

# The morpho-syntactic status of *ne* and its effect on the syntax of imperative sentences

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## ABSTRACT

This article argues that there is compelling evidence that French *ne*, even in dialects that still have this particle, is no longer negative, does not determine the scope of negation with respect to other operators, does not have properties of a head (optionality), and therefore cannot be analysed as the head of NEGP in Modern Standard French. Rather, *ne* should be considered as an affix merged to a Tense projection (TNSP) endowed with sub-label features of polarity. This article argues that this proposal provides a unified solution for the distributional properties of *ne* in finite and non-finite contexts alike. It especially provides an explanation for the structure of French negative imperatives, which are characterised by the proclisis of argument clitics (*ne le prends pas* ‘don’t take it’), crucially linked to properties of Tense, as opposed to their enclisis in positive imperatives (*prends-le* ‘take it’) and in spoken registers where *ne* is absent (*prends-le pas* ‘don’t take it’).

## I. INTRODUCTION\*

Set within the generative framework of the Minimalist Program (MP) (Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2001; Pesetsky & Torrego, 2001, 2007), the present article analyses the syntax of imperative sentences in Modern Standard French and across vernacular varieties of French in Europe and Canada. This sentence type offers a rich testing ground for hypotheses on the properties of both the negative particle *ne* and on pronominal argument clitics as these linguistic items interact in interesting and distinct ways across closely related language varieties: we see enclitics used for pronominal arguments in positive imperatives (*prends-les* ‘take them’), but in negative imperatives, Modern Standard French procliticises pronominal arguments

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(*ne les prends pas* ‘don’t take them’), while they remain enclitics in Quebec French (*prends-les pas* ‘don’t take them’). Essentially, this article argues that there is compelling evidence that French *ne*, even in dialects that still have this particle, is no longer negative, and therefore cannot be analysed as the head of NEG<sub>P</sub>. Rather, *ne* should be considered an affix merged to the Tense projection (TNSP) endowed with uninterpretable features of polarity. This proposal provides a unified solution for the distributional properties of *ne* in finite and non-finite contexts alike as compared to the distribution of clitics. It especially provides an explanation of the structure of French imperatives crucially linked to the properties of the functional category TNS in distinct varieties of European and Canadian French, and extends this approach to account for restrictions on passive imperatives, and infinitival root sentence with injunctive meaning.

The article is organised as follows: section 2 briefly introduces the syntactic framework of the MP and distinguishes between feature interpretability and feature valuation. Section 3 presents the view of sentential negation in French argued for in Péters (1999) in which *ne* is a Tense affix constituting the realisation of a sub-label of the Tense (TNS) functional category and *pas* (‘not’) is an inherently negative adverb merged in the specifier of the highest vP to express sentential negation. Section 4 introduces assumptions on the imperative sentence type, assuming overt verb movement to the COMP functional category and the presence of a defective Tense category. Section 5 develops a syntactic approach to the distribution and co-occurrence of pronominal argument clitics in French based on Laenzlinger (1993, 1994), Cardinaletti and Starke (1999), Roberts (2010) and others, assuming that clitics are deficient pronouns with respect to Case and prosody, required to lean on a verbal host at Spell Out. Section 6 synthesises the previous theories to provide an account of the syntax of imperatives across varieties of French with respect to the pre and post-verbal position of clitics in interaction with sentential negation in this sentence type. Section 7 extends the account to passive imperatives in different varieties as well as to infinitival directives in Standard French. Finally, section 8 draws some conclusions and suggests avenues of future investigation.

