Non-finiteness in independent clauses:
The hypothetical infinitive in Quebec French

FRANCE MARTINEAU and VIRGINIA MOTAPANYANE

Abstract

Hypothetical infinitives behave like finite clauses: they license lexical NP and pro in subject position and display atmospheric verbs. These properties follow from the interaction between checking procedures (that is, V-to-I-to-C movement) and the location of the hypothetical infinitive in the sentence structure (that is, base-generated in Topic position). In this specific configuration, the effect of [+V] features on Tense combines with the modal feature of Complementizer and ensures finiteness to this clause, despite the infinitive form of the verb. This analysis offers a uniform account for hypothetical infinitives in Quebec and Continental French. It also predicts that cross-linguistic variation (for example, internal licensing of pro in subject position in Quebec French versus Continental French) must concern parametric settings (for example the Null Subject Parameter) which would further interact with the structural conditions of high infinitives discussed in this paper.

1. Introduction

A striking property of Quebec French comes from the possibility to alternate finite conditional clauses with infinitives, as in (1):

---

1. Acknowledgments: We thank Pierrette Thibault (Corpus de Montréal 1984; Thibault and Vincent 1990) and Pierre Martel (Corpus de l’Estrie, which is constituted of the corpus of Montréal 1971, corpus of Estrie, corpus of Quebec city, corpus of Saguenay-Lac-Saint jean), who let us consult their bank of data. We also thank Régis Foré, for lending us recordings of Ontario interviews; and, finally, we thank Sylvia Bruneau, our research assistant, who helped with data collection. This paper has been partly funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, under grant #410-92-0221.

Probus 9-1 (1997), 79 – 100

0921 – 4471/97/009 079
© Walter de Gruyter
(1) a. Gagner de l’argent, si on aurait de l’argent là, make-INF of the money if we had-COND of the money viens jamais qu’à n’avoir un jour là, ça hein, come ever that to not have one day then that then j’aimerais bien ça aller en Europe. I like-COND well this go-INF in Europe ‘If I made some money, if we had some money, then, if ever comes the day when we have that, then, I would really like to go to Europe.’

(207 Estrie 36f 197: 9/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

b. Me semble me coucher dans une maison pis je to-me seems REFL sleep-INF in a house then I gèlerais là, là je me sentirais malheureuse. freeze-COND there, then I REFL feel-COND unhappy ‘It seems that if I were to sleep in a house and if I were to freeze there, then I would feel unhappy.’

(144 Estrie 22f 107: 10/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

c. Si ils arriveraient puis arrêter de monter ci if they come-COND then stop of raise-INF this puis monter ça, monter ça, on en aurait then raise-INF that raise-INF that we of-it had-COND assez de notre salaire. enough of our salary ‘If they came and if they stopped raising (prices) here and there, we would have enough salary (to live on).’

(602 Montréal 25h 18: 23/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

Since the interpretation of the infinitive clauses in (1a–c) is obligatorily hypothetical, these constructions raise a question for current analyses of non-finiteness, which exclude the presence of infinitive inflections in non-selected contexts. Furthermore, these infinitive clauses exhibit other properties which are generally incompatible with non-finite inflections: they may have lexical subjects,2 uncontrolled null subjects, and function as islands to extractions.

In this paper we will show that the properties of hypothetical infinitives follow from a structural condition, which induces their placement in independent context. From this perspective, the structural position of hypothetical infinitives
in relation to the matrix clause has an impact on the internal structure of the infinitive, and triggers certain operations usually disallowed in subordinate infinitive clauses.

The investigation proposed here will contrast the syntax of hypothetical infinitives that are non-selected and obligatorily base-generated in a topical position (Top), with subordinate infinitives that are selected (by V or P) and occur in dislocated positions either through base generation or movement. The contrast is further supported by these observations: only the former project to CP and ensure clause internal conditions equivalent to finite clauses, whereas the latter display an IP level in dislocated positions and require referential dependency on the matrix clause.

2. Data

2.1. Non-lexical subject

The most frequent occurrences of hypothetical infinitives have a non-lexical subject:

(2) a. Avoir l’argent, je resterais dans ce coin ici have-INF the money I stay-COND in this corner here définitivement. definitely

‘If I had money, I would stay here for ever.’

(Corpus de Montréal 1984: 113/115)

b. Voir un Anglais, je lui demanderais des informations. see-REFL an Englishman I to-him ask-COND information

‘If I saw an Englishman, I would ask him for information.’

(Corpus de Montréal 1984: 131/355)

In general, the non-lexical subject undergoes subject control from the matrix, as in (3):

(3) a. Retourner en arrière, on trouverait ça vieux jeu. return-REFL in back we find-COND this old game

‘If we returned to the past, we would find it outdated.’

(987 Québec 42f 121: 6/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

b. Avoir un épais de même comme fils, moé, j’mé suicide-COND have-INF a thick of even as son I REFL suicide-COND

‘If I had a stupid son like that, I would kill myself.’

