglier dort.



#### 2) C'est juste.

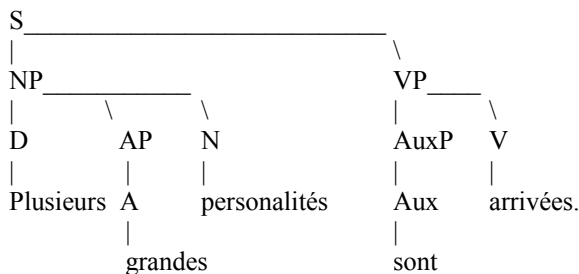


Notes :

i) *Ce* is an impersonal pronoun in French, and is used to refer to a whole proposition or state of affairs. Contractions from *ce* to *c'* are a feature of French phonology and may be indicated in brackets in the tree diagram for the sake of clarity.

ii) Note that the symbol AP is necessary, not just A. This is because the AP can be potentially expanded by the addition of a degree adverb, as in *c'est si juste* or *c'est plus juste*. This same principle is applied to all major phrase types (NP, VP, AP, AvP, PP).

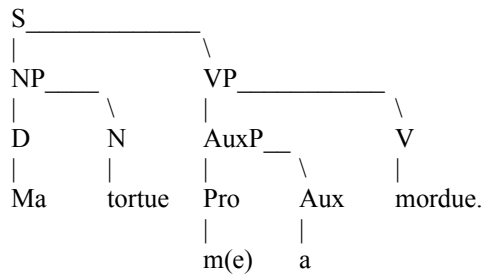
#### 3) Plusieurs grandes personnalités sont arrivées.



Notes :

i) The verb is broken down here into the obligatory auxiliary for this verb (*être*) and the past participle *arrivé(e/s)*. Notice that when other past participles are used after *être*, as in *être déçu(e/s)*, *être fâché(e/s)*, they are adjectives and labelled AP. This can be tested by inserting a grammatical adverb such as *si*, *assez* or *très* before the A: *être si déçu*, *être très fâché*, *(?)être très construit*, *\*être assez mangé*. Since in the example above we cannot say *\*très arrivé*, we know that we are dealing with Aux + V.

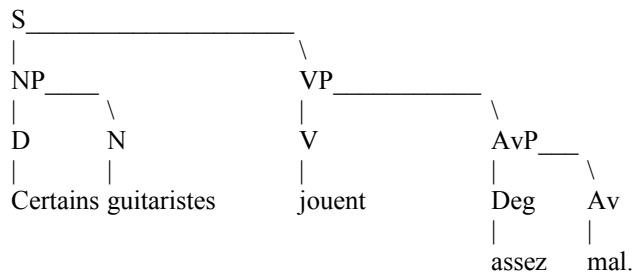
4) Ma tortue m'a mordue.



Notes:

i) The gender of the tortoise's victim is signalled by the past participle agreement in *mordue*. The pronoun *m(e)* is known as 'the preceding direct object'.

5) Certains guitaristes jouent assez mal.



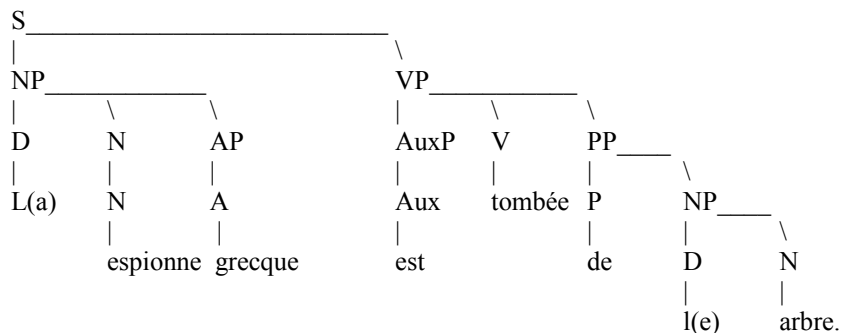
Notes :

i) *Certain/e/s* can sometimes be an adjective (as in *un certain guitariste*), but in this position has the role of a determiner.

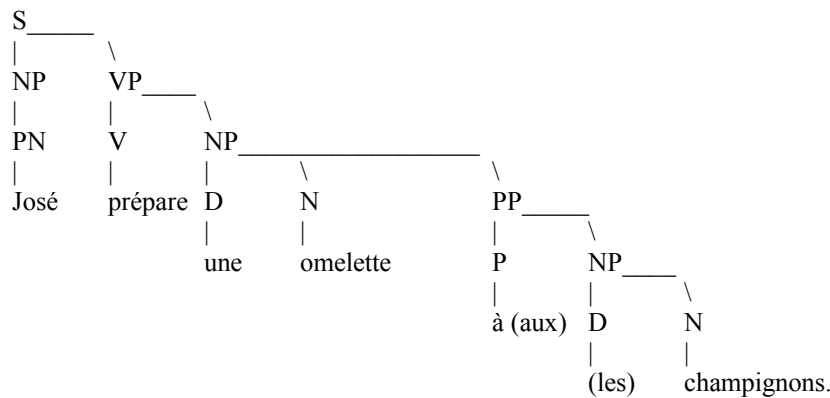
ii) *Mal* is an adverb, not an adjective. The main test for this is that *mal* does not agree with the plural NP subject. Another justification for this is that other adjectives would not be possible in this position: as in *\*ils jouent assez bon*, *\*ils jouent très rapide*.

iii) Although some adverbs are mobile in the sentence, *mal* is restricted to the VP here (we cannot say *\*mal certains guitarists jouent*).

6) L'espionne grecque est tombée de l'arbre.



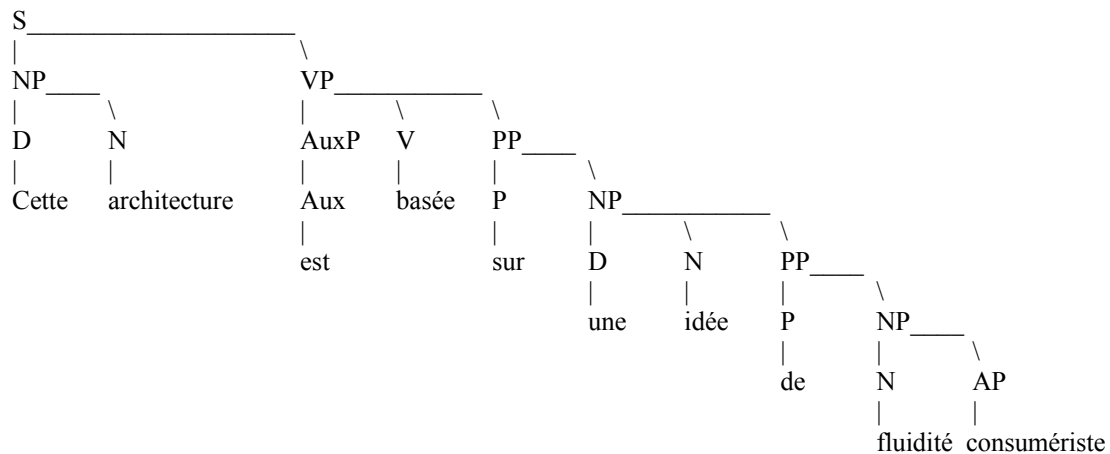
7) José prépare une omelette aux champignons.



Notes

i) The PP *aux champignons* is a complement of N.

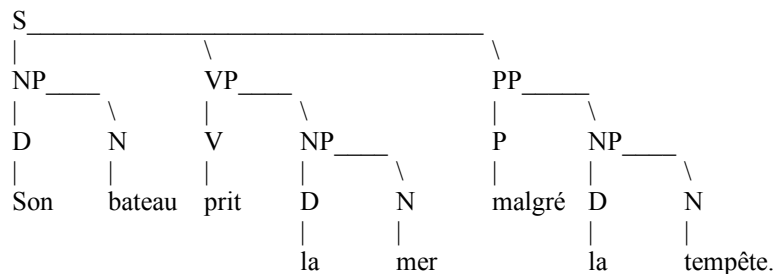
8) Cette architecture est basée sur une idée de fluidité consumériste.



Notes :

i) This sentence involves an Auxiliary verb + Verb rather than an adjective (see the tests introduced in sentence 3).

9) Son bateau prit la mer malgré la tempête.(+)

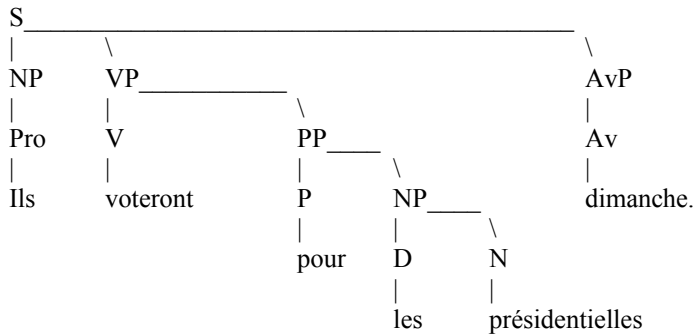


Notes :

i) The prepositional phrase *malgré la tempête* is mobile in the sentence (*Malgré la tempête, son bateau prit la mer*) and is thus placed directly under S. It is then known as a sentence modifier, and behaves differently to the PP we saw in Question 6 (*de l'arbre*) which is a modifier of the verb and restricted to VP. This tree diagram is drawn differently in later sections (with PP coming down from an extra S level). (continued overleaf)

ii) *Malgré* is sometimes incorrectly considered to be a conjunction, but a substitution test demonstrates that it is not used in the same position as conjunctions: *il y est allé, même s'il n'était pas invité* vs. *il y est allé, \*malgré il n'était pas invité*.

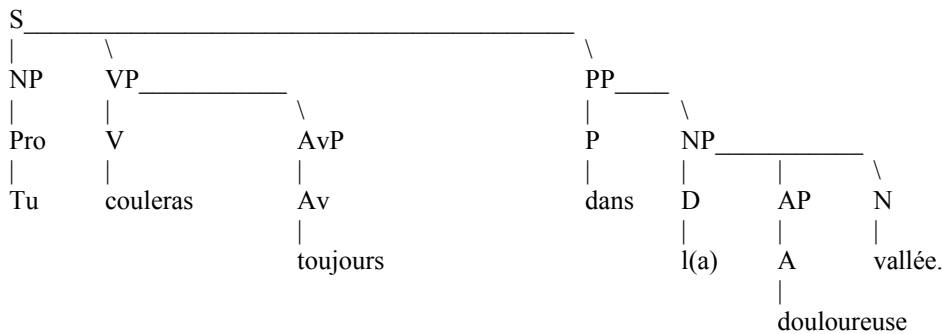
10) Ils voteront pour les présidentielles dimanche. (+)



**Notes :**

i) *Dimanche* is an adverb. Its position in this sentence is justified by the fact that it is mobile (*Dimanche ils voteront pour les présidentielles*) and is therefore a sentence modifier placed directly under S. The PP *pour les présidentielles* is not mobile, however, and is placed within VP.

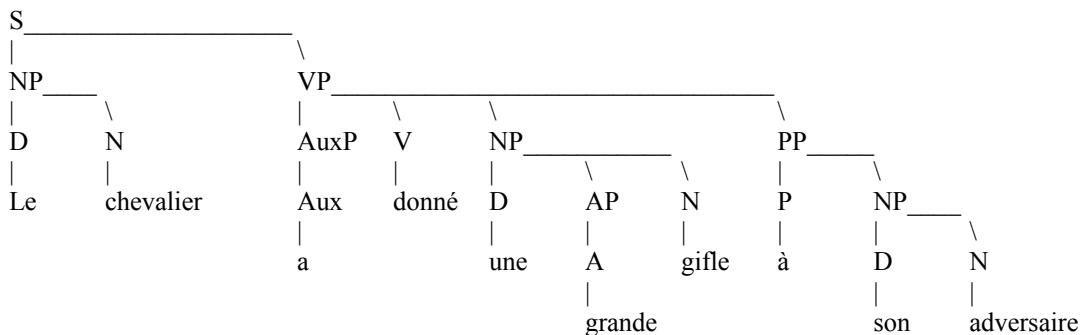
11) Tu couleras toujours dans la douloureuse vallée. (+)



**Notes :**

i) As in Question 7, the prepositional phrase is mobile here, while the adverb is restricted to VP (*Dans la douloureuse vallée, tu couleras toujours*.)

12) Le chevalier a donné une grande gifle à son adversaire. (+)



**Notes :**

i) There are two objects of the verb: the direct object (*une grande gifle*) and the indirect object (*à son adversaire*). These can be replaced by the appropriate direct and indirect object pronouns which are placed in the AuxP (*le chevalier la lui a donnée*).

ii) This ‘clitic pronoun’ test is the main justification for analysing indirect objects as part of the VP. However, indirect objects are mobile in French, and can come before the direct object (*Le chevalier a donné à son adversaire une grande gifle*) but also in front of the subject (*À son adversaire, le chevalier a donné une grande gifle*). It seems that this kind of mobility is only possible if another element in the sentence is present in the VP. Thus we cannot say \**Ce magnifique gigot je mangerai*, but we can say *Ce magnifique gigot je mangerai plus tard*. This phenomenon is known as ‘dislocation’, because the original complement of the verb has been moved by some adverb or prepositional phrase in the VP.

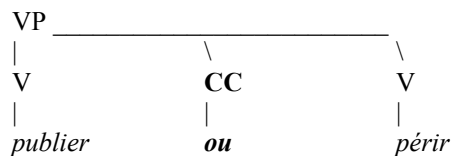
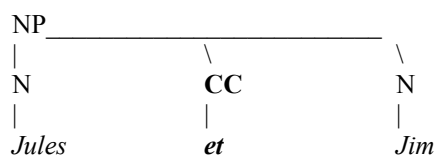
## French Syntax 2: Clauses.

### 2.1 Introduction.

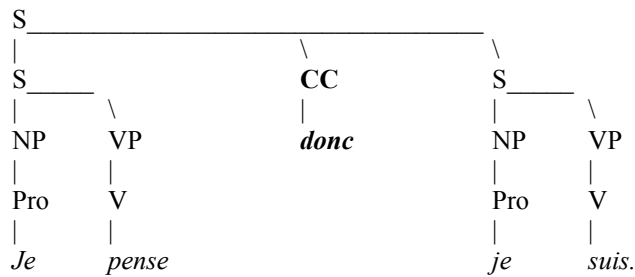
All phrases have their own particular characteristics in language and they can be combined in a number of ways to form sentences. Many different types of sentences can be analysed using a combination of the seven phrase structure rules set out at the end of Part One. However, these rules need to be expanded if we are to account for more complex sentences. Most of the complex structures to be examined in this section of the book concern the important syntactic notion of ‘recursion’.

### 2.2 Co-ordinate phrases and clauses.

Recursion involves the cyclical nature of language, in that sentences and phrases can repeatedly contain further examples of other types of sentences and phrases. The simplest form of recursion is to allow two phrases to be joined by a conjunction, as in *Jules et Jim* and *publier ou périr*.. This mechanism is known as **co-ordination**. Co-ordination creates a new ‘higher’ phrase in which a co-ordinating conjunction (**CC**) joins two elements of similar or equal status:



There are a limited number of functional words which can co-ordinate other phrases. Some CCs join phrases of various types as well as sentences (*et, ou*), while others can normally only be used to join sentences (*mais, or, donc, car*), thus:



The linking of sentences in this way forms a larger ‘co-ordinate sentence’. This in turn consists of two sub-sentences, each termed a **co-ordinate clause**. The identification of co-ordinate clauses is straightforward: each clause has a subject (NP) and a finite verb (a verb which agrees in number and person, the French term for this being *fléchi*). Since a co-ordinate clause is simply a sentence joined with another one, the symbol for this type of clause is the same as a whole sentence (S).

### 2.3 Embedded clauses.

Whereas in co-ordinate clauses both clauses have a similar structure and join to form a single unit, in other complex sentences a clause can be included or ‘embedded’ within another (the French this is termed *enchâssement*). This kind of recursion gives us a number of possible structures, all of which are types of ‘embedded clause’. Here is a sample of different types of embedded structures, each with their traditional grammatical labels:

<i>Paul est triste [puisqu’il est malade]</i>	(Subordinate clause)
<i>Ils ont guéri la maladie [que Paul a attrapée]</i>	(Relative clause)
<i>Je me demande [si Paul est malade]</i>	(Verb Complement clause)
<i>Le fait [que Paul est malade] me chagrine</i>	(Noun Complement clause)
<i>Il lui faut des médicaments [pour se remettre]</i>	(Non-finite subordinate clause)
<i>Le médecin nous permet [de rencontrer Paul]</i>	(Non-finite complement clause)

Embedded clauses may contain a whole clause (NP VP) or part of a clause (just a VP, in which case the subject of the second verb has to be inferred, as in the final two examples). Whenever a clause is embedded within another clause, a grammatical word is placed before the main part of the embedded clause. As you can see, sometimes this is a conjunction (*que, puisque, si*), a relative pronoun (*que*) or a preposition (*pour, de*). In syntactic jargon the position occupied by these various



functional words is termed the **complementizer** position, and fact that this position is consistent for all types of embedded clause leads us to add the following formula to our list of phrase structure rules:

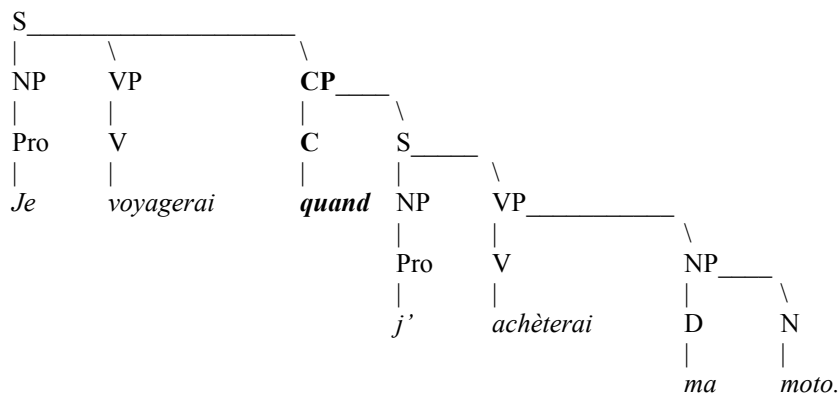
**CP** -> **C** **S**

This rule means that a grammatical word or phrase (C) is used to introduce a normal sentence (S -> NP VP). For example, in subordinate clauses C stands for a subordinating conjunction (a word or phrase which signals a semantic relationship between sentences: *quand, si, pendant que, parce que, pourvu que, bien que...*). However, C stands for several other types of clause connector. The term for C in French is **complémenteur**, and this term is regularly used to describe the connectors in such sentences as *je dis que Paul est malade* and *je vous offre quelque chose à manger* (Maingueneau 1994).

All of these different types of clauses are described using the CP rule, as I explain in this chapter and in Part Four. There are differences between these various clauses, but these are not signalled by labels, but by the relative position of the clause in the syntactic tree diagram. This means that the definition of ‘complementizer’ set out in this book is much broader than the definition established in traditional grammar (for a description of the various uses of C in modern syntax, see Radford 1997). For the time being, it is sufficient to note that C is not a part of speech, but represents an abstract position in which different types of phrases are placed for grammatical reasons.

## **2.4 Subordinate clauses.**

As I mentioned above, one of the most frequent ways of embedding one clause within another is by **subordination**. Whereas co-ordinate clauses have equal syntactic status, subordination places a subordinate clause (symbolised by CP) within a main clause (S). In traditional grammar, the subordinate clause is sometimes also known as a ‘dependent’ or ‘adverb’ clause. For example, *‘je voyagerai, quand j’achèterai ma moto’* involves a lower sentence joined to a higher one with a conjunction (‘*quand*’), as in:



In many sentences of this type, the order can be switched around. The lower CP in the example above could be inserted to the left of NP to give us: *'Quand j'achèterai ma moto, je voyagerai*. In fact, French speakers often prefer this way round, and there is no syntactic reason why the expression cannot be switched back. This inversion also gives us a movement test to distinguish between co-ordinate and subordinate clauses. A co-ordinate sentence leaves the conjunction in the middle (*Je préfère Voltaire, mais j'aime Baudelaire / J'aime Baudelaire, mais je préfère Voltaire*), whereas in a subordinate clause, the conjunction travels with the mobile CP clause (*Je préfère Voltaire, bien que j'aime Baudelaire / Bien que j'aime Baudelaire, je préfère Voltaire*). The fact that subordinate clauses are as mobile as some PPs and AvPs (as we saw in Part One) has led to them being termed 'adverb clauses'. In other words, PPs, AvPs and subordinate CPs can all 'modify' the main sentence, without necessarily interrupting the word order of the main clause.

The relation of the subordinate clause to the main clause is determined by the conjunction which is used to introduce the CP. For example, *si je gagnais le loto* is a condition (by virtue of the conjunction *si* and the obligatory imperfect tense) while *quand je gagnerai le loto* is a predicted state of affairs (established by the conjunction *quand* and the use of the obligatory future tense). When combined with a higher sentence (or 'main clause' – *je voyagerai*), the higher clause is considered more central and can stand on its own as a grammatical sentence. Notice that a subordinate clause can also be used in isolation, but it is always understood in relation to another proposition (*Quand iras-tu en Espagne ? - Quand j'achèterai ma moto*). Otherwise, the sentence '*quand j'achèterai ma moto*' simply suggests that another part of the sentence is to come.

## 2. 5 Relative clauses.

Relative clauses are embedded clauses which have been inserted into a Noun Phrase rather than another clause. For example, the following pairs of clauses are related in meaning, but are syntactically speaking ‘independent’:

- #1 *C'est la dame:*                      *La dame habite là-bas.*  
#2 *Je vois le monsieur:*              *J' ai rencontré ce monsieur hier.*

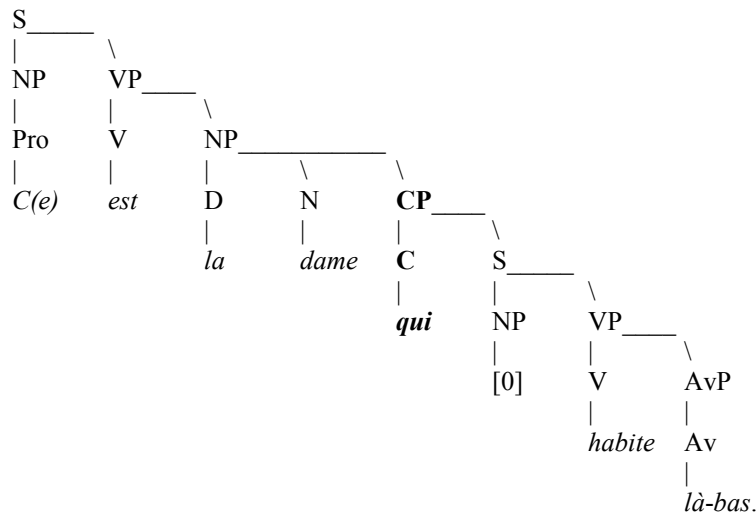
In connected speech the repeated words ‘la dame’, ‘le monsieur’ are usually linked and a **relative pronoun** is used to create a single connected sentence:

- #1 *C'est la dame                      qui habite là-bas.*  
#2 *Je vois le monsieur              que j' ai rencontré hier.*

Relative clauses involve replacement of a noun in the lower clause by *qui* (in the case of subjects) or *que* (in the case of objects). However, each sentence still has two separate clauses (notice the finite verbs: *est, habite, vois, ai*). Whereas the subordinate clauses we saw in the previous section modify a main clause, and come under S, relative clauses modify Noun Phrases, and are always drawn under the NP. Because a subject and verb are still present in the embedded clause, we can make use of the same rule as the subordinate clause rule (CP) and re-write the NP rule to allow for this:

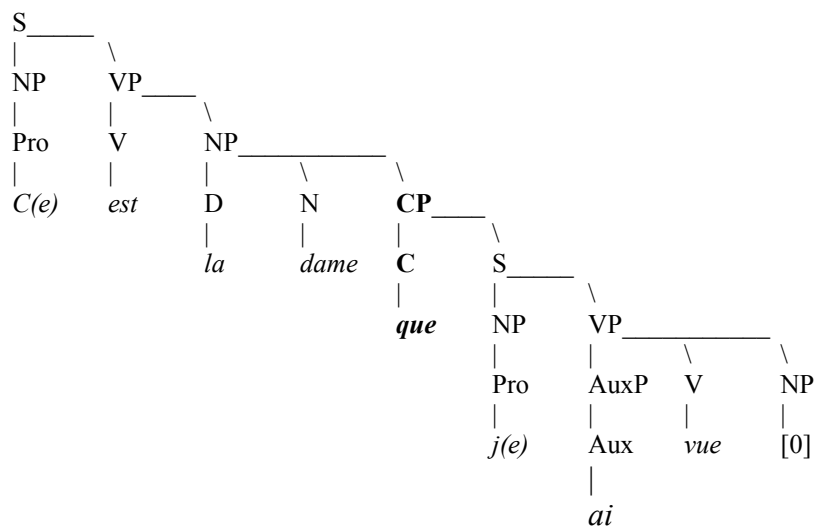
**NP-> D (AP) N (AP , PP, CP)**

We can now use CP to describe *C'est la dame qui habite là-bas* :



In this sentence, the subject of the relative clause (*la dame*) has been replaced and a relative pronoun is placed instead at C position. It is important to repeat here that C represents an abstract grammatical position and not a ‘part of speech’. C is sometimes a position filled by conjunctions (as we saw with in subordinate clauses) and sometimes filled by relative pronouns (as in this example). It is for this reason that it is important to represent the missing subject, *la dame*, in the tree diagram, by using the symbol NP - [0]. In this way, the role of the pronoun at C can always be identified.

If we take another example of a relative clause, *c'est la dame que j'ai vue*, the missing object of the verb *voir* is left in the tree to make the role of C clear:

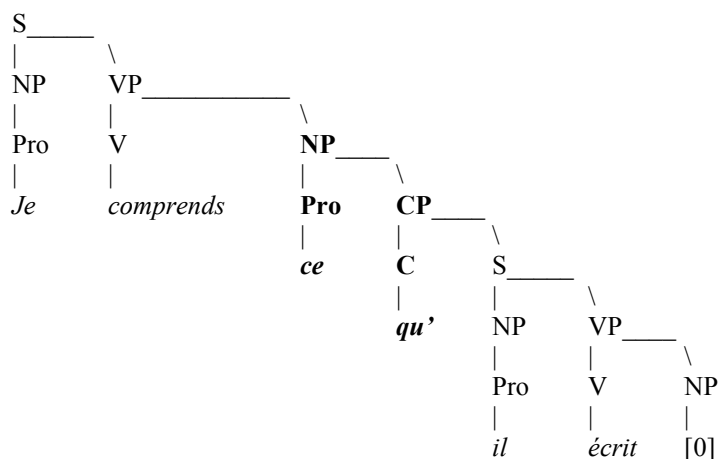


You can also see from these examples that relative clauses serve as an extra adjective, stuck on as they are to the end of a Noun Phrase (*la dame...*). Because the relative

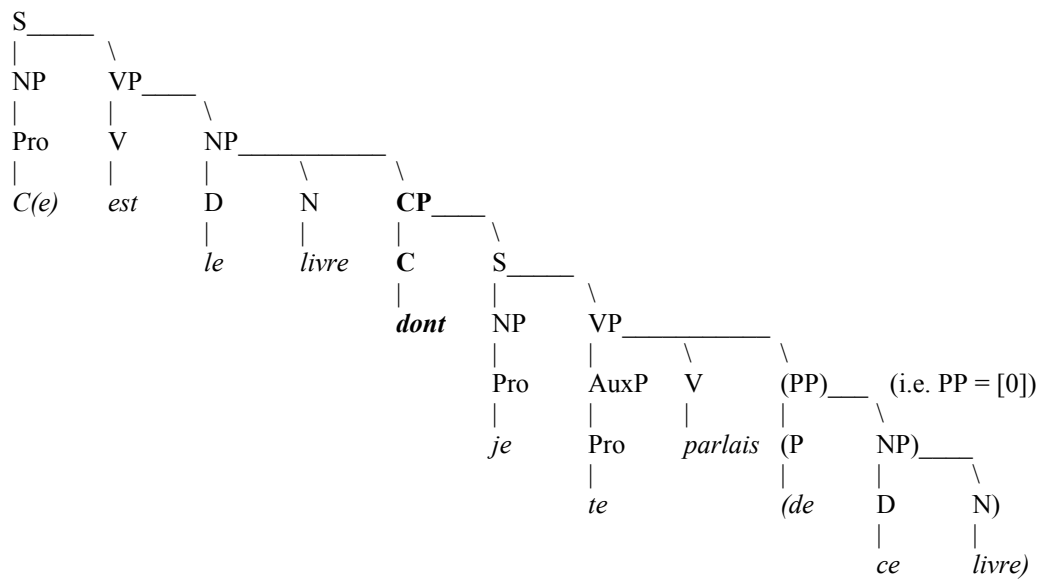
clause describes a NP just in the same way adjectives do and are placed in the same position as adjectives, relative clauses are sometimes called ‘adjective clauses’ (not to be confused with subordinate clauses which, as we have seen, are known as ‘adverb clauses’).