## 2. SYNTACTIC FRAMEWORK

Within the generative framework and the MP (Chomsky, 1995, 2000, 2001), a sentence is constructed by the operation ‘Merge’ applying to lexical items selected from an initial array of lexical items (a numeration). This approach is derivational in the sense that there are no independent levels of syntactic representation, such as ‘Deep’ or ‘Surface’ structure, instead the lexical and functional items manipulated by the computational system of the faculty of language (in a narrow sense, FLN) are entirely constituted of syntactic and semantic features that must be interpreted at the interfaces of Logical Form (LF) and Phonetic Form (PF) interacting respectively with the Conceptual-intentional and Articulatory-perceptual systems of the faculty of language (in a broad sense, FLB) (Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch, 2002). At various

points in the derivation (known as ‘phases’), the derivation splits thanks to the operation ‘Spell Out’ such that one branch is sent towards PF for phonetic ‘interpretation’, while the other branch continues the derivation towards LF. In the spirit of Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz, 1993), phonetic features are introduced post-syntactically.<sup>1</sup>

In order to account for movement and agreement properties of human languages in a unified manner, Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001) establishes a distinction between interpretable morpho-syntactic features (*iF*) and uninterpretable (*uF*) ones. The latter must be deleted by the operation ‘Agree’ before the derivation reaches the interface level of LF. Agreement occurs between a ‘Probe’ feature and one or several ‘Goals’ that contain matching features. An unvalued feature *F* (a probe) on a head *H* scans its *c*-command domain for another instance of *F* (a goal) with which to agree. If the goal has a value, its value is assigned as the value of the probe. Movement is but a special case of feature agreement when the probe has so-called EPP properties that trigger the immediate attraction and re-merging of the goal (and its containing category), to the head (or to a projection of the head) containing the probe. The consequence of this conception of ‘Move’ as a special case of ‘Agree’ is that movement is always triggered, and never optional. According to Chomsky, features unvalued at the interface are delinquent and, in order for a derivation to converge, must be eliminated through valuation in the most economical way.

Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) propose to distinguish interpretability from valuation and reinterpret the Agree relation as feature valuation. This modification provides for a wider range of agreement relationship as both uninterpretable and interpretable features can be valued or unvalued. Only unvalued features, whether interpretable or not, can serve as probe. For instance, as they argue, the category Tense has an interpretable and unvalued [*iT*\_] feature whose value is normally established by the form of the verb, the verb containing a valued (for instance, + PAST) but uninterpretable sub-label [*uT*: +PAST] feature.

### 3. SENTENTIAL NEGATION IN FRENCH

The most influential proposal concerning the syntax of sentential negation within the generative framework has been the NEGP hypothesis presented in Pollock (1989), with *ne* as head of the negative projection containing *pas* in its specifier, and developed in Belletti (1990), Zanuttini (1991, 1997), Haegeman (1995), Rowlett (1998), among others:

1. [<sub>TNSP</sub> TNS [<sub>NEGP</sub> *pas* [<sub>NEG</sub> *ne*] [<sub>AGRP</sub> AGR [<sub>VP</sub> V]]]

<sup>1</sup> This post-syntactic vocabulary insertion means that there is no principled difference between clitics and affixes, except that affixes are initially merged on functional heads, while clitics are initially merged on lexical heads (Embick & Noyer, 2001: 550). We will see however that (lexical) clitics move to functional heads in the course of the derivation.

This proposal is integrated in the more general split-IP hypothesis that has allowed researchers to better understand the clause structure of sentences across languages and it formalises the link that exists between the bipartite negation *ne* and *pas* ('not') in French, by generating them together in a single projection. There are however well known difficulties with the NEGP proposal as applied to French (Péters, 1999).

First, the expected order '*pas + ne*' is never grammatical even in non-finite tenses:

2. a. Ne pas voir ce film serait une erreur.  
 NEG not see-INF this movie be-COND a mistake.  
 'Not to see this movie would be a mistake.'
- b. \*Pas ne voir ce film serait une erreur.  
 Not NEG see-INF this movie be-COND a mistake.

Pollock (1989) and Belletti (1990) propose to treat *ne* as a clitic raising to Tense, but while the negative particle indeed patterns with argument clitics in finite clauses (*ne me les*), it doesn't in infinitive clauses:

3. a. Il ne me les donne pas.  
 He NEG me-DAT them-ACC give-PRES not.  
 'He doesn't give them to me.'
- b. Ne probablement pas me le donner est souhaitable.  
 NEG probably not me-DAT it-ACC give-INF is desirable.  
 'Probably not to give it to me is a good idea.'