(M. Tremblay Grosse 179: Heading/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

However, an arbitrary interpretation of the null subject is not excluded, as in this example from Dulong (1952):
Moreover, the null subject may also meet the requirements for identification clause-externally: in the examples in (5), the subject of the hypothetical infinitive has disjoint reference in relation to the subject of the matrix clause:

(5) a. Faire un voyage, ça serait en Europe.
    make-INF a trip it be-COND in Europe
    ‘If I were to make a trip, it would be to Europe.’
   (985 Québec 49f 35: 6/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

   b. Passer proche de mourir là, y en a peut être
    pass-INF close of die there there of it are may be
    qui auraient pensé que j’était mort, mais pas moi.
    who have-COND thought that I was-IND dead but not me
    ‘If I were so close to dying, there are perhaps some who would
    think that I was dead, but not I.’
   (112 Estrie 26th 31: 3/Source: Corpus de l’Estrie)

   c. Avoir pas su parler l’anglais, la maison partait en feu.
    have-INF not known speak English the house go-IND in fire
    ‘If I had not been able to speak English, the house would have
    been burning.’
   (Corpus Moungeon-Béniak: Françoise Moungeon, personal communication)

2.2. Pronominal subjects

Lexical pronouns compatible with the subject position of hypothetical infinitives must belong to the strong paradigm (as opposed to clitics):

(6) a. Seigneur, moi avoir dit ça à mon père,
    God I have-INF said that to my father
    il m’aurait renfermée jusqu’à vingt et un ans.
    he me have-COND locked until twenty one year
    ‘My God, if I had said that to my father, he would have locked me
    up until I reached the age of twenty one.’
   (658 Montréal 26f 4: 13/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

   b. S’ils ont envie de s’embrasser, ils s’embrassent,
    if they have-INF desire of REFL kiss they REFL kiss
    tandis que nous-autres avoir fait ça, bien
    while that we others have-INF done that well
    la voisine aurait dit bien, aïe j’ai vu
    the neighbor would-COND said well well I have seen
The hypothetical infinitive in Quebec French

2.3. Lexical subjects

Hypothetical infinitives with lexical subjects are quite seldom, compared to the versions in (2) and (3), although they are quite well accepted in tests.\(^3\)

\begin{align*}
\text{(7)} & \quad \text{a.} & C' & \text{était pour eux autres. Vous savez que des fois là,}
\text{the mother leave-INF then the kids young stay-INF alone}
\text{it was for them others you know that some times}
\text{la mère partir pis les enfants jeunes rester seuls}
\text{to-me seemed I have-INDIC said this has no common sense}
\text{I' ai dit, ç' a pas de bon sens.}
\text{'It was for the others. You know sometimes, if the mother had}
\text{‘It was for the others. You know sometimes, if the mother had}
\text{left, and, if the kids were left alone, it would seem to me, I said,}
\text{that there is no common sense.'}
\text{(187 Estrie 55f 123: 10/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{(7)} & \quad \text{b.} & Puis je vous dis moi mes enfants avoir fait
\text{this I they be-COND dead there}
\text{then I you say-INDIC I I my children have-INF done}
\text{ça, moi, ils seraient morts là.}
\text{‘Then I tell you, as for me, if my children had done that, they}
\text{would be dead.’}
\text{(658 Montréal 26f 16: 29/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)}
\end{align*}

2.4. Optional resumptives

A resumptive pronoun in the matrix corefers with the hypothetical infinitive as a whole, as in (8a); however, the presence of a resumptive pronoun is not obligatory, as shown in (8b).\(^4\)

---

3. The questionnaires with tests on the structure and placement of the hypothetical infinitive have been answered by 25 speakers.

4. In this respect, Quebec French contrasts with Standard French, where a resumptive pronoun is obligatory, as emphasized in Villiard and Vinet (1983) and Vinet (1985).
2.5. The hypothetical infinitive in French

The hypothetical infinitive, such as illustrated from (1) to (8), is specific to colloquial language in Quebec French, and is not attested in previous stages of French. Although infinitives with lexical subjects occur in previous stages of French, they do not have a hypothetical interpretation, neither do they alternate with “si conditionals”. More precisely, infinitives with lexical subjects occur in two contexts in Old French: (i) as sentential complements (“Accusative with infinitive” constructions);^5 or (ii) as absolute clauses with exclusive temporal interpretation.® Both constructions have a different reading and distribution, compared to the hypothetical infinitive in Quebec French. Thus, the hypothetical infinitive cannot be judged from a diachronic perspective and stands out as a possibility allowed by the grammar of modern language.

^5 For an analysis on the licensing of lexical subjects in these constructions see Martineau (1990); Junker and Martineau (1992), who focus on structures such as:

(i) Il ne cuidoit point [sa fille estre tuelve].
he not thought his daughter be-INF like that
‘He didn’t think his daughter was like that.’

