Microparametric Syntax and Dialect Variation

Edited by James R. Black and Virginia Motapanyane

Offprint

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY
HYPOTHETICAL INFINITIVES AND CROSSLINGUISTIC VARIATIONS IN CONTINENTAL AND QUEBEC FRENCH

FRANCE MARTINEAU & VIRGINIA MOTAPANYANE
Université d’Ottawa & University of New Brunswick-Saint John

1. Introduction

Hypothetical Infinitives (hereafter HIs) are non-finite clauses with conditional interpretation that occur in Continental French (CF) and Quebec French (QF). These constructions display several properties usually incompatible with non-finite clauses: placement of HIs is restricted to dislocated positions, as in (1); HIs disallow extractions, as in (2); they license lexical subjects in Nominative (see Vinet 1985 for arguments toward Nominative assignment in these clauses), as in (3). These properties characterize HI clauses in both varieties of French:

(1) a. Être nés riches, travaillerez-vous autant? QF
   be-INF born rich work-COND you so much
   “If you’d been born rich, would you work so much?”
   b. * Travaillerez-vous autant être nés riches?
   c. Pierre y aller seul, ce serait vraiment courageux. CF
   Peter go-INF alone that be-COND really brave
   “If Peter went there alone, that would really be brave.”
   d. * Ce serait vraiment courageux Pierre y aller seul.

---

1 This paper is the result of a complete collaboration between the authors; the order of names is alphabetical.
2 Although HI constructions occur in both CF and QF, they stand out as a productive option only in QF. Villiard (1984:18) notices the absence of this construction in CF to the extent that some native speakers do not recognize it; however, most speakers accept it, and show a passive knowledge.
3 from Villiard 1984:18
4 from Vinet 1985:411
(2) a. * Quoi gagner, j’achèterais une maison.  
what win-INF I buy-COND a house  
QF
b. * Quoi gagner, ce serait merveilleux?  
what win-INF that be-COND fantastic  
CF
(3) a. Ma mère m’avoir fait ça, je lui parlerais plus.  
my mother me have-INF done that I her talk-COND no more  
“If my mother had done that to me, I would not have talked to her any more”.
QF
b. La France battre le Brésil, ce serait inconcevable.  
France beat-INF Brazil that be-COND inconceivable  
“France beating Brazil would be inconceivable.”
CF

The parallel behavior in (1) to (3) led Villiard & Vinet 1983, Villiard 1984, Vinet 1985 to an analysis in which HIS have the same underlying structure in both CF and QF. Along these lines (but in the framework of the Minimalist Program), this paper will argue in § 2-5 that the properties in (1) to (3) follow from the interaction between the features of the HI Complementizer (C) and the placement of the respective clause (Complementizer Phrase—henceforth CP) in Topic. These two factors have an impact on the internal structure of HIS, which qualify as ‘absolute clauses’; that is, HI constructions behave like independent (vs. subordinate) clauses and yield effects of finiteness, such as lexical subjects in Nominative.

In § 6, the paper will focus on facts of variation, which concern the referential content of the null subject. More precisely, HIS present arbitrary null subjects in CF, as in (1c) above (see also Vinet 1985). On the other hand, the null subject in QF may be co-referent with the subject of the matrix clause, as in (4a), disjoint in reference, as in (4b), arbitrary, as in (4c), or may even occur with atmospheric verbs, as in (4d).

(4) a. Retourner en arrière, on trouverait ça vieux jeu.  
return-INF back we find-COND it old game  
“If we went back in time, we’d find it old-fashioned.”
QF

5 from Vinet 1985:408
6 HI clauses seem to be a peculiarity of modern varieties of French. Old and Middle French also had infinitive constructions with lexical subjects, but their distribution and interpretation were different (see Martineau 1990, Junker & Martineau 1992). For example:
(i) il ne cuitdoit point [sa fille estre tieulle.]  
“He did not think that his daughter was like that.”(from Martineau 1990:447)
b. Avoir pas su parler l’anglais, la maison partait en feu.
  "Had I been unable to speak Eng., the house would’ve burnt."\(^8\)

c. De prendre un verre, ça passerait le temps.
  "It would help pass the time, if we have a drink."\(^9\)

d. Hier, avoir fait beau, nous finissions.
  "If the weather had been nice yesterday, we would have finished it."\(^{10}\)

The contrast between CF (1c) and QF (4a-d) revolves therefore around the interpretation of null subjects: QF presents some flexibility in recuperating the referential content of the null subject; it also includes internal identification, as in (4b). Several questions arise from these observations: if we consider that HIs have the same underlying structure in CF and QF, how does the structure allow for different conditions on null subjects? Do HIs in QF meet the criteria for pro-drop finite clauses? What property of the language would justify a pro-drop option in HIs?

The analysis proposed here argues that HI configurations meet the criteria for finite clauses. Hence, licensing and identification of null subjects (pro) at the internal level is possible if the language has opted for the Null Subject Parameter; on the other hand, the conditions on pro identification at the internal level are insufficient in non-pro-drop languages, such as Standard CF. In this sense, the paper claims that QF behaves like a pro-drop language, in contrast to Standard CF, and to a higher degree than Colloquial CF (as discussed in Roberge & Vinet 1989, Auger 1994).