A more serious difficulty is that the supposed head of negation is in fact redundant, optional and sometimes expletive (Péters, 1999: 110–12). This is a puzzling observation for an element supposed to be the centre of sentential negation. It is redundant as it is not allowed without a negative 'auxiliary', such as *pas*.<sup>2</sup> It is generally omitted in spoken French as shown in numerous sociological surveys on the topic (Coveney, 1996, and others). Finally, it is expletive in chosen contexts in formal registers (see example 4.b):<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Other negative auxiliaries are the so-called n-words (Zanuttini, 1991): *jamais* ('never'), *personne* ('no one'), *aucun* + NP ('no + NP'), etc. The treatment of these negative auxiliaries is beyond the scope of this article, but one could assume that an empty Operator replaces *pas*, as in Rowlett (1998).

<sup>3</sup> As pointed out by a reviewer, this was not always the case as *ne* was diachronically the actual negator of the sentence, and this usage subsists in formal / literary varieties of French and in a series of expressions such as: *N'ayez crainte* ('do not be afraid'), *je ne saurais le dire* ('I couldn't say') (Grevisse, 1969). This is an issue of linguistic evolution known as the Jespersen's cycle (1917) in which a head-like negative element weakening over time must be supported by an adjunct negative auxiliary progressively taking over the full force of sentential negation. See section 6 for some discussion.

4. a. Je (*ne*) regarde \*(*pas* / *jamais*) la télé.  
I (NEG) watch (not / never) the tv.  
'I don't / never watch tv.'  
b. Je doute qu'il (*ne*) parte.  
I doubt that he (NEG) leave-SUBJ.  
'I doubt that he will leave.'

Even more importantly, *ne* makes no contribution to the interpretation of negation as its satellite *pas* entirely determines the scope of negation and its grammaticality with respect to other adverbials (Péters, 1999: 112):

5. Paul (*souvent/probablement*) n'a (*souvent/probablement*) *pas* (*souvent/\*probablement*) compris.  
Paul (often/probably) NEG has (often/probably) not (often/probably) understood.  
'Paul (often/probably) hasn't (often) understood.'

For example in (5), the acceptability of the epistemic adverb *probablement* and the interpretation of the frequentative *souvent* depend on their respective position to the left or the right of *pas*, and not on their position with respect to *ne*.

Yet, the negative particle *ne* closely patterns with Tense (see Zanuttini, 1996) as can be seen in TNS-to-COMP movement leading to a subject-verb inversion configuration:

6. N'est-il pas parti?  
NEG is he not gone  
'Didn't he leave?'

To account for these properties, Péters (1999) proposes that the negative particle *ne* is directly inserted on the Tense functional category in cases of sentential negation. This hypothesis directly accounts for the position of *ne* within finite and non-finite sentences, and for the essentially pre-verbal nature of *ne* (Zanuttini, 1991, 1996, 1997).

Within the current framework, this idea is formalised by proposing that Tense has an uninterpretable and unvalued sub-label negative feature [*u*Neg<sub>-</sub>]. Valuation and checking via agreement with a matching feature from the checking domain is therefore required for the derivation to converge. The current proposal considers *ne* as the affixal instantiation of this unvalued polarity feature, sub-label of TNS. It is merged to the left of TNS, and attaches to any lexical material to its right.<sup>4</sup> This proposal allows us to centre negation on the truly negative marker *pas* (or possibly its empty variant when negation is expressed with n-words, as in Rowlett, 1998).

In contrast to *ne*, *pas* ('not') is an inherently negative adverb. I therefore assume that it is endowed with an interpretable and valued [+NEGATIVE] feature:

<sup>4</sup> The choice of insertion of an overt *ne* or its phonologically empty variant depends on the phonological and lexical context surrounding it, as well as on the formality of the situation of communication.

