THE EVOLUTION OF COMPLEMENTS OF FRENCH CAUSATIVE AND PERCEPTION VERBS*

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1. Introduction
This paper examines the evolution of two types of complements of causative and perception verbs in French. In the first type of complements, the NP subject appears before the infinitival verb (1a,b). When the infinitival verb is transitive, the subject and object clitics bear the accusative case (1c):

(1) Construction 1: Preverbal NP subject construction

a. Full NP subject before the infinitival verb
   Jean laisse Marie dormir.
   Jean lets Marie sleep”

b. Accusative case assignment to the subject
   Jean laisse Marie manger la tarte.
   “Jean lets Marie eat the pie”

c. No object clitic climbing
   Jean la laisse la manger.
   “Jean lets her eat it”

In the second type of complements, the NP subject appears after the infinitival verb (2a,b). When the infinitival verb is transitive, the subject clitic bears the dative case and the object clitic bears the accusative case (2c). Clitic climbing of the object of the infinitival verb is prohibited in the first construction (1c), but is allowed in the second (2c).

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(2) Construction 2: Postverbal NP subject construction

a. Full NP subject after the infinitival verb
   Jean laisse dormir Marie.
   “Jean lets Marie sleep”

b. Dative case assignment to the subject
   Jean laisse manger la tarte à Marie.
   “Jean lets Marie eat the pie”

c. Object clitic climbing
   Jean la lui laisse manger.
   “Jean lets her eat it”

Table I shows that these constructions are used differently in Old, Middle and Modern French. Construction 1, which was almost only used with the perception verbs in Old French, began to be used with laisser in Middle French. On the other hand, Construction 2, which was used with causative and perception verbs in Old French, is mostly used with causative verbs in Modern French.

(3)  

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<th>Old French</th>
<th>Middle French</th>
<th>Modern French</th>
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<td>Causative Verbs</td>
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<td>Faire</td>
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<td>Laisser</td>
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<td>Perception Verbs</td>
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<td>Oïyr / Entendre</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ +/-</td>
<td>+ -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voir</td>
<td>+ +</td>
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Table I: Evolution of Constructions 1 and 2 with causative and perception verbs from Old to Modern French

Many changes affected the infinitival complements during the Middle French period, that is the 14th, 15th and early 16th centuries. I therefore investigated the structure of the infinitival complements of this period to determine the use of these two types of constructions. I conducted a systematic study of two Middle French texts, both entitled Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles. The first one was written in Burgundy, around 1462, by an anonymous author
who gathered short stories heard at the court of the Duke of Burgundy. The second text was written between 1505 and 1515 by Philippe de Vigneulles, a draper from the city of Metz in Lorraine. In section (2), I analyze three properties which distinguish the two types of constructions and compare their use in Old and Middle French. I examine the position of the full NP subject in section (2.1), accusative or dative case assignment to the subject in section (2.2), and object clitic climbing in section (2.3). Then, in section (3), the structure of the two types of constructions is analyzed and I show that the evolution is related to case assigning properties of the main verb linked to its semantic selection.

2. **Old and Middle French Infinitival Complements**

Let us examine the first property which distinguishes both types of constructions: the position of the full NP subject of the infinitival verb.

2.1 **Position of the NP subject of the infinitival verb**

In Old French constructions with causative and perception verbs, when the infinitival verb is intransitive, an NP subject can appear before or after an infinitival verb. Examples with a preverbal NP subject appear in (4).

(4) Old French / Intransitive Verbs
   a. *...ferat l’ost returner.*
      “he will make the army return” (*Roland*, 1060; St-Amour 1977:72)
   b. *La veitez tant chevaler plorer.*
      “There you see many knights weeping” (*Roland*, 349; Pearce 1985:88)

However, when the infinitival verb is transitive, the subject is seldom placed before the infinitival verb in Old French causative constructions. Sentences such as (5) are rare in Old French.

(5) Old French / Transitive Verbs
   *il li fera Le roi d’Engletiere donner Estrelins pour guerre mener.*
   “he will make the king of England give Estelin to him to make war” (*Mousket*, 20902, cited by Tobler 1883; VB I:207; de Kok 1985:236)

Because word order is freer in Old and Middle French than in Modern French, it is difficult to rely on this property to distinguish the two constructions, especially when the infinitival verb is intransitive. Sentence (6), for ex-
ample, may look as an instance of the preverbal NP subject construction but it
must be an instance of the postverbal NP subject construction since clitic
climbing has applied.