2. **Base generation vs. movement to Topic position**

The sentences in (1), discussed in Villiard (1984) and Vinet (1985), show that HI clauses surface only in Topic position. Further investigation of these clauses will lead to the claim that HI clauses are base generated in Topic position, not moved to this position. Tests confirming this analysis contrast HIs with non-

\(^8\) p.c. Françoise Mougeon, corpus Mougeon-Béniak
\(^9\) from Villiard 1984:32
\(^{10}\) from Dulong 1952:151
finite clauses that originate in a position subcategorized by the matrix verb. It appears\(^{11}\) that HIs cannot undergo clefting, as in (5a); they do not license parasitic gaps, as in (6a); and they co-occur with WH-extraction to matrix CP, as in (7a). On the other hand, fronted non-finite clauses, whose traces are governed by a selecting head, allow for all the operations banned in HIs, as shown in (5b), (6b), and rule out concurrent WH-movement, as in (7b).

(5)    a. * C’est [gagner le gros lot] que je saurais quoi faire avec.  
it is win-INF the big ticket that I know-COND what do-INF with
b.  C’est [vivre dans cette ville] que je ne veux plus ti.  
it is live-INF in this town that I not want any more  
“It is living in this town that I don’t want any more.”

(6)    a. * [Avoir un montant comme ça], on saurait garder ti sans  
have-INF an amount like that we know-COND keep-INF  
without spend-INF
b.  ? [Avoir vu les faits] je voulais déclarer ti à la police sans  
have-INF seen the facts I wanted-IMPF declare-INF to the  
without comment-INF  
“Having seen the facts I wanted to state [them] to the police  
without commenting.”

(7)    a. [Rencontrer un pape], que lui dirais-tu?  
meet-INF a pope what to-him say-COND you  
“If you met a pope, what would you tell him?”

b. * [Revoir Pierre], où veux-tu?  
see again-INF Peter where want-INDIC you

The contrastive behavior of the HIs and the fronted non-finite clauses which originate in a position subcategorized by the verb indicates that only the latter undergo a form of WH-movement. Fronting through WH-movement licenses clefting (5b), parasitic gaps (6b), and disallows parallel WH-chains, as in (7b). Since HI clauses do not move, we consider them base generated in Topic.

\(^{11}\) Positional tests are conducted in QF, since HIs have a higher productivity in this language and native speakers have clear judgments.
Furthermore, the types of chains that obtain in (5) to (7) are also different. We adopt the typology of A'-chains proposed in Cinque (1990), who distinguishes between: (i) chains headed by a constituent base generated in an A'-position; and (ii) chains headed by a constituent which moved to an A'-position. The latter, but not the former, has quantificational properties. Along these lines, HI clauses form non-quantified A'-chains, which include resumptive pronouns, such as ce, ça “that” in (1c), (3b) for CF, and (8a) for QF. Note that resumptive pronouns are optional in QF, as shown in (8b).

(8) a. [Marie avoir trouvé un chum], ça, m’aurait calmé.
Mary have-Inf found a friend that me had-cond calmed
“Had Mary found a friend, that would have calmed me down.”

b. [Marie avoir trouvé un chum], j’aurais été contente.
Mary have-Inf found a friend I have-cond been happy
“Had Mary found a friend, I would have been happy.”

To sum up this section, the tests in (5) to (8) show that HI clauses are base generated in Topic position, and head non-quantified A'-chains, which may include resumptive pronouns.

3. Hypothetical Infinitives project to the Complementizer Phrase

3.1 Arguments from the internal structure

There is no empirical indication whether HIs project to IP or to CP. Nevertheless, some operations allowed in HI clauses would rather favor a CP analysis.

First, the presence of Nominative subjects in non-finite clauses, as illustrated in (9), is generally associated with CP-clauses.

(9) [Camille avoir été malade], je serais restée à la maison.
Camille have-Inf been sick I be-cond stayed at the home
“If Camille had been sick, I would have stayed home.”

Second, dislocation to Topic position within the HI, as in (10), shows that the hierarchy of projections by-passes the IP level.
(10) [ma belle-mère, l'amener e à l'hôpital], dans une semaine on l'enterre.
my mother-in-law her bring to the hospital in one week we her bury
"If we brought my mother-in-law to the hospital, we would bury her in a week."\textsuperscript{12}

Finally, the complementizer \textit{de} in HI clauses, as in (11), provides the crucial piece of evidence for the definition of these clauses as CPs. In section 4.4. below we will analyze \textit{de} as an element in SPEC-CP.

(11) Tu sais, ma Lauri, ben des fois, j'ai l'air d'un sans coeur,
mais [d'\textit{te} voir comme ça] tomber en gondole, j'braillerais!
you know my Lauri many of times I have the air of one
without heart but of you see-INF like that fall off a gondola I
hawl-COND
"You know, my Lauri, I often behave like a rough man, but
if I were to see you like that, falling apart, I would cry."\textsuperscript{13}

The sentences in (9) to (11) would receive a natural account if we consider that HIS project to CP.