[iNeg:+NEGATIVE]. However, it cannot be considered the head of NEGP as there is ample evidence that *pas* has properties of XP phrases, most notably in instances of constituent negation, when merged in the specifier of other categories: for example, a Prepositional or a Verbal Phrase:

7. a. Quoique vraiment pas comme les autres. ...  
 Although really not like the others  
 ‘Although really not like the others. . .’
- b. Ils ont tous été pas acceptés à l’examen. (Péters, 1999: 118, example 16.b)  
 They have all been not accepted at the exam  
 ‘They were all not accepted at the exam.’

The ability of *pas* to express sentential negation depends on the timing of its merging within the derivation. Assuming that the position of the floating quantifier *tous* (‘all’) is akin to an overt trace of subject movement within the VP-internal Subject Hypothesis (Sportiche, 1988), (8.a) shows that *pas* must be merged to the left of the VP-internal insertion point of the subject.<sup>5</sup>

8. a. Les enfants (ne) sont (\*tous) pas (tous) venus.  
 The children (NEG) are (\*all) not (all) come.  
 ‘The children haven’t all come.’
- b. Ils (n’) ont pas tous été acceptés à l’examen.  
 They (NEG) have not all been accepted at the exam.  
 ‘They haven’t all been accepted at the exam.’

Furthermore, (8.b) compared to (7.b) shows that, in order to be sentential, that is, to have sentential scope over the subject and the predicate (with its internal arguments), *pas* must be associated with the highest verb endowed with Tense features, in this case, the auxiliary verb *avoir* (‘have’) in the complex VP structure.

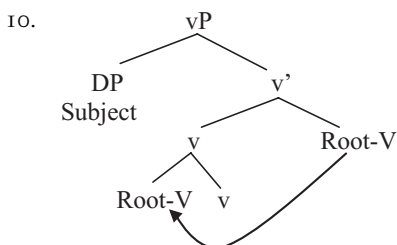
There are two options to account for these facts: either one merges *pas* in the Spec. of a separate NEGP with an empty head, or assumes that *pas* is merged in the specifier of the highest verbal projection, that is, the vP projection in a verbal complex:



<sup>5</sup> Assuming that *pas* can have scope over an element if it c-commands that element or one of its traces, the merging of *pas* above the VP-internal Subject position also allows the negation to have wide scope over the subject when the quantifier raises alongside the subject as in *Tous les enfants ne sont pas venus* (‘All the children haven’t come’) whose most natural interpretation is ‘Not all the children have come.’

In a framework that allows for the merging of multiple specifiers at no extra cost for the computational system, the second solution seems more appealing. This solution also allows us to avoid an unmotivated lexical ambiguity between an XP constituent *pas* and an X sentential *pas*.<sup>6</sup>

For the representation of the verbal predicate, I assume a complex shell structure headed by a light verb *v* (Chomsky, 1995). The light verb has agentive properties and hosts the VP-internal subject of transitive and unergative verbs in its specifier. More generally, within Distributed Morphology, each syntactic structure should contain a morpho-syntactic head that turns a category-neutral root selected from the numeration into a lexical category (Halle & Marantz, 1993): *v* turns a root into a verb that immediately adjoins to the light verb.