To test for a relative clause, it is often possible to replace relative pronouns by full nouns (i.e. to reinsert *la dame* into the sentence). With subordinate clauses this will not be possible (you cannot use a noun or pronoun to replace a conjunction). Another test would involve a movement test: a subordinate clause can be moved around the sentence under S, whereas a relative clause is usually fixed in position within the NP it is referring to. So, because we cannot say \**qui habite là-bas c’est la dame*, the movement test suggests that *qui habite là-bas* is integral to the NP *la dame*.

Relative clauses can also be formed around pronouns, a fact which can cause confusion for students of French, especially in the case of *ce qui* and *ce que*. The difficulty lies in the fact that both expressions appear to make up a single word form, whereas in fact they centre around the pronoun *ce*. For example, *ce que* involves *ce* as the object of the main clause (*Je comprends ce(ci)*), while *que* is object of the relative clause (*qu’ il écrit*):



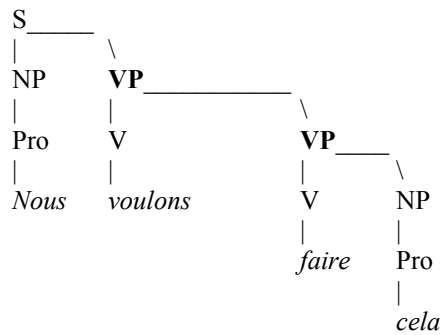
The tree diagrams of relative clauses always involve an empty category (symbolised by [0]). This means that *qui* will always replace an NP subject by [0], while *que* will always replace an NP object with [0]. *Qui* and *que* are not the only relative pronouns, however. Different pronouns are used to replace Adverb Phrases (*c’est la maison où j’habite* [0]), or entire Prepositional Phrases (*c’est le livre dont je te parlais* [0]). The second of these examples is set out below:



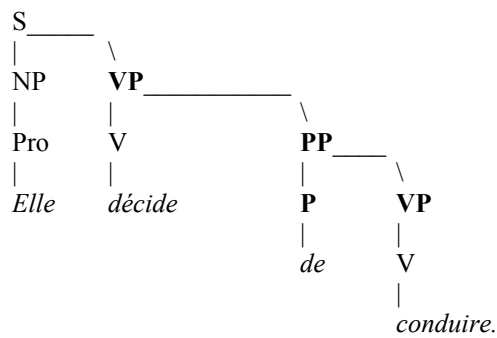
The relative pronoun *dont* is used to replace the Prepositional Phrase *duquel* which is only used on its own in Old or literary French. Most other prepositions combine with *lequel*. *Lequel* agrees with the gender of the noun to which the relative clause is referring (*le jeune avec lequel je parlais*, *la compagnie avec laquelle il négociait*, *les copies sans lesquelles je ne peux pas travailler*, *le futur auquel (= à + lequel) on s'attend*).

## 2.6 Complement clauses.

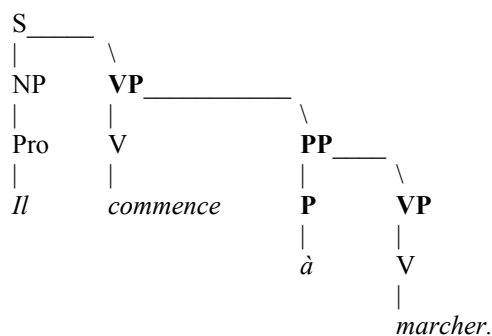
Another major category of clauses which involve recursion or the embedding of clauses within other phrases is that of 'complement clauses'. A **complement** is any phrase which is the 'object' of another, as in (*Tu achètes du thé*). However, a verb can also have another verb as its complement, such as *j'aime manger*, *tu vas changer*, *nous voulons faire cela*. The function of this type of infinitive expression is to allow for the subject of the first verb to be carried on to the next verb. In these cases, the first verb is known technically as a **control verb**. An analysis of *nous voulons faire cela* demonstrates this:



A number of these verbs, such as *devoir payer*, *pouvoir nager* are the equivalent of modal verbs in English (modal verbs do not agree with the subject: *he must pay*, *he can swim*). Another large family of verbs require the preposition *de* to introduce the second verb, often with some sense of termination or endeavour. (*il a fini de travailler*, *on a cessé de nous écrire*, *ils ont tenté de nous contacter*, *elle essaie de le porter*):



These examples demonstrate that prepositions can also take verbs as complements rather than just NPs as the original rule stated. Another, smaller, family of control verbs require *à* before the second verb, generally relating to a change or commencement of activity (*il se met à marcher*, *elle renonce à le faire*, *j'apprends à naviguer*, *tu continues à m'agacer*):



As most learners of French are aware, the choice of which preposition to use in these cases depends on the first verb which introduces the infinitive. This choice appears to be determined by convention, although it is not entirely random. It seems that there are four main patterns for this type of construction:

1 - no preposition is required by perception verbs (*entendre, voir*) and verbs which have a MODAL sense in French (will, can, must = *vouloir faire, pouvoir faire, devoir faire*)

2 - the preposition **de** is required by a largest group of verbs, and is effectively the default choice. This is especially the case when the infinitive is the DIRECT OBJECT of the first verb (*arrête de pleurer*). A large number of verbs of this type happen to have a meaning relating to communication (*dire, permettre, parler, promettre, refuser...à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose*), the one exception being 'apprendre' (*apprendre à quelqu'un à faire quelque chose*).

3 - The preposition **à** is required by a smaller group of verbs, often with a general meaning of managing to do something or intending to do it: *arriver, autoriser, chercher, consentir, consister, détester, penser, renoncer, résister, réussir, servir, suffire, tenir, en venir...* The preposition **à** is also required when the infinitive is the INDIRECT OBJECT of the first verb (*forcer, encourager, inciter, obliger... quelqu'un à le faire*). Most of the verbs which share this pattern have a meaning relating to obligation.

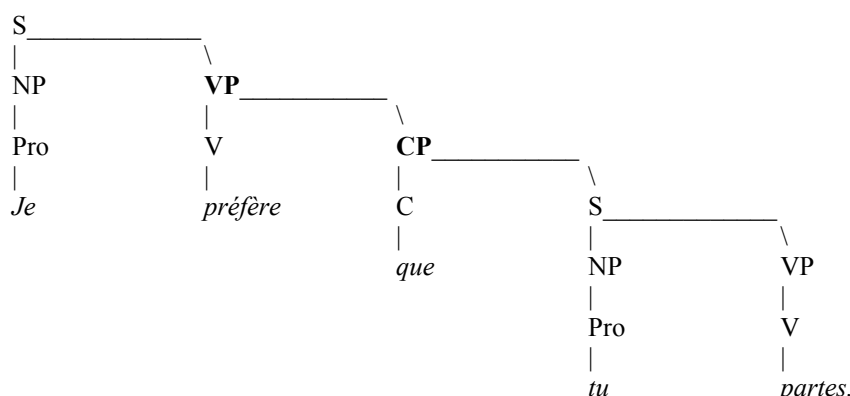
4 - a small number of verbs require **POUR**, in particular *insister*. The verbs *finir* and *commencer* can also take **PAR** (to finish with, to begin by).

In Part Four of this book I shall argue that **à** and **de** may need to be categorised as different parts of speech rather than traditional prepositions, a point which we do not need to concern ourselves with further in this section. It is sufficient to note that generally speaking, the presence or absence of a preposition appears to be determined partly on syntactic grounds (for example, whether the second verb is the complement of the verb or not) or on broader semantic grounds.

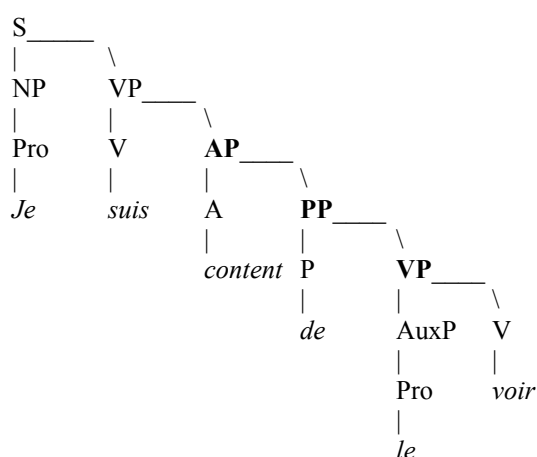
Returning to our discussion of complement clauses, a verb can also take an embedded finite clause as its complement, as in *Je préfère que tu partes*. This is known as a **verb complement** clause, and is often associated with the subjunctive form of the



verb in the CP. Unlike subordinate clauses, a complement CP cannot be moved around S, remaining instead in the main VP:



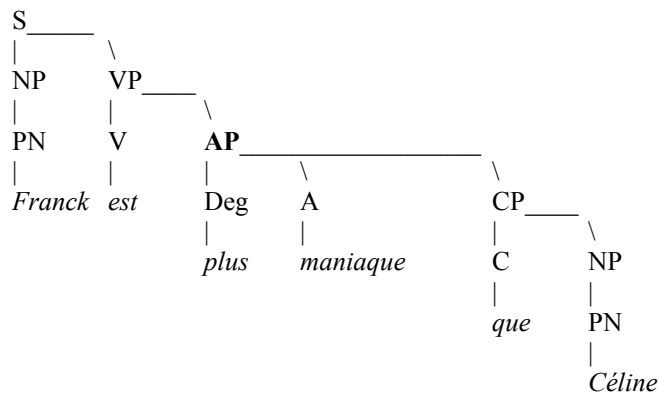
A number of Adjective Phrases also allow for control verbs. For example the Adjective Phrase in *je suis content de le voir* has a PP as its complement (*de voir...*) which in turn has VP as its complement (*le voir*). This is how this looks as a tree diagram:



The reason that the PP in this example depends on AP rather than VP is that it is the adjective which allows (or 'licences') the expression of a PP here. In the absence of an adjective, the expression becomes ungrammatical (*\*je suis \_ de le faire*), and this indicates that the PP is dependent on AP. In addition, not all adjectives allow for this structure (we cannot say *\*je suis bleu / rond / grand de le faire*). In fact, this structure is reserved for a number of abstract adjectives relating to possibilities or states of mind: *certain de le faire*, *avide de vous aider*, *sûr de réussir*. A similar structure occurs with **adjective complement** clauses where a CP clause is introduced by a similar type of adjective: *je suis certain que tu réussiras*, *je suis sûr que tu réussiras*. Similarly, Adverbs can introduce complement clauses, as in: *heureusement que*

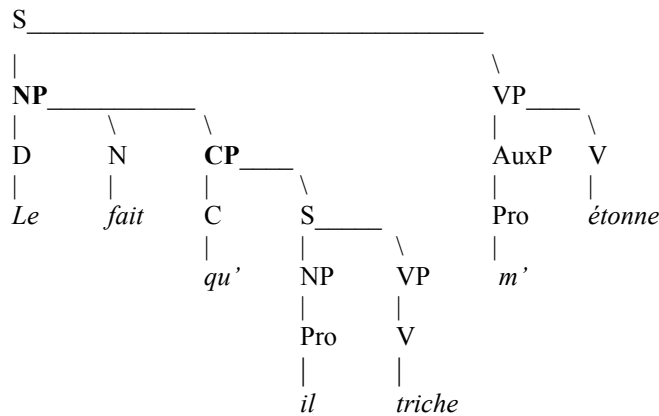
*j'étais là* (not quite the same as: *heureusement j'étais là*, where the adverb is mobile).

Adverbs and adjectives also allow for comparative conjunctions, as in:



The CP is necessary because it potentially contains a whole clause: *Franck est plus fou que Céline est folle*. Both French and English have a number of ‘coupled’ constructions (the classic examples being *the more the merrier*, or *not only... but also*) where a grammatical word (*more, not only*) signals a grammatical construction further on in the sentence (most often a comparative). In French, such couples as *ne pense qu’à ça*, *aussi grand que l’autre* appear to behave in a similar way, and C appears to be the most appropriate label for this comparative function.

Finally, nouns also form control structures (*l’envie de partir*, *la peur de tomber*, *le besoin de réussir*) and this allows us to analyse a number of fixed expressions with *avoir* as essentially noun + control verbs (*avoir envie de chanter*, *avoir peur de tomber*, *avoir besoin de réussir*). Similarly, certain nouns also permit **noun complement** clauses : *l’idée que la terre est ronde l’a laissé perplexe* / *the idea that the world is round baffled him*. These expressions are only formed with nouns such as *idée*, *peur*, *conviction*, *fait*. As with adjectives which allow for CP clauses, these nouns are limited in number and relate to mental states and ideas. Their syntactic structure looks superficially like a relative clause, as in *Le fait qu’il triche m’étonne*:



Why do we need to distinguish between complement clauses and relative clauses? Part of the reason is that relative clauses can be formed around all nouns (*the elephant that I rode, the table that I built*) but not all nouns allow for noun complement clauses: \**the elephant / table / city / blueness that the world is round...* This restriction means that '*qui*' cannot meaningfully replace the conjunction *que* in a Complement CP:

Relative CP:            *La dame que j'ai vue.*  
                               *La dame qui habite là-bas.*

Complement CP:        *L'idée que la terre est ronde*  
                               \**L'idée qui la terre est ronde.*

Such differences in patterns of expression strongly suggest that the underlying syntax is different for this type of clause. This kind of subtle difference leads us to modify our notation in Part Three. For the time being, however, it is sufficient to note that relative clauses require relative pronouns while noun complement clauses require the conjunction *que*.

## 2.7 Remarks.

The notion of recursion has led us a long way from the simple rules we started off with. In order to analyse more varied sentences in French, our seven phrase structure rules need to be interpreted in a more flexible way. For example, although S -> NP VP is still a fundamental property of sentences, we need to be aware that various

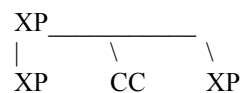
phrases (such as Adverbials) can be inserted before the NP or after the VP. There remain a small number of modifications to be made (these are set out in Parts Three and Four). For the moment, we need only to add one rule to the list set out in Part One:

CP -> C S

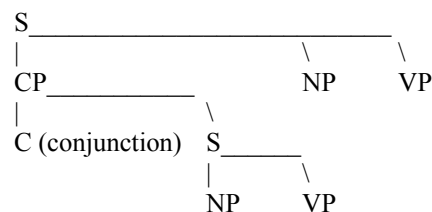
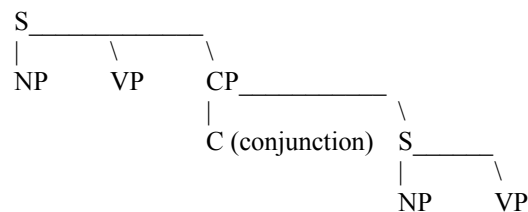
We can now analyse the practice sentences in Exercise 2 using the rules set out in Part One, as long as we take account of the complex structures introduced here, notably CC (coordinating conjunctions) and CP (embedded clauses, including subordinate, relative, complement clauses).

Here is a brief summary of the overall structures presented in Part Two:

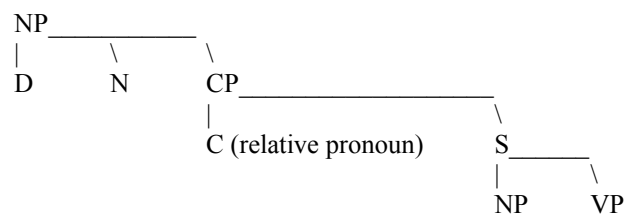
Co-ordination (where X = any Phrase or Clause of the same type)



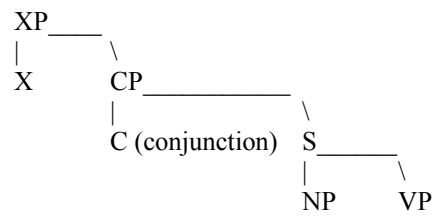
Subordinate clauses



Relative clauses



Complement clauses (where XP = any Noun, Verb or Adjective which permits CP)

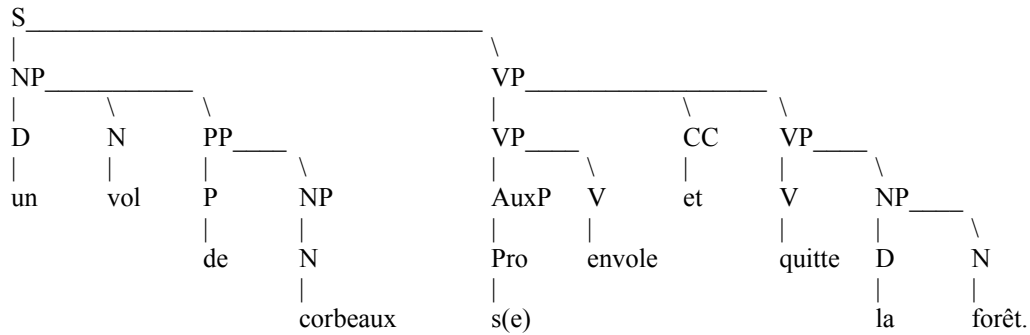


## Exercice 2 : Clauses.

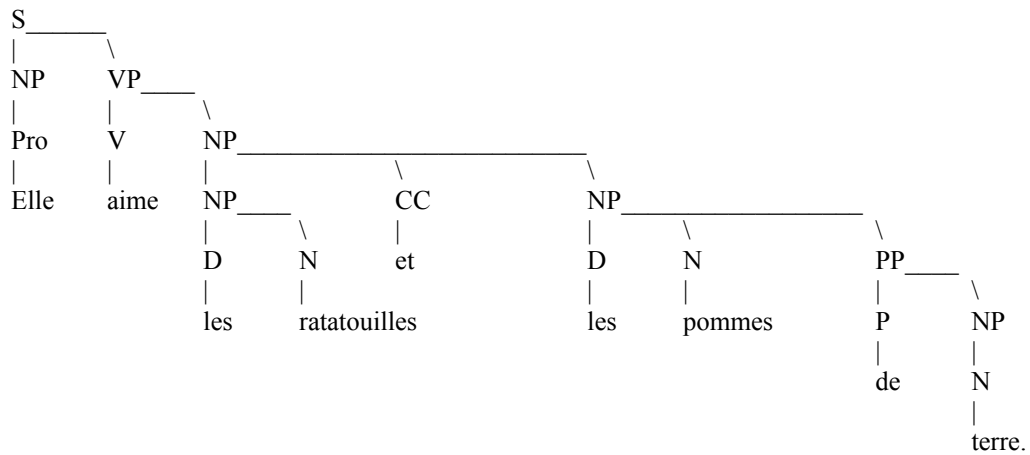
- 1) Un vol de corbeaux s'envole et quitte la forêt.
- 2) Elle aime les ratatouilles et les pommes de terre.
- 3) Pierre est malade, donc il ne viendra pas.
- 4) Charles est puni, parce qu'il est paresseux.
- 5) Quand Napoléon arrivera, nous partirons.
- 6) Les Américains ont promis de respecter le traité.
- 7) L'équipe que je soutiens a gagné le championnat.
- 8) La crainte de perdre existe toujours.
- 9) Paris est une ville qui éveille notre curiosité.
- 10) La voiture que tu m'as vendue est en panne.
- 11) Il a dit que Pierre l'avait injurié.
- 12) Les autres spectateurs sont sûrs de rater le début.

Model answers to Exercise 2 : Clauses.

1) Un vol de corbeaux s'envole et quitte la forêt.



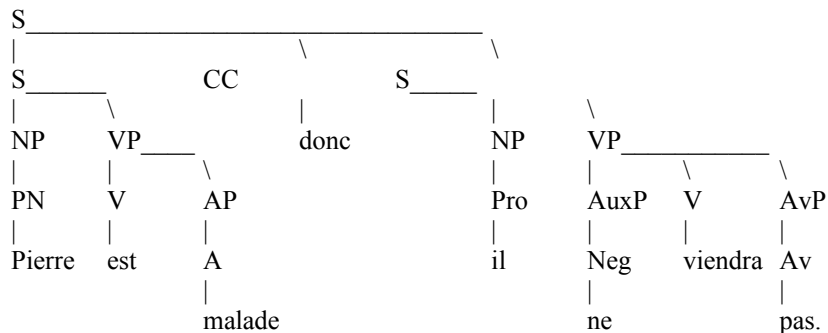
2) Elle aime les ratatouilles et les pommes de terre.



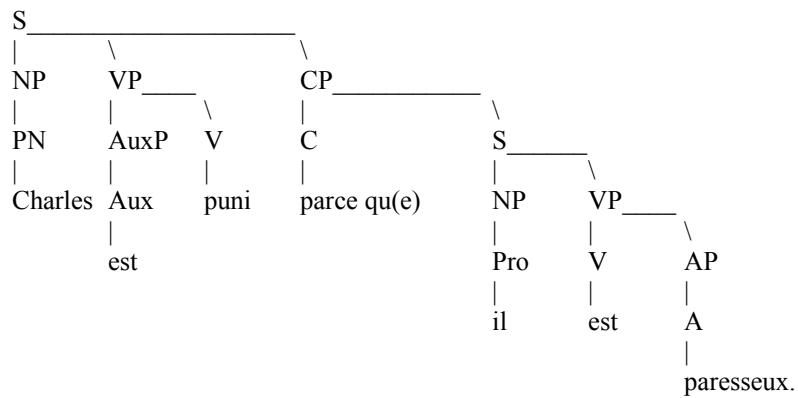
Notes:

i) *Pommes de terre* is a compound noun, and the PP *de terre* is analysed as complement. As a fixed expression, it is impossible to modify or expand the '*de terre*' part of the phrase, or to insert other phrases between *pommes* and *de terre*.

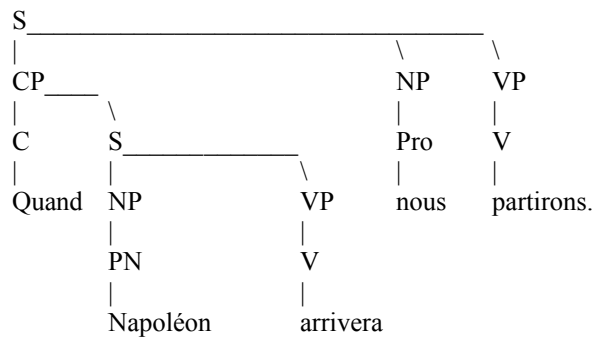
3) Pierre est malade, donc il ne viendra pas. (+)



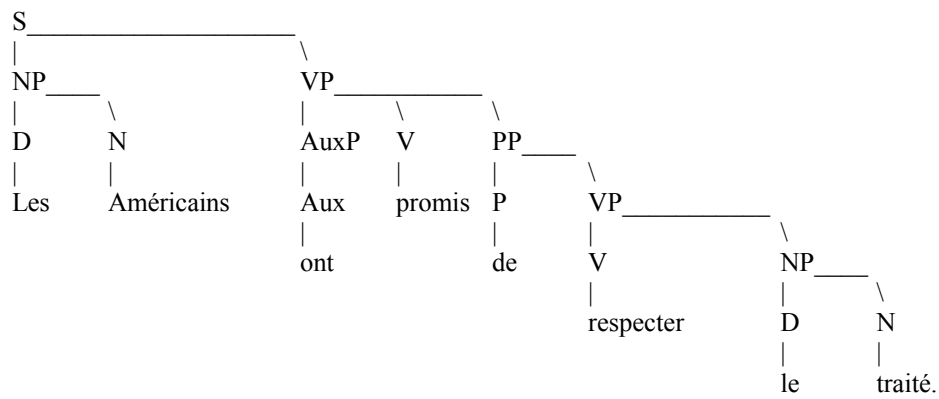
4) Charles est puni, parce qu'il est paresseux.



5) Quand Napoléon arrivera, nous partirons.

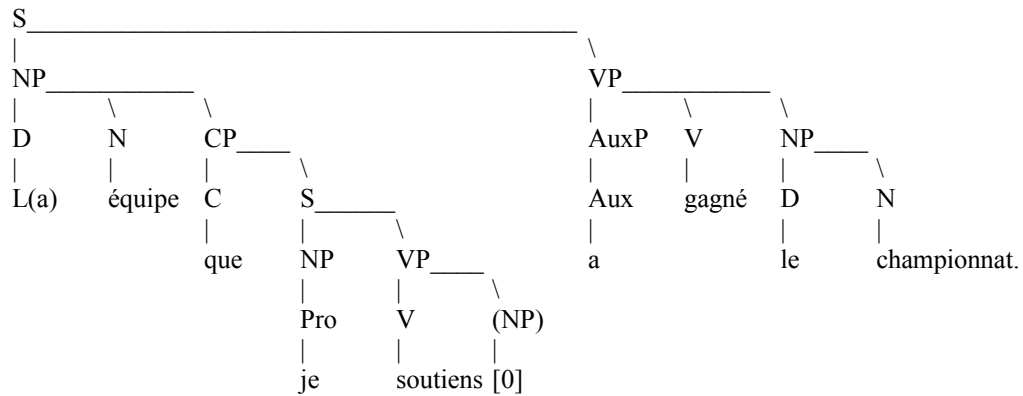


6) Les Américains ont promis de respecter le traité.