3.2 \textit{Free alternation} with \textit{si}-\textit{conditional} clauses

The definition of HIS as CP clauses would also explain their free alternation with \textit{si}-conditionals, which project to CP. The alternation is illustrated in (12):

(12) [Gagner de l'ar-], \textit{si on aurait de l'argent là, viens jamais qu'à
n'avoir un jour là, ça hein, j'aimerais ben ça aller en Europe.
make-INF some money if we had-COND some money there
come ever that to not have one day then that then I like-
COND well this go-INF in Europe
"If I made some mon-, if we had some money, then, if ever
the day comes when we have that, then, I would really like
to go to Europe."\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Martel 1971: 658 [Montréal 26f 24:35/source: projet de l'Estrie]
\textsuperscript{13} Martel 1971: [A. Dessureault-Descôt 162:heading/source: projet de l'Estrie]
\textsuperscript{14} Martel 1971: 207 [Estrie 36f 197:9/source: projet de l'Estrie]
The hypothesis advanced in this section is that infinitives in Topic position receive a hypothetical interpretation because they are dominated by a C-head with 'hypothetical' features. A C-head in HIs represents the non-lexical version of the conditional complementizer si “if”, which selects finite verbs.

Facts from Romance languages, such as presented in Kayne (1991), support this analysis. Kayne (1991) demonstrates that the Romance morpheme si/se, which occurs in indirect interrogatives and conditional clauses, has a complementizer (C) status. This complementizer is incompatible with non-finite clauses because of the conditions on the licensing of pro: si in C governs SPEC-IP, which contains pro, and induces a violation of Binding Principles. However, V-to-I movement may waive this effect in certain languages. That is, languages with the word order infinitive-clitic allow for si/se with infinitive clauses, whereas languages with the clitic-infinitive word order do not:

(13) a. Gianni non sa se andare al cinema.
John not knows if to go to the cinema
"John does not know if he should go to the cinema."

b. * Marie ne sait pas si aller au cinema.
Mary not knows if to go to the cinema

The contrast between Italian (13a) and French (13b) follows from the fact that the infinitive verb intervenes between se and pro in overt syntax, canceling the illicit government relation in Italian, whereas the same type of V-to-I movement does not apply in clitic-infinitive languages like French. Si is incompatible with non-finite clauses in French, since it interferes with control on the non-lexical subject\textsuperscript{15}. Most HIs display control, in free alternation with lexical subjects; therefore, it is expected that si be excluded from these constructions.

The analysis sketched above confirms that a C-head with [hypothetical] features dominates both finite and non-finite conditional clauses; the former exhibit si, the latter present an empty head, which move from V-to-I-to-C in LF. Since the clause with the latter configuration occurs in Topic, the hypothetical features of C must interact with the non-finiteness of the embedded inflectional phrase (IP), and lead to a configuration which changes the Hi into a finite clause.

\textsuperscript{15}In this paper we adopt the hypothesis initially proposed in Borer (1989) that all the pronominal empty categories correspond to pro; the licensing conditions on pro differ in finite and non-finite clauses.
4. Hypothetical Infinitives as finite clauses

4.1 Hypothetical Complementizers carry [+qu] features

First, we notice that a hypothetical Complementizer Phrase displays effects of SPEC-head agreement as it does in interrogative CPs. More precisely, SPEC-CP is blocked for WH-movement, as if it already contained a [+qu] element. Consider the examples in (14): WH-movement rules out both si-conditional and HI clauses. One might suppose that (14a) violates the double filled CP constraint. However, QF does not observe this constraint in interrogatives, as further shown in (14c); note that both si and que occupy a C position (see Kayne 1991 for arguments). Moreover, WH-movement is also ruled out in HI clauses (14b), which have their C position empty16.

(14)  
   a. * Si Jean arrive quand, nous serons contents?
     if John arrives when we be-FUT happy
   b. * Jean arriver quand, on serait contents?
     John arrive-INF when we be-COND happy
   c. Je me demande qui que tu vois en cachette.
     I me ask who that you see in hiding
     "I wonder who you’re seeing secretly."

Again, hypothetical clauses (15c, e) are similar to interrogatives (15b) in so far as they cannot be embedded under prepositional heads, such as pour. This test contrasts hypothetical and interrogative clauses on the one hand, and CPs with non-quantified features on C, on the other. The latter do occur with pour (15a, d):

(15)  
   a. Pour réussir à cet examen, on fera tout.
     for succeed in this exam we do-FUT all
     "We will do everything to pass this exam."
   b. * Pour où réussir, on fera tout?
   c. * Pour prendre un verre, ça passerait le temps.
     for have-INF a glass that pass-COND the time

---

16 Tests such as (14b) have led Vinet (1985) to the conclusion that HIs project to IP, and lack the necessary CP host.
d. Pour qu'il réussisse à cet examen, on fera tout.
   for that he succeed-subj in this exam we do-fut all
   "We will do everything in order for him to pass this exam."

   c. * Pour si on prenait un verre, ça passerait le temps.
      for if we had-imff a glass that pass-cond the time

The observations in (14) and (15) show that the hypothetical features on C
must imply [+qu] features. Hence the prediction that (i) C enters a local relation
with SPEC-CP, and marks it with [+qu] features; and (ii) lack of si triggers verb
movement to C, necessary to fulfill the checking on the hypothetical feature. The
mapping of these two operations depends on the properties of the embedded IP.