^6 For example:

(i) Pantagruel, [avoir entièrement conquést le pays de
Pantagruel have-INF all conquered the country of
Dipsodie], en iceluy transporta une colonie de Utopiens.
Dipsodie in that-one brought a colony of Utopians
‘Pantagruel, after having conquered the country of Dipsodie, brought in a colony of Utopians.’
(Gougenheim 1984: 19/Rabelais III.1.)

(ii) [Estre arrivé Jehan de Paris entre les deux roys
be-INF arrived Jehan de Paris between the two kings
d’ Espaigne et d’Angleterre], entrèrent en ladicie salle.
of Spain and England entered-3PL in-the aforementioned room
‘After Jehan de Paris has arrived between the two kings of Spain and England, they entered in the aforementioned room.’
(Marchello-Nizia 1979: 339/JP 78)
3. Analysis

3.1. Base generation of hypothetical infinitives in Top-position

The working hypothesis in this paper is that the hypothetical infinitive is always base-generated in Top; so, its placement outside the domain of matrix I confers it the status of a quasi-independent clause. Arguments toward the base generation of hypothetical infinitives in Top come from a series of tests where this construction shows a contrastive pattern when compared with selected infinitives which appear in dislocated positions.

As observed in Villiard (1984) and Vinet (1985), a general condition for the hypothetical infinitive is its occurrence to the left of the matrix clause:

(9)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item [Prendre un coup], \textit{il menacerait sa famille}.
\begin{itemize}
\item take-INF a blow he threaten-COND his family
\end{itemize}
\begin{itemize}
\item ‘If he had had drink, he would have threatened his family.’
\end{itemize}
\item *\textit{Il menacerait sa famille} [prendre un coup.]
\begin{itemize}
\item he threaten-COND his family of take-INF a blow
\end{itemize}
\end{enumerate}
\hspace{1cm}(Villiard 1984:32)

Sometimes, the morpheme \textit{de} may precede the hypothetical infinitive. The presence of \textit{de} does not affect the restrictions on placement: \textit{de} + infinitive occurs to the left of the matrix clause. Thus, (9c, d) mirror the contrast in (9a, b); (9d) is ungrammatical with hypothetical interpretation:

(9)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item [De sortir un peu], \textit{ça lui changerait les idées}.
\begin{itemize}
\item of to go out a bit this him would change the ideas
\end{itemize}
\begin{itemize}
\item ‘Going out for a while might change his ideas.’
\end{itemize}
\item *\textit{Ça lui changerait les idées}, [de sortir un peu.]
\begin{itemize}
\item this him change the ideas of to go out a bit
\end{itemize}
\end{enumerate}
\hspace{1cm}(Villiard 1984:32)

The restriction on left–right placement illustrated in (9) clearly indicates that the hypothetical infinitive occupies a Top position.

But other contexts allow for the placement of the infinitive on the right, as shown in these examples from Villiard (1984):

(10)  
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Je verrais la parade}, [pro₁ traverser le pont].
\begin{itemize}
\item I see-COND the parade cross-INF the bridge
\end{itemize}
\begin{itemize}
\item ‘If I cross the bridge, I would see the parade.’
\end{itemize}
\item \textit{Elle, aurait été en Chine}, [pro₁ avoir vendu son char].
\begin{itemize}
\item she have-COND been in China have-INF sold her car
\end{itemize}
\begin{itemize}
\item ‘She would have been in China if she had sold her car.’
\end{itemize}
\end{enumerate}
\hspace{1cm}(Villiard 1984:29)
c. Ça passerait le temps, [(de) prendre un verre].
   this pass-COND the time of to take a glass
   ‘Having a drink would help the time pass.’

However, as further noted in Villiard (1984), the versions in (10) require a
specific intonation, with considerable break between the matrix and the infinitive
clause; omission of this break would turn the hypothetical infinitive
ungrammatical, just like (9b, d):

(11) a. *Je, verrais la parade pro, traverser le pont.
I see-COND the parade cross-INF the bridge

b. *Elle aurait été en Chine avoir vendu son char.
she have-COND been in China have-INF sold her car

c. *Ça passerait le temps de prendre un verre.
this pass-COND the time of to take a glass

By their position and required prosody, hypothetical infinitives contrast with selected
infinitives, which follow the matrix clause without intonational break, as in (11d):

(11) d. Je serais pas capable de donner des détails là-dessus.
I be-COND not capable of give-INF details there-above
   ‘I wouldn’t be able to give details about that.’

The evidence in (9) to (11) indicates that the hypothetical infinitive must be
structurally “unrelated” to the matrix clause, and this condition is obtained when
we place the infinitive in Top.7 The Top position may, however, be projected
on the left or on the right, which results in the possible variation of order men-
tioned in (10), and represented in (12) (next page).

Placement in Top, as represented in (12), indicates that hypothetical infinitive
is the structural counterpart of si-conditionals clauses, which also appear at the
periphery of the sentence;8 a sentence like (13c) is ungrammatical under neutral
reading and without significant breaks.