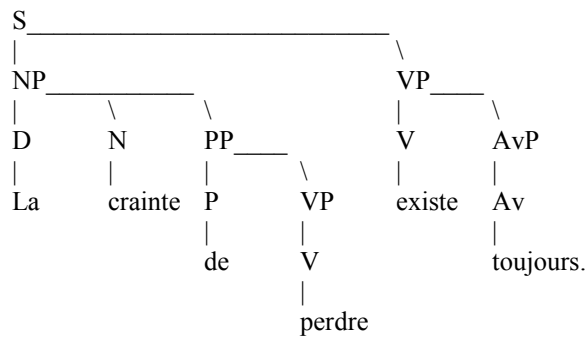
7) L'équipe que je soutiens a gagné le championnat. (+)



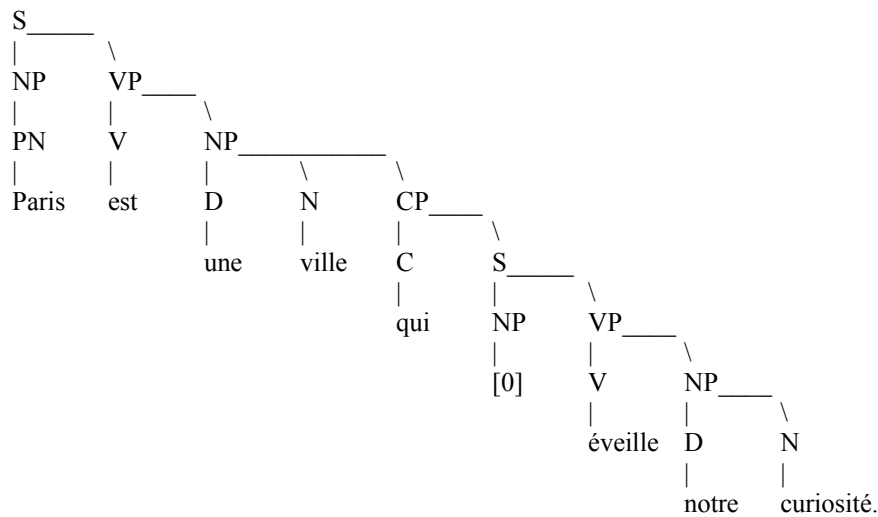
Notes :

i) The relative clause (CP) is drawn as a modifier after Part 3. In such cases, the CP is drawn parallel to a repeated NP symbol.

8) La crainte de perdre existe toujours.



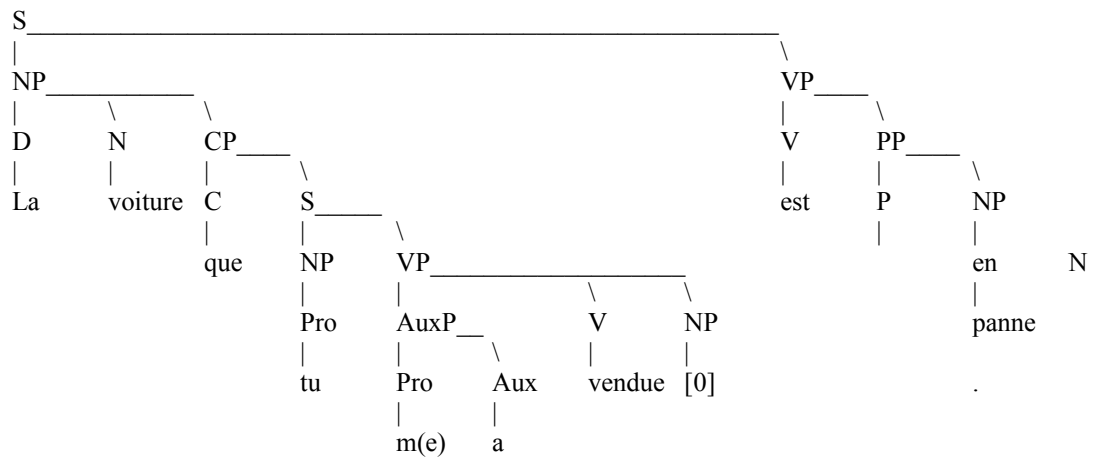
9) Paris est une ville qui éveille notre curiosité.(+)



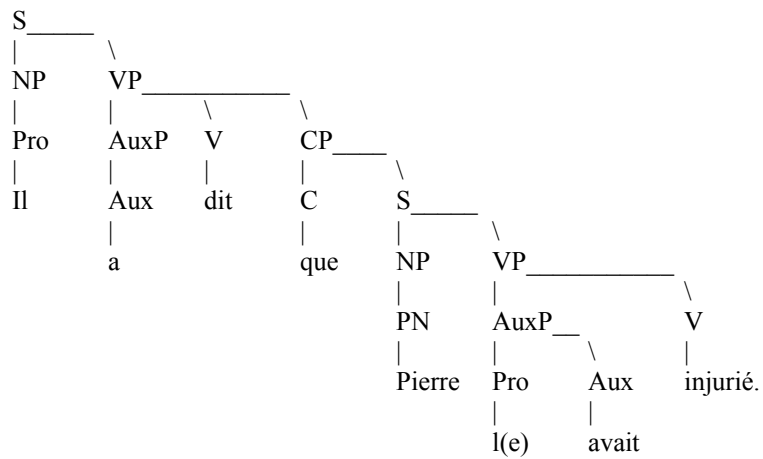
Notes :

i) As in Sentence 7, the relative clause is a modifier and is drawn differently in later sections.

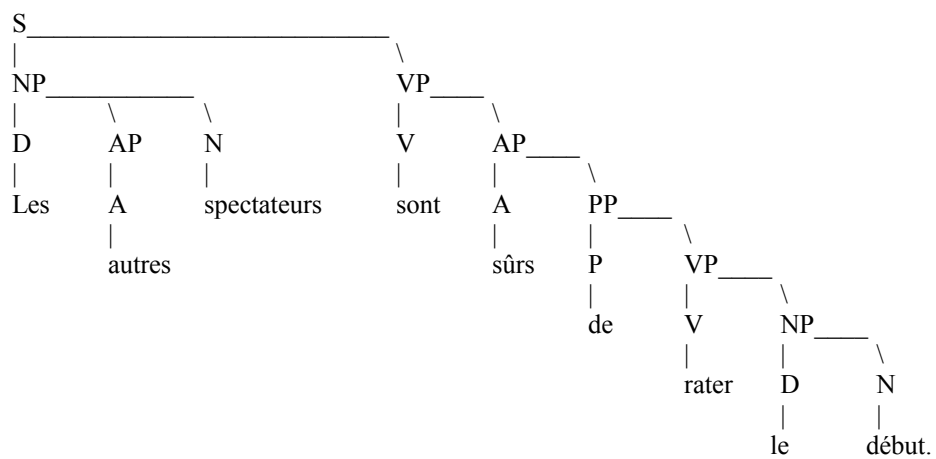
10) La voiture que tu m'as vendue est en panne. (+)



11) Il a dit que Pierre l'avait injurié.



12) Les autres spectateurs sont sûrs de rater le début.



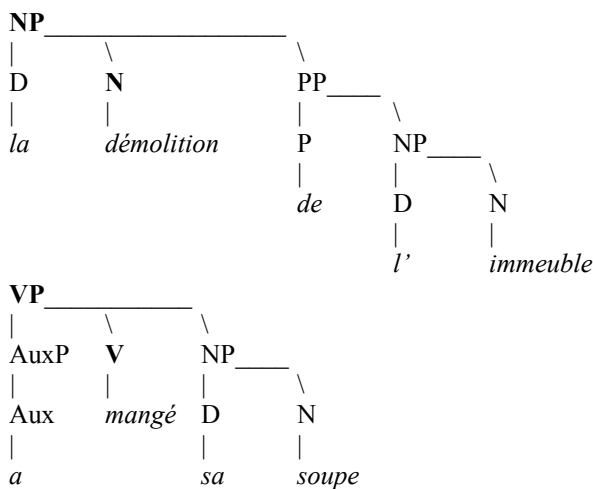
## French Syntax 3: Advanced Phrases

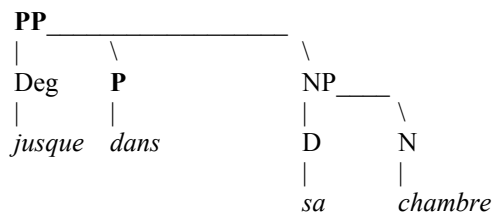
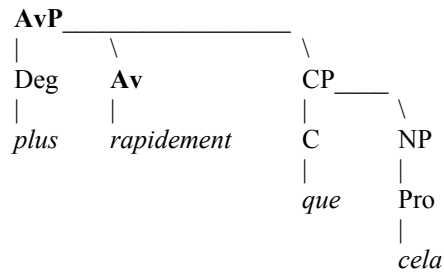
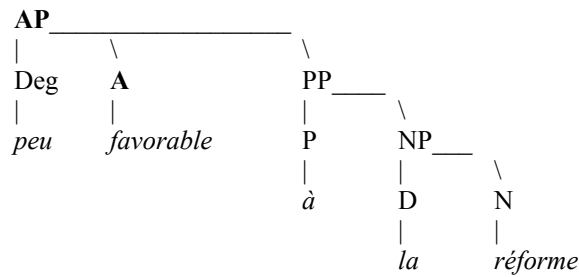
### 3.1 Introduction.

Parts Three and Four of this book bring some innovations to the syntactic model I have set out so far. These changes deal with complex structures in French which could not be analysed using the basic phrase structure rules as they stand. My discussion here principally reflects modifications to the original model which Chomsky and other syntacticians have made since the original version of the theory was published. One of the most interesting developments in linguistic theory has been the observation that all the phrases in a particular language appear to adopt the same structural pattern as though they were acting in concert (this is known as X-bar theory). After introducing this, I explain the notion of ‘argument’ which has become an important concept in our understanding of how these underlying patterns work.

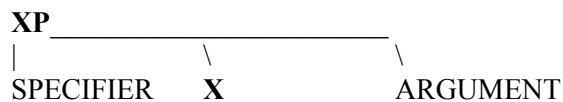
### 3.2 X-bar theory

You may have noticed already that phrases in French appear to have the same fundamental structure. Although there are differences in detail, grammatical words come to the left and higher up in the syntactic tree, while the main ‘head’ word in the centre and complements come further down and to the right:



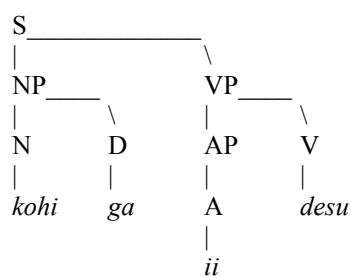


X-bar Theory (also written X' Theory) claims that these phrases are not just similar but in fact obey a single rule in the language. The rule is set out as an abstract diagram:



This is read as follows: any phrase (XP) is made up of grammatical information (a specifier), a head word (X) and a phrase which completes the sense of the head word (an argument). This diagram captures the fact that determiners, auxiliary verbs, degree adverbs and the like all seem to share similar properties within phrases and can therefore be grouped together under one term: **specifier**. All specifiers present abstract grammatical information about the phrase. They signal definiteness, gender and number for nouns (*quelle voiture*, *ces voitures*), tense and person for verbs (*a mangé* / *auraient mangé*), intensity for adjectives and adverbs (*si proche*, *trop vite*) and proximity for prepositions (*jusque dans sa maison*). Another point of convergence is that while a phrase may contain different arguments (such as objects and indirect objects), it seems that only one specifier is permitted per phrase.

Some linguists have proposed that this X-bar structure is the same for all languages, although the position of different elements can be swapped around. For example, in Japanese arguments come before X and specifiers come after. The Japanese equivalent of *I'd like some coffee* is 'coffee is preferable', that is: '*kohi ga ii desu*' where *kohi* = coffee, *ga* = topic marker, *ii* = preferable, *desu* = is:



Most elements of Japanese sentence structure are therefore 'left-branching', that is to say with grammatical information coming after the head word in each phrase, and lexical information coming to the left (NP -> N D, VP -> AP V). Relative to Japanese, English and French appear to have very similar syntactic structures, because all their phrases are 'right-branching' (the head word is followed by arguments to the right of X). On the other hand, the differences that do exist between French and English do not depend on phrase structure as such, but to the extent to which phrase types behave differently in each language. For example, French prepositions do not behave like English ones. To explore these differences in more detail, therefore, it is necessary to re-evaluate French phrases in more detail, comparing them with their English counterparts where necessary.

### 3.3 Arguments.

Following the principle of 'recursion', we have seen that each phrase in the language is capable of containing a variety of other phrases. It seems that the number and type of elements allowed within a phrase are limited by its **arguments**. For example, a verb like *donner* has two arguments: direct object and indirect object. In *Je donne de l'argent à ma sœur*, *de l'argent* is the **direct object complement**, while *à ma sœur* is the **indirect object complement**. A particular property of 'objects' and 'indirect objects' is that there can only be one of each type for a particular kind of verb. If

other, optional, elements intervene they are known as **modifiers** (*Je donne souvent de l'argent à ma soeur*).

However, VPs are not the only phrase types which distinguish between complements and modifiers. In the following NPs, for example, # 2 is impossible:

#1 *Le chef de cuisine aux cheveux frisés.*

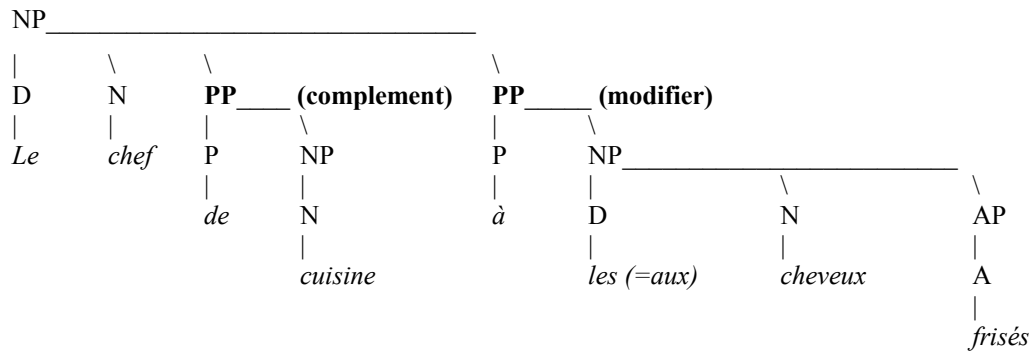
#2 \**Le chef aux cheveux frisés de cuisine.*

The reason for this is that the phrase *de cuisine* is given priority as **complement**. The phrase *aux cheveux frisés* is considered less central, and is termed a **modifier**. In Noun Phrases, complements change the fundamental meaning of the head word (*chef*) and usually displace any modifiers. Most NP complements tend to form compound nouns (as in *coup d'état, homme d'affaires, sac à dos*) and these can be distinguished from other NPs in which the PP modifiers can be separated from the noun by an adjective (*un bouquet splendide de fleurs, le frère aîné de ma copine, mon triste coeur percé de tous les coups*). Modifiers do however have the upper hand in a number of other respects. Unlike complements, they are not limited in number and can be accumulated in several positions, as in:

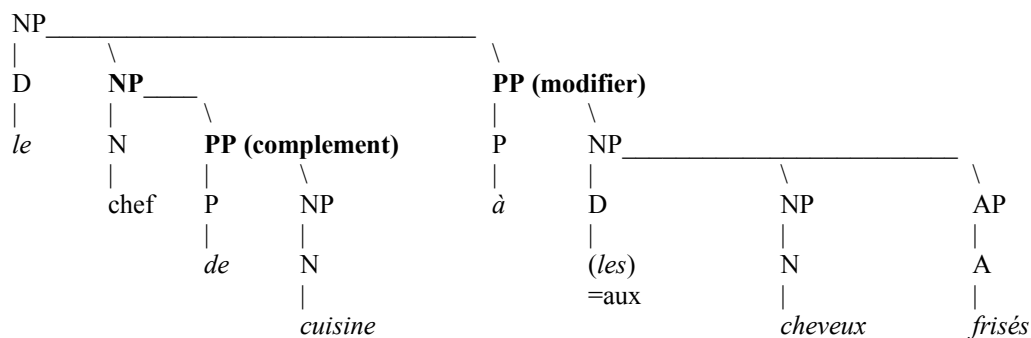
#3 *le chef de cuisine très grand aux cheveux frisés*

#4 *le très grand chef de cuisine aux cheveux frisés.*

Since complements and modifiers have different functions in the phrase and the sentence, our syntactic model should signal the difference. In the standard system I have presented so far, *Le chef de cuisine aux cheveux frisés* is represented as:



One problem with this analysis is that it does not distinguish between the two prepositional phrases. It does not capture the fact that *aux cheveux frisés* cannot separate the head word from its complement. A more accurate approach is to establish an extra level of representation in which the complement is separated from the modifier. This is done by creating an expanded Noun Phrase under NP (known as an ‘expanded nominal’, sometimes labelled N’ or N-bar in X-bar theory):



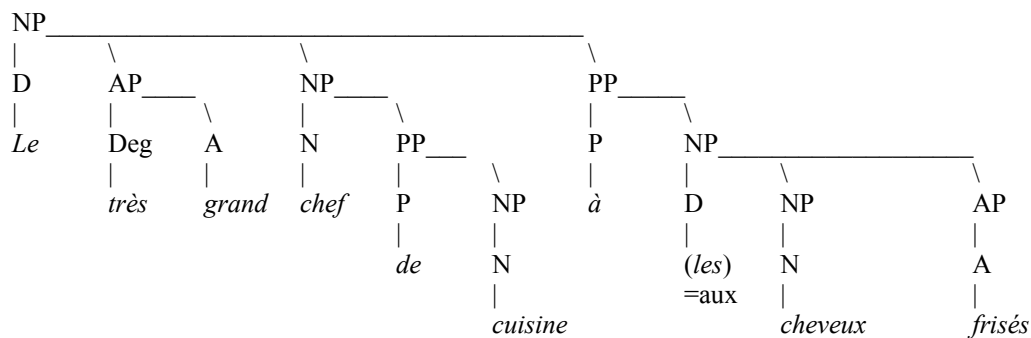
This convention now allows us to trace the main or head noun in the tree diagram (follow NP down through NP to N). Complements can also be easily identified in our tree diagrams as ‘sisters’ of the head word (look for the phrase that is parallel to N). Modifiers on the other hand are always placed as ‘sisters’ of an expanded phrase (look for the phrase parallel to NP). It turns out in this sentence that *frisés* is also a modifier, positioned as it is under the second NP. One test for this is that we can displace the adjective by inserting a new modifier: *aux cheveux gris frisés*.

We are still left with a problem, however. If we compare #3 and #4 again:

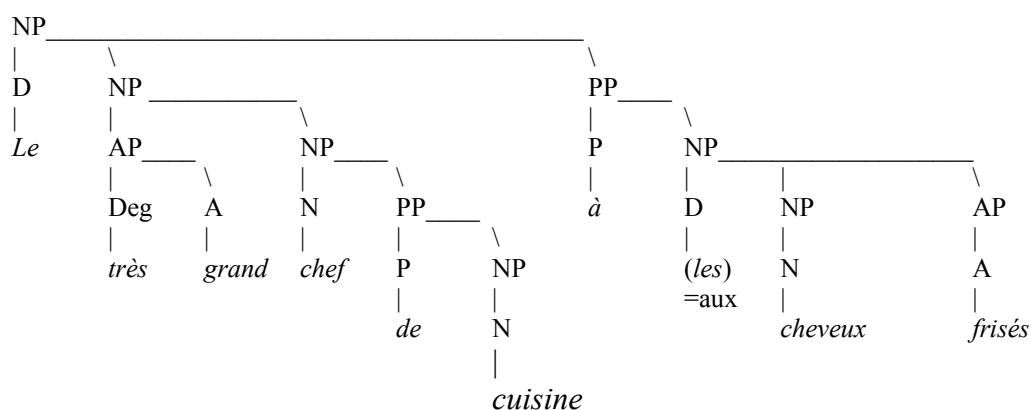
#3 *le chef de cuisine très grand aux cheveux frisés*

#4 *le très grand chef de cuisine aux cheveux frisés,*

we can see that one modifier is more central than another (we cannot say *\*Le chef de cuisine aux cheveux frisés très grand*). The following tree presents a basic analysis:



However, our movement test suggests that the AP *très grand* is more closely attached to *chef de cuisine*, so even this analysis is not accurate. The following diagram indicates more systematically that the first AP is more central to the Noun Phrase as a whole, while an extra NP is created to signal *très grand* as a modifier:



This creation of an extra NP phrase is known as **adjunction**. Phrases which are parallel to a repeated phrase (as both Aps are here) are always understood to be modifiers.

### 3.4 NP arguments

NP structures are similar in English and French. However, it seems that both languages have different rules about which elements of the Noun Phrase can be mobile in the phrase. For example, adjectives in French are more mobile than in English. They can precede as well as follow the head noun, but in English they must

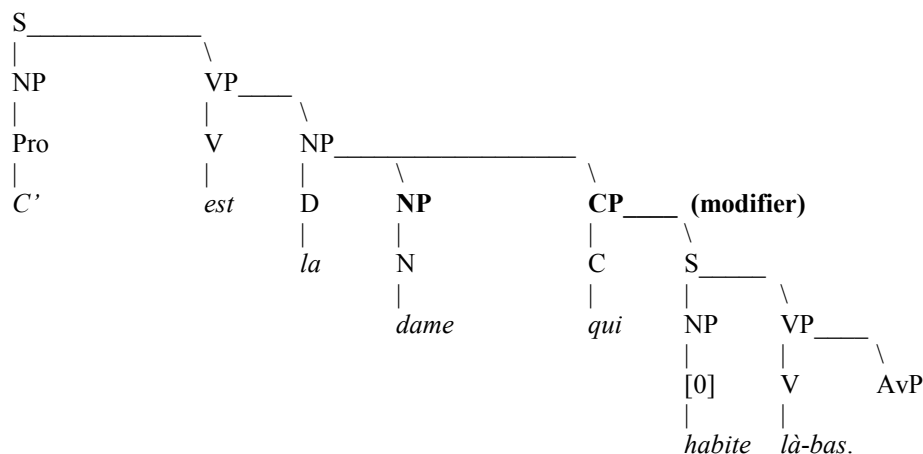


precede (*an excellent vintage* vs. *une cuvée excellente, une excellente cuvée*). Conversely, complements may precede or follow nouns in English (*the apple harvest, the harvest of apples*), but must follow in French (*la récolte des pommes*). The rule appears to be:

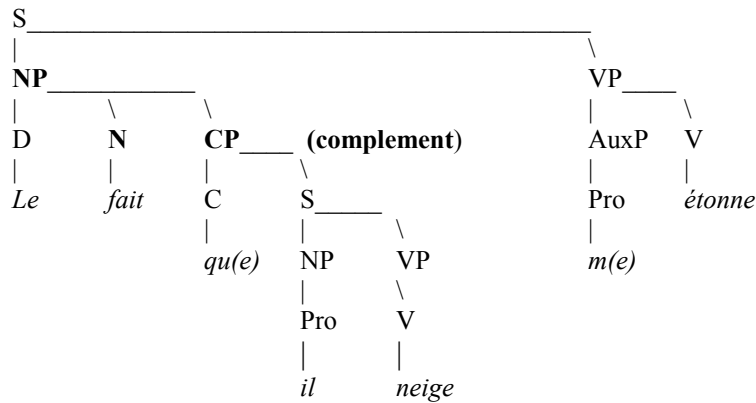
French NP = Mod + N	N+ Mod	N + Comp.
English NP = Mod + N	N + Comp	Comp + N.

There are, of course, constraints on the position of modifiers and nouns in French. As I suggested in Part One, the positions of adjectives are often semantic (*un ancien camarade* vs. *un camarade ancien*) or stylistic (*une cuvée excellente* vs. the more formal or literary *une excellente cuvée*). And whereas in languages such as German and Russian a modifying relative clause can precede the main noun, in French and English relatives are very much restricted to a post-nominal position.

We saw above that NPs can contain complements and modifiers, as in *Le professeur de maths* (Comp) *aux lunettes noires* (Mod) and that the difference can be made visible by placing modifiers parallel to an expanded phrase (NP). We can now use this convention to signal the difference between noun complement clauses and relative clauses. As we saw in Part Two, a relative clause modifies NP, and so the NP is expanded with the addition of a second NP:

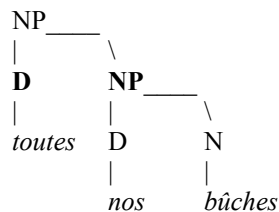


An NP complement clause on the other hand, places CP in parallel to N, since complement clauses are complements of N, as in a sentence such as *Le fait qu'il neige m'étonne*, in which the embedded clause *qu'il neige en ce moment* is a complement of the Noun:



### 3.5 Determiners and Pronouns.

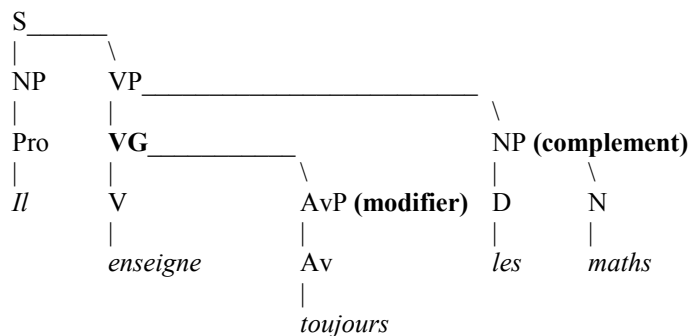
As with Nouns, Pronouns can be used on their own or as heads of modified phrases (as in: *moi qui suis si fatigué*). However, the case of *tout* in *toutes nos bûches* seems to pose a problem for our analysis of NPs. In this expression, is *toutes* a determiner or an adjective which finds itself somehow outside the normal boundaries of NP? The best solution appears to be to analyse words such as *tout*, *beaucoup de*, *peu* and so on as determiners which modify (or refer to) a full NP:



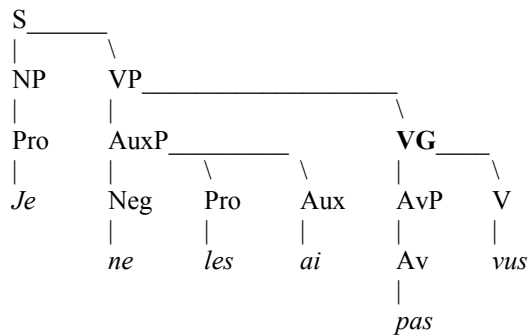
*Tout* can sometimes be a determiner (as in *toute histoire a sa fin*), but it can also be an adjective (*le tout Paris*) and a pronoun (*je veux tout savoir*), where *tout* is the complement of the verb *savoir* and is placed in the usual position for complement pronouns. In the example *toutes nos bûches*, *tout* is best analysed as a determiner rather than an adjective, because in French adjectives cannot precede the determiner in a full noun phrase (*\*nombreuses nos bûches*). However, *toutes* still maintains some of the properties of a pronoun, because it can be isolated from the NP to which it is referring: *il brûle toutes les bûches – il les brûle toutes*.