4.2 V-to-I-to-C and non-finiteness

Let us consider the type of verb movement to C. The order subject-negation-
clitic-verb in (16) indicates that V-to-I does not take place in overt syntax. It is
generally assumed (Chomsky 1993) that this type of movement applies in the LF
component. This assumption is based on previous analyses of French infinitive
inflection which proved that V-to-I is not triggered overtly in infinitive clauses
(with the exception of auxiliary verbs, as argued in Pollock 1989). Investigation
of other operations specific to infinitive clauses (i.e., licensing and identification
of pro) led to the hypothesis that I-to-C must apply covertly (see Borer 1989 for
an analysis of anaphoric AGR and obligatory I-to-C in infinitives). Therefore we
follow current analyses and assume that French infinitives do not present V-to-I
movement in overt syntax, but allow for V-to-I-to-C in LF.

(16) Marie pas y aller, je serais triste.
   Mary not there go-inf I be-cond sad
   "I would be sad if Mary did not go there."

Another general property of French infinitives is their negative value for
subject agreement and tense features. In consequence, both the subject and the
tense receive their referential content from the matrix clause; this operation is
mediated through a form of anaphoric binding (see Borer 1989 for anaphoric
binding of the null subject, and Terzi 1992 for anaphoric binding of the embed-
ded tense). Apparently, HI clauses are not exceptional, since their temporal inter-
pretation depends on the tense value of the matrix IP, as noted in Vinet
(1985:412):
(17)  a. * La France battre le Brésil, cela a été inconcevable.  
France beat-INF Brazil that has been unbelievable  
b. * Le frigidaire tomber en panne, on a eu de l’air fin.  
the fridge break-INF down we have had air fine = [looked 
    incompetent]

Vinet attributes the ungrammaticality of (17) to the clash between the unrealized tense in the infinitive and the past tense of the matrix clause; only a conditional verb would render (17) comprehensible.

A closer look will reveal, however, that the clash does not concern the tense value in the matrix, as long as those tenses are included in conditional paradigms:

(18)  a. Avoir pas su parler l’anglais, la maison partait/serait partie 
en feu.  
have-INF not known speak-INF English the house 
went/would have gone on fire  
b. Ma belle-mère l’amener à l’hôpital, dans une semaine, on 
l’enterre/l’enterrerait. 
my mother-in-law her bring to the hospital in one week we 
her bury/we her would bury

The continuous past (18a) or the present tense (18b) can appear in the matrix, on a par with conditional forms, and the hypothetical interpretation of the infinitive is maintained.

The tense and mood variations in (18) cast doubts on the realization of anaphoric binding between the tense in the matrix and in the HI clause: the latter does not copy, feature-by-feature, the mood/temporal specifications in the matrix. Moreover, anaphoric binding should be excluded for technical reasons: His occupy dislocated positions, and they head chains on an optional basis—for example, the sentences in (18) do not exhibit chain formation. Lack of chains situates the respective clauses outside the binding domain of the matrix clause: in this configuration, one cannot suppose that binding involves some internal empty category and becomes a property of the chain. An account of the realization of mood and tense values is therefore crucial for the understanding of the internal structure of HI clauses.
5. **Finiteness from abstract modals**

5.1 **Kayne’s (1992) abstract modal**

In order to account for the temporal value of T in hypothetical infinitives, we start with the observation that this construction has the status of a quasi-independent clause, due to its placement in Topic position. From this point of view, the hypothetical infinitive resembles the infinitive used as a suppletive imperative in Romance languages, such as argued by Kayne (1992) and illustrated below:

(19)  

a. Non parlaré a nessuno!  
    not to speak to nobody

Kayne makes the observation that infinitive inflections cannot appear in root clauses, unless they are licensed in a way which ensures them the required finiteness. The exact mechanism proposed in this analysis is triggered by the presence of the negation: the negative marker non licenses an empty modal element, specified for positive tense value, as part of the inflectional chain; the infinitive raises to the level of the empty modal head and acquires the tense features that enable it to appear in a root context. Arguments toward this analysis come from Italian dialects where there is a lexical counterpart to the modal element, i.e. stà in Paduan (19b)—the element stà is restricted to negative imperatives, as shown by the contrast with (19c):

(19)  

b. Non stà parlaré!  
    not aux to talk

c. * Stà parlaré!  
    aux to talk

5.2 **A temporal operator**

Returning now to the hypothetical infinitive in QF, we follow Kayne’s (1992) line of argumentation and assume that positive tense features are licensed in this type of inflection, and that is why the infinitive can appear in an independent context. However, we diverge from Kayne (1992) with respect to the mechanism through which the tense features are licensed in the structure. First, we cannot attribute the capacity to license a tense operator to the negation, because the negation is optional in hypothetical constructions; moreover, this type of infinitive projects to CP and displays marked features on C, which have hierarchical precedence over negation. Hence, we focus on the [+hypothetical] fea-
ture of C and consider it to be the licensing factor for positive temporal features on I.

We must first observe that hypothetical clauses (finite or non-finite) display a variety of inflectional forms. Thus, indicatives, conditionals and infinitives alternate as grammatical tools for conveying the hypothetical reading: the resulting reading depends, as already mentioned, on the presence of si or on the availability of I-to-C movement, in a specific context (i.e., Topic-position in QF).