---

7. We adopt the definition of Top position in Cinque (1990), where Top adjoins to CP. Multiple
   Top is theoretically unrestrained (cf. the version of X-bar theory in Zwart 1993, allowing only
   for two adjunctions to XP), and we expect multiple Top to co-occur with hypothetical
   infinitives, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer:

   (i) Quan au voyage, gagner de l’argent, j’aimerais bien ça aller en Europe.
   for the travelling to make of money I like-COND well this to go to Europe
   ‘As for travelling, if I made good money, I would like to go to Europe.’

8. Since hypothetical infinitives occur in Top, we expect them to adjoin to the highest phrasal
   projection in the clause, that is, CP or IP. Therefore, constructions as (i), suggested by an
   anonymous reviewer, must be possible: hypothetical infinitive in (i) is base-generated in the
   Top-position adjoined to embedded IP (lower than que).

   (i) Je crois que, avoir de l’argent, il resterait dans ce coin ici.
   I think that to have of the money he stay-COND in this corner here
   ‘I think that, if he had money, he would stay here.’
(12) a. 
\[
\text{TOP} \\
\text{Hypothetical infinitive} \quad \text{CP/IP}
\]

b. 
\[
\text{TOP} \\
\text{CP/IP} \quad \text{Hypothetical infinitive}
\]

(13) a. \textit{Si on m’avait appelé à temps, je serais venu dès que le travail était fini.}
\textit{If they had called in time I be-COND come when that work was finished.}
\textit{‘Had they called me in time, I would have come as soon as I finished working.’}

b. \textit{Je serais venu dès que le travail était fini, si on m’avait appelé à temps.}

\textit{I would have come as soon as that work was finished, if they had called me.}

c. \textit{*Je serais venu si on m’avait appelé à temps dès que le travail était fini.}

The next question will bear on the way in which the hypothetical infinitive is placed in Top: is it base-generated or moved to this position? The typology of A-positions to which we resort in our discussion is adopted from Cinque (1990), where A-positions may head two types of chains: (i) a chain with non-quantificational properties, which results from base generation of the constituent in an A-position; and (ii) a chain with quantificational properties, which results from movement of a constituent to an A-position. The series of tests proposed below will confirm that the hypothetical infinitive is always base-generated in Top, and it heads the chain type (i); thus, it contrasts with selected infinitives, which can be either moved to a preverbal position or base-generated in a preverbal position, under the conditions specified in section 3.2. Let us consider, first, the contrast between base generation and movement to a preverbal position.

The hypothetical infinitive cannot undergo clefting, as in (14a), it does not license parasitic gaps, as in (15a), and it cooccurs with extractions to matrix CP, as in (16a):  

---

9. We borrowed the tests from Motapanyane (1994), where the purpose for the tests was to establish the status of preverbal positions in Rumanian.

10. Si-conditionals display the same behavior as hypothetical infinitives in the tests proposed from (14) to (16).
(14) a. *C'est [Camille manger toute son assiette] que je serais 
it is Camille eat-INF all her plate that I be-COND contente. 
happy
b. C'est [trouver un mari], que je ne veux plus t.
it is find-INF a husband that I want no-more
‘What I don’t want any more is to find a husband.’

(15) a. *[Pierre battre Marie], je dirais à la police si sans 
Pierre hit-INF Marie I tell-COND to the police without 
commenter e.
comment-INF
b. *[Avoir vu les faits], je voulais juste déclarer t.
have-INF seen the facts I wanted-INDIC just declare-INF 
sans répéter e.
without repeat-INF
‘It is to have seen the facts that I just wanted to tell the police, without repeating.’

(16) a. [Jean revoir Pierre], où irais-tu?
Jean see-INF Pierre where go-COND you
‘If Jean saw Pierre again, where would you go?’
b. *[Revoir Pierre], où veux-tu t?
see-INF Pierre where want you

Moreover, hypothetical infinitives occur across non-lexical domains (as noted by an anonymous reviewer), an operation which is associated with placement in Top:

(17) [Avoir de l’argent], il a dit qu’il resterait dans ce coin ici. 
to have of the money he has said that he stay-COND in this corner
‘He said that he would stay here if he had money.’

A selected infinitive clause which undergoes the same operations yields opposite results, as seen in (14b), (15b), (16b). The contrast of grammaticality follows from the contrast between base generation in a dislocated position, that is, Top for hypothetical infinitives, as opposed to movement to a dislocated position, which is the condition for the selected infinitives in (14) to (16). Clefting in (14) entails movement to Spec of CP, possible for an infinitive which is extracted from a clause-internal position (note the co-indexation between the dislocated infinitive and a trace in object position), but not for the hypothetical infinitive, base-generated higher than Spec of CP. Licensing of parasitic gaps in (15) requires wh-movement in the matrix, which will then justify the abstract operator in the subordinated CP, that forms a chain with the co-indexed gap, as in (15b); since the hypothetical infinitive did not move to the respective position, it cannot trigger the operator-gap chain (15a). Finally, co-occurrence
of the hypothetical infinitive with the wh-element in (16a), and crossing over the
matrix clause in (17), also follow from lack of movement: in (16a) the wh-chain
created through movement of the wh-element to Spec of CP is the only chain
with quantificational features in the structure; in (17) lack of movement allows
the formation of an \( \bar{A} \)-chain across que. On the contrary, in (16b) both the
infinitive and the wh-element undergo movement to an \( \bar{A} \)-position, which leads
to concurrent wh-chains; this kind of crossing is generally excluded under the
Relativized Minimality condition, as formulated in Rizzi (1990).

