

## ***A Movement Analysis of French Modal Ellipsis***

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How are French modal ellipsis (FME) sentences like (1) represented in syntax?

- (1) Elle voulait venir me voir, mais elle n'a pas pu [ ].  
she wanted to-come me to-see but she NEG-has not been-able  
'She wanted to come and see me, but she wasn't able to.'

As Dagnac (2010) has shown, sentences like (1) allow syntactic extraction out of the elision site (cf. the ACD configuration in (2)).

- (2) Ils m'ont envoyé tout l'argent qu'ils ont pu [ ].  
they me-have sent all the-money that-they have been-able  
'They sent me all the money they could.'

Data such as (2) weigh heavily in favor of a PF-deletion approach to FME because they suggest that the ellipsis site has inner structure and therefore provides an extraction site that would remain unavailable under a pro-form approach such as those in Depiante (2001) and Cecchetto & Percus (2006). In this paper, I will explore a novel formulation of licensing conditions on FME inspired by Johnson's (2001) proposal that English elided VPs stand in a topic position. The gist of my analysis of FME is that it reduces to topicalization of an infinitival clause with both the head and the tail of the chain created by Move not being spelled out phonologically (cf. (3)) or with only part of the head of the chain being spelled out (what Busquets and Denis (2001) name French "Pseudo-Gapping" - cf. (4)).

- (3) [~~PRO aller au cinéma avec elle~~], [je veux bien [~~PRO aller au cinéma avec elle~~]].  
to-go to-the movies with her I want fine to-go to-the movies with her  
(4) [~~PRO aller au cinéma avec elle~~], [je veux pas [~~PRO aller au cinéma avec elle~~]].  
to-go to-the movies with her I want not to-go to-the movies with her

French is usually taken to not have English-style topicalization because dislocated NPs are "clitic-doubled." There is, however, a notable exception to this general ban: infinitival clauses can appear in a left-dislocated position and be linked directly to a gap, provided that they are introduced in the complement position of those verbs that license modal ellipsis as (5) illustrates.

- (5) a. Elle m'a dit que *fumer dans les couloirs*, on peut pas [ ].  
she to-me-has said that to-smoke in the hallways one can not  
b. \*Eric dit ne pas aimer le caviar, mais *aimer le champagne*, il dit [ ].  
Eric says NEG not to-like the caviar but to-like the champagne he says

Further, the phenomenon in (5a) displays a crucial characteristic of English VP topicalization, namely that topicalization of a phrase contained in an infinitival is possible only if that phrase can move out of the infinitival that contains it and find a finite clause to land in (cf. (6a) where the infinitival, being an adjunct, is an island to extraction).

- (6) a. \*Paul a téléphoné pour [*obtenir son visa plus rapidement*, pouvoir [ ]].  
Paul has phoned to to-obtain his visa more quickly to-be-able  
b. *Soulever ce sac de ciment tout seul*, tu risques pas de pouvoir [ ]!  
to-lift this bag of cement all alone you are-likely not of to-be-able

Given my analysis, we therefore correctly predict that FME becomes illicit in infinitivals that are islands to extraction (cf. (7)).

- (7) \*Arnold a blessé son petit frère sans vouloir [ ].  
Arnold has hurt his little brother without to-want

Finally, we correctly expect French to not have VP ellipsis (since the latter is parasitic on VP topicalization and VP topicalization is disallowed in French) and English to not license French-

type modal ellipsis (since it does not allow topicalization of an infinitival clause complement to a modal verb taking a clausal complement, as (8) shows).

(8) \*[PRO to go to Spain]<sub>i</sub>, Anne wants t<sub>i</sub>.

## References

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