### 3.6 Verb Groups

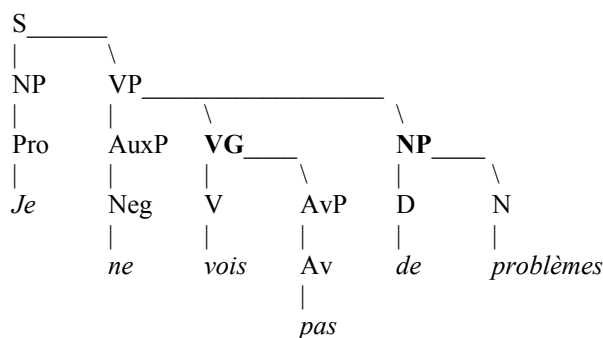
Verb Phrases have a very different set of properties in English and French. One particular difference is that English allows for prepositional particles to move to either side of the object of the verb (as in *She picked up the book*, *She picked the book up*). This mobility is not allowed in French, but French does allow for certain adverbs to be inserted between the verb and the object where English would not allow it: *il oublie toujours sa grammaire* (\*he forgets always his grammar). In order to capture this potential movement and to signal the difference between complement and modifier in French, the modifier is placed under **VG (Verb Group** or ‘expanded verb’):



French also uses this location for indirect objects and other prepositional phrases (*il a donné à l'église tout son argent*, *elle cache dans sa veste un revolver chargé*). In French, VG is the preferred location for grammatical adverbs which indicate duration of time (*encore, déjà, enfin*), as well as negative adverbs and pronouns (*pas, rien, personne, jamais*):

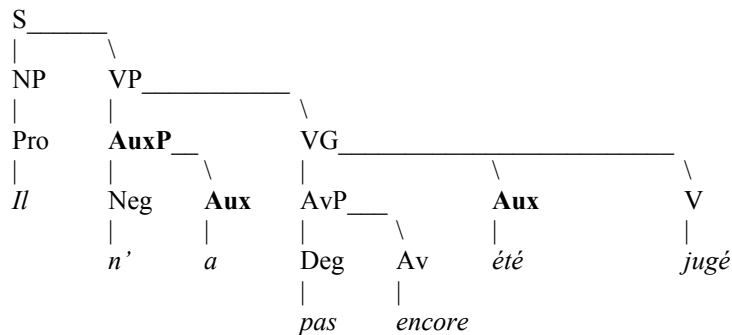


The adverb ‘*pas*’ needs to be separated from the Auxiliary Phrase (as I presented it in Part One), because it can also intervene between V and NP complement (*Il n’aime pas les spaghetti*). *Pas* therefore occupies a position in the VG, where it modifies the lexical verb, and allows the complement to be unambiguously identified as the phrase which stands parallel to VG:

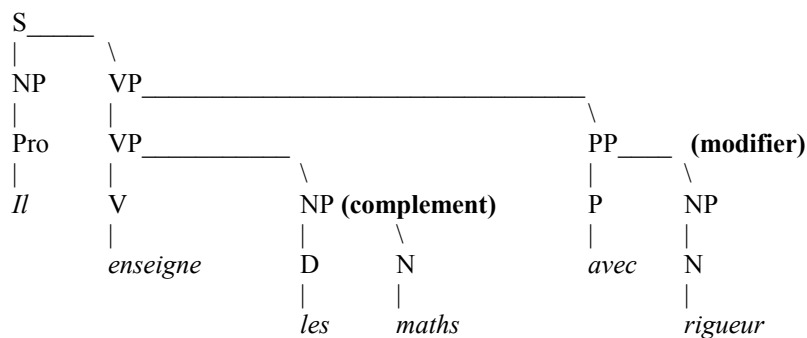


The *de* in the NP in this last example is a negative determiner (traditionally known as a partitive), and not a preposition. This particle resembles ‘any’ in English (*I don’t see any problems*), and its function in French is to replace the indeterminate articles *un*, *du* or *des* after NPs which have been negated (*je vois des problèmes -> je ne vois pas de problèmes, je bois du vin -> je ne bois pas de vin*).

Further justification for the use of VG comes from the use of auxiliaries in passive verb constructions such as: *le ministre a été condamné*. Passive participles such as *été* can be separated from the auxiliary by an adverb (such as *Il n’a pas encore été jugé*) and are never inverted in question forms (*N’a-t-il pas encore été jugé?*), we are obliged to see *été* as part of VG:



Finally, when adverbs or other modifiers are used elsewhere in the VP, an expanded phrase (adjunction) is created in the same way as it would be in NPs, as in *Il enseigne les maths avec rigueur*:



In summary, the direct object complement of any verb is the phrase which is parallel to VG. If no modifier is expressed, the complement is simply the phrase parallel to V (as in the diagram above). Modifiers of verbs are either included in the VG (in which case they tend to be grammatical in nature) or are parallel to a phrase in adjunction (as shown in the tree diagram above).

### 3.7 Auxiliary Phrases and Clitics.

The placement of negative *ne* and object pronouns a peculiar complexity of the verb in French. The position directly to the left of the verb (the Auxiliary phrase) is the preferred location for what are technically known as pronominal particles or **clitics** (*tu ne l' as pas vu, Elle en a pris trois*). Clitics have no independent status as words and attach themselves to a nearby element, most often the verb or the auxiliary verb. One explanation for the classification of these items as 'clitics' is that they cannot be

used as independent pronouns (compare *me, te* with full or ‘tonic’ pronouns: *comme moi, pour toi*). In fact, many clitics lose their phonetic strength, and no longer make up syllables in standard French (*tu l’es trompé, je l’ai vu*). In colloquial French, clitics are even phonetically assimilated into the subject or the verb: *je les ai vus* -> /ʃe ze vy/, *Je ne les ai pas vus* -> /ʃe ze pa vy/.

Unlike pronouns in English, clitics in French do not always fully replace noun phrases, but sometimes repeat grammatical information included in the rest of the sentence. Here are some examples of this:

- 1 *J’en ai marre de ce film* (The clitic echoes but does not replace the PP *de ce film*).
- 2 *Elle s’est coupé la main.* (The clitic extracts a possessive from *sa main*).
- 3 *La porte n’est pas ouverte.* (The clitic repeats negative information signalled by *pas*).

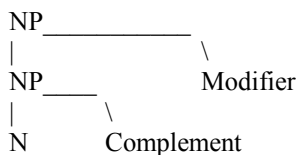
Clitics exist in other languages such as Portuguese or Swahili, where particles often repeat information expressed elsewhere. Whereas verbs in these languages incorporate clitics into the verb, French reserves a position for them to the left of the finite verb. It is no accident that this happens to be the ‘grammar zone’ where the auxiliary verb congregates with other abstract information, including the negative *ne*. In fact, AuxP can be seen to be the ‘Specifier’ position of the main verb, having a similar function to the Determiner in a Noun Phrase.

However, AuxP must be seen as an abstract grammatical position (similar to C in CP) rather than a part of speech or a lexical phrase. AuxP is unusual because even when an actual auxiliary is absent, it is a valid ‘landing site’ for pronouns, as in the case of simple verbs (*je ne les vois pas, il lui en veut*) and non-finite verbs (*ce faisant, pour en connaître plus*). In addition, AuxP differs from other specifiers in that it has a complex internal sequence: Negative (*ne*) – Personal pronoun (*me, te, se, nous, vous*) - Indirect complement (*lui, leur*) - Direct complement (*le, la, les*) – Adverbial or Locative (*y, en*) - Auxiliary.

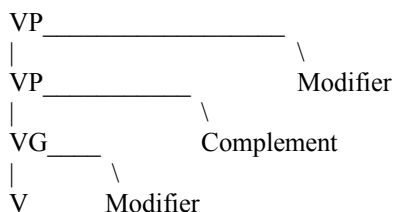
### 3.8 Remarks

In Part Three we have seen that broadly speaking all lexical phrases (NP, VP, PP, AP, AvP) have the same general properties and all appear to share the same underlying ‘X-bar’ structure (Specifier – X – Argument). General syntactic properties of this kind are technically known as **principles**.

However, despite these similarities, phrases have still have many different properties, and they may also be unique Much of the complexity of phrase structure in French is not due to exceptions to the X-bar rule, but rather to the arrangement of arguments (complements and modifiers) within the overall framework. For example, NPs have a particular structure in French in which no other phrase can intervene between the noun and its complement. This rule accounts for fixed expressions such as *chef de cuisine, pomme de terre, coup d'état*:



We have seen that when phrases which appear immediately next to N are displaced by another phrase, as in *la destruction de l'immeuble* -> *la destruction immédiate de l'immeuble*, the displaced phrase is treated syntactically as a modifier (ven though semantically we might want to argue that it is a complement). This pattern differs somewhat from that of VPs, in which modifiers readily displace complements away from the verb (as in *disposez dans une casserole les haricots verts, j'estime très utile votre contribution*), and there are few instances of verbs which do not allow modifiers to be placed in VG:



These structures are also rather different to those of NPs and VPs in English. It follows from this that many differences between languages are attributable to the various ways that complements and modifiers can be configured in each language.

English prefers, for example, to keep complements very close to the head word in NPs and VPs. While Japanese, as we saw, prefers complements to precede the head while specifiers follow. Syntacticians refer to these specific preferences as **parameters**, that is to say the particular ways in which a language interprets the basic X-bar schema. Although the parameters appear to differ from one phrase type to the next in French, they still happen to be very consistent.

It is possible to trace the development of these parameters within the history of the French language. As French developed from Latin, there was a gradual movement of complements from before to after the main verb (although sometimes remnants of the older structure remain in idioms such as: *il nous faut raison garder* ‘we must keep a cool head’). At the same time, there was a tendency to discard the grammatical morphology of Latin. This becomes clear when we compare the following Latin phrase with its modern French equivalent (adapted from Lodge et al. 1994):

Synthetic structure : *Paganus Romam veniet.*  
                                  ‘Paysan (à) Rome viendra’.

Analytic structure : *Le Paysan va venir à Rome.*

This shows the general shift from a **synthetic** structure in Latin (with morphemes attached to the right of the word) to an **analytic** structure in French (with grammatical words and specifiers to the left of the word). What is remarkable is that this shift always follows the same pattern regardless of the part of speech or the type of grammatical information involved. The fact that modern colloquial French now appears to prefer the compound *va venir* to the simple future tense *viendra* also testifies to this general evolution in French. This trend also shows that syntactic changes take place gradually and that different areas of grammar evolve at different stages. The reason why the syntax of a language might change over time is not fully understood. Over the centuries French has often been influenced by Germanic languages (spoken by the tribes who settled in France after the Romans) as well as, in recent times, modern English. However, it is also just as likely that parametric shifts take place when speakers adopt different speech styles or dialects from within the same language.

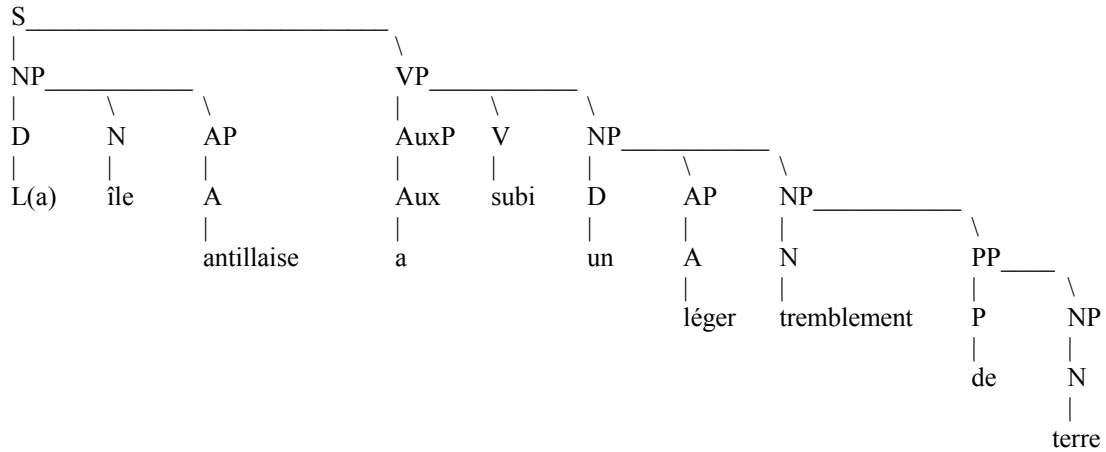


### Exercise 3 : Advanced Phrases.

- 1) L'île antillaise a subi un léger tremblement de terre.
- 2) La timidité est un point de départ excellent pour un poète.
- 3) Les journalistes condamnent l'intervention militaire agressive.
- 4) L'ordinateur provoque une prolétarisation brutale des employés.
- 5) Gaston a fumé toutes les cigarettes.
- 6) Merleau-Ponty écrivait beaucoup de livres sur l'art.
- 7) Un troupeau de vaches est une richesse incontestable chez les Massai.
- 8) Je n'ai pas mangé.
- 9) Je ne mange rien.
- 10) Georges ne les a pas encore vus.
- 11) Le chef de la tribu n'apprécie pas beaucoup votre chanson.
- 12) Jean n'a pas lu beaucoup de ces romans récemment.

### Model answers to Exercise 3 : Advanced Phrases.

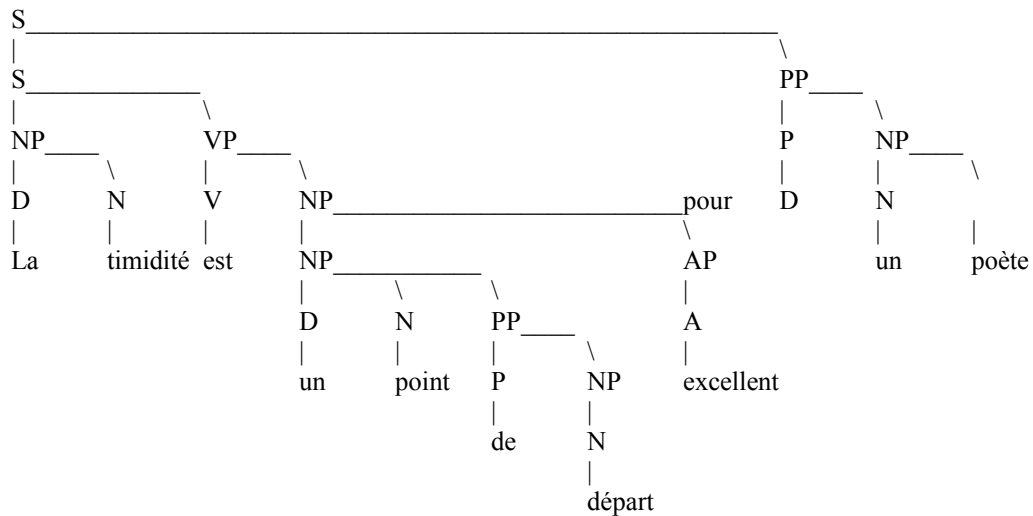
1) L'île antillaise a subi un léger tremblement de terre.



Notes :

i) The PP *de terre* is complement of the Noun, while *léger* modifies this NP (the adjective could not intervene between complement and noun: *\*un tremblement léger de terre.*)

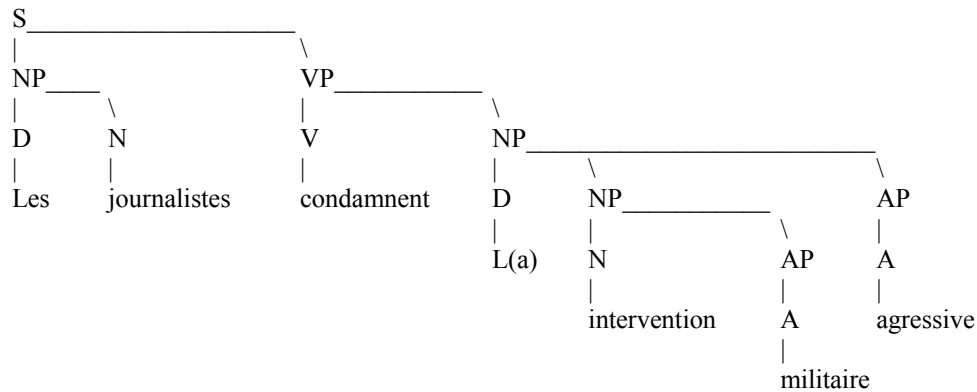
2) La timidité est un point de départ excellent pour un poète.



Notes :

i) In *point de départ*, the PP *de départ* is complement of N, while in the sentence as a whole, the PP *pour un poète* and the AP *excellent* are modifiers, requiring adjunction (repetition of symbol for the modified phrase).

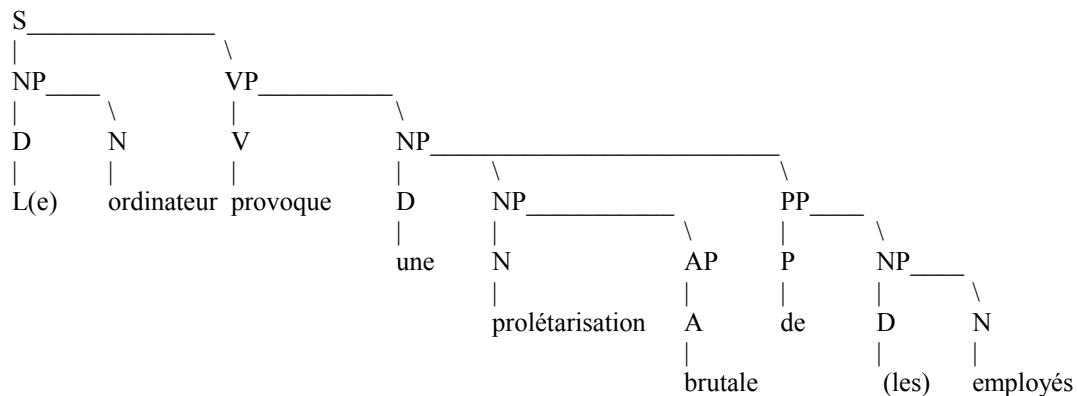
3) Les journalistes condamnent l'intervention militaire agressive.



Notes :

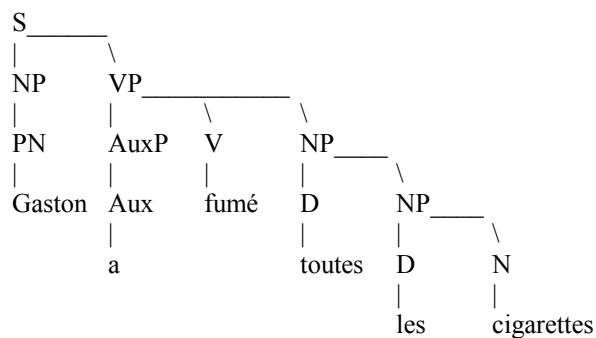
i) Here is an example of AP as complement (*militaire*) as well as modifier (*agressive*). When AP is complement, it is sometimes known as a 'classifying' phrase, and such adjectives as *américain*, *économique*, *électronique* are placed closer to the N in the NP with the same properties as other NP complements. As well as the movement test (*\*une intervention agressive militaire*), we can also demonstrate that these adjectives have different functions because they fail to combine with co-ordinating conjunctions: *\*l'intervention militaire et agressive*.

4) L'ordinateur provoque une prolétarisation brutale des employés.

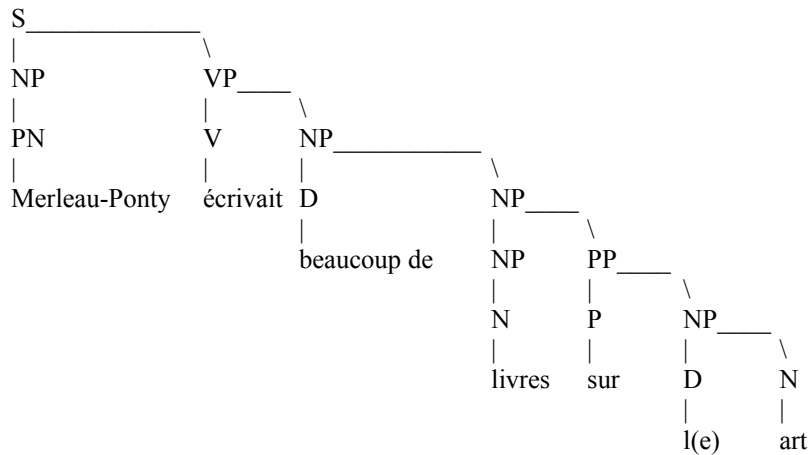


Notes : *brutale* is placed closest to the N and is considered to be a classifying or complement AP.

5) Gaston a fumé toutes les cigarettes.



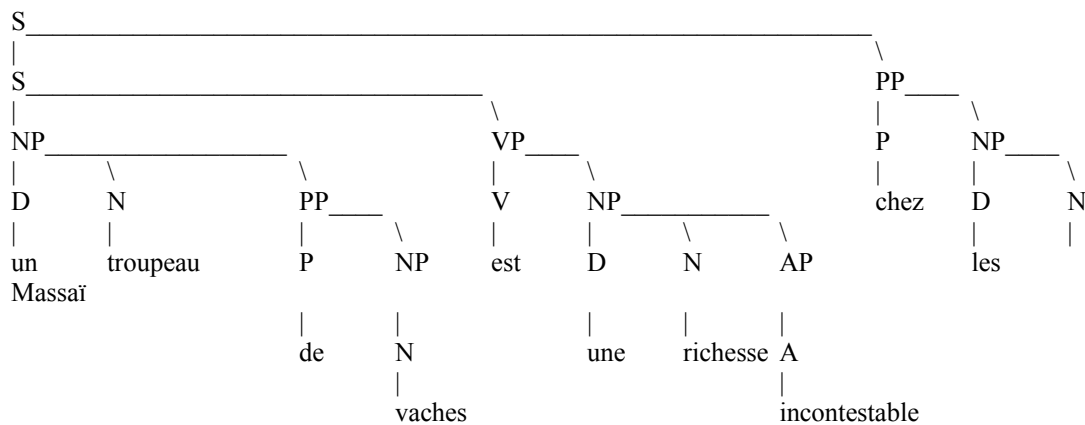
6) Merleau-Ponty écrivait beaucoup de livres sur l'art.



Notes :

- i) Quantifying expressions such as *beaucoup de*, *la plupart de* are not full NPs and serve instead as determiners in the same structure as that used by *tout* + NP in Sentence 5. The difference between *tout* and these expressions is that an obligatory particle *de* is inserted. We can consider this to be another example of grammaticalisation, in the same way that the conjunction *que* is added to prepositions to form compound conjunctions.
- ii) The NP is separated from the D here to emphasise the fact that a determiner can be inserted in the main NP (*il écrivait beaucoup de ses livres en Provence*).
- iii) The PP is signalled as a modifier by using (an optional) extra NP symbol. Other expressions can intervene: *beaucoup de livres excellents sur l'art*.

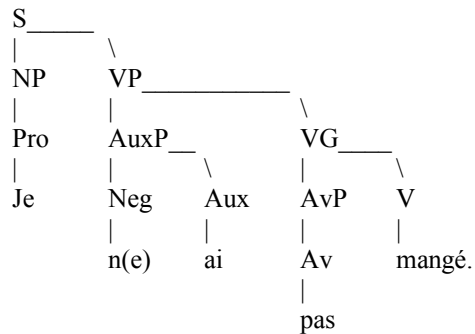
7) Un troupeau de vaches est une richesse incontestable chez les Massai.



Notes :

- i) Collective nouns such as *un troupeau de* or *la majorité de* are treated as normal NPs, as can be seen by the singular form of the verb.
- ii) The AP *incontestable* is a modifier, however no adjunction is necessary in the diagram if the NP is not further modified by other phrases.
- iii) The PP *chez les Massai* can be seen as modifier of the VP (*...est chez les Massai une richesse incontestable*) or as a sentence modifier which can be placed in focus position: *Chez les Massai un troupeau de vaches est...*

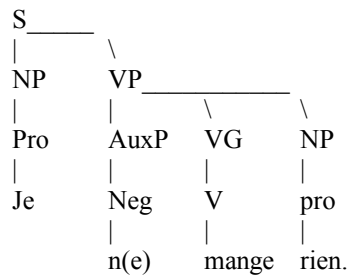
8) Je n'ai pas mangé.



Notes :

i) *Pas* is analysed as AvP rather than just Av because the phrase can be expanded (*même pas, surtout pas, plutôt pas*).

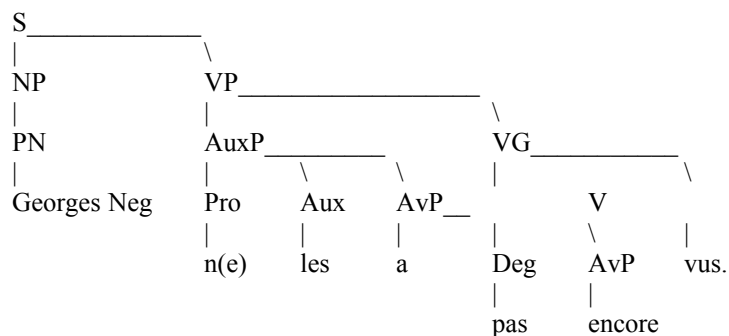
9) Je ne mange rien.



Notes :

i) *Rien* is complement of the verb, and so placed in the VP, parallel to VG. VG is not necessary if no other elements (such as modifiers) are present.

10) Georges ne les a pas encore vus.

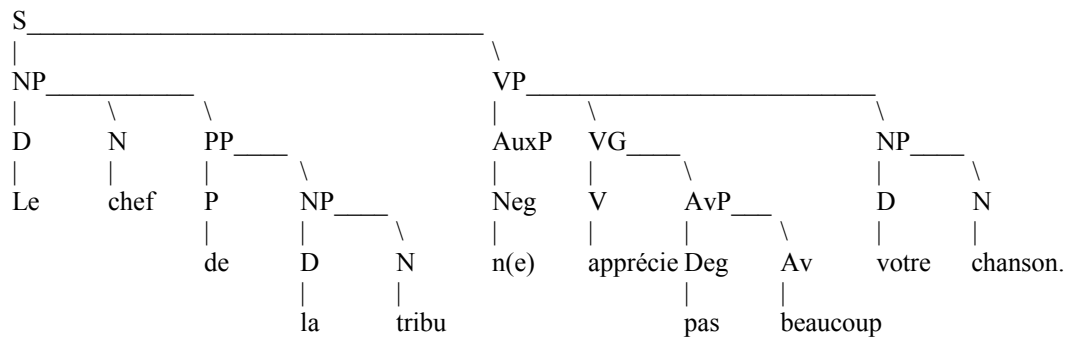


Notes :

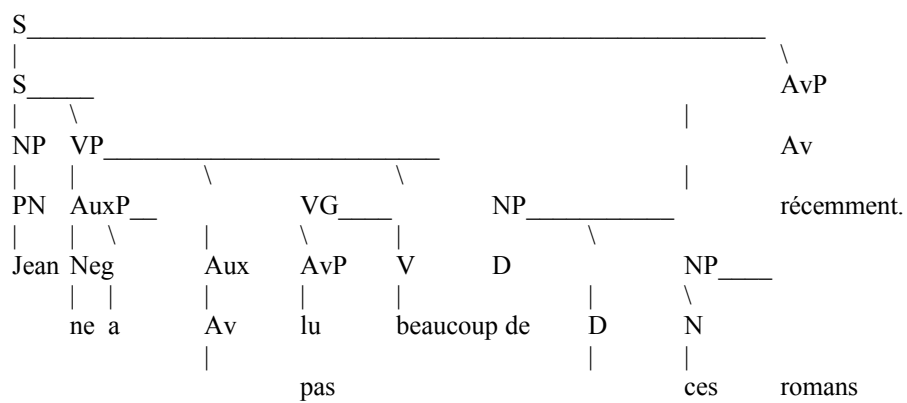
i) VG is necessary, because the main verb (*vus*) is modified by a complex adverb.

ii) *Pas* is a Degree adverb here because it specifies the main adverb. Various lexical items can be pressed into service as specifiers and *pas* and other adverbs such as *même* can be used in a variety of contexts in this way (*pas moi, pas ce monsieur, même moi, même ce monsieur*).

11) Le chef de la tribu n'apprécie pas beaucoup votre chanson.



12) Jean n'a pas lu beaucoup de ces romans récemment.



## French Syntax 4: Advanced Clauses

### **4.1 Introduction.**

In the previous section, I introduced X-bar structure as a means of capturing the essential structure of all types of phrases in French. In this section, I examine the implications of X-bar structure at the level of the clause. We have seen that X-bar notation provides a systematic way of signalling the syntactic relationship between phrases. However, X-bar is not sufficient to deal with a number of issues which involve the syntactic notion of ‘movement’. Movement is an important way of testing which constituents belong to a given phrase and at what level of structure a particular phrase should be analysed. But there are a number of phenomena in French which can involve displacement of phrases beyond the usual boundaries of the clause as well as expressions which do not seem to fit into the basic schema set out so far. Impersonal pronouns, non-finite verbs, question forms and inversions may sound as though they have little to connect them, but they are all related to the way in which we conceive of clauses.