In hypothetical infinitives, the implication of temporality in the [hypothetical] feature appears in the near obligatory conditional forms in the matrix clauses:

(20) a. [Gagner de l’argent], j’aimerais ben ça aller en Europe.
to make of the money I like-cond well this to go to Europe
“If I made some money, I would like to go to Europe.”

The sentence in (20a) shows the hypothetical infinitive behaving as a correlated structure with respect to modal values, on a par with the non-standard (20b), where the subordinated verb copies the values of the matrix verb.

(20) b. Je gagnerais de l’argent, j’aimerais ben ça aller en Europe.
I make-cond of the money I like-cond well this to go to Europe
“If I made some money, I would like to go to Europe.”

Temporal values of the hypothetical infinitives are also closely dependent on the tense value in the matrix (‘concordance des temps’). In (21a), the matrix verb is present conditional and the present infinitive is used. In (21b), the matrix verb is past conditional and the infinitive is also past:

(21) a. Gagner de l’argent, j’aimerais ben ça aller en Europe.
b. Avoir gagné de l’argent, j’aurais aimé ben ça aller en Europe.

The transfer of modal and temporal values of the matrix verb is not restricted to conditional matrix verbs. As the indicative may also express the hypothetical feature, we expect to find hypothetical infinitives when the matrix verb is indicative, as shown in (5b) and (22):

(22) a. Avoir pas su parler l’anglais, la maison partait en feu.
have not known speak English the house go-indic on fire
“Had I been unable to speak English, the house would’ve burnt.”
b. Ma belle-mère, l'amener à l'hôpital, dans une semaine on l'enterre.
   my mother-in-law her bring to the hospital in one week we her bury-INDIC
   "If we brought my mother-in-law to the hospital, we would bury her in a week."

However, a matrix indicative verb, without the hypothetical value, turns the sentence ungrammatical, as shown in (23):

(23)  a. * Avoir pas su parler l'anglais, la maison partira en feu
   have not known speak English the house go-IND/FUT in fire
   b. * Ma belle-mère, l'amener à l'hôpital, dans une semaine on l'enterrera.
   my mother-in-law her bring to hospital in one week we her bury-IND/FUT

Similarly, a conditional matrix verb which does not have the hypothetical interpretation rules out the sentence:

(24)  a. * Avoir gagné de l'argent, je me demandais si j'irais en Europe.
   have made of the money I myself asked-IND/IMPF if I go-COND to Europe
   b. * Avoir gagné de l'argent, je me demandais si je serais allé en Europe.
   have made of the money I myself ask-IND/IMPF if I be-COND gone to Europe

Note that in (24) the ungrammaticality is not due to the fact that the conditional verb is in a subordinate clause since sentence (25), with the tensed hypothetical conditional in a subordinate clause, is grammatical:

(25)   Avoir de l'argent, il a dit qu'il resterait ici.
   have of the money he has said that he stay-COND here
   "He said that he would stay here if he had money."

The facts in (20) to (25) show that a transfer of temporal and modal values takes place in hypothetical infinitive constructions, restricting the choice of inflectional forms and the past/present interpretation. We relate this restriction to
the properties of the [hypothetical] feature in C, which projects a Specifier position, against which it can check the temporal value of the clause. The configuration is represented in (26):

(26)

The local SPEC-head relation in CP

We consider that the feature [+hypothetical] subsumes both conditional and temporal interpretations, which would result from the co-indexation of Op and C with embedded and matrix T. Co-indexation with matrix T is required because the [hypothetical] feature does not display a 'hypothetical morphology'. Thus, co-indexation is the means through which the hypothetical mood is identified and then checked in syntax through the local SPEC-head relation represented in (26).

The abstract Operator in (26), co-indexed with matrix T, is chain related to embedded T, to which it transfers the positive temporal value. The structure in (26) extends to hypothetical clauses in general, irrespective of the lexical/non-lexical realization of C. However, when the embedded form is an infinitive, the temporal operator in SPEC-CP can also license an abstract modal, which confers finiteness to the clause, along the lines of the analysis in Kayne (1992).

5.3 Hypothetical Infinitives with de

The examples in (27) occur in QF, and seem to contradict our analysis, wherein C has both [+hypothetical] and [+qu] features: SPEC-CP in these examples displays the element de usually compatible with [-qu] complementizers.

(27) a. De prendre un verre, ça passerait le temps.
of have a glass that pass-COND the time
"It would help pass the time if we had a drink."
b. De sortir un peu, ça lui changerait les idées.
   "It would take his mind off things if he went out for a while."  

We will argue that the examples in (27) represent a second type of HI construction, in which hypothetical C has [-qu] features. We follow the analysis in Kayne (1991), where the complementizer de receives the definition of a Specifier. Placement of de in SPEC-CP blocks WH-movement to this position on a par with the presence of an empty Operator, as suggested in (26). On the other hand, as a non-operator, de does not have the capacity to license abstract modals, which are crucial for the status of subjects in HI clauses.