(6) *et en lairent l'ost aler.*
“and they would let the army leave” (Vill., I, 116; de Kok 1985:238)

However, even if word order is relatively free in Old and Middle French,
the fact that the subject of a transitive infinitival verb rarely appears before that
verb in causative constructions suggests that the position of the NP subject, be-
fore or after the infinitival verb, could shed light on the type of construction
used. I therefore examined the position of the NP subjects in the constructions
with causative and perception verbs, in both texts of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nou-
vellles.* The results are shown in (7).

(7) Intransitive verbs

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<tr>
<th>Causative Verbs</th>
<th>Transitive verbs</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% NP subject before</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the infinitival verb</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Faire</em></td>
<td>22% (16/72)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Laisser</em></td>
<td>9% (1/11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception Verbs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Oyr</em></td>
<td>73% (16/22)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Voir</em></td>
<td>64% (32/50)</td>
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Table II: Frequency of use of the NP subject before the infinitival verb
with the causative verbs faire and laisser and the perception verbs
oyer and voir in both texts of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*

Table II shows that when the infinitival verb is intransitive, the NP subject be-
haves differently with causative and perception verbs. With causative verbs,
the NP subject has a tendency to appear in a postverbal position:

(8) Causative Verbs / NP subject after the verb
a. *vous faites venir* le verlet du barbier nostre voisin.
“you send for the servant of the hairdresser, our neighbor”
(CNNV: 93/84)\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Numbers in parentheses refer, for *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles Anonymes* (CNNA), to the number of the page and the number of the line, and, for *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* by Vigneulles (CNNV), to the number of the story and the number of the line. I used a con-
cordance of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles Anonymes* established by Marc Wilmet of the
b. *et laissa aller* son oyseau *voulant à l’adventure.*
   “and he let his bird go, flying aimlessly” (CNNV: 20/50)

On the other hand, with perception verbs, the NP subject has a tendency to appear before the intransitive infinitival verb:

(9) Perception Verbs / NP subject before the verb
a. *Et la jeune espousée, oyant le college des femmes ainsi parler...*
   “And the young spouse, hearing the group of women talking in this way...” (CNNA: 472/60)
b. *il vit le curé venir tantost après...*
   “he saw the priest come just after...” (CNNA: 493/50)

However, when the infinitival verb is transitive, the two causative verbs *faire* and *laisser* and the two perception verbs *ouyr* and *voir* do not follow the same pattern. Table II shows that, in this context, *faire* is used in the construction with a postverbal NP subject but *laisser* has a tendency to be used in the construction with a preverbal NP subject (10, 11). Similarly, *voir* is used in the construction with a preverbal NP subject whereas *ouyr* is often found in the construction with a postverbal NP subject (12, 13).

(10) Faire / NP subject after the verb
   *nous le ferons payer* a ceulx de la campagnie.
   “we will make those of the group pay for it” (CNNA: 376/94)

(11) Laisser / NP subject before the verb
   *Or nous lairrons ycy nostre mary sercher compagnie.*
   “thus we will let our husband look here for company” (CNNA:528/64)

(12) Ouyr / NP subject after the verb
   *les parolles qu’il avoit ouy dire* au tanneur.
   “the words he had heard the tanner say” (CNNV: 20/83)

(13) Voir / NP subject before the verb
   *car j’ay veu ung poisson qu’on appelle bachet prendre ung lievre.*
   “because I saw a fish known as a pike catch a hare” (CNNV: 55/14)

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Université Libre de Bruxelles as well as a concordance of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* by Yigneulles established by Paul Hirschbühler of the University of Ottawa.

2 The perception verb *ouyr* is different from other perception verbs such as *percevoir* or *entendre* which, like *voir*, are usually used in the preverbal NP subject construction in Old, Middle and Modern French. In the study I conducted, the postverbal NP subject construction is used with *ouyr* when the infinitival verb is *dire* or *conter* in sentences such as *de ouyr compter à Loys la male nuict qu’il avoit eu* “to hear Loys tell the bad night he had” (CNNV: 99/338); otherwise, the preverbal NP subject construction is used.
Examination of the position of the full NP subject shows that faire is clearly identified with the postverbal NP subject construction. This particular status of faire is confirmed by the study of the case assigned to the subject which is discussed in the next section.

2.2 Case Assigned to the Subject of the Infinitival Verb

Elizabeth Pearce (1985) examined in detail the assignment of the case to the subject in constructions with causative and perception verbs in Old French. I have compared her results with those I obtained.