3.2. CP versus IP infinitives in Top

The tests of the previous section have indicated that hypothetical infinitives
occupy a Top position (see tests in [9], [10], [11]), and that the placement of the
infinitive in this position entails base-generation, as opposed to movement (see
tests in [14] to [17]). The following series of tests will compare hypothetical
infinitives with selected infinitives generated in Top position, and will empha-
size their contrastive pattern with regard to constituents in preverbal positions.

Preverbal subjects occur in hypothetical constructions (18a), but not in
selected infinitives (18b) in Top, which are generated in this position:

(18) a. [Marie avoir trouvé un chum], j’aurais été contente.
Marie have-INF found a friend I have-COND been happy
‘If Marie had found a friend, I would’ve been happy.’

b. *[Marie avoir trouvé un chum], je le lui disais lui.
Marie have-INF found a friend I it say

The element de, usually generated in infinitive CP, may precede the hypo-
thetical (19a), but not the selected infinitive generated in Top (19c), although
de-CP is lexically selected by the verb (19b):

(19) a. Tu sais, ma Lauri, ben des fois, j’ai l’air d’un sans
you know my Lauri many of times I have the air of a without
cœur, mais [d’te voir comme ça], tomber en gondole.
heart but of you see-INF like that fall off a gondola
j’braillerais!
I bawl-COND
‘You know, my Lauri, many times I behave like a rough man, but
if I see you like that, falling apart, I would cry.’

(A. Dessureault-Descôt 162: Heading/Source: Projet de l’Estrie)

b. C’est agréable de marcher dans les forêts.
it is pleasant of walk-INF in the forests
‘Walking in the forests is pleasant.’
c. *[De marcher dans les forêts] c'est agréable.
of walk-INF in the forests it is pleasant

The tests in (18), (19) indicate that the internal structure of the infinitive clause in Top differs according to whether the clause is selected (that is, chain-related to an argumental position in the matrix) or non-selected (that is, the hypothetical infinitive). More precisely, the non-selected hypothetical infinitive allows for operations usually possible in CP clauses (that is, elements generated in CP, such as de) and in clauses with finite features (that is, lexical subjects). Conversely, the selected infinitive seems to correspond to an IP (that is, it disallows de) and is devoid of finite features (that is, it does not license lexical subjects). Hence, we draw a distinction between selected infinitives which surface in Top, and project to IPs, and non-selected infinitives, that is, the hypothetical constructions, which are generated in Top, and project to CPs. Further investigation on the internal structure of the hypothetical infinitive will consider that the nature of C-position in the independent context of Top has a decisive impact on the structure of the hypothetical clause, and accounts for the contrastive pattern illustrated in (18) to (19).

4. The [hypothetical] feature of C

The data in (1) to (5) show that a non-selected infinitive clause in Top position receives an obligatory hypothetical interpretation in Quebec French. Hypothetical, non-selected infinitives freely alternate with finite conditional clauses (1a, b), in the same structural context, as mentioned for (9) and (13). Furthermore, hypothetical infinitives project to CP, on a par with si-conditional clauses. These observations led us to the following hypothesis: a C-projection dominates both the infinitive and the conditional tense in the hypotactic construction, and the set of C-features includes the specification [+-hypothetical]. On one hand, the [hypothetical] feature of C excludes it from selected environments. On the other hand, the positive [hypothetical] feature requires a form of syntactic realization; this is possible either (i) through the insertion of a lexical item with the sole function to yield the “hypothetical” reading, that is si in French, or (ii) through I-to-C movement, so that the embedded inflection acquires the “hypothetical” value by merging with C, that is, the infinitive inflection in the constructions discussed above.