The following observations will indicate that a de-HI does not meet the criteria of an ‘absolute clause’; thus, de-HIs must be typologically and functionally different from HI's with empty CPs. First, clitic chain formation is obligatory in de-HIs, as in (28a); the chain is represented in (28b).

\[
\begin{align*}
(28a) & \quad [\text{De prendre un verre}]_i, \text{ ça }_i \text{ lui passerait le temps.} \\
& \quad \text{of have-INF a drink this him pass-COND the time}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(28b) & \quad \text{CP}_i \ldots \text{ ça}_i \ldots \text{ e}_i
\end{align*}
\]

The empty category falls in the binding domain of the matrix IP. Binding and control become properties of the chain, and are implemented through ‘connectivity’. Note that HI's with empty CPs do not enter the chain in (28b), unless optionally; therefore, they are not subject to connectivity.

Further examples in (28c,d) confirm that lack of resumptive pronouns rules out de-HIs; the sentences become grammatical if we delete de.

\[
\begin{align*}
(28c) & \quad * \text{ De prendre un coup, il menacerait sa famille.} \\
& \quad \text{of receive-INF a blow he threaten-COND his family}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(28d) & \quad * \text{ De penser à lacher la job, tu devrais avertir le patron.} \\
& \quad \text{of think-INF to quit the job you should warn the boss}
\end{align*}
\]

Second, lexical subjects cannot occur in de-HIs, as in (29), whereas this is an important property of HI's with empty CPs; again, de deletion would render the sentence grammatical.

---

\[17 \text{ from Villiard 1984: 32} \]
\[18 \text{ from Villiard 1984: 32} \]
(29) a. * De Marie penser à lâcher la job, ça devrait plaire au patron.
    of Mary think of quit the job this should please the boss

Third, the null subject in a de-HI is obligatorily co-referent with an argument in the matrix, as in (30b); when co-reference is not available, the interpretation of pro is arbitrary, as in (30a); on the contrary, the interpretation of null subjects in HIs with empty CPs does not depend on control, as previously shown in (4).

(30) a. De proarb/*je,il prendre un verre, ça passeraient le temps.
    b. De proij/*je sortir un peu, ça lui; changerait les idées.

The facts in (27) to (30) indicate that a de-HI behaves like a dislocated clause which is chain related to a position in the matrix clause. The chain mediates the processes of binding and control, and yields the ‘connectivity’ effects proper to adjunct clauses. Therefore, de-HIs do not meet the criteria of ‘absolute clauses’, which are finite, quasi-independent clauses.

To sum up sections 4 and 5, HI clauses project to CP, and are equivalent to si-conditional clauses. The C-head carries the hypothetical feature, which allows for the interpretation of HIs irrespective of the mood specifications in the matrix (the latter may be conditional or indicative). The hypothetical feature pairs with [+/-qu] features: [-qu] features allow for insertion of lexical elements in CPs (i.e., de) and confer on HIs the properties of adjunct clauses; on the other hand, [+qu] features license an Operator in SPEC-CP, which, in turn, licenses an abstract modal; the abstract modal confers finite features on HIs, and allows them to function as ‘absolute clauses’.

6. Cross-linguistic variation: the licensing of null subjects

Sections 1 to 5 have argued that HI clauses have the same underlying structure in CF and OF. Nevertheless, variation arises within this common structure with respect to the licensing of null subjects. Vinet (1985) shows that null subjects receive an obligatory arbitrary interpretation in CF, as in (31a); arbitrary null subjects alternate with lexical subjects, as in (31b):

(31) a. proarb Pouvoir partir en vacances, ce serait merveilleux.
    able-INF go on holidays this be-COND wonderful
    “If one could go on holidays, it would be wonderful.”
b. Pierre y aller seul, ce serait vraiment courageux.
Peter there go-INF alone this be-COND really brave
“If Peter went there alone, that would be really brave.”

The restriction on subject interpretation in (31) follows naturally from the
definition of HIs as absolute clauses. Neither control nor positive agreement
features are available in absolute clauses: therefore the subject is either lexical
(licensed under case checking by positive T) or arbitrary pro (a configuration for
pro identification is not obtainable).

On the other hand, QF presents a variety of HI clauses in which the null sub-
ject may be controlled, arbitrary, or have disjoint reference. These instances are
illustrated in (4). Furthermore, the interpretation of the null subject in QF HI
clauses indicates that the null pronominal can be licensed and identified intern-
ally. This observation is based on evidence that HIs display effects that gener-
ally characterize pro-drop languages (see Rizzi 1982, 1986, 1990 for tests on
Italian dialects). For example: (i) pro occurs with atmospheric verbs as in (32)
and in impersonal expressions as in (33); (ii) pro has disjoint reference, as in
(34); and (iii) non-lexical pro alternates with emphatic pronouns as in (35a), as
opposed to clitic subjects as in (35b):

(32) a. Avoir fait mauvais, j’aurais resté à la maison.
have-INF done bad I have-COND stayed in the house
“If the weather was bad, I would have stayed home.”

b. Avoir venté un peu moins, serais-tu venu en chaloupe avec
have-INF winded a little less be-COND you come in boat with
nous-autres?
us others
“If it had been less windy, would you have come with us in
the boat?”19

(33) Avoir venu du monde pour pousser le char, on se serait
have-INF come the people for push-INF the car we ourselves
sorù de d’là ben plus vite.
be-COND go out from there a lot faster
“If some people had come to push the car, we would have
been out of there a lot faster.”