(14)  

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<th>Intransitive Verbs</th>
<th>Transitive Verbs</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% dative subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Causative Verbs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faire</td>
<td>2% (3/19)</td>
<td>1% (2/166)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laisser</td>
<td>1% (1/91)</td>
<td>2% (1/41)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception Verbs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ouyr</td>
<td>0% (0/29)</td>
<td>0% (0/33)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voir</td>
<td>0% (0/140)</td>
<td>0% (0/81)</td>
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Table III: Comparison of the frequency of use of the dative subject with the causative verbs faire and laisser and the perception verbs ouyr and voir in Old French (Pearce 1985:96, 97) and in both texts of Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles

Let us first consider the case assigned to the subject when the infinitival verb is intransitive. As shown in Table III, with causative and perception verbs, the subject of an intransitive infinitival verb generally bears the accusative case in Old and Middle French:

(15) Old French / Accusative Case

a. *et les fiest la yvernir.*
   “and he made them pass the winter there” (*Fet des R.*, 192; 7; Pearce 1985:82)

b. *Mais il l’a oï de loin plaintre.*
   “But he heard him moan from far away” (*Renart*, 702; St-Amour 1983:340)

(16) Middle French / Accusative Case

a. *pour les faire retourner.*
   “to make them return” (CNNV: 87/36)

b. *quand il les vit rire en ce point.*
   “when he saw them laugh so much” (CNNA: 188/211)
The subject of an intransitive infinitival verb almost always bears the accusative case, regardless of the structure in which it appears. Therefore the only examples which clearly permit us to distinguish between the two constructions are those where the infinitival verb is transitive. In the construction with a preverbal NP subject, the subject bears the accusative case (see 1b, c). In the construction with a postverbal NP subject, the subject bears the dative case (see 2b, c).

Table III shows that with causative and perception verbs, the subject of a transitive infinitival verb generally bears the dative case in Old French:

**Old French**

(17) Causative Verbs / Dative Case
- *et fet tendre le paveillon sur la rive a deus serjanz.*
  
  "and he makes two servants put up the tent on the shore" (*Queste*, 108, 26; St-Amour 1983:339)
- *Bien lur deit hum laisser lur custumes tenir.*
  
  "well must one let them keep their customs" (*Becket*, 2787; Pearce 1985:88)

(18) Perception Verbs / Dative Case
- *Quant li vallet li virent prendre / Le facon...*
  
  "when the servants saw him catch the hawk..." (*Escoufle*, 6720; Pearce 1985:174)
- *A juggleurs oï en m'effance chanter / que Guillaume fust jadis Osmon essorber.*
  
  "in my childhood I heard troubadours sing that Guillaume formerly had Osmont blinded" (*Rou*, 1361-2; Pearce 1985:88)

In Middle French, the subject still bears the dative case with *faire*. However, *laisser* and the perception verbs are used less and less with a dative subject:

**Middle French**

(19) Faire / Dative Case
- *il lui faisoit vestir ung tres beau jaserant.*
  
  "he made him wear a very nice armor" (CNNA: 278/19)

(20) Laisser / Accusative Case
- *on ne l'a pas laissée paier son disme.*
  
  "they did not let her pay her tithe" (CNNA: 218/116)

(21) Voir / Accusative Case
- *...elle ne l'eust onques veu exercer les faiz de clergie.*
  
  "...she had never seen him act as a priest" (CNNA: 569/463)
(22) Ouyt / Accusative Case

j’ay ouy de mon lit les porceaux rompre leurs ren.

“from my bed I heard the pigs free themselves from their bonds”
(CNNV: 47/57)

We have seen in this section that again, faire is clearly associated with the
postverbal NP subject construction. The changes occurring in the language
concern the perception verbs and laisser. These verbs are progressively more
often associated with the preverbal NP subject construction in Middle French.
Let us now examine object clitic climbing.

2.3 Object Clitic Climbing

Object clitics climb to a position before the main verb in the construction
with a postverbal NP subject but remain in front of the infinitival verb in the
construction with a preverbal NP subject (1c, 2c). Object clitic climbing in the
construction with causative and perception verbs can thus serve to determine
the type of complement used in Middle French.

With both classes of verbs, the object clitic of the infinitival verb almost
always climbs before the main verb, as in (23, 24).

(23) Causative Verbs / Object Clitic Climbing

a. ce prebtre la fist mener en son hostel.