In order to support the claim that the same set of C-features select both si-conditional and hypothetical infinitives, we will review, first, the status of silse in Romance; then, we will discuss their relevance for the facts in Quebec French.
4.1. Optional se in Italian

The distinction between the two syntactic manifestations of [hypothetical] \( C \), such as proposed here, has been suggested for Italian conditional clauses, in Rizzi (1982). Let us review those facts. The complementizer \( se \) in Italian selects modal inflections (that is, subjunctive mood) and yields a hypothetical interpretation; lexical subjects in these constructions appear in preverbal position:

\[
\text{(20a)} \quad \text{Se lui avesse capito al volo, tutto sarebbe andato bene.}
\]

\[
\text{if he had understood immediately everything}
\]

\[
\text{have gone smoothly}
\]

In the context of (20a), \( se \) deletion triggers obligatory placement of the lexical subject after the auxiliary verb, as shown by the contrast between [(20b) versus (20c)]:

\[
\text{(20b)} \quad *0 \text{ lui avesce capito al volo, tutto sarebbe andato bene.}
\]

\[
\text{(20c)} \quad Avesse lui capito al volo, tutto sarebbe andato bene.}
\]

(Rizzi 1982: 84)

The data in (20) receives the analysis of Aux-to-Comp movement; deletion of \( se \) in (20c) permits the auxiliary to substitute to the empty C-position.

The Italian facts indicate that a tensed form, such as subjunctive, acquires hypothetical value only in two instances: (i) presence of \( se \), or (ii) Aux-to-Comp. In terms of Checking theory, the C-head of the clauses in (20) contains a [hypothetical] feature, which is checked either through lexical insertion or through I-to-C.

4.2. The complementizer \( si/se \) in Romance

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 of 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:

\[
\text{(21a)} \quad \text{Gianni non sà se andare al cinema.}
\]

\[
\text{John non knows if to go to cinema}
\]

\[
\text{‘John does not know if he should go to cinema.’}
\]

\[
\text{(21b)} \quad *\text{Marie ne sait pas si aller au cinema.}
\]

\[
\text{Mary not knows if to go to cinema}
\]
The contrast between Italian (21a) and French (21b) follows from the fact that the infinitive verb intervenes between *se* and PRO, and cancels the illicit government relation in Italian, whereas the same type of V-to-I movement does not apply in clitic-infinitive languages, like French.

4.3. *Si* and its non-lexical counterpart in Quebec French

Quebec French, on a par with standard French, does not allow for *si*-deletion, such as illustrated for Italian in (20). We attribute this restriction to independent factors, which disallow overt I-to-C in French tensed clauses in non-root context.

Also, as mentioned in section 4.2, *si* is incompatible with non-finite clauses, since it interferes with control on the non-lexical subject. Most hypothetical infinitives display control, in free alternation with lexical subjects; therefore, it is expected that *si* be excluded from these constructions.

Further comparison with Romance hypothetical CPs suggests that the hypothetical infinitive in Quebec French is the counterpart to Italian (20c): the complementizer is deleted, and the hypothetical reading is recovered through I-to-C. Although French does not allow I-to-C in tensed non-root clauses, this movement is obligatory in infinitive clauses, if we follow the arguments in Borer (1989). In both Quebec French and standard French, the infinitive verb moves to inflection and further to C in LF.\(^{11}\) As a result, the word order in hypothetical infinitives will differ from Italian (20c), where I-to-C is overt. That is, verb–subject inversion does not apply to hypothetical infinitives, as shown in (22):

\[(22)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{Si Camille avait été malade, je serais restée à la maison.} \\
& \text{‘Had Camille been sick, I would have stayed home.’}
\end{align*}
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{b. } & \text{Camille avoir été malade, je serais restée à la maison.} \\
& \text{Camille have-INF been sick I be-COND stayed in house}
\end{align*}
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{c. } & \text{*Avoir Camille été malade, je serais restée à la maison.} \\
& \text{have-INF Camille been sick I be-COND stayed in house}
\end{align*}
\]

The theoretical background presented in this section allows us to claim that infinitive–CP can function as the counterpart to *si*-conditionals, in as far as V-to-I-to-C is available to implement the checking procedure on C-features. However, V-to-I-to-C is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for infinitives

---

11. Belletti (1990) and Pollock (1989) argue that auxiliaries move overtly to I in French infinitives. Note, however, that I-to-C does not occur overtly, even with auxiliary verbs, and this explains the word order in (22).
to receive a hypothetical reading. As argued in section 3, the placement in Top is another crucial condition for the hypothetical interpretation. The interaction between the properties of the infinitive clause (that is, I-to-C) and the placement in Top ensures the conditions in which infinitive C can carry the [hypothetical] feature. Thus, C-head in infinitives generated in Top position qualifies as the non-lexical counterpart to si, with which it occurs in complementary distribution (that is, according to the finite/non-finite features of the inflection).