19 from Villiard 1984:38. Villiard mentions that judgments vary for the sentences (32): some
speakers accept them very readily, others less so.
(34) Si ils arriveraient puis [pro ils arrêter de monter ci]
if they arrive-cond then stop-INF of raise-INF this
puis [pro ils monter ça], [pro ils monter ça], on en aurait as-
then raise-INF that raise-INF that we of it have-cond enough
sez de notre salaire
of our salary
"If they came and if they stopped raising (prices) for this
and for that, we would have enough salary (to live on)."\(^{20}\)

(35) a. Seigneur, [moi avoir dit ça à mon père], il m’aurait renfer-
God I have-INF said that to my father he me have-cond
mée jusqu’à vingt et un an.
locked until twenty one year
"My Lord, if I had said that to my father, he would have
locked me up until I reached the age of twenty one."\(^{21}\)

\* Seigneur, [je avoir dit ça à mon père] ...

The properties in (i) to (iii) indicate that HI clauses behave like finite clauses
in pro-drop languages. This behaviour is compatible with the hypothesis put
forth in Roberge & Vinet (1989) and Auger (1994, 1995a,b) that QF presents the
characteristics of a pro-drop language in finite clauses.

6.1 Evidence for pro-drop in QF

Roberge & Vinet (1989) and more recently Auger (1994, 1995a, b) have
proposed an analysis of QF as a pro-drop language\(^{22}\). Roberge & Vinet suggest
that languages where subject clitics must be expressed, as it is generally the case
in QF, are pro-drop. They differ from languages such as Italian, which allow the
absence of subject clitics, in the way pro is licensed in subject position. In
Italian, pro receives its semantic content from the verbal ending; in French, pro
is licensed by the subject clitic, as in (36):

(36) pro SCL V

\(^{22}\) As shown further in this paper, the pro–drop character of QF is best argued for on the basis
of subject clitic doubling, a phenomenon which also occurs in Colloquial CF. Since Standard
CF does not exhibit subject clitic doubling, we prefer not to extend the pro–drop analysis to
this variety of French, without further evidence.
For Auger, who adopts a similar analysis, the subject clitic, as pronominal affix, is not an argument which saturates the subcategorizing frame of the verb. Thus, an overt lexical subject may co-occur with the subject clitic, as in (37):

(37) Les maringouins ils me suivent.
    the mosquitoes they me follow
    “Mosquitoes follow me.”

In Auger (1995a), it is shown that the NP in (37) enters a subject doubling construction, and is not dislocated. For instance, bare quantifiers, which tend to be excluded from subject dislocated positions, are found in QF, as in (38):

(38) En campagne, quand quelqu’un il dansait....
    in country when someone he danced
    “In the country, when someone danced...” (from Auger 1995a)

The arguments summed up in this section indicate that QF qualifies as a pro-drop language with subject clitic doubling.

6.2 Expletive pro in QF

Roberge & Vinet (1989) also argue for the presence of pro in expletive expressions, where the lexical expletive subject pronoun has been deleted, as in QF sentences in (39)24.

(39) a. M’est avis que vous méritez ce qui vous arrive.
    to-me is opinion that you deserve what to-you happens
    “It is my opinion that you deserve what happens to you.”

b. Me semble que Jean va venir.
    to-me seems that John will come
    “It seems to me that John will come.”

---

23 from Auger 1995a, 108-71:036
24 Roberge & Vinet (1989) leave aside cases where the lexical expletive is obligatory in embedded clauses (ib), although its deletion is possible in independent clauses (ia):
   (i) a. Pleut un peu.
       rains a little/"It rains a little."
   b. * Je sais bien que pleut un peu.
       I know well that rains a little

For them, (ia) is the result of a possible phonological deletion.
25 from Roberge & Vinet 1989:110-11
They propose that a syntactic rule may delete an expletive subject when an object marker (*me* in (39)) or another element which could licence the expletive subject is present. Explicitly, they propose the following principle:

\[(40) \quad \text{pro}_{\text{exp}} \text{ is identified by INF}_{\text{x}}\]

where \(x\) represents a sub-set of grammatical features.

Features under Agr and Tense would be found in this sub-set.

On the basis of deletion of the lexical expletive in (39), the authors further propose that expletive *pro* may also be allowed in HIs (such as (32), (33)), when certain criteria are met; that is, Tense has positive features, and the HI is adjunct to an INF with [+tense/conditional], [+Agr] features.

Although the pro-drop analysis in Roberge & Vinet extends to both QF and Colloquial (as opposed to Standard) French, the HI phenomena, as illustrated in (4) and (32-35), surface only in QF. This asymmetry is related to frequency: sentences like (39) are more frequent in QF than in Colloquial French; it is then expected that the option for the pro-drop setting be also more frequent in QF HI clauses. However, the data indicate a total absence of expletive and referential *pro* in CF HI clauses. Therefore, an explanation is needed for the fact that the pro-drop option is productive in QF vs. CF non-finite clauses.

### 6.3 The null subject parameter in QF HI clauses

The hypothesis advanced in this section is that reanalysis of HIs as finite clauses extends the finiteness to Agr in QF. Increased frequency of the pro-drop setting in independent finite clauses (as shown in § 6.1., 6.2.) favours the speaker’s pro-drop setting in HI clauses, which meet the criteria for finiteness.