### **4.2 Dislocation and Cleft clauses.**

A number of different phrase types can serve as what are known as ‘sentence adverbs’ or sentence modifiers in French:

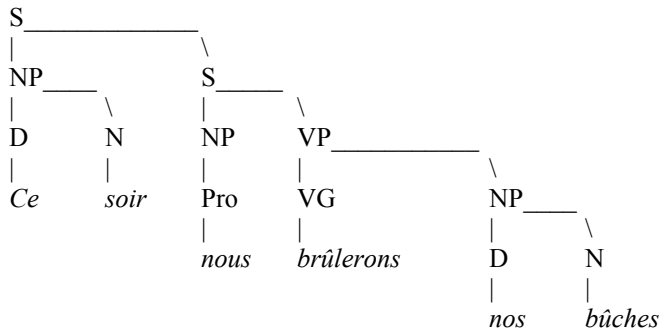
AvP modifier - *Lundi, il arrivera en voiture.*

PP modifier - *Avant de le savoir, nous devons attendre.*

NP modifier - *Ce soir, nous brûlerons nos bûches.*

Sentence modifiers appear to single-out a specific piece of information and bring it into focus at the beginning of the sentence. In Parts One and Two, these modifiers were represented in tree diagrams as coming down from S, placing them before NP or after VP (thus breaking the rule S-> NP VP). In Part Three, I argued that modifiers create an extra level of structure, involving the repetition of an expanded phrase

symbol (**adjunction**). This notation can now also be applied to complete sentences. In the particular example of *ce soir, nous brûlerons nos bûches*, this notation helps us to avoid confusing *ce soir* with the subject of the sentence:



We saw in Part Three that the repetition of the S or NP symbol (as in the example above) is a standard convention in X-bar theory which allows for extra modifiers to be inserted at higher levels of the clause. This convention might also be useful in analysing expansions which do not appear to have a very satisfactory place in our standard analysis: *Que faites-vous là, Madame?* / *Enfin, malheureusement la situation s'est dégradée* / *C'est, je pense, une tragédie.*

Our basic syntactic rules (such as S → NP VP) are good at capturing the fundamental properties of clauses and phrases. However, adjuncts and sentence modifiers show that the language has also evolved complex structures to manage information in the sentence which go beyond the basic sentence structure. The placement of phrases in these unusual locations appears to have less to do with the usual syntactic concerns of ‘who did what to whom’ and more to do with emphasis and stylistic effect. Two systems in particular appear to be used in French for this purpose: dislocation and cleft-clauses.

**Dislocation** involves the expression of a phrase or part of a phrase in an unusual position in the sentence, as in a left-dislocation: *ce livre, je l'ai lu* or right-dislocation is: *Il est là, Pierre?* In both examples, either the object (*ce livre*) or the subject (*Pierre*) becomes the **topic** or focus of attention in the clause. These examples also show that lexical information is dislocated, while a grammatical item (typically a pronoun) remains in the place of the dislocated phrase. Dislocation can also be cumulative, as in: *Moi, ma mère, elle est partie.* Here, the clause gradually develops



different topics (first *moi*, then *ma mère*), before announcing new information in the main clause *elle est partie* (this is known technically as the **comment**).

A similar effect can be seen with **cleft** clauses. These involve the expression *c'est* which cuts away (technically 'clefts') a single element from the main clause and raises it to the beginning in a structure similar to a relative clause: *C'est ma mère qui est partie*. Again, the purpose of this reformulation is to focus on a particular phrase from the original clause. There is a difference in information structure between dislocations and clefts. In *Ma mère, elle est partie*, the new information is *est partie*. However, in our cleft example the new information is *C'est ma mère* which answers the potential question *Qui est parti(e)?* This fronting of a topic (in dislocation) or picking out of a comment (with a cleft) allows French to place a variety of different phrases in focus. In addition, French appears to use these expressions more frequently than English, largely because English, unlike French, has the option of using intonation to focus on a phrase. Thus in the following example, the emphatic intonation in English is expressed as a cleft clause in French: *Who scored the goal? - Peter scored the goal / Qui a marqué le but? C'est Pierre qui a marqué le but*. This is not to say that English does not use clefts, but the difference does explain the very frequent use of cleft structures, especially in spoken French.

### 4.3 Interrogative clauses.

As with dislocations and clefts, questions are also unusual in that they involve some form of inversion which breaks the S -> NP VP rule:

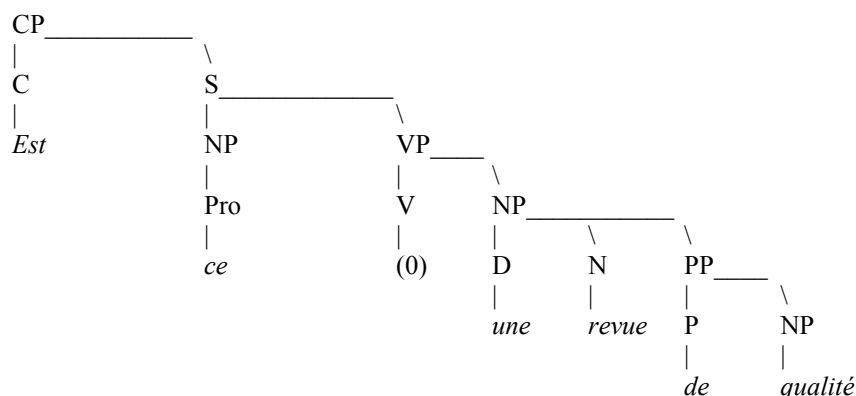
#1 *Est-ce une revue de qualité?* (Polar interrogative)

#2 *Quel temps fait-il?* (QU- interrogative)

So far we have seen that movement can be accounted for using adjunction and a repeated S symbol. This works for dislocations and sentence adverbs, however in questions the structure of the original clause is more disrupted. In #1, the verb 'jumps' over the subject and leaves its object behind (*C'est une revue de qualité -> Est-ce \_\_\_ une revue de qualité?*). In #2 the clause is completely inverted, with the object leaving the verb behind, and the main verb in turn leaving the subject behind:

*il fait quel temps* -> *quel temps fait il?* We can assume from this that questions in French involve the systematic movement of one or more elements up from the Verb Phrase.

Up to this point, I have used CP to analyse subordinate, relative and complement clauses. These are collectively described as ‘dependent clauses’, in that they cannot be expressed without a main clause. However, CP can also be used to represent such ‘independent’ or stand-alone clauses as questions, in which case CP must be seen as a possible main clause as well. The following analysis of #1 shows that an auxiliary or main verb has been moved (or technically ‘raised’) from its original position (*c’est une revue de qualité*) up to the higher C position (*Est-ce une revue de qualité?*):

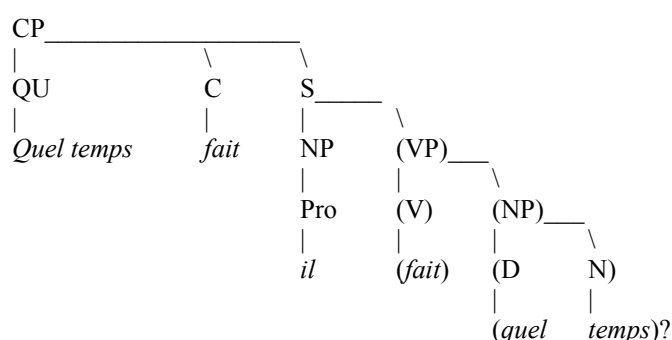


Although English forms questions in a similar way, there are a number of differences. In English, interrogatives are formed by the use of an auxiliary verb (*have, be, may, would* etc.) as in: *She is reading a thriller* -> *Is she reading a thriller?* This rule is so consistent that even where there is no auxiliary in the underlying sentence, a new auxiliary is created anyway: *She reads thrillers* -> *Does she read thrillers?* Similarly, French also raises auxiliaries, although unlike English, the French auxiliary verb brings along any clitic pronouns which are attached to it (*Je ne les ai pas vus* -> *Ne les ai-je pas vus?*). And unlike modern English, if the auxiliary is not present, the main verb will itself be raised to the C position, as in *Elle aime les ratatouilles* -> *Aime-t-elle les ratatouilles?* (I say modern English, because Shakespearean English would allow for such inversions as: *Likes she ratatouille?*). And if the verb has any clitics in French, it takes the clitics with it on the way (*Vous le connaissez* -> *Le connaissez-vous?*).

The form *est-ce que* is used to rephrase any standard clause as a polar interrogative (also known as a ‘yes / no question’). It can be analysed as a question

from on the basis of *c'est que...*, or more simply as an interrogative auxiliary (*Est-ce que c'est une revue de qualité?* where *Est-ce que* occupies the C position). This analysis as a fixed expression is perhaps more convincing when we consider that *Est-ce que* does not change for tense, whereas other raised verbs tend to maintain the tense of the main clause (*Était-ce une revue de qualité?* -> *Est-ce que c'était une revue de qualité?*). This tendency for a phrase to become fixed as a grammatical word is known as 'grammaticalisation'.

The second major category of question we have to account for involves QU-interrogatives. Example #2 (*Quel temps fait-il?*) employs the same syntactic structure as a polar question, but also picks out a specific piece of information from the main clause. The rule appears to be that the auxiliary or verb is still 'raised' from the VP to C position (in this case *fait*), but also an extra position (QU) is filled by a phrase taken from the main VP which is then placed in focus:



QU can be filled by NPs, PPs or even adverbs (as in *Comment vas-tu?*). The majority of interrogative pronouns tend to be spelt with *qu*: *que, qui, quel, quand*, but this category also includes *comment, où, pourquoi* and corresponds to WH in English (*who, what, where, why, when*, as well as *how*). However, sometimes in informal French only the QU position is filled (*Comment tu vas?, À quoi tu penses?*). These positions are not arbitrary, and the rule appears to be that if a QU word is used in the main phrase, no verb is allowed to be placed at C (we can say *Tu penses à quoi?* and but not *\*Penses-tu à quoi?*). Similarly, if the QU is raised, the Aux is also raised but placed at C (we say *À quoi penses tu?* but not *\*Penses à quoi tu?*). This restriction ensures that QU-phrases are given a place at the beginning of the sentence (in other words, they are the focus of the sentence).

Although QU-questions appear to be similar to WH-questions in English, a number of differences exist. One particular difference is that if the subject is not a

pronoun, the entire VP can be raised in French: *Où était passée l'ambulance?* This is especially true of intransitive verbs, although transitives also allow for this in formal French: *Que font les autres?* (= *Les autres font quoi?*) Question forms can also be combined with dislocation, as in *Où l'ambulance était-elle passée? Que disent-ils, les autres?* These can be analysed as modified CPs (*l'ambulance* creates an expanded CP, *les autres* modifies the sentence as a whole).

One persuasive reason for using CP to represent questions is that questions look like relative clauses. We know that relative pronouns and question words are usually the same forms (*comment, que, quelle* etc) and that a relative pronoun in a relative clause can be considered to be raised to C (*la voiture qui est en panne, la façon dont il le fait*). Another indication comes from the similarity between relative clauses and indirect questions in French: *je me demande à quoi tu penses, il m'a demandé où elle était* and in some cases this also involves verb inversion, as in: *elle sait où se trouve le trésor*.

This discussion of interrogatives and relative clauses leads us to reconsider the role of CP clauses in general. If CPs are used for all clauses which involve some form of syntactic movement, then we can also argue that the same notation can be used for question forms as well. All of this suggests that questions, indirect questions, subordinate, relative and complement clauses are all related in French, and confirms that the same syntactic mechanism is involved in each case. In addition, we have already seen that the label C cannot be considered a single part of speech. We have also noted that at times C can be left empty (as in Auxiliary Phrases, where there may or may not be an auxiliary verb). So it seems as though C and Aux are abstract 'landing sites' for elements which usually have a fixed position elsewhere in the clause.

#### **4.4 Control and Raising verbs.**

So far I have argued that questions are formed by the movement of various elements in a CP clause. For example, *que vois-tu* involves movement of the object of the verb to QU position and the verb itself is moved to C position. This notion of movement may also help us to understand some other peculiar grammatical habits of French, in particular the distinction between 'control' and 'raising' verbs. Control verbs

introduce embedded infinitives in which the subject of the first verb is the same as the subject of the second. Raising verbs on the other hand introduce infinitives which have a different subject from the first verb. The following two examples show the basic difference:

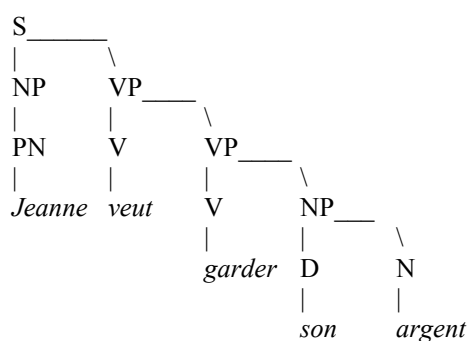
**Control:** *Jeanne veut garder son argent.*

(*Jeanne* is the subject of *vouloir* and *garder*)

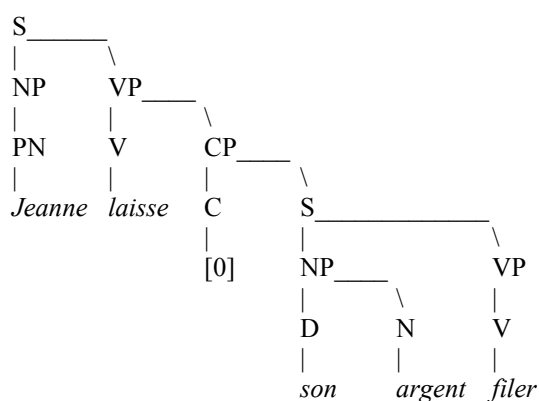
**Raising:** *Jeanne laisse son argent filer.*

(*Jeanne* is the subject of *laisse*, but *argent* is subject of *filer*).

We have seen in Part Two that control verbs have the following structure:



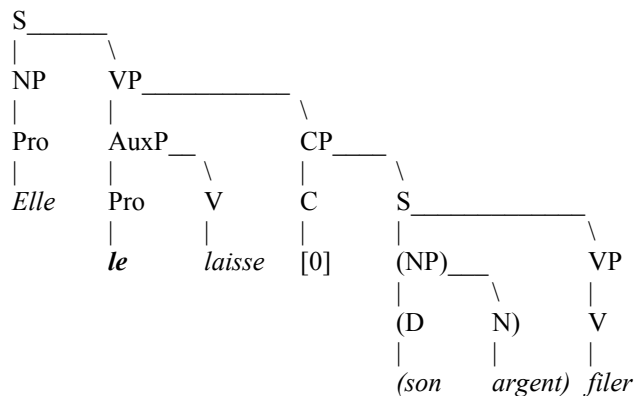
However, raising verbs have a very different structure, which involves CP:



One of the most compelling reasons for analysing raising verbs like this, is that the CP structure allows us to describe inversions such as *elle laisse filer son argent* or *il entend jouer les enfants*. In these examples the infinitives *filer* and *jouer* have skipped over the subject and moved to the C position of the embedded clause. This is known

as **infinitive raising**. The same diagram can now be used to describe a normal sentence structure of the type *elle laisse son argent filer*, *il entend les enfants jouer* as well as the ‘raised infinitive’ structure: *elle laisse filer son argent*, *il entend jouer les enfants*.

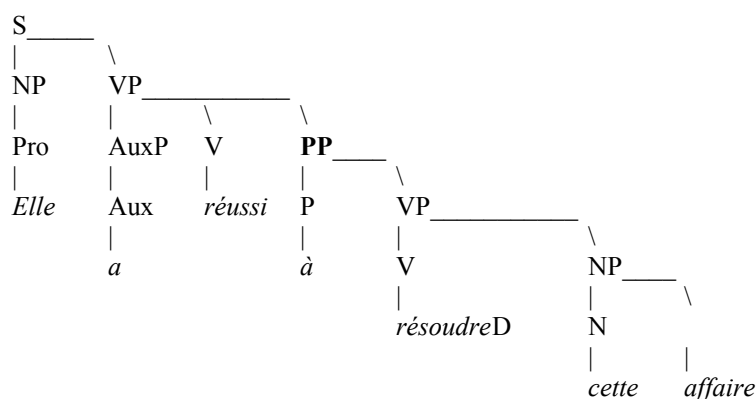
Raising verbs also have the peculiar property of replacing the subject of the second verb with a pronoun, as though it were the object of the first verb. This is known as **subject raising**. Thus, in the sentence *elle laisse son argent filer*, the subject of the embedded (second) verb can be replaced by a pronoun *elle le laisse filer*:



To obtain *elle le laisse filer*, the subject of the second verb *son argent* is considered to be moved or ‘raised’ to the C position, then replaced by a clitic pronoun (*le*).

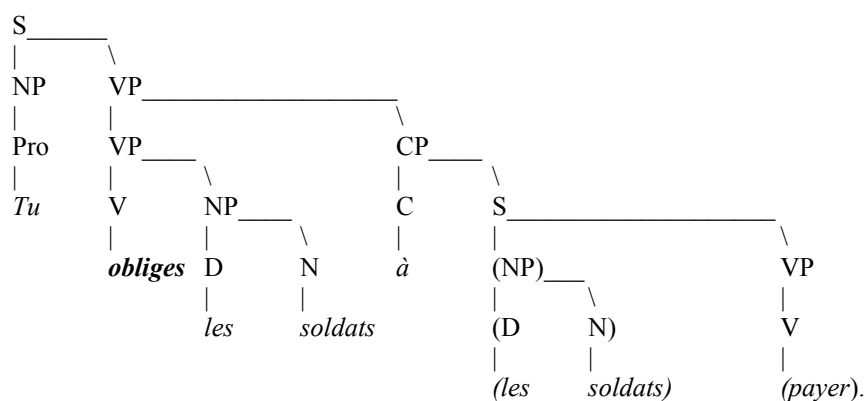
Another fundamental basis for the distinction between control and raising verbs involves the notion of an ‘inferred subject’. Syntactically speaking, the subject of a control verb is always seen as the subject of the second verb, as in *elle peut voir*, *il aime manger*, *ils préfèrent chercher*. This ‘control’ effect can be continued in long chains, as in: *Elle va pouvoir faire ce travail*. In control structures, therefore, the inferred subject can always be traced to the first verb in the main sentence, and no extra signalling of the subject is necessary in the tree diagrams for such sentences. This contrasts with raising verbs in which a different subject is always assumed for the second verb, even when it is not expressed, as in : *elle laisse (quelque chose?) filer*, *elle voit (quelqu’un?) marcher*, *il envoie (quelqu’un?) combattre*, *il empêche (quelqu’un?) de manger*, *tu obliges (quelqu’un?) à partir*. If raising structures need to express a subject in this way, we appear to be dealing with full embedded clause which must, potentially at least, contain an empty NP subject and a VP.

If we are to make a consistent distinction between control and raising structures, it also becomes necessary to distinguish between infinitives which are introduced by prepositions (PP) and those introduced by complementizers (CP). We saw in Part Two that several control verbs require a preposition to introduce an embedded verb, as in *Elle a réussi à résoudre cette affaire* :



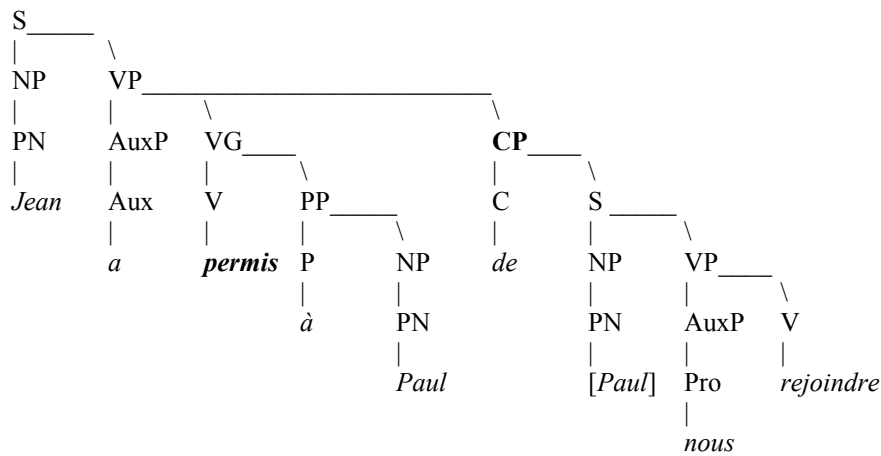
While prepositions *à* and *de* are used for embedded infinitives, other prepositions are used to introduce modifiers with a similar structure : *Pour me remettre, je dois prendre des médicaments, En sortant, elle me regardait bizarrement*. In all of these cases, the subject of the embedded infinitive is the same as that of the main clause.

However, if we accept that the symbol CP is to be used in those cases where the subject of the second verb is not the same, we should consider the preposition to be a complementizer instead, as in: *tu obliges les soldats à payer*.



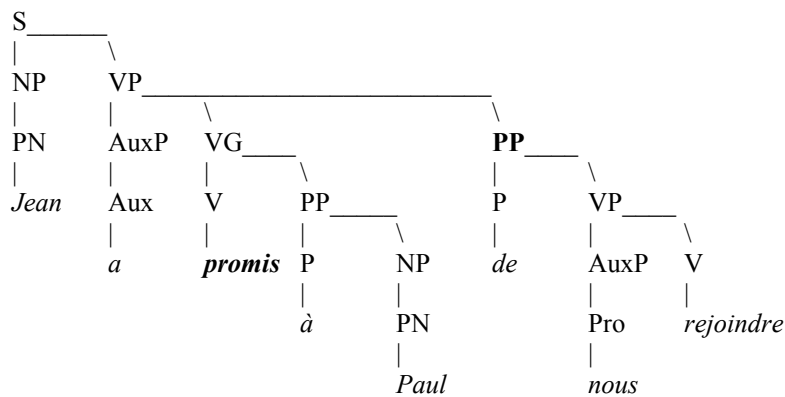
In this case, the subject of the embedded clause (*les soldats*) is raised to C and then made a direct complement of the control verb, while the CP clause is the indirect complement of the verb (this accounts for the use of *à* rather than *de*). Other raising

verbs have a slightly different structure, in which the embedded infinitive is treated as a complement of the verb, and complementizer becomes *de*:



If the embedded infinitive is direct complement, as in the example above, the subject of the embedded verb is raised and made into an indirect complement (hence its placement in VG and the use of the preposition *à*).

This analysis now allows us to distinguish structurally between two seemingly similar sentences in which the subjects of the embedded infinitive are different. In the sentence above, *Jean a permis à Paul de nous rejoindre, permettre* is a raising verb (requiring CP). However, in *Jean a promis à Paul de nous rejoindre, promettre* is a control verb and *Jean* is the subject of the first and the second verb (requiring PP):

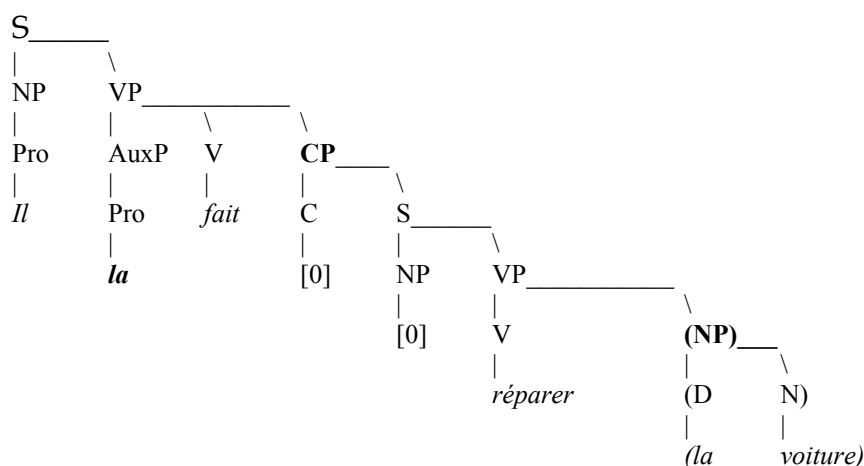


Although I have discussed control and raising verbs principally in terms of their syntactic properties, it is worth noting that families of lexical items such as these also happen to share similar meanings. Control verbs typically express a potential or preference, and sometimes coincide with modal verbs in English (*can, will, must, should...*). The meaning of raising verbs on the other hand tends to be related to



perception (*entendre, voir, regarder, percevoir*) or permission and obligation (*permettre, envoyer, obliger, empêcher*). However, it should not be assumed from this that there is always a sharp distinction between these two types of verbs. For example, some verbs seem to belong to both categories, as in *je demande d'y aller*, which is a control structure (PP), while *je te demande d'y aller* involves raising (CP). The verb *faire* also appears to demonstrate some unique syntactic properties which suggest that it may belong to a hybrid category of 'causative verbs'.

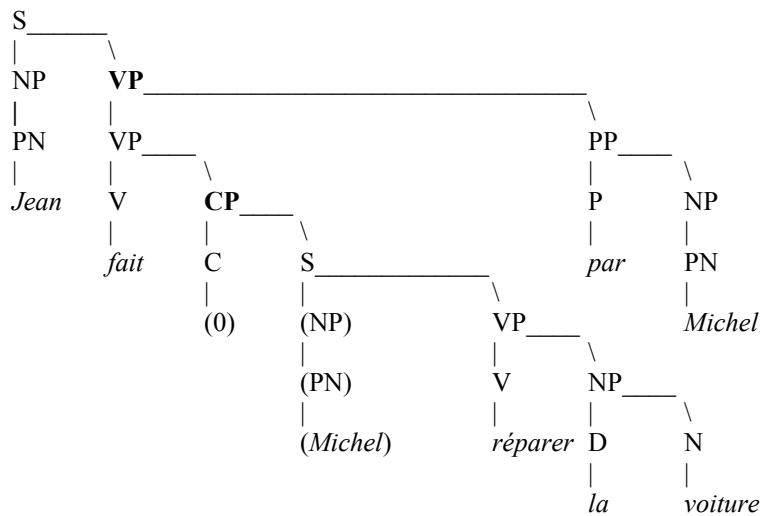
*Faire* is unique among raising verbs in that it allows for **object raising**. In the example *il la fait réparer*, the object of *faire* is not the subject of the embedded verb (as it would be for other raising verbs), but the object of the embedded verb, derived from *il fait réparer la voiture*. In object raising, the object of the embedded verb is first raised to C, and then converted to the clitic pronoun *la*:



As with other raising verbs, one justification for this analysis is that we can use a CP structure to analyse a similar complement clause: *il a fait qu'on répare la voiture* (the embedded verb would in this case be an finite subjunctive). *Faire* also allows for infinitives to be raised, as in *il fait danser les enfants*. However this analysis is still not quite as satisfactory as the structure of other raising verbs, especially when we consider that *faire* does not allow for placement of the embedded subject before the verb: *\*il fait les enfants danser*.

*Faire* also differs from other raising verbs in that when a subject is expressed for the second verb, a preposition is placed before the subject phrase. For example: *Jean fait réparer la voiture par Michel*. This formulation is similar to the structure we had for *Jean a permis à Paul de le rejoindre*, except that the subject of the embedded

clause (*Michel*) has been raised as an indirect object of the first verb and placed after the embedded verb, as can be seen in the following analysis:



It can be argued that if the embedded infinitive *réparer la voiture* is a complement of *faire*, the CP is equivalent to a direct complement, while the raised phrase *Michel* is treated as an indirect complement of the verb and hence requires a preposition (PP). Some evidence for this comes from the fact that if the PP is replaced by a pronoun, an indirect object pronoun is used: *Jean lui a fait réparer la voiture*. This pattern exists for other ‘causative’ verbs, such as *empêcher* and *permettre*. The only difference is that these raising verbs require the preposition *à* before a subject, but require *de* as a complementizer before the verb: *Jean a permis à Paul de nous rejoindre* / *Jean lui a permis de nous rejoindre*.