4.4. De in hypothetical infinitives

The examples in (9) have introduced hypothetical infinitives preceded by de. These structures display internal properties shared by de-infinitive clauses in any context. That is:

(i) Obligatory control

(23) a. *De pro sortir un peu, ça lui changerait les idées.
   be pro go out a bit this him change-COND the ideas
   ‘Going out for a while might change his ideas.’
   b. *De pro sortir un peu, ça changerait les idées.
   be pro go out a bit this change-COND the ideas

(ii) Exclusion of lexical subjects

(24) *De Jean sortir un peu, ça lui changerait les idées.
   be John go out a bit this him change-COND the ideas

(iii) Exclusion of movement to local Top position

(25) *De, au restaurant, sortir un peu, ça nous changerait les idées.
   be, at restaurant, go out a bit this us change-COND the ideas

The factors that trigger these properties in selected infinitives must also extend to the context of hypothetical infinitives. Two aspects in the syntax of de are relevant for the constructions discussed here:

(i) De appears only in the infinitives base-generated in Top, and not in the infinitive clauses which undergo movement (fronting or left-dislocation). This observation is consistent with the definition of hypothetical-infinitive placement in (12). Consider again (19), resumed as (26):

(26) *De marcher dans les forêts c’est agréable.
   be walk in the woods is pleasant
(ii) *De, unlike si, occupies Spec of CP, and does not interfere with control or with I-to-C, such as required in hypothetical CP:

(27) a. *De prendre un verre, ça passerait le temps.
of to take a glass this pass-COND the time
b. *Si prendre, ça passerait le temps.
if to take this pass-COND the time

Wh-phrases are also excluded, for other reasons (see note 12):

(28) *Quoi prendre, ça passerait le temps?
what to take this pass-COND the time

To sum up, it is argued that Spec of CP of hypothetical infinitives can host lexical elements, since C-head is non-lexical. However, only *de is allowed in this type of CP, whereas *si and wh-phrases are excluded. Section 5 will suggest that although wh-phrases do not interfere with control, the [wh] and the [hypothetical] features in C compete for the licensing of a Spec of CP, so that they must occur in complementary distribution.

5. The internal structure of hypothetical infinitives

This section will discuss the impact of the non-lexical C with [hypothetical] features on the structure of the infinitive clause. It will be argued that the hypothetical feature triggers finiteness in the infinitive clause; and that there is a need of functional identification for the “hypothetical mood”.

5.1. Against anaphoric tense

Licensing of lexical subjects, as in (6), (7), entails a case marking environment, which would ensure assignment of nominative Case in our constructions. The most recent version of Case theory (that is, Chomsky 1992) attributes the capacity for nominative Case to the [tense] features of I: T-head, specified for positive temporal value, amalgamates with the raising verb and checks the constituent in subject position for Case features, in a determined structural

---

12. Kayne (1991) provides tests showing that *de occupies Spec of CP: it does not interfere with control; it blocks raising to subject; it cannot occur with wh-phrases; it may allow clitic movement to the matrix clause, through C. On the other hand, wh-phrases must be excluded, since they suppose a local Spec–head relation, required by the [+wh] features in C. Local relations of the same type (that is, A–Spec–head) are obtainable only once within a maximal projection. Therefore, it is expected that C contains either [hypothetical] or [wh] features, since both features lead to an A–Spec–head relation.
configuration (that is, under a Spec-head relation, usually mediated by Agr). Since the positive value of T is crucial for the licensing of lexical subjects, it follows that this condition is met in hypothetical infinitives, such as illustrated in (6), (7). The main question to be addressed, then, is how does infinitive T acquire a positive value in hypothetical infinitives.

The temporal interpretation of the hypothetical infinitive depends on the value of matrix T. From this point of view, the tense of hypothetical infinitives seems to obey the pattern of selected non-tensed/non-finite clauses, where embedded T has anaphoric features and is locally bound by matrix T. Analyses along these lines have been proposed for subjunctive and infinitive clauses in Raposo (1987) and Terzi (1992) among others, and we refer the reader to those analyses for arguments and consequences of anaphoric tense. In as far as hypothetical infinitives are concerned, the realization of anaphoric binding on infinitive T seems to be, technically, impossible: in a configuration like (12), infinitive T falls outside the binding domain of matrix T. The standard assumption for such situations is the existence of a “connectivity” factor, which extends the control effect from matrix to left dislocated infinitives (see Cinque 1990); however, control is a less locally restricted process compared to anaphoric binding. Therefore, while assuming that control may extend to the hypothetical infinitives and apply to non-lexical subjects, such as mentioned for the examples in (2), anaphoric binding on T seems to be completely excluded.

5.2. 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 Top. From this point of view, the hypothetical infinitive resembles the infinitive used as a suppletive imperative in Romance languages, such as approached in Kayne (1992) and illustrated below:

(29) a. Non parlare 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 enables 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, that is, stà in Paduan (29b); the element stà is restricted to negative imperatives, as shown by the contrast with (29c):
(29)  b. Non stà parlare!
      not AUX to talk

c. *Stà parlare!
      AUX to talk

5.3. A temporal operator

Returning now to the hypothetical infinitive in Quebec French, 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 construction; 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] feature 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, in a specific context (that is, Top-position in Quebec French).

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

(30)  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 (30a) shows the hypothetical infinitive to behave as a correlated structure with respect to modal values, on a par with (30b), where the subordinated verb copies the values of the matrix verb.