“this priest made her be led to his house” (CNNV: 8/26)

b. et le laissa incontinant savoir audit Colin.

“and he let the aforementioned Colin know it immediately”
(CNNV: 94/73)

(24) Perception Verbs / Object Clitic Climbing

a. mesmement qu’elle l’oyoit priser et renomer pour le plus sage
de toute la cité.

“she even heard he was considered as the most sensible person of
all the city”(CNNA: 569/465)

b. il les vouloit voir aprestier luy mesmes.

“he wanted to see them be prepared himself” (CNNV: 80/24)

In contrast with what could have been expected, the object clitic rarely appears
before the infinitival verb in the constructions with laisser and the perception
verbs. I have found only four occurrences of an object clitic before an infinitival verb in Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles. They are given in (25).³

(25) No Object Clitic Climbing
   a. ains les laissa en aller.
      "thus he let them go" (CNNV: 61/31)
   b. Quant Jehan Richard l’en veit en aller.
      "When Jehan Richard saw him leave" (CNNV: 25/72)
   c. à ceux qu’i veoit y avoir devotion.
      "to those he saw had worship for it" (CNNV: 35/32)
   d. ilz oyersent la voix du par avant arrière les hucher tres aiement.
      "they heard the voice from behind hurl insults very harshly to
      them" (CNNA: 276/98)

However, these results are not so surprising if we take into account the fact that in Old and Middle French, the object clitic cannot, in general, remain before the infinitival verb and must climb before the main verb. This constraint reduces the number of object pronouns which can appear before the infinitival verb in the constructions with causative and perception verbs. The constraint on the placement of object clitics begins to weaken during the Middle French period and we shall note that none of the four occurrences in (25) appear with faire.

3. Structure of the Constructions with Causative and Perception Verbs

The examination of three properties of the constructions with causative and perception verbs in Old and Middle French shows that with faire, the construction with a postverbal NP subject continues to be systematically used in Middle French. However, with laisser and the perception verbs, the construction with a preverbal NP subject begins to be used more frequently. I will now discuss the structure of these two constructions, starting by the postverbal NP subject construction.

Since the infinitival complement in the construction with a postverbal NP subject shows neither an INFL feature nor an AGR feature, I shall adopt the hypothesis that the infinitival complement does not project to IP and that faire takes a VP complement. This analysis is slightly different from the approach

³ The four occurrences in (25) show that the presence of the object clitic before the infinitival verb is still exceptional in Middle French. Nevertheless, for the four occurrences found, clitic climbing could have well applied but has not (including (25a, b) with the verbal expression en aller).
adopted in Martineau (1989, 1990) where I propose that the infinitival complement in postverbal NP subject constructions is an IP complement (cf. Kayne 1975; Rouveret & Vergnaud 1980, and Zubizarreta 1985, among others, for a sentential analysis of the causative constructions). However, I still maintain that movement of the lower VP applies in the postverbal NP subject constructions. I also adopt the hypothesis of Koopman & Sportiche (1988) and Sportiche (1988) that the subject of the infinitival clause is base-generated under V^n where "V^n is a small clause with VP as predicate and NP* as subject" (Sportiche 1988:425).

(26) *et qu'i les feroit oster au mairlier.

"he would make the carpenter take them away" (CNNV: 7/1)

The main verb *faire* functions as an auxiliary and as such, is not a case assigner. Moreover, the embedded subject cannot receive case from INFL [-tense]. Therefore, it is the application of the VP movement that allows the assignment of a case to the embedded NP subject under V^n.

We have seen that perception verbs were used relatively frequently in the preverbal NP subject construction in Old French. I propose that the infinitival complement of these verbs is a sentential complement and I shall claim that the complement is an IP. Contrary to infinitival complements of *faire*, infinitival complements of perception verbs may show an INFL feature. For instance,

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4 As expected if the construction is not an instance of an incorporation process in the sense of Baker (1988), only the main verb is negated (2) or moved in interrogative structures (1).

(1) a. *On ne fera pas partir Jean.
   b. *On ne fera partir pas Jean.
   "We will not make John leave"

(2) a. *Fera-t-il partir Marie?
   b. *Fera partir-il Marie?
   "Will he make Mary leave"
negation particles can appear in the preverbal NP subject construction but not in the postverbal NP subject construction:

(27) a. *On a fait ne pas boire Jean.
    “We made John not to drink” (Kayne 1977:222)

b. ?Il a laissé / vu ses enfants ne pas aller à l’école.
    “He let / saw his children not to go to school” (Ibid.)