#### 4.5 Extraposition and Extraction.

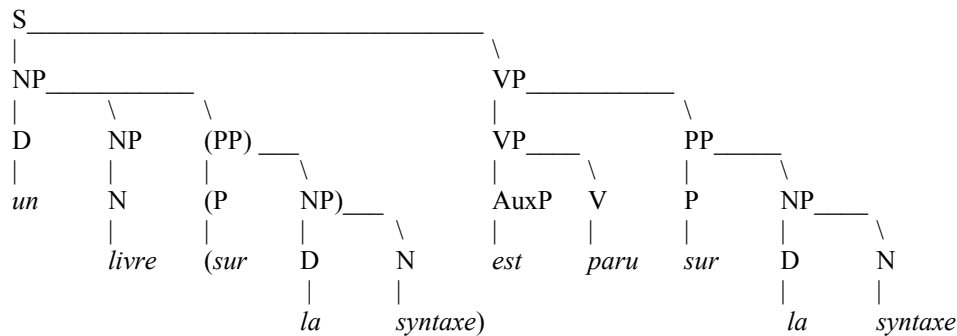
The fact that we can form grammatical paraphrases is often a good sign that two similar sentences share the same underlying syntactic structure, as we have seen with raising verbs : *il a entendu les enfants jouer*, *il a entendu jouer les enfants*. A number of paraphrases can also be formed in French by displacing (or ‘extraposing’) a phrase or clause to another position in the sentence. For example, the fact that the following sentences are paraphrases suggests that they are syntactically related:

#1 *Un livre sur la syntaxe est paru.*

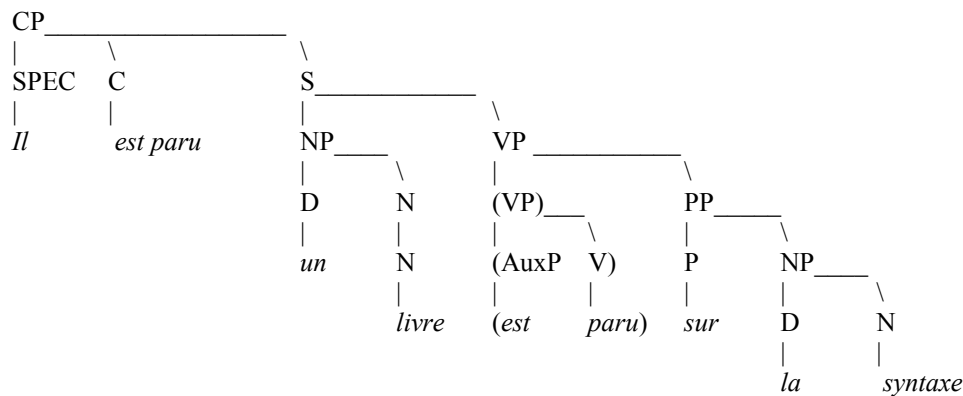
#2 *Un livre est paru sur la syntaxe.*

#3 *Il est paru un livre sur la syntaxe.*

In many cases, extraposition involves an **extraposed phrase** which is structurally similar to dislocation, as we saw in section 4.2. Thus, sentence #1 can be reformulated as #2 by making *sur la syntaxe* a modifier of the verb:



Although CP is a symbol often used for embedded clauses, we have also seen that it can stand for full or 'independent' sentences such as questions. The same now seems to be the case for extraposed sentences, such as sentence #3. Whereas #1 and #2 involve movement, sentence #3 involves a more complex form of **extraposition**, where the verb is raised to C and an impersonal pronoun is inserted at SPEC:

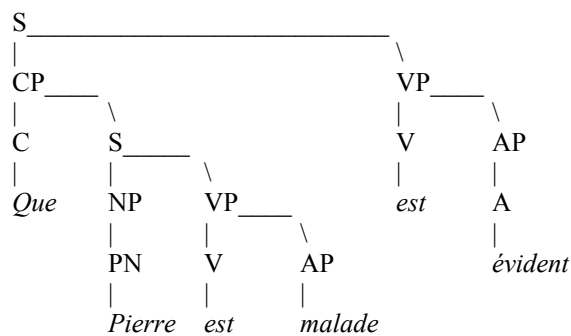


This may seem like an unusual analysis. However, this structure is the same as the one that would be used for a question based on the same sentence: *Quel livre est paru sur la syntaxe?* In this case the NP (*quel livre*) would be raised to Spec, and the Aux *est* would be raised to C. Further evidence for this treatment for extraposed clauses comes from impersonal verbs in French which allow for a similar kind of grammatical paraphrase:

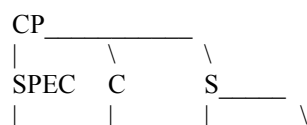
*Les détails nous manquent.*                   ->    *Il nous manque les détails.*  
*Une chose bizarre s'est passée.*           ->    *Il s'est passé une chose bizarre.*  
*Beaucoup de malheurs lui sont arrivés.* ->    *Il lui est arrivé beaucoup de malheurs.*

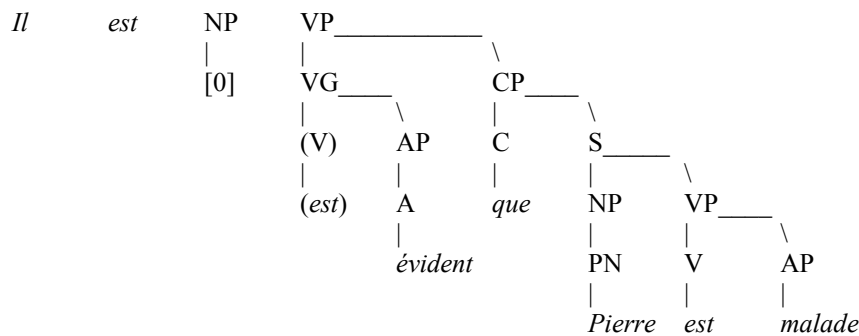
The fact that the verb appears to precede its subject in these impersonal expressions also coincides with a similar pattern for fixed expressions which never have any subject other than *il*: *il faut de l'argent, il s'agit de l'amour, il pleut des cordes*. With impersonal verbs of this type, the complement of the verb can also be analysed as its underlying subject. This would account for why we cannot say *\*elle faut de l'argent*, or *\*ce texte s'agit de l'amour* because the grammar of these verbs dictates that the 'real' subject is already present; it just happens to be expressed in an unusual position (in the VP). This principle is perhaps easier to observe in English, where, in contrast to French, the raised verb agrees with its original subject in such impersonal expressions as: *there is an apple, there are some apples, there seems to be a problem, there seem to be many problems*. Such formulations support the view that extraposition is a form of subject-verb inversion similar to interrogative clauses.

Extrapolated clauses also appear to be structurally related to **subject clauses**. These are formal expressions, in which a clause can stand instead of the NP subject as in *Que Pierre est malade est évident*:

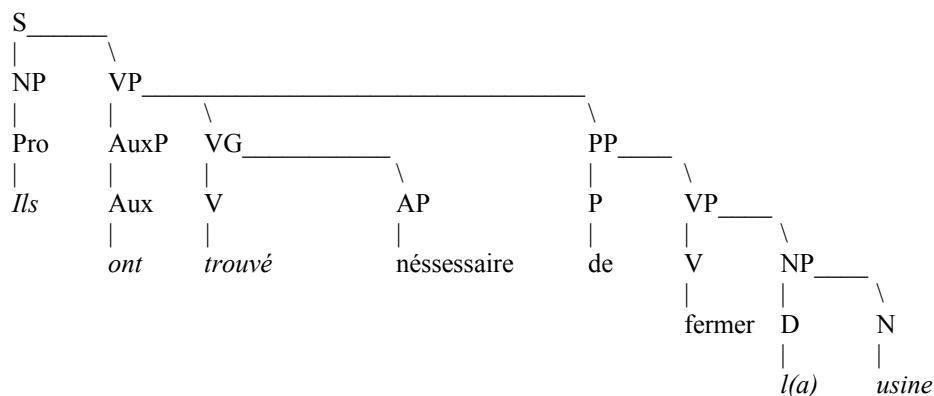


These clauses are rather 'top-heavy', and are often expressed in everyday French by an extraposed clause instead: *Il est évident que Pierre est malade*. Again, the V is raised to C and an impersonal subject placed at SPEC:



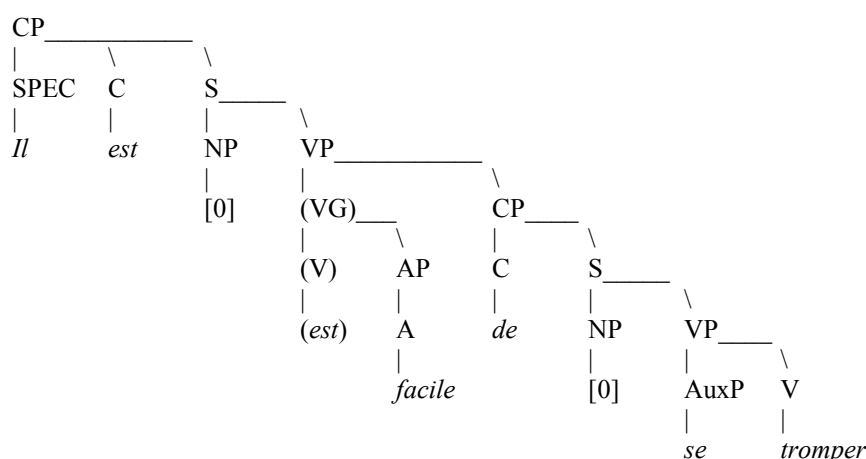


This extraposed structure is derived by movement of a subject clause (*que Pierre est malade*) to the VP. There are some strong structural grounds for not placing this clause under AP. The main reason is that the adjective is being used as a modifier to describe the extraposed clause, a formula which is often used in formal French: *je trouve incroyable que tu attendes toujours sa réponse, ils ont estimé nécessaire de fermer l'usine*. In the latter example, the AP is placed in modifier position under VG, where it can be seen to refer to the complement of the verb (the adjective requires a control structure with PP in this example):



The fact that it is also possible to insert material between the adjective and an extraposed clause also provides some evidence that these are separate phrases: *il est évident aux médecins que Pierre est malade*. Extraposed clauses are similar to raising verbs in that the subject of an extraposed clause can be raised to the main clause, as in: *il m'est impossible de comprendre cette question, il est pour lui difficile de marcher*. When a subject is raised from the extraposed clause, it is assigned a preposition or moved to a position where it cannot be seen as the complement of the verb. This appears to confirm the hypothesis that the extraposed clause is a complement of the verb *être*.

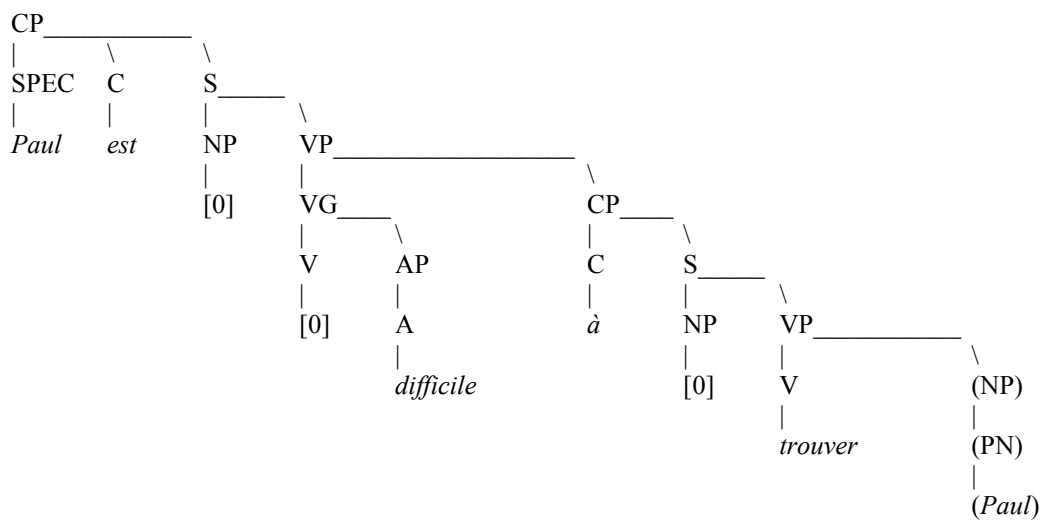
I pointed out in Part Two that certain syntactic structures are often limited to subsets of lexical items. It turns out that extrapositions are in fact only formed around a limited group of adjectives: *Il est {évident, certain, probable} que Pierre est malade / Que Pierre est malade est {évident, certain, probable}*. But this does not work for all abstract adjectives, and we can not say *il est \*facile que Pierre est malade, / Que Pierres est malade est \*facile*. Similarly, a different group of adjectives, this time including *facile, difficile, agréable, désagréable* allow for extraposition with an infinitive, where *de* is pressed into service at the C position:



It may seem strange to require the Spec and C positions to be filled for extraposed sentences. However, when we compare this sentence with our original extraposed sentence (*il est paru un livre sur la syntaxe*) we have a comparable structure in which an impersonal pronoun (*il*) and the verb (*est paru*) have skipped over the underlying subject of the sentence to these two key positions. We can consider that the underlying subject in these extraposed clauses is the embedded clause ‘*de se tromper*’, as in ‘(De) *se tromper est facile*. The use of the Spec and C symbols is therefore necessary to indicate that some grammatical change has taken place in the sentence as a whole. It is worth noting that extraposed clauses can only be formed using copular verbs such as *être* and verbs such as *paraître, sembler, devenir* and around a small set of adjectives: *il leur semble difficile d’avouer la vérité, il devenait impossible pour lui de rester debout*. The preposition *de* is also used to introduce all extraposed clauses, and is always considered to be a ‘complementizer’ (*Il est impératif de le faire, Il est nécessaire de le faire*). Even when the impersonal pronoun is switched to *ce* in informal French, the complementizer remains *de* (*c’est important*

*de le faire* and not *\*c'est important à le faire*). It is also important not to confuse the complementizer *de* in raising structures with the preposition *de* used in control clauses (*il est certain de gagner, elle est sûre de gagner*). In these cases, the symbol PP is used to signal that both verbs refer to the same subject.

Finally, not all extraposed clauses involve an impersonal subject. Sometimes an object is raised in front of the main verb, in which case we have an **extraction clause**. In the sentence *Paul est difficile à trouver*, *Paul* is the object of *trouver*. Here the grammatical object of the verb has been raised or 'extracted' to Spec position:



As with extraposed clauses, extractions appear to be limited to just two adjectives: *facile* and *difficile*. (and in English adjectives such as *tough*). Extraction and extraposition clauses are related syntactically, because they happen to form grammatical paraphrases (*Paul est difficile à trouver, Il est difficile de trouver Paul*). The most visible difference between both clause types, is that extraction always requires the complementizer *à* rather than *de*: *elle trouve cela difficile à croire, cette voiture est facile à conduire*, and we can never say: *\*cette voiture est difficile de conduire*. Additionally, extraction clauses can modify nouns in a structure resembling a relative clause: *c'est un peintre à admirer*, (compare this with: *c'est un peintre qui est à admirer*). Extraction always involves a raised object of a transitive verb and the object is usually preceded by the determiner *ce, cette, ces* or an impersonal pronoun *ce* (*c'est difficile à faire*: note that the impersonal *il* is never used: *\*il est difficile à*

*faire* unless this sentence refers to *il* as a full pronoun, as in: *ce monsieur, il est difficile à persuader*).

In summary, extraposition and extraction clauses seem to behave like raising constructions. The difference is that extraposition centres around the creation of an impersonal expression based on the whole clause. In addition, there are a number of ‘morphological’ differences between extraposition and extraction clauses. The main distinction is that extraposed clauses always use an impersonal pronoun *il* (or informal *ce*) followed by the complementizer *de*, whereas extraction clauses raise the object noun or express the object with *ce* followed by the complementizer *à*.

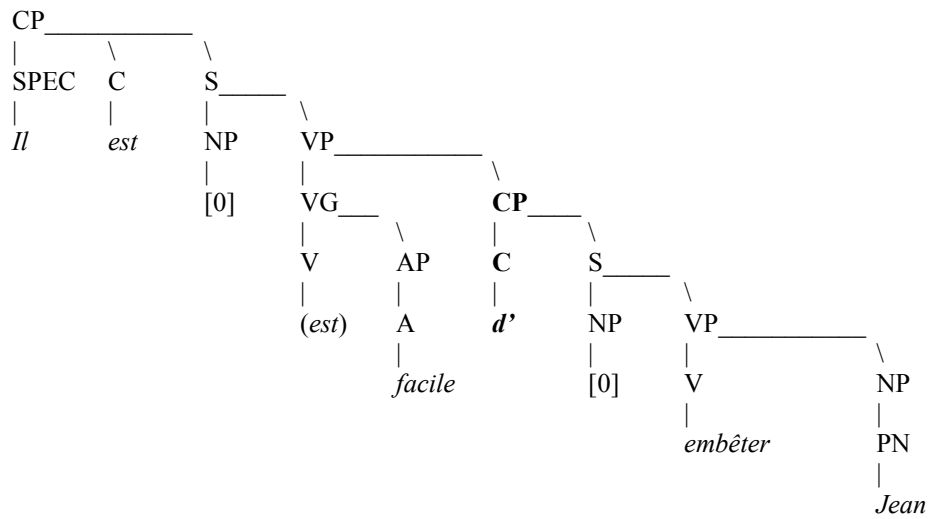
As I pointed out above, the use of a complementizer *de* or *à* in extraposition and extraction clauses (CP) should not be confused with the preposition associated with control verbs (PP). The following examples summarise the main differences:

Extraposition:	<i>Il est facile</i>	<u><i>d’embêter Jean</i></u>
		CP
Extraction:	<i>Jean est facile</i>	<u><i>à embêter</i></u>
		CP
Control :	<i>Jean est certain</i>	<u><i>de s’embêter</i></u>
		PP

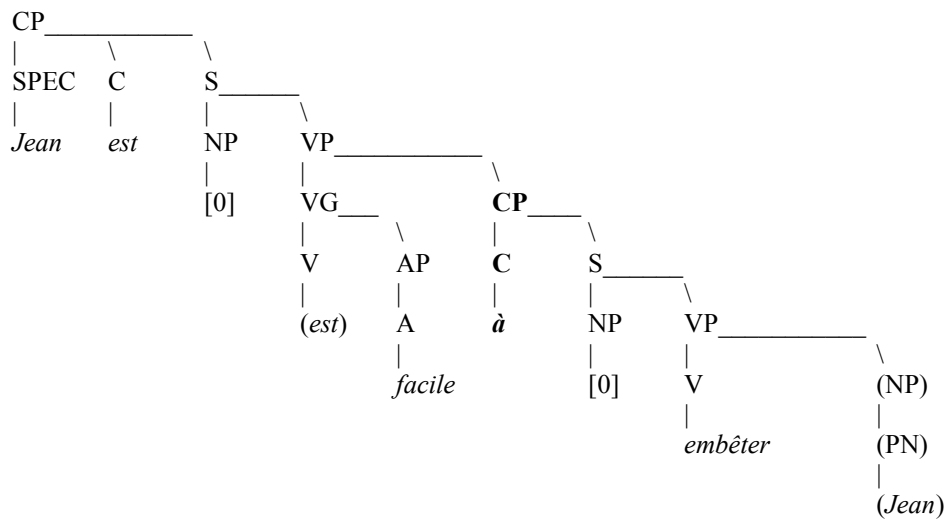
It is also important to note the different positions of the infinitive clause in relation to the adjective. Raising clauses are complements of the verb, as I have argued above, whereas control clauses are always complements of the phrase which introduces them, and so they are placed in AP (they would be placed in VP if dependent on the verb, or NP if dependent on the noun). The following tree diagrams make the distinction clear:



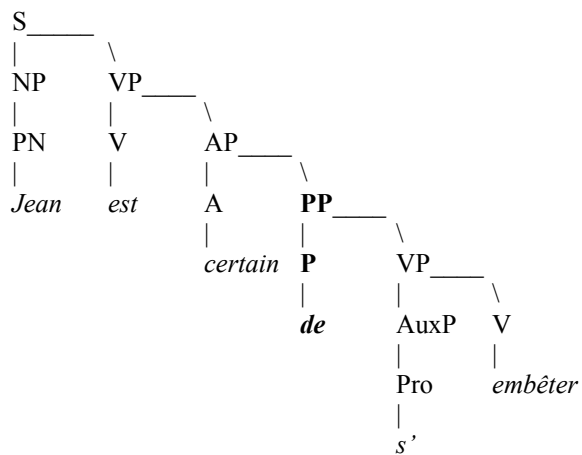
### Extrapolation:



### Extraction:



### Control:



#### 4.6 Remarks.

The complex structures introduced in Part Four all exploit the general tendency in French to move phrases around within the clause. In most cases, movement serves a communicative purpose which allows the sentence to be reformulated for stylistic reasons or for emphasis. Dislocation and cleft structures pick out phrases from the main clause in order to spotlight a particular piece of information. Similarly, interrogative clauses focus on specific phrases to be questioned. Control clauses allow information to be passed on from one verb to the next, while raising verbs, on the other hand, allow a subject, infinitive or object to be given a new function in a higher clause. Finally, extraposition involves the creation of impersonal and at times very formal phrases, whereas extraction places the object at the focal point of the sentence.

It is perhaps fitting, therefore, that the final aspects of syntax which we cover in this book begin to touch on features of stylistics. It seems that there is a natural progression from the generalities of the core syntax to the ‘periphery’; that is particular forms of expression relating to rhetoric (such as stylistic inversion) and features of discourse (such as topicalisation and information structure). Stylistics is a notoriously difficult aspect of language, and it is not surprising that this section touches on some of the most complex issues of French syntax. I should point out that most of these structures have been and are still being discussed in great detail in the research literature. For example, there has been much recent work on the verb *faire*, and the raising structures I have set out here are still being debated. In many ways, this is one of the most interesting features of the study of syntax, in that once the core has been examined, the intricacy and effective use of more complex structures can be placed in perspective.

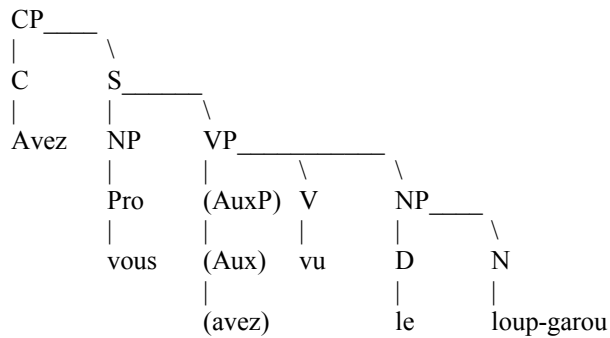
The phrase structures set out in Parts One and Two together with X-bar theory in Parts Three and Four present a syntactic system which is self-contained and should allow for the analysis of most of the core syntax of French. The model answers for the exercises are consistent with this approach, and my comments for some of the answers demonstrate that it is possible to extrapolate from the principles set out here in order to analyse features that I have not had space to examine in the main part of the book.

#### **Exercice 4 : Advanced clauses.**

- 1) Avez-vous vu le loup-garou?
- 2) Que faites-vous ici?
- 3) Je me demande s'ils vont bientôt le recevoir.
- 4) Sans le vouloir, Vanessa Paradis a dû payer l'addition.
- 5) Je passais quelques minutes à lire ces vers étranges.
- 6) Le fameux peintre a permis aux journalistes de le photographier.
- 7) Le général avait encouragé les soldats à se révolter.
- 8) Soudain, les chasseurs les entendirent hurler.
- 9) Le tricheur a fait perdre son adversaire, le fripon!
- 10) Il est facile de cuire ces spaghettis.
- 11) Ces spaghettis sont faciles à cuire.
- 12) Il est normal que Victor gagne toujours ses matchs.

**Exercise 4 : Advanced clauses.**

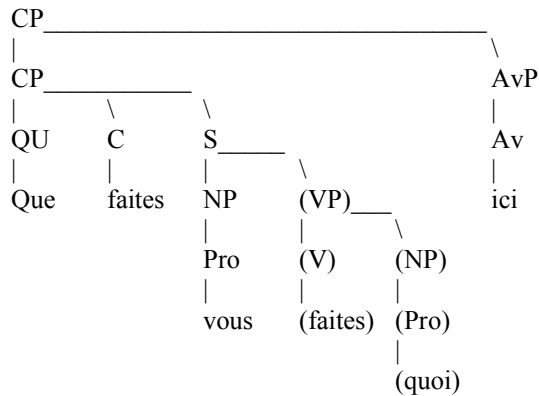
1) Avez-vous vu le loup-garou?



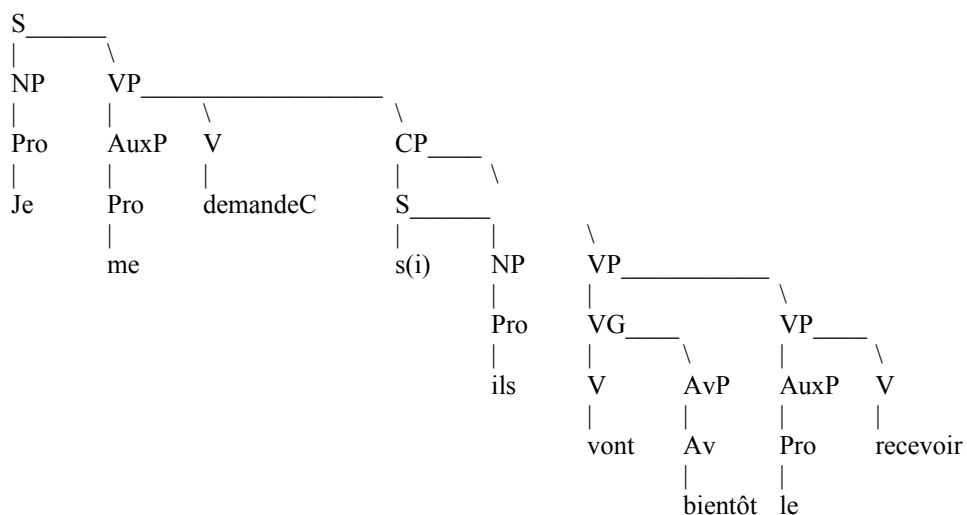
Notes :

i) *Loup-garou* (were-wolf) is a compound noun on the basis of *loup*.

2) Que faites-vous ici?



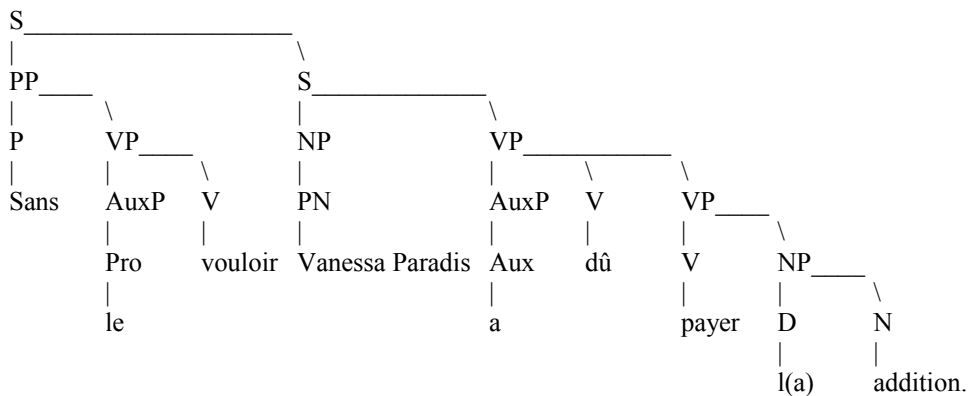
3) Je me demande s'ils vont bientôt le recevoir.