(30)  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 hypothetical infinitives are also closely dependent on the tense value in the matrix (“concordance des temps”). In (31a), the matrix verb is present conditional and present infinitive is used. In (31b), the matrix verb is past conditional and the infinitive is also past:

(31)  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 value of the matrix verb is not restricted to conditional matrix verbs. As indicative may also express the hypothetical value, we expect to find hypothetical infinitives when the matrix verb is indicative, as shown in (5c) and (32):

(32)  

(a) Avoir pas su parler l’anglais, la maison partait en feu.  
have not known speak English the house go-INDIC in fire  
‘Had I been unable to speak English, the house would have burnt.’  

(b) Ma belle-mère, l’ amener à l’hôpital, dans une  
my mother-in-law her bring to the hospital in one  
semaine on l’ enterrer.  
week we her bury-INDIC  
‘As for my mother-in-law, if we bring her to the hospital, we would bury her the same week.’  

However, a matrix indicative verb, without the hypothetical value, turns the sentence ungrammatical, as shown in (33):

(33)  

(a) *Avoir pas su parler l’anglais, la maison partir 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  
my mother-in-law her bring to hospital in one  
semaine on l’ enterrer.  
week we her bury-IND/FUT

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

(34)  

(a) *Avoir gagné de l’ argent, je me demandais  
have made of the money I myself asked-IND/IMP  
if j’irais en Europe.  

(b) *Avoir gagné de l’ argent, je me demandais  
have made of the money I myself ask-IND/IMP  
if je serais allé en Europe.  

Note that in (34) the ungrammaticality is not due to the fact that the conditional verb is in a subordinate clause since sentence (35), with the tensed hypothetical conditional in a subordinate clause, is grammatical:

(35) 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 (30) to (35) show that a transfer of temporal and modal values take place in hypothetical infinitive constructions, which restricts 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 (36):

(36)

```
CP
  Spec
  Op
        C
        [+hypothetical]
    AgrP
```

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 (36).

The abstract operator in (36), co-indexed with matrix T, is chain-related to embedded T, to which it transfers the positive temporal value.

The structure in (36) 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 of CP can also license an abstract modal, which confers finiteness to the clause, along the line of the analysis in Kayne (1992).

5.4. Consequences of finiteness in hypothetical infinitives

This analysis gives a straightforward account for the presence of lexical subjects: positive features on T enables it to check the subjects for nominative Case features when V to I takes place (that is, at LF in Quebec French). Hence, the behavior of the subject position, illustrated in section 2, becomes predictable: it is compatible with both controlled null-pronominals, as in (2), (3), and with lexical DP, as in (7). A few remarks are in order with respect to the

---

13. The presence of *de* must not raise a problem for this analysis; *de* is devoid of semantic contents and becomes invisible in LF, where the checking procedure in (36) takes place.
The hypothetical infinitive in Quebec French

presence of strong pronouns in subject position, and, also, the occurrence of referential pro in the same position.

The examples in (6) show that strong pronouns occupy the subject position, on a par with lexical DP in (7). However, clitic pronouns are disallowed in the same context, although they should be allowed in as much as they count as lexical DP. Hence, the question why would the structure discriminate between strong versus clitic pronouns?

One possible answer is that Agr in hypothetical infinitives is devoid of “personal” features, and, thus, unable to license the clitic subject, in terms of Corver and Delfitto (1993). Strong pronouns do not need this type of licensing, and checking for nominative Case (due to the features on T) is sufficient to justify their presence.

Constructions such as (5) render this explanation inadequate: referential pro is present, while clitic subjects are disallowed. It seems, then, that Agr in hypothetical infinitives must have “personal” features, which are strong enough to identify pro. At this point, we consider that the speakers who accept (5) and (6) use Quebec French as a null-subject language, at least when they resort to hypothetical-infinitive structures. Note that the same speakers also accept atmospheric verbs with null subjects in hypothetical infinitives, as in (4), which is a property of null-subject languages. Along this line, absence of clitic pronouns from subject position is expected, since null-subject languages allow only strong pronouns in this position. The development of this hypothesis is beyond the goals of this paper (but see Martineau and Motapanyane 1995). To sum up this section, hypothetical-infinitive structures ensure the conditions for assignment of nominative Case, and license lexical subjects. The type of subjects that occur in free distribution suggest that hypothetical-infinitive structures display some null-subject language properties of Quebec French.

6. Conclusion

This paper considers the hypothetical infinitive in Quebec French as a quasi-independent clause, generated in Top, and which projects to CP. The [hypothetical] feature on C triggers several types of operations: (i) it licenses an abstract Operator in Spec of CP, under structural agreement; (ii) it triggers co-indexation of matrix and embedded T, so that the operator mediates the transfer of tense value; (iii) it triggers obligatory I to C, implemented at LF. The interaction of these operations creates a configuration in which nominative Case is available, and licensing of lexical subjects becomes possible.

Received 1 May 1994
Revised 12 January 1996

(Martineau) University of Ottawa
(Motapanyane) University of New Brunswick
References