The fact that the NP subject precedes the negation particles in (27b), ses enfants ne pas aller à l’école, suggests that the NP subject of the infinitival verb is moved from the specifier position of VP to the specifier position of IP in the construction with a preverbal NP subject. The main verb assigns the accusative case to the NP subject since IP is not an inherent barrier (Chomsky 1986). In this construction, the lower VP constituent does not need to be moved since the NP subject receives its case directly from the main verb.

We have also seen that one of the differences between Old and Middle French is the more frequent use of the NP subject before the transitive infinitival verb in Middle French. I propose that Middle French differs from Old French by the use of an IP complement in the causative constructions with laisser.

If this analysis is correct, it suggests that the more frequent use of the construction with the NP subject before the infinitival verb in Middle French is linked to a change in the case-assigning properties of the verb associated with a change of its categorial property, from an auxiliary taking a VP complement to a full verb taking a sentential complement. Recall that in Construction 1, the embedded NP subject moved in the specifier position of IP receives its case from the main verb, a case assigner. However, in Construction 2, the embedded NP subject in the specifier position of VP receives its case from the infinitival verb since the main verb is not a case-assigner. In light of this proposal, we can look at (3).

The perception verbs were optional case assigners in Old French and later became obligatory case assigners; laisser was not a case assigner and later became an optional case assigner; finally, faire was not a case assigner and has remained so. The evolution of the two types of constructions seems to be linked to a strengthening of case assignment. This hypothesis predicts that faire, which is not a case assigner, will eventually become an optional case as-
signer. This seems to be borne out by Modern French sentences such as (28) where the construction with the preverbal NP subject is marginally accepted.5

(28) a. *la lueur d’angoisse qui réveille le tigre et lui fait dévorer le dompteur.*
   "the glimmer of anguish that wakes the tiger up and makes it devour the tamer" (Bailard 1982: 52)

   b. *la lueur d’angoisse qui réveille le tigre et le fait dévorer le dompteur.*
   "the glimmer of anguish that wakes the tiger up and makes it devour the tamer" (Massip; Bailard 1982:52)

This hypothesis raises a last question: why faire did not change its case-assigning properties whereas other verbs did during the Middle French period? In other words, why this syntactic change from VP to IP complement did not affect faire? A complete answer to this question would need much more work on the evolution of this verb from Old to Modern French. However, I think that part of the answer is given by the semantic content of faire.

According to Rochette (1988), based on Grimshaw (1979), the semantic selection of a verb is closely linked to its syntactic realization. Rochette proposes that the syntactic realization of an ‘action’ is a projection of V but that the syntactic realization of an ‘event’ is a projection of INFL. I want to suggest that contrary to *laisser* and the verbs of perception which select an event, faire usually selects an action.6 We can let something happen but we force or make someone do an action. Consequently, the subject of the infinitival verb in the causative construction with faire is often perceived as an experiencer or a patient. The fact that the dative clitic is often associated with an experiencer or a patient thematic role probably favors the use of the postverbal NP subject construction with faire. For instance, use of the preverbal NP subject construction is much more marginal when the experiencer status of the subject is strongly underlined. Compare (28b) with sentence (29) where the subject of the infinitival verb *apprécier* is an experiencer.

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5 This construction has been studied in great detail by Hyman & Zimmer (1975), Dorel (1978) and Manandise & Manandise (1983), among others.

6 Anne-Marie di Sculillo, in a paper presented at the Fourth Symposium on Romance Languages and Linguistics (May 1990, Utrecht, Netherlands) observed that *faire* (or *faire* in French) and its NP complement often expressed an action rather than a state. Compare for instance the sentences with faire and its complement with their verbal counterparts:

(1) a. *Je fais une sculpture / Je sculpe.*

   b. *Je fais une présentation / Je présente.*
(29) ?? Je me multipliais pour le faire apprécier la rue provinciale.
    "I was doing my best to make him appreciate the provincial street"
    (Bailard 1982:60)

To conclude, I have shown that during the Middle French period, use of
the preverbal NP subject construction increases with laisser and the verbs of
perception as a result of changes having affected their case-assigning prop-
ties. Faire has remained a non case assinger, due to its semantic selection. The
evolution of complements of French causative and perception verbs shows the
close link between the syntactic subcategorization and the semantic selection of
verbs.

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