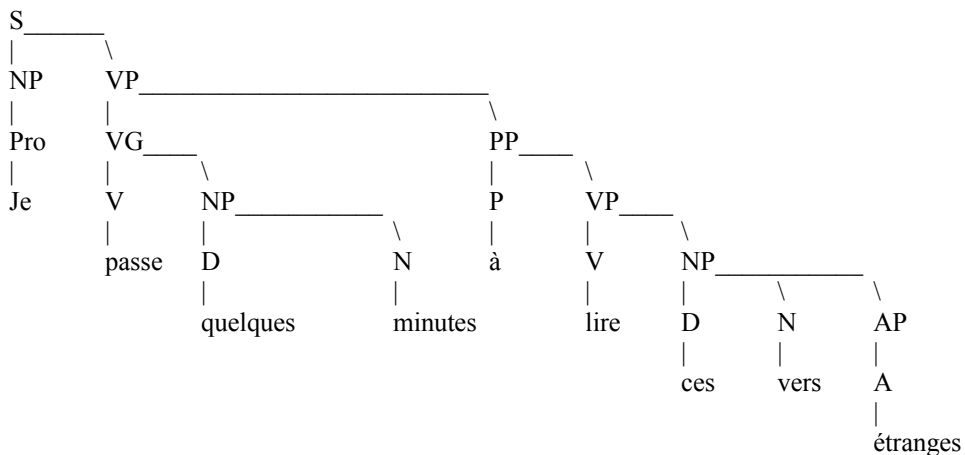
Notes :

i) CP is not a mobile modifier of S, but a complement of the verb *demander*. These structures are sometimes known as indirect interrogatives.

4) Sans le vouloir, Vanessa Paradis a dû payer l'addition.



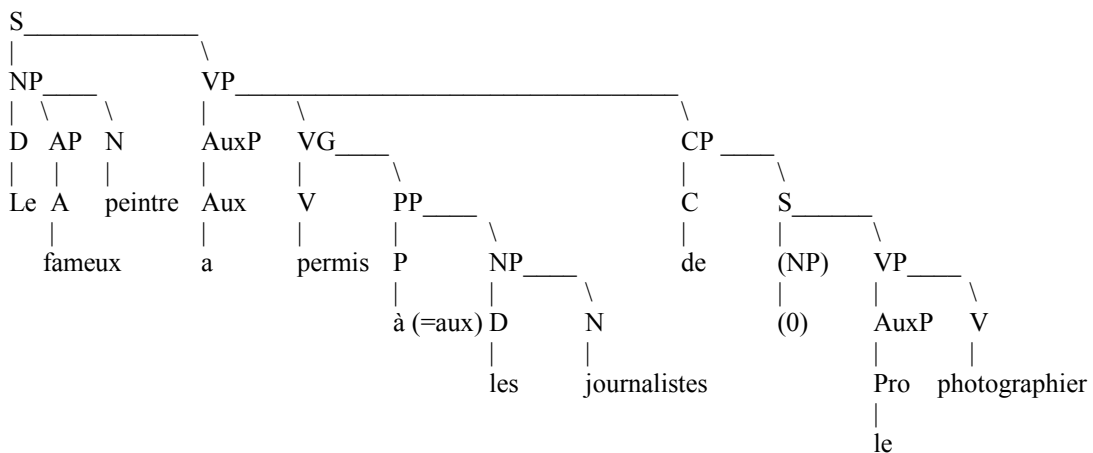
5) Je passais quelques minutes à lire ces vers étranges.



Notes :

i) As with the indirect object structure we saw in Exercise 1, expressions such as *passer un certain temps à faire quelque chose* require a modifier of the verb (some time expression) and an indirect complement (a control verb preceded by *à*). However, this structure differs from that of indirect objects, in that neither the NP or the embedded clause can be pronomialised.

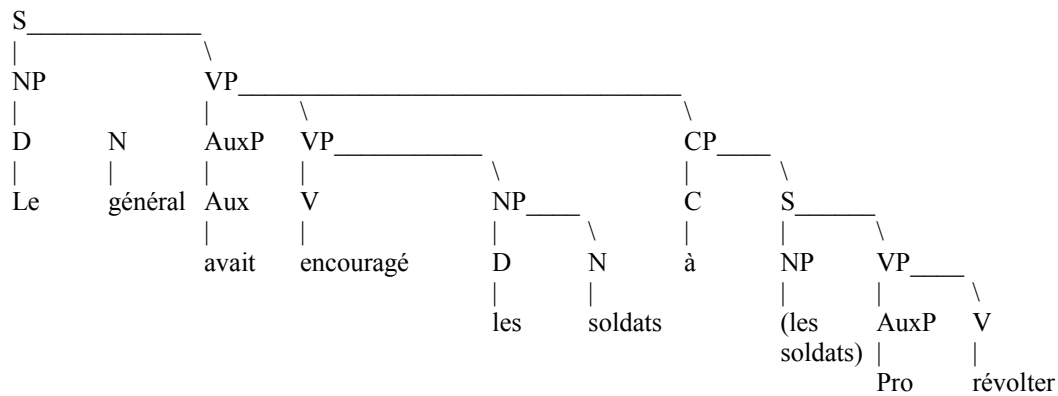
6) Le fameux peintre a permis aux journalistes de le photographier.



Notes :

i) The subject of the complement clause CP (*les journalistes*) is first raised to C then reformulated as an indirect object of the verb. VG is a suitable grammatical location for indirect object complements.

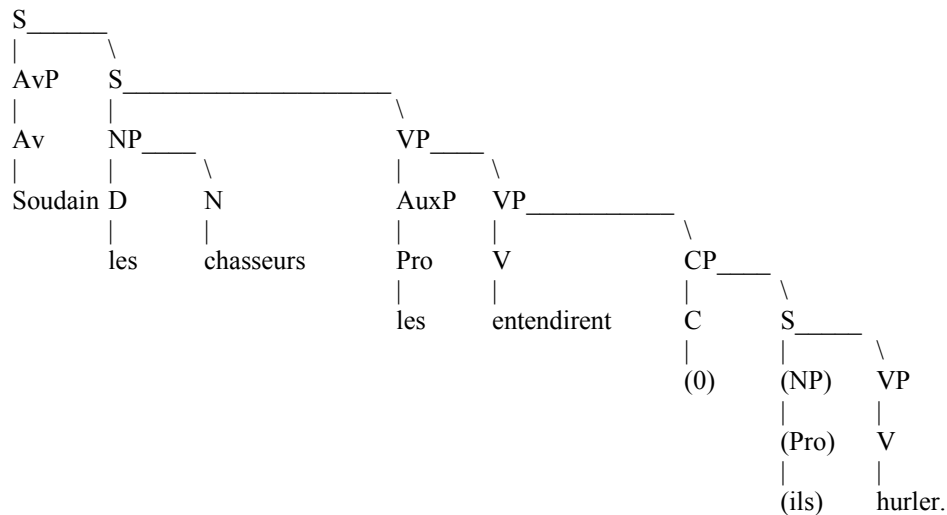
7) Le général avait encouragé les soldats à se révolter.



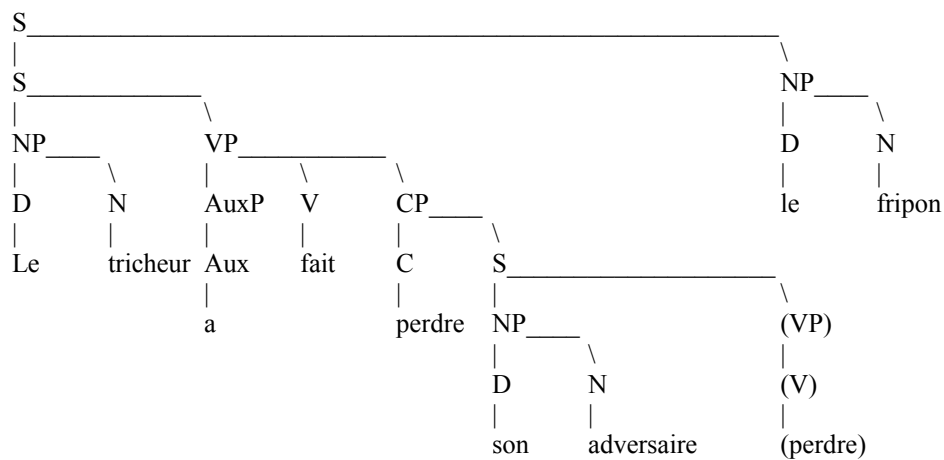
Notes :

i) In this example of raising, the subject of the CP clause is raised to C and then made complement of the verb. The CP becomes indirect complement of the verb (requiring the preposition *à*), and is thus placed parallel to an adjunction (a repeated VP symbol).

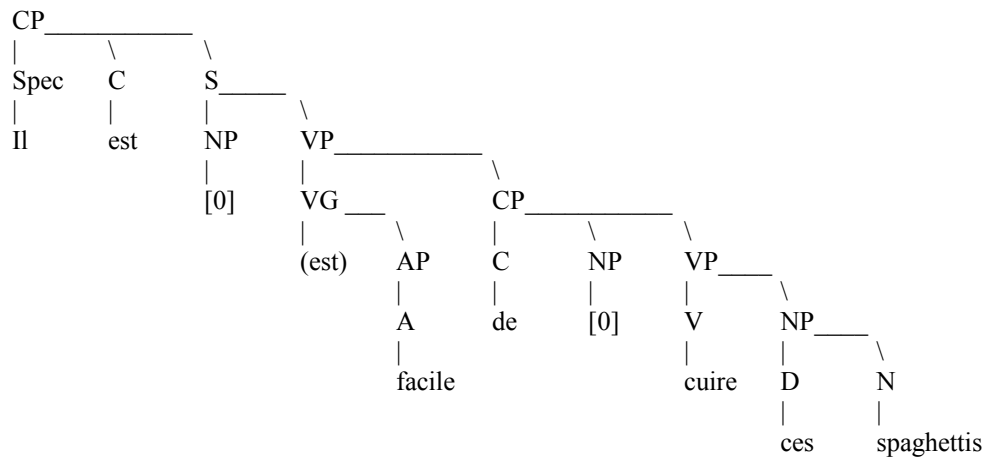
8) Soudain, les chasseurs les entendirent hurler.



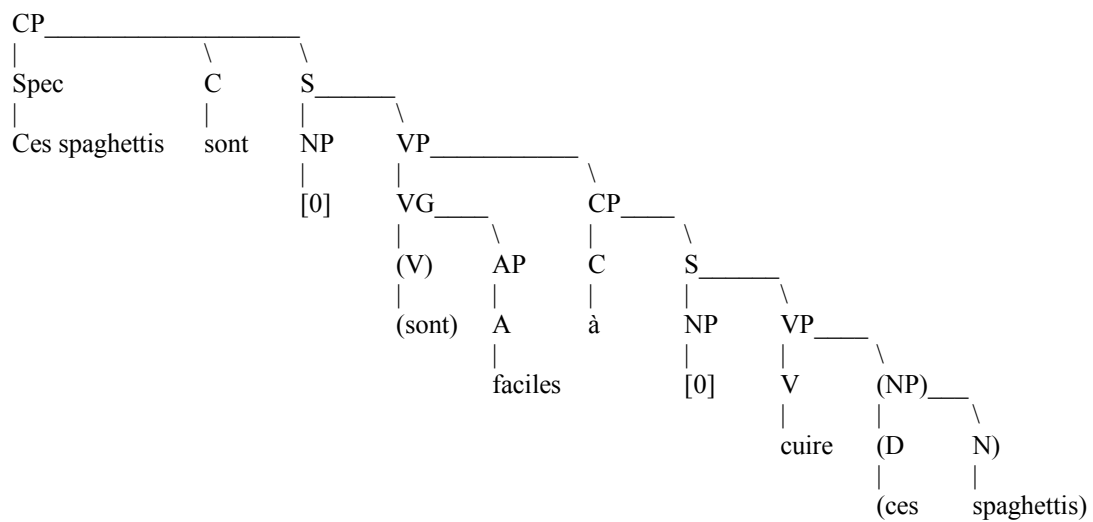
9) Le tricheur a fait perdre son adversaire, le fripon!



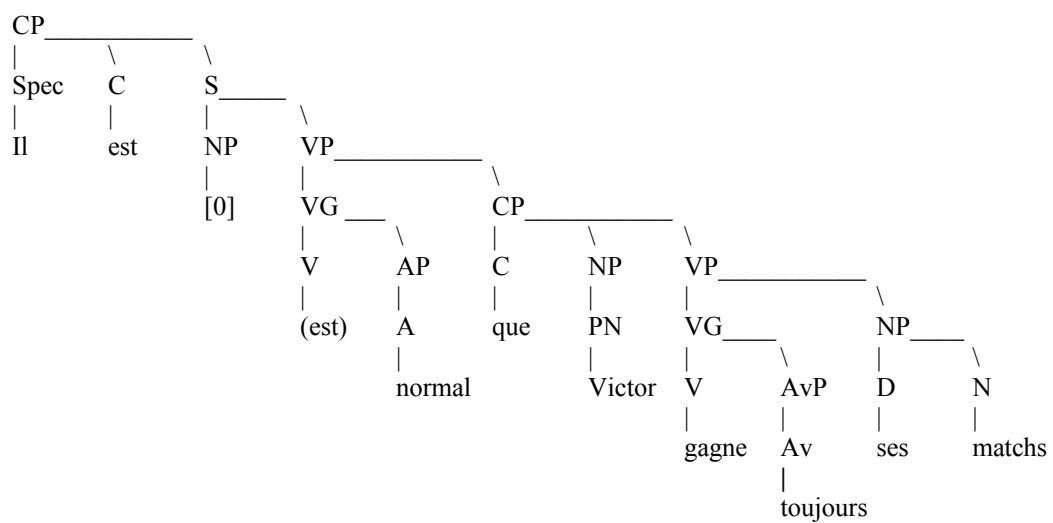
10) Il est facile de cuire ces spaghettis.



11) Ces spaghettis sont faciles à cuire.



12) Il est normal que Victor gagne toujours ses matchs.



### **Sample Sentences for Further Practice.**

- 1) Savez-vous comment ils vont voter?
- 2) Le ver de terre géant commence à avaler sa première victime.
- 3) Étant donné la dimension de cet ouvrage, on ne pouvait envisager de l'étendre.
- 4) Pierre souhaite toujours rendre visite à ses parents.
- 5) Ma copine a déjà fait repeindre sa maison.
- 6) C'est un problème à résoudre, je crois.
- 7) On dit que ce livre est difficile à lire.
- 8) Ils ont ordonné aux employés de porter leurs uniformes.
- 9) Tels seront peut-être les mots que le commandant américain adressera à son homologue russe.
- 10) Devrait-on considérer cette pièce notre salle à manger?
- 11) Plusieurs sont ceux qui divisent ce monde en deux.
- 12) L'intensification agricole fait vivre beaucoup trop de monde pour qu'on l'arrête.



## French Syntax 5: Notation and Further Reading.

The purpose of this final chapter is to present a commentary of the notation I have used in this book and to provide students with a guide to current research in French syntax. This is particularly aimed at advanced students undertaking a research project or graduate dissertation on French grammar or syntax. My comments assume that students are conversant with the model I have set out in the previous chapters but may be curious to explore alternative approaches or more challenging aspects of the French language. Students who would like to find more clarification of any points I have made in the preceding sections should consult the ‘Further Reading in English’ section (5.2).

### **5.1 Notation**

This final section is designed to allow students to engage with more complex areas of syntax published in text books and in the research literature. In this section I point out the similarities and differences between the notation used in this book and some of the alternative symbols and conventions which the reader may encounter elsewhere. Commonly used symbols not used in this book are mentioned in italics and brackets. A note on French symbols is also made at the end of this section.

- A** Adjective.
- AP** Adjective Phrase. A lexical phrase which can in traditional terms be either an epithet (modifier of NP) or an attribute (complement or sometimes modifier of VP).
- Aux** Auxiliary. Auxiliary verbs behave very differently from one language to the next. English has modal auxiliaries (*can, may, should, would*). French has two verbs to signal compound tenses (*avoir* and *être*), but has no equivalent of modal verbs. Verbs such as *pouvoir, devoir, vouloir* are used to translate modals in English, but English modals do not agree with their subject and can not take direct complements on their own, properties which make them somewhat different to other finite verbs).

- AuxP** Auxiliary Phrase. A grammatical phrase which gives grammatical information about the verb phrase, including negation and tense. AuxP may contain various types of particle: Neg (negative), Pro (clitic pronouns) and one Aux (auxiliary forms of *avoir* or *être*). Unlike other phrase types, the presence of an auxiliary verb is not an obligatory component of AuxP. Auxiliary verbs are specifiers of the verb, and are raised before the subject to form polar ('yes / no') questions. In X-bar theory AuxP is often subsumed under IP. Some early text books also include Aux in what I have been calling VG.
- Av** Adverb (also Adv). Adverbs can be lexical (*heureusement, soudain, hier*) or grammatical (*si, très*). Certain adverbs are difficult to account for in standard syntactic terms (such as exclamations *oui, non, alors là, bof*), while most other classes of word can be pressed into service as adverbs at different times (in which case they are termed 'modifiers').
- AvP** Adverb Phrase. AvPs are lexical phrases which can modify any type of phrase or clause. Sentence adverbs (*hier, aujourd'hui, eh bien, oui* etc.) appear to function very differently from other lexical adverbs, since they often do not allow for specifiers or degree adverbs. Most grammars contrast AvPs with grammatical adverbs (*très, si, presque, même*) which are considered to be degree adverbs (Deg). Some text books consider prepositional modifiers to be AvP, in which case the Av symbol leads to a lower PP.
- C** Complementizer. An abstract position in which grammatical words are inserted or to which phrases are moved as part of the syntax of dependent clauses. Typical complementizers include bound conjunctions *que, parce que, quand*, relative pronouns *qui, que, où*, and raised auxiliary verbs *est-ce que*. C is also used to distinguish between common prepositions and the complementizers *à* and *de* when these are introduced by raising verbs (*faire, forcer, interdire, permettre, obliger, persuader*).
- CC** Coordinating Conjunction. One of a small number of conjunctions (*et, ni, ou mais, donc*) which can join two or more instances of any type of word or phrase to form a larger phrase with the same properties. Although traditionally classed as coordinating conjunctions, words such as *or* and *car* usually serve as subordinating conjunctions in CP clauses.
- CP** Complementizer Phrase. A grammatical clause in which a phrase or specific grammatical word (such as a conjunction, question word or relative pronoun)

is given focus and moved to C (complementizer) position. Several types of clause can be represented by CP: complement, extraction, extraposed, interrogative, relative, subject clause and subordinate clause (subordinate clauses are also known as ‘dependent clauses’). I have used the term ‘embedded clause’ as a collective term for any CP clause which is part of a larger clause. However, if a CP clause is a full sentence (as in interrogatives, extraposed and extraction sentences), then the term CP sentence can be used (see Parts Two and Four).

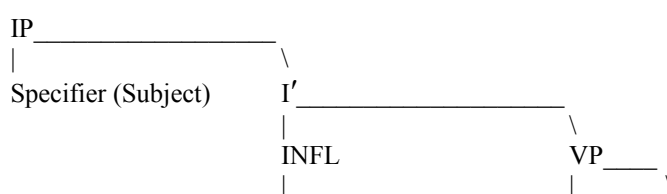
**D** Determiner (also labelled Det). A grammatical word used in NPs to signal abstract information, such as number, gender, definiteness. D is technically a specifier in NP, and corresponds to the traditional categories of possessive pronoun and article.

**Deg** Degree adverb. A grammatical adverb used to signal abstract information, such as proximity, intensity, comparison. Degree adverbs are also known as ‘intensifiers’. Deg is technically a specifier in AP or AvP.

*(DP)* Determiner Phrase. A symbol equivalent to NP not used in this book. DP has been proposed in X-bar theory to reflect the fact that NPs can in fact have several determiners (as in *all my friends, tous mes amis*). DP is also used to reflect the theory that Noun Phrases have an implicit clause structure, especially in languages such as English where nouns based on verbs can have subjects (determiners), take verbal endings (especially *-ing*) and allow for complements (*She rescued the data - Her rescuing of the data*). If the symbol DP is adopted in a text book, then IP is also likely to be used (see below).

*(e)* Empty category, a symbol replaced by [0] in this book (see below).

*(IP)* Inflection Phrase. A symbol equivalent to S not used in this book. IP is used to refer to the fact that sentences are always headed by grammatical information and therefore resemble the X-bar structure exhibited by lexical phrases. For example, in a simple clause the subject is the specifier of the verb:



According to this system, the subject is specifier of IP. An intermediate stage known as I' is placed over INFL and VP. INFL is therefore a grammatical 'landing site' to which negatives, clitic pronouns, auxiliaries and verbs are raised in French, in the same way that AuxP is used in this book (the symbol INFL is used to avoid confusion with English 'I'). The main difference between standard X-bar notation and the notation I have adopted is that X-bar theory always separates the specifier from the head word by an intermediate stage (X').

- N** Noun.
- (N')** (pronounced 'N-bar'). A symbol equivalent to NP not used in this book. N' is used in X-bar theory to denote intermediate stages of the Noun Phrase below the level of NP. The equivalent of N' is the use of repeated NP symbols in this introduction. However, the reader may find N' useful when other NPs intervene in the Noun Phrase in which case N' is used to identify the main noun phrase.
- Neg** Negative. The negative particle *ne* is considered to be a clitic and is placed in the AuxP in this book. This is a simplified approach, and the placement of *ne* is a matter of considerable complexity in the research literature, largely because the behaviour of Neg is not the same in other languages. (If the IP notation is adopted in a textbook, Neg is placed at the level of I').
- NP** Noun Phrase. A lexical phrase which can serve as subject or complement of the VP. Less frequently, NPs can also function as modifiers (as in: *ils sont passés la nuit dernière, la nuit dernière ils sont passés*).
- [0]** 'Zero' phrase or Empty phrase. An empty phrase is left in a syntactic tree diagram to indicate that a phrase has been moved from one part of the structure to another or has not been explicitly expressed. A zero phrase will often be created after a grammatical process, such as question formation, extraposition and raising (where the phrase is raised to C or SPEC). I have often left the original phrase in place to show where the movement has taken place from, and to signal the function of the original phrase. Other publications sometimes signal this by the symbols (e) or (t).

- (OP)** Interrogative operator. In some publications this symbol is sometimes used to indicate the position for raised auxiliaries in polar (yes / no) interrogatives. In this book, this is simply represented by the C position in a CP clause.
- P** Preposition.
- PP** Prepositional Phrase. A grammatical phrase which sometimes serves as either an adjective (as complement of verbs and nouns) or an adverb (as modifier of clauses and other types of phrase). Prepositions in French cannot be isolated, unlike their counterparts in English (*the book which I refer to* -> *le livre auquel je me réfère*).
- Pro** Pronoun. A grammatical sub-category of noun in NP. Pronouns cannot be used with determiners, but can also be modified by other phrases (*même moi, toi qui es si organisée*). The two subtypes of pronoun in French are clitic pronouns (placed in AuxP *il s'y trompé, ne t'en fais pas*) and tonic pronouns (given full phonetic stress and used as a normal NP, *pour moi, contre toi, avec ceci, ce dont je m'inquiétais*). X-bar theory sometimes restricts the use of Pro to what I have called the 'inferred subject', that is say where the subject is 'understood' to be the same as for a previous verb, as in control structures: *je lui a promis d' [Pro] y aller* where Pro = *je*. As a consequence of this technical use, in certain text books the symbol Prn is used for standard pronouns.
- PN** Proper Noun. A traditional sub-category of noun which is used to denote a well-known or named referent (*Tom., Marseille, Dieu*) as opposed to a 'common' noun (N). PNs do not normally require a determiner, although generic nouns do (*La France, les Français*). The distinction is not an absolute one, and some text books do not distinguish between different subtypes of noun.
- QU** Question word. Question words are grammatical items which occupy the SPEC or C position in interrogatives where a phrase has been raised and converted into an interrogative form, including: *que, qui, quand, (à) quoi, quel, lequel, où, pourquoi, comment, combien*. The English equivalent is WH.
- S** Sentence. All sentences contain a subject or 'topic', often NP, and a predicate or 'comment' (VP). The NP subject position can also be filled by a subject clause (CP, as in *Que Jules est malade m'inquiète*). This order can also be

interrupted by placing other phrases in topic position, thus placing them in ‘focus’ (in front of the NP).

(S) (or S-bar). A symbol equivalent of CP. S' is used in a number of introductory text books on X-bar theory (for example in Lodge et al. 1994 and parts of Jones 1996) but in the research literature and in more recent introductions S' is replaced by CP.

**Spec** Specifier. Any word which provides obligatory grammatical information (number, gender, proximity, interrogative). In extraposed clauses, Spec is the position for an impersonal pronoun (usually *il* in French). In interrogatives, the Spec position is filled by a QU-word if the C position is occupied. According to X-bar theory, specifiers are present in all phrases (sub-types of SPEC include D, AuxP, Deg, QU).

(t) Trace, a symbol not used in this book. In some versions of X-bar theory, the symbol ‘t’ is used to signal that a moved phrase leaves behind a ‘trace’ which still has an observable syntactic effect. For example, a trace is left when a noun appears to have been removed from NP isolating the Determiner: *je vois deux voitures* -> *j'en vois deux* \_ . (See empty category, [0] above).

**V** Verb.

**V'** V-bar or expanded Verb Phrase. A symbol not used in this, but commonly seen in X-bar theory. See the note in VG, below.

**VG** Verb Group. A sub-unit of the Verb Phrase which contains the main lexical verb, passive particles (*être* and *été*), and any grammatical adverbs or modifiers which have been adjoined to the verb. VG also happens to be a useful structure in English, in order to account for the placement of phrasal particles (*she picked up the paper, she picked the paper up*). VG used to be a commonly used symbol in transformational grammar. However, this symbol is not used in mainstream X-bar theory, and adverbs are dealt with differently. [The rule adopted in this book is: VP -> AuxP VG NP. However, a more usual approach in generative grammar, for example in Dubois and Charlier (1970), is to place the complement of the verb in V', with the rule VP -> Aux V', V'-> V NP.]

**VP** Verb Phrase. A lexical phrase which forms the predicate in all clauses. In combination with subject NP, VPs form an independent or main clause in

which the VP is traditionally known as a predicate. VPs can be complements of another VP (i.e. after a control verb: *aller le faire*), complements of PP (after a control adjective: *être content de le faire*) or complements of CP (after a raising verb: *permettre à Jean de le faire*). Less frequently, VPs can also be modifiers in relation to NPs (*la nuit durant*) or subjects of a verb (in which case the CP symbol is used: *savoir faire son mieux est* ).

**X'** (or X-bar) A modified or expanded phrase which is one level below XP. According to X-bar theory, all phrases consist of a main lexical word (X), with a specifier (grammatical word, sometimes labelled SPEC) and an argument (any lexical phrase which can serve as complement or modifier for that particular phrase type).

**XP** A phrase of type X, where X stands for any lexical head word: NP, VP, AP, AvP, PP. XP is used to symbolise a full phrase, while X' is a sub-phrase within a larger unit. For example, VP is a full verb phrase, while V' is a subunit of VP (in older versions of X-bar theory, V' is sometimes written VG).