The background for our hypothesis comes from the analysis of pronominal elements in Corver & Delfitto (1993). In this study, null pronouns are NPs which need substantive features (identification) and visibility (case feature checking). For null pronouns in subject position, there are two configurations in which the conditions on identification and case can be implemented, as shown in (41).

In (41), the head enters a local head-head relation with the complex [Agr+T]. With Agr carrying substantive features, and T carrying case-checking features, D mediates the transfer of both sets of features to SPEC-DP (which hosts *pro*) because of the structural local relation of Specifier-head. The transfer takes place when *pro* raises to SPEC-DP and enters a local relation with the mediating D-head. In (41a) the D-head is lexical, because the [N] features on T are weak and insufficient for case checking; note that *il* has an inherent Nominative
case. On the other hand, the configuration in (41b) is possible in a language where the [N] features on T are strong and sufficient for D to case mark pro in its SPEC position. Therefore, the representations in (41a) and (41b) account for a contrastive pattern of licensing null pronominals in pro-drop languages (41b) and non-pro-drop languages, such as Standard CF, represented in (41a).

(41) a.
   \[\text{AGR'}\]
   \[\text{DP} \quad \text{[AGR + T]}\]
   \[\text{SPEC} \quad \begin{array}{c}
   \text{D'} \\
   \text{D} \\
   \text{NP} \\
   \text{il} \\
   \text{pro}
   \end{array}\]

b.
   \[\text{AGR'}\]
   \[\text{DP} \quad \text{[AGR + T]}\]
   \[\text{SPEC} \quad \begin{array}{c}
   \text{D'} \\
   \text{D} \\
   \text{NP} \\
   \varnothing \\
   \text{pro}
   \end{array}\]

*The local SPEC-head relation in CP*

If we apply the analysis in (41b) to HI clauses, we obtain an account for the extension of the positive value from T to AGR: these two functional heads merge their features before they enter a local relation with the subject position. Moreover, the subject position in HI clauses is locally related to the abstract modal, to which the complex [AGR+T+V] raises, as in (42):

(42)
   \[\text{MP} \quad \text{SPEC} \quad \begin{array}{c}
   \text{M'} \\
   \text{SUBJECT} \\
   \text{[M+[AGR+T+V]]}
   \end{array}\]

*V-movement to abstract Modal in HI*

According to (42), the abstract modal shares a positive value with the complex [AGR+T], as opposed to T only. Further effects on the subject position depend on the intrinsic features on T—that is, whether T has strong or weak [N] features in the language.

As mentioned for (41a), T has weak [N] features in Standard CF, and requires the presence of a lexical D, such as *il*. The function of *il*, which is to complement and transfer [AGR+T] features to pro, must be implemented in overt syntax: *il* lacks lexical content and becomes invisible at LF. Therefore, if a DP with the D-head *il* is inserted in SPEC-MP in (42), the structure would be ruled out. Verb movement to the modal and further to C takes place at LF in HI clauses, but *il* is not visible to LF rules, and the assignment of substantive features to the
null pronominal cannot be implemented. Thus, the analysis in Corver & Delfitto (1993), applied to HI clauses in French, accounts for non-occurrence of clitic pronouns in these constructions (35b), although lexical subjects and strong pronouns are allowed (35a).

The same analysis indicates, on the other hand, that licensing and identification of null pronominals in (4), (32-35) must take place according to the pattern in (41b). In this sense, the QF versions of HI clauses exhibit the properties of pro-drop languages such as Spanish, and exclude subject clitics. Indeed, the grammaticality of those examples can be accounted for only if we assume that (41b) is the configuration for the null pronominal, and it is inserted in the subject position in (42). The D-head is non-lexical, so it pairs with a T-head with strong [N] features. The complex [AGR+T], with strong [N] features, raises to the abstract modal, which confers finiteness to it; thus, the complex [AGR+T] transfers the required features to D, which in turn transfer these features to the pronominal in SPEC-DP. This process is licit at LF.

To conclude this section, HI clauses in CF present the properties of Standard non-pro-drop Continental French, and thus contrast with Hypothetical Infinitives in Québec French with respect to the licensing of null subjects: (41a) applies in Standard CF, (41b) applies in QF.

6.4 Final remarks

The properties of HI clauses, approached through the analysis in Corver & Delfitto (1993), deepen the contrast between QF and CF with respect to the setting for the null subject parameter. Although a variety of CF (i.e., Colloquial French) was shown to behave as a pro-drop language with subject clitic doubling, on a par with QF, productivity of the pro-drop option is higher in QF.

HI clauses takes this difference a step further, since the pro-drop option in their context implies licensing configurations which exclude subject clitic doubling: at this point, CF speakers, who occasionally accept pro-drop in finite clauses if they allow subject clitic doubling, reverse their pro-drop option in HIs, where clitic doubling is not obtainable. On the other hand, QF speakers, who have a higher exposure to pro-drop finite clauses, maintain this option in HIs.
REFERENCES

Thibault, Pierrette. 1984. *Corpus Montréal 84: Projet de recherche sur le français parlé à Montréal*, Université de Montréal. See also Thibault, Pierrette & D.