Most of these symbols are frequently used by syntacticians working in a Chomskyan framework. However, the reader may find that many details of syntactic analysis are at variance in other books, even if the symbols are similar. Notational systems and conventions can vary in both introductory as well as theoretical books. There may be differences in notation because an author is at a particular stage of his or her explanation, or simply because different languages are being examined. But even small variations in the labelling and position of phrases often imply a different interpretation of the structures involved. However, the reader should not imagine that all notational systems are incompatible or that one particular system is appropriate for all contexts. Most analysts are familiar with the mainstream system (the rule S-> NP VP is often cited), but also happen to be fluent in one or more alternative schemes. It is perhaps preferable therefore to consider mainstream conventions as a useful stepping stone to a variety of alternative models.

Another reason for such variety in notational systems stems from the fact that there are different schools of linguistics, within which several competing models of syntax have developed. The model I have set out here is a basic version of X-bar theory ultimately derived from Noam Chomsky's generative theory (1957, 1959, 1965). This

is however just one of a number of formal models of grammar, and the major alternatives to Chomsky's approach include Lexical Functional Grammar (Bresnan and Kaplan, 1981) and Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (Gazdar et al., 1985). The notion that these are clear 'alternatives' is deceptive, however, especially when one considers that each school or theory goes through several incarnations. For example, X-bar theory is regarded as a particular stage in the development of Chomsky's theory of syntax, and the terms used for this theory have developed over the decades, and include Transformational Grammar, Government and Binding, Principles and Parameters and, more recently, Minimalism. Readers interested in the development of formal grammar are advised to read the final sections of the latest edition of C.L. Baker's *English Syntax* where several models are compared and their historical development is traced in a straightforward way. Apart from formal models of grammar, less formal alternatives exist (as I set out below). Some of the more established alternatives to Chomskyan syntax include Halliday's Systemic Functional model, which is set out in Bloor and Bloor (1995 and forthcoming). In Chapter 12, Bloor and Bloor give an overview of the field of functional grammar which may prove a useful, especially since the terminology typically used by the many French linguists happens to be functionalist in orientation.

Generally speaking, French symbols do not differ greatly from those used by linguists working in English, especially if the X-bar model is being discussed. However, readers should be aware that introductions to syntax frequently use traditional French notation, which can be easily confused. The main differences concern the use of the symbol P for *Proposition* or *Phrase* (= S, sentence), GN or SN for *Groupe Nominal / Syntagme Nominal* (= NP, Noun Phrase) and GV or SV for *Groupe Verbal / Syntagme Verbal* (=VP, Verb phrase). I have attempted a brief summary of these symbols at the beginning of this book.

## **5.2 Further Reading in English**

There is a significant difference of perspective between books on syntax in English and those written in French. In the next two sections, I discuss some of the materials available in both languages. This should allow the reader to examine more advanced



syntactic models than the one developed in this book, as well as to consider some alternative approaches.

Several introductory books on general linguistics provide a useful summary of the syntax of English, for example G. Yule: *The Study of Language* and V. Fromkin and R. Rodman: *An Introduction to language*. R. Salkie: *Analysing Sentence Structure* and *Understanding Syntax* by M. Tallerman are more detailed and have useful explanations of methodology (such as movement and deletion tests). Readers intrigued by the notion of universal grammar may wish to consult S. Pinker's entertaining and influential *The Language Instinct* or the more philosophical but rewarding *Chomsky: Ideas and Ideals* by N. Smith. These books apply Chomsky's theory of syntax to much broader concerns, notably the evolution of language, child language acquisition and the relationship between language and mind. A more detailed discussion of these topics is undertaken by L. Jenkins in *Biolinguistics*. The approaches proposed by Chomsky and Pinker have been controversial, however, and some of the counter-arguments can be examined in G. Sampson: *Educating Eve: the 'Language Instinct' Debate*.

For readers who wish to see examples of sentence analysis in English, N. Burton-Roberts: *Analysing Sentences* is particularly useful. However, his notation has been adapted to simplify the analysis of English. NOM is used for expanded nominals instead of N'. He also places modal verbs and auxiliaries within VG (whereas I use VG to accommodate French grammatical adverbs and modifiers). Burton-Roberts' placement of extraposed clauses is also rather different from other contemporary approaches. Similarly, C.L. Baker (*English Syntax*) offers a thorough treatment of the structures of English. Baker's account is original because it avoids terms handed down by traditional grammar and at the same time side-steps the abstract formalisms which are typical of other models. The model is essentially the same, however, as standard X-bar theory.

Readers interested in pursuing the theory of syntax and the analysis of languages other than English may wish to consult introductions to X-bar theory in the first part of K. Brown and J. Miller: *Syntax: A Linguistic Introduction to Sentence Structure* and in the final part of A. Radford et al.: *Linguistics: an Introduction*. A concise and systematic account of many of the structures I have discussed in this book can also be found in Battye: *An Introduction to Italian Syntax*. For more comparative approaches,

Borsley (*Syntactic Theory*) and Roberts (*Comparative Syntax*) explain the precepts of universal grammar and test the principles of X-bar theory in a variety of languages. Similarly, in *Chomsky's Universal Grammar*, Cook and Newson trace how the exploration of various languages has led to refinements in X-bar theory. In order to follow the analyses set out in these books, readers will need to be familiar with the X-bar notation set out in the glossary above (noting especially the symbols S', DP and IP). The original methods of the generative approach were set out by Harris (1954). Chomsky himself (1957, 1965, 1959) is essential reading in order to understand the underlying philosophy of his work, although his most influential early writing is technical and uses a different notation to most later work. Chomsky sets out his debt to the French *Port Royal* grammarians in part two of *Cartesian Linguistics* (1996, of which there have been several re-editions).

Many developments in syntactic theory have been concerned with the way grammatical information is communicated in the clause, a process which is thought to involve 'feature checking' (Chomsky, 1965). Feature checking is an important aspect of such phenomena in English as anaphora (pronomial reference), but also concerns features which X-bar theory finds difficult to analyse in synthetic languages which have complex morphology or in languages with very free word order (such as Dravidian and Australian, technically known as 'non-configurational languages'). Anaphor poses quite serious problems for Chomskyan syntactic theories (as argued in Fauconnier 1974) and has come to the fore recently, largely because of the increasing interest in the context of sentences and the extent to which it is possible to model our interpretation of utterances (Kleiber 1981, Apothéloz 1995). The generative theory of anaphor ('government and binding') is discussed in Culicover (*Principles and Parameters*). Culicover also explains how problems involved in the analysis of X-bar theory have led to the development of Minimalism. This theory, proposed by Chomsky in *The Minimalist Program* (1995), suggests that feature checking involves the movement of abstract grammatical features in the clause rather than constituent words and phrases. Andrew Radford is a leading generative grammarian in the UK, and his *Syntactic Theory and the Structure of English* gives perhaps the most comprehensive account of both X-bar and Minimalism. Radford also discusses applications of the theory in non-standard and dialectal varieties of English.

Until recently, there have been fewer introductions to the syntax of French in English. Many books concentrate on the relationship between standard and non-

standard French, setting out the patterns of expected usage or describing language varieties, as in Battye and Hinze, *The French Language Today*. Some texts provide detailed comparisons with English, as in A. Judge and F. G. Healey *A Reference Grammar of Modern French* and I. Roberts: *Verbs and Diachronic Syntax: A Comparative History of English and French*. There has also been much work on the historical development of French grammar, as in the standard work on the subject A. Ewart: *The French Language* or more recently Harris, M: *The Evolution of French Syntax*, Ayres-Bennett *A History of the French Language Through Texts*, R. A. Lodge: *French: From Dialect to Standard*, and R. Posner: *Linguistic Change in French*. A concise introduction to syntactic analysis is presented in R. A. Lodge et al. *Exploring the French Language*. This introductory book explains the relationship between various areas of contemporary linguistic enquiry in French. The standard reference work on French syntactic theory is R. Kayne *French Syntax: The Transformational Cycle*. For a more recent account, readers may wish to consult M. Jones: *The Foundations of French Syntax* which is a standard reference work on the subject. The book also offers a comprehensive overview of X-bar theory together with a theoretical analysis of many areas of French grammar, especially verb argumentation, the relationship between verb forms and tenses, and a variety of issues which have been raised in recent grammatical theory (see discussion in section 5.4).

### 5.3 Further Reading in French

Introductions to syntax in French often offer a different perspective to the one proposed by English writers. This can be partly linked to cultural and historical factors. The formal analysis of sentences has been an important feature of the language curriculum in France, and the notion of syntax itself is still sometimes equated with prescriptive grammars, such as the highly normative M. Grevisse: *Le Bon usage*. The roots of French attitudes to language can be traced to attempts in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to establish a standard form of the language. This happened at the same time as a more philosophical approach to language was inspired by Descartes and embodied in the ‘Grammaire de Port-Royal’, in which the French language was associated with formal processes of thought and principles of universal grammar. These notions were later to have considerable influence on Noam Chomsky (as set out in Chomsky’s *Cartesian Linguistics*). The grammatical analysis of French also owes a great deal to traditional descriptions such as Sandfeld’s *Syntaxe du français contemporain*, which relies on canonical literary writing for its examples. French introductions to syntax therefore tend to be more descriptive and less dependent on a particular model of analysis. This is true of general introductions to language study such as G. Molinié: *Le Français moderne*, as well as more detailed grammars of the language, such as H. Béchade: *Syntaxe du français moderne et contemporain*. Similarly, more recent text books, such as N. Le Querler : *Précis de syntaxe française* and D. Maingueneau : *Syntaxe du français* propose a ‘functional’ method of analysing sentences in which the clause is organised around sentence functions (subject, predicate, complement and modifier) and where clauses behave like parts of speech (adjectival, adverbial or nominal clauses).

Readers wishing to examine syntactic theory as opposed to descriptions of the language may find that general works in French linguistics are a useful starting point. A summary of various approaches to syntax is presented in G. Siouffi and D. Van Raemdonck (*100 Fiches pour comprendre la linguistique*), while C. Hagège presents a broad overview to the implications of modern syntactic theory in *L’Homme de Paroles*. An introduction to syntactic method is given in Creissels (*Éléments de syntaxe générale*) and C. Fuchs and P. Le Goffic (*Les Linguistiques contemporaines*). At a more advanced level, J. Moeschler and A. Auchlin in *Introduction à la linguistique contemporaine* provide an accessible summary of X-bar theory and also

discuss related areas, such as generative semantics and logic. There have been a number of American generative approaches in French syntax, some of the most influential works being M. Gross, *Grammaire transformationnelle du français*, J. Dubois and F. Dubois-Charlier: *Eléments de linguistique française: syntaxe*, and N. Ruwet: *Introduction à la grammaire générative*. Unfortunately, many of the symbols and conventions used in Gross, Dubois and Ruwet have become outdated, although the syntactic problems they deal with are often still relevant. J. Guéron and J-Y. Pollock set out a more recent introduction, especially relevant to those interested in X-bar theory (*Grammaire générative et syntaxe comparée*), and J-Y. Pollock, one of France's leading generativists, has also published an introduction to Minimalism (*Langage et cognition. Introduction au programme minimaliste de la grammaire générative*).

A number of alternative models coexist with the Chomskyan approach in French-speaking countries. Some of these originated in English-speaking linguistics. For example, Bresnan and Kaplan's Lexical Functional approach is a formal generative grammar which has attracted considerable interest in France and is described in A. Abeillé: *Les nouvelles syntaxes*. Abeillé describes a variety of French syntactic phenomena from this perspective and discusses applications of the approach to such areas as computational linguistics. Other alternatives to Chomskyan syntax have also been influential, in particular M. Halliday's Systemic Functional grammar, which places much emphasis on the textual role of linguistic structures. Halliday's theory of thematic structure and the semantic relations between clauses has been particularly influential in the discussion of grammatical and socio-linguistic variation, and is explored in Blanche-Benveniste: *Approches de la langue parlée*. Other non-generative approaches in linguistics have a specifically French origin, and many of these follow the 'functionalist' tradition of E. Benveniste (*Problèmes de linguistique générale*). A-M. Brousseau and Y. Roberge examine some recent functional approaches to syntactic theory in *Syntaxe et sémantique du français.*, while J. Guillemin-Flescher applies a functional approach to translation theory in: *Syntaxe comparée du français et de l'anglais : problèmes de traduction*. Similarly, G. Wilmet in *Grammaire critique du français* offers an analysis which progressively builds upon Guillaume's psychological approach to grammar and contrasts this with previous descriptions of French. In most of these approaches, there is an emphasis on clause function, verbal aspect and tense rather than on phrase structure, and this is also

reflected in the communicative approach of R. Charaudeau: *Grammaire du sens et de l'expression*.

Readers intending to examine specialist texts on French syntax may find it useful to examine the underlying currents of thought in French linguistics. A historical overview of French grammatical theories is presented in R. Martin: *The French Contribution to Modern Linguistics; Theories of Language and Methods in Syntax*, J-C. Chevalier *Histoire de la Syntaxe: Naissance de la notion de complément dans la grammaire française...* and H. Huot and J. Bourguin: *La Grammaire française entre comparatisme et structuralisme 1890-1960*.

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, French theories of language were influenced by the structuralist theory of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure and his French successors, notably Antoine Meillet and Émile Benveniste. Meillet's concept of 'système' and Benveniste's 'énonciation' (utterance) were not syntactic notions as such, but have been constant themes in the work of French grammarians. Following this tradition, Gustave Guillaume led French linguists to place less emphasis on sentence structure, and to consider instead the function of words in relation to utterances and intended meaning. Similarly, Lucien Tesnière and André Martinet encouraged descriptions of French syntax which are inclusive of other areas of grammar. For example, P. Guiraud's *Syntaxe du français* applies Martinet's approach to the analysis of morphemes, and examines clauses and phrases in terms of Guillaume's 'syntaxe expressive'. Similarly, C. Bureau's *Syntaxe fonctionnelle du français* takes morphemes as a starting point, and builds up a sentence analysis on semantic criteria. Another recent introductory book on general linguistics, O. Soutet: *La Linguistique*, presents syntax in terms of Tesnière's dependency grammar.

Of the major French theorists, Martinet has perhaps had the most influence in English-speaking linguistics, although his work largely concentrates on functional principles in phonology and morphology (as can be seen in *Éléments de linguistique générale*). For Martinet, syntactic analysis begins at the level of minimal units of meaning, or *monèmes*. This notion helps to distinguish between words which depend on other words for their function in the clause or phrase (adjectives, nouns, verbs, prefixes), words which signal their own function (conjunctions, adverbs, lexical morphemes) and words which signal the functions of other words (determiners, auxiliaries, prepositions and grammatical morphemes). Martinet was influenced by the 'Prague school' of linguistics, which emphasised the importance of contemporary

and applied analysis of language rather than the more historical approaches which dominated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tesnière was also a follower of the Prague school. Tesnière's *Éléments de syntaxe structurale* resembles the generative syntax we have examined in this book, in that sentences are analysed as tree diagrams. However, Tesnière rejected the distinction between subject and predicate (S → NP VP) and insisted instead that syntactic trees represent 'dependency' rather than 'sequence'. A dependency tree does not start with the most general (S) and work its way down, rather it identifies the most central concept (often a form of the verb) which in turn connects with the central elements at the next stage of analysis (often the noun). Tesnière's related notion of 'valency' has been influential in the development of dependency grammars, especially in mainland Europe.

In contrast, Guillaume's work (principally established in *Langage et science du langage*) does not constitute a single model but has been influential in French speaking countries in a number of applications, notably in discussions of verb modality, voice and aspect. But his theory is also representative of a broader tradition in French linguistics, namely 'analyse de discours', an approach which emphasises the pragmatic meaning of the sentence as opposed to its syntactic structure. Guillaume is best known for his notion of *psychomécanique*, in which the linguists' definition of a single word or morpheme should account for all possible uses of that item. This theory attempts to understand how certain words, such as determiners, can sometimes have a meaning which is 'particular' (*la maison de campagne que je viens d'acheter*) and at other times appear to be 'universal' (*la maison de campagne se fait de plus en plus chère*). Some well-known critics of Guillaume's approach include D. Ducrot: *Dire et ne pas dire*, who emphasises the role of linguistic operators (grammatical linking words) in the interpretation of the sentence, and proposes that such words have no intrinsic meaning beyond the context in which they are used. From a similar perspective, A. Culioli (*Pour une linguistique de l'énonciation*) underlines the importance of modality and the subjective stance of the speaker in the interpretation of utterances.

## 5.4 Issues in French Syntax

There are currently a number of topics of debate in the study of French grammar and syntax. Under the influence of linguists such as Labov (1972) and Halliday (Halliday 1990, Bloor and Bloor 1995 and forthcoming), there has been a marked shift in the methodology of linguistics in general, involving a more descriptive, empirical attitude towards language data. Grammarians have tended to move away from discussing made-up examples or selecting excerpts from higher registers of French, such as prose and poetry, and have turned instead to language surveys and, more recently, to corpus linguistics, the computer-based examination of text archives consisting of millions of words.

This new emphasis is reflected by interest in social variation in the use of French (Ager 1990, Sanders 1992) and the effects of context on grammatical features, especially in varieties such as spoken French, non-standard French, dialects and the French of Québec (Carroll 1982, Gadet 1992, Coleman and Crawshaw 1994, Blanche-Benveniste 1997), as well as, to a lesser extent, African French and French-based Creoles (Chaudenson 1992, Achard 1993). While surveys and text archives were available in the past, new techniques in statistical analysis and the widespread availability of electronic texts have encouraged a growing number of studies in textual variation and spontaneous style, as well as more systematic analyses of traditional topics such as the classification of parts of speech, fixed expressions, idioms and phraseology (Gross 1996, Blanche-Benveniste 1996, Abeillé 1996b, Habert and Salem 1998, Gledhill 2000). Studies in theoretical syntax have also begun to rely on surveys of native speakers and corpus data as ways of improving the traditional description of grammatical difficulties (for an example of such an analysis, see Blasco-Dulbecco 1999). These new methods have led to modifications to the mainstream theories of syntax, and new approaches in data analysis are being applied to such areas as pronominal verbs, negation and the effects of topicalisation on word order (an overview of these subjects is provided in Jones 1996 and Ayres-Bennett and Carruthers 2001).

The intrinsic word order of French is a central topic in syntax, and has received new impetus in recent studies on dislocation and topicalisation. The gradual development of French as an analytical, syntax-based language with the order Subject-Verb-Object, is a central theme in the history of the language (Harris 1978,



Ashby 1982, Pollock 1997). Linguists are interested in explaining why a particular word order becomes fixed, and there have been several detailed studies of the development of word order from Latin to modern French (Obenauer 1985, Anderson and Skytte 1995). Marchello-Nizia (1995) has argued that the shift of the complement from OV to VO was a gradual and necessary precursor to the expression of a subject, where no subject pronoun was necessary in Latin. Fuchs (1997) has similarly argued that the development of the subject pronoun in French demonstrates a gradual stage in the development of an X-bar structure. According to Fuchs, the presence of the subject and its grammatical properties are in effect determined by the verb in the same way that the verb determines other VP arguments, as in the case of impersonal verbs (*il lui est arrivé beaucoup de malheurs*). Current X-bar theory suggests that the morpheme which expresses the subject is either adjoined to the verb (as in Latin) or is expressed at the beginning of the auxiliary phrase (also known as INLF position). This theory is supported by the fact that subject pronouns share the properties of other pronoun clitics, and cannot be separated from the auxiliary verb (*\*il aussi viendra*), whereas lexical subjects can sometimes be separated in French (*Pierre aussi viendra, lui aussi viendra*) (Creissels 1995).

Linguists such as Hagège (1978) have argued that stylistic factors have also been important in the development of word order. Fuchs (1980) and Pretensen (1990) have also pointed out that topicalisation and paraphrase, for example in relative and cleft clauses, are key factors in the development of word order. Hopper and Traugott (1992) have argued that this kind of evidence shows that stylistic movement in the clause can eventually become fixed as part of a grammatical pattern. However, others have recently challenged this view. Blasco-Dulbecco (1999) shows on the basis of corpus data that dislocation was a constant feature of Old as well as modern French, but is more restricted in the language than is sometimes assumed. She claims that in most cases, a dislocated element is echoed by a pronoun or other referent in the main clause, as in: *la syntaxe, elle est piétinée* and *La France, j'y crois*. She argues instead that dislocation is a normal variant of the standard word order, with predictable rules for its usage, rather than a long-term evolutionary pattern.

Dislocation and other forms of inversion often conflict with the symmetrical analysis of sentences in X-bar theory. The extent to which X-bar theory is capable of dealing with what are in effect stylistic reformulations has been a topic of considerable debate. Obligatory inversion has been explored in interrogatives (Rizzi

and Roberts 1989), relative clauses (Fonvielle and Hug 2000) and conjunctive adverbials, as in *ainsi soit-il* (Combettes 1998). While dislocation is often seen as a form of adjunction in generative theory (with the dislocated phrase placed in the same position as sentence modifier), topicalisation is seen as rule-governed (raising the topic to C position in a CP clause). This distinction has been argued for a variety of structures (Milner 1978). For example, Deulofeu (1977) contrasts ‘binary’ constructions, such as *Le même argent on peut payer un loyer* with displaced object NPs: *Ce gars je le déteste*. In a study of presentative idioms, Léard (1992) similarly demonstrates that it is possible to distinguish between the clefting structure *il y a* and the raising structure *c’est*, noting that it is possible to say *C’est Pierre qui chante / Il y a Pierre qui chante*, and *C’est chanter que Pierre aime* but not *\*Il y a chanter que Pierre aime*. But it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between adjunction and other forms of topicalisation, such as non-standard interrogatives *où qu’on va?* (Coveney 1995), NP displacement (Banes 1985, Neveu 1998), modifier insertions (Perrin-Naffakh 1996), and stranded quantifiers such as *tout* and *chacun* (Junker 1994, Riegel et al. 1999). From a Lexical-Functional position, Postal (1994) shows that some forms of topicalisation resemble extraction from a lower phrase (as in *no such color would I paint my car*). Postal suggests that, contrary to X-bar predictions, there is no strict boundary between dislocation and extraction structures.

Another recurrent theme in syntactic research concerns the functions of different parts of speech (Basset and Perennec 1994). Recent work by morphologists and syntacticians has been particularly concerned with the role of grammaticalisation; the creation of a grammatical word or morpheme on the basis of a lexical item, such as the development of the prepositions *durant* and *pendant* from the verbs *durer* and *pendre* (Ramat 1992). Traugott and Heine (1991) have traced the development of grammaticalisation in a variety of languages, and this influential notion has come to be seen as a key mechanism in the development of French word order (Posner 1997). Similar research has been undertaken on other positions and parts of speech, especially the distinction between pronouns and determiners (Pierrard 1993) and *à* and *de* as complementizers or prepositions (Shyldkrot 1995). Vincent (1999) points out that the development of ‘full’ prepositions in French is the product of grammaticalisation (from lexical adverb in early Latin, to predicator of a noun in later Latin, to grammatical item with its own phrase structure in French). The notion that the outer layers of phrases are ‘projected’ by lexical heads is central to recent X-bar

theory, and has been applied to other types of phrase, notably the noun phrase, as described in Progovac (1994) for zero-determiner languages, as well as Skårup (1994) on adjectives and quantifying expressions which become determiners in the French NP (*la moitié de, beaucoup de, la plupart de*). Problems with quantifiers in the NP are particularly well documented in French, and Kupferman (1994) examines the unusual use of adjectives introduced by *de*: *quelque chose de particulier, trois places de libre*.

The debate about whether a feature of language is ‘core’ or ‘peripheral’ has been a vexed question in syntactic theory. Charles Fillmore (Fillmore et al. 1988) is well-known among theoretical syntacticians for arguing that the idiosyncratic properties of idioms and other fixed expressions demonstrate that languages are ‘particulate’, that is, languages possess features which can only be accounted for in the syntactic description of that particular language. One area of current debate on this topic concerns negatives, clitics and auxiliary verbs in French. In X-bar theory (Pollock 1989, Auger 1995) clitics are thought to be morphemes which are raised to the INFL position (or the AuxP position, as presented in this book). This mechanism resembles that of interrogative clauses in which the auxiliary is raised to C. The problem is that the positions of negatives and clitic pronouns in relation to the verb are much more unpredictable than has been commonly assumed. Zribi-Hertz (1994) has argued that two systems appear to be in operation for subject pronouns in standard and non-standard forms of French: one is the conservative, normative system established and maintained by formal education, the other (‘français avancé’) is a consistent but non-standard form. Zanuttini (1997) has similarly shown that non-standard forms of French and Italian dialects have a variety of different patterns for the negative clitic (*ne*), arguing that the properties of the negative are consistent within the syntactic system of several Romance dialects, but also that each clitic applies a different parametric set of rules for each language. Lagae (1994) examines a number of contexts for the partitive clitic *en*, and shows that its usage is particularly difficult to predict (as in *afin de ne pas faire de lui un martyr*). From a different perspective, Vincent and Harris (1982) have argued that, as essentially morphological features of language, clitics are not best described in terms of syntactic theory, while Miller (1992), Miller and Sag (1994) and Abeillé (1996) use clitics to demonstrate that feature checking in Lexical-Functional framework provides a better account of the particulate nature of different languages. In X-bar theory, Rowlett (1993) and

Larrivée (1995) have also discussed related difficulties in the analysis of *pas*, which was analysed in early generative grammar as a grammatical particle, but appears to be analysed more satisfactorily in French as an adverb in the ('lower') main verb phrase.

Many of the more complex areas of syntactic analysis I have discussed in this book have been debated at length in the research literature. Although the structures associated with a particular irregularity or difficulty sometimes pose a problem for syntactic theory, the debate around such structures can also lead to innovations which sometimes have a profound effect on the further development of the syntactic model. One particular example involves the problem of causative verbs such as *faire* in French and other Romance languages, which has led to numerous revisions of Chomsky's original transformational syntax, notably introduced by Kayne (1975), Ruwet (1976) and Huot (1981). Kayne (1975 and 1980) and Battye (1987) originally proposed that a CP-structure was involved in French and Italian causatives (as we saw in Part Four). More recently, researchers have questioned the CP analysis on the grounds that verbs such as *faire* have complex requirements, including the insertion of a preposition when a subject is raised (*j'ai fait manger les pâtes aux enfants => je les ai fait manger aux enfants [les pâtes]* versus *je leur ai fait quelque chose à manger [aux enfants]*, and *je leur ai fait à manger [aux enfants]*). Comparing this usage with morphemes in incorporating languages, Guasti (1997) has proposed that *faire* should be treated a causative particle (or 'light verb'). From a Lexical-Functional perspective, Baschung and Desmets (2000) argue that *faire* and a series of other raising verbs have the same structure as control verbs in French, and, as Postal has done for extraction types, effectively argue that there is no clear dividing line between control and raising structures.

## 5.5 Remarks.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a flavour of some of the issues that are of current concern in the field of syntax and of French grammar, especially for those intending to study syntax at a more advanced level. It becomes apparent that there is considerable complexity in the field of syntax, largely because of the plethora of notational systems as well as the varying traditions which have developed in the different national languages. Although I would contend that the core syntax of the

language can be analysed using many of the systems and methods I have elaborated in this book, the fact remains that there are many other factors which must also be taken into account if we are to understand the complexity of even the most straightforward utterances in the French language.

One of the topics I have only lightly touched on in Part Four is the notion of thematic or information structure. Yet this is clearly a key feature of word order, and has a rich and complex research literature (see Halliday 1990 and Bloor and Bloor 1995). Similarly, idioms, fixed expressions and phraseology have a considerable impact on syntax, and much work has been done on these areas (Gross 1996, Abeillé 1996b). Although much work has already been done in the field of syntax, it is probable that preoccupations such as these are likely to find an progressively more central place in our theory of language, especially when we begin to move away from invented examples towards the analysis of complex forms of authentic speech.

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