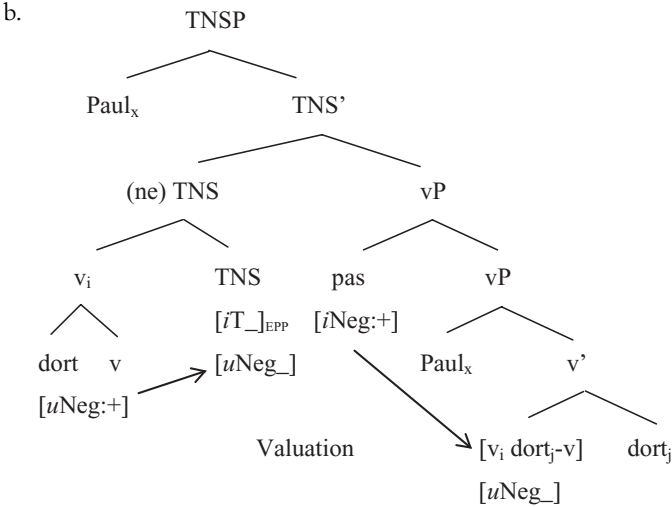


In brief, the negative adverb *pas* is inherently endowed with an interpretable [+NEGATIVE] formal feature and it can merge as a modifier in the specifier of XP categories. It can therefore merge freely to the vP as well. As seen before, in order to have sentential scope over the subject, the predicate and its internal arguments, *pas* must merge in the outer specifier of the highest vP (that is, above the subject). I now propose that the light verb can be endowed with a [*u*Neg  $\_$ ] feature.<sup>7</sup> This feature is valued *in situ* in the most economical way by the merging of the inherently negative marker *pas* in its specifier directly from the numeration. The verbal complex becomes ‘alive’ as a suitable *goal* for agreement with the negative probe of Tense.

<sup>6</sup> A reviewer wonders how this phrase structure and position of *pas* in the specifier of vP can account for sentences with multiple adverbs: *Jean n’a probablement pas bien dormi* (‘John probably didn’t sleep well’). Apart from allowing for multiple specifiers providing insertion points for adverbs, I adopt Roberts’ (2010: 82) suggestion that at least the lower aspectual and (root) modal part of the cartographic structure (Cinque, 1999) can be analysed as a series of *v*-elements of different kinds.

<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising for *v* to be endowed with a feature of polarity as many languages, including English (*don’t, won’t, musn’t, etc.*), express sentential negation with the help of negative auxiliary verbs (Zwicky & Pullum, 1983). Instead of allowing *pas* to freely merge to vP as a modifier, we could hypothesise that the negative feature of *v* is endowed with an EPP property triggering the immediate insertion of *pas* in its specifier.

11. a. Paul (ne) dort pas.  
 Paul (NEG) sleeps not.  
 ‘Paul isn’t sleeping.’



Besides the uninterpretable and unvalued polarity feature (not associated with an EPP property), the Tense functional category also contains several v- and n-related features associated with strong EPP features that overtly attract the highest tensed verb ([dort-v]) as well as the lexical subject (*Paul*) in their checking domain. Therefore, the Agree relation resulting in the agreement and mutual elimination of the delinquent negative features of Tense and the light verb, can be done while piggy-backing on the movement of the verb to Tense. There is an economy condition here where the movement of one element able to check two delinquent features is more economical than two separate agreement relations. The negative feature of Tense is then optionally realised as *ne* at the stage of vocabulary insertion.

The previous example has shown how the derivation can converge with an interpretation of sentential negation when *pas* is generated in the specifier of the highest vP in the verbal complex. However, we must still exclude the possibility for a constituent (or term) negation generated in a lower vP projection to license a sentential negation. In other words, how can we prevent \**Jean n'a été [vP pas tué]* ('John has been not killed') to express sentential negation equivalent to *Jean n'a pas été tué* ('John hasn't been killed')?<sup>8</sup>

Crucially, vPs are assumed to constitute *phases* (Chomsky, 2001), that is, points in the derivation at which the operation 'Spell Out' applies such that any constituent inside the domain of a phase is unable to participate in any further computation.

<sup>8</sup> Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.



The only way for a constituent to escape a phase is to have moved first to the left edge of the phase: that is, to a specifier of vP or to a position left-adjoined to the v head. Remembering that vPs are phases, a possible answer comes forward: the *pas* in a lower vP will be unable to value the delinquent negative feature of Tense because it is no longer visible to the computational system (by the Phase Impenetrability Condition) once the domain of the phase has been sent to PF and LF for interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. THE SYNTAX OF IMPERATIVE SENTENCES IN FRENCH

Imperative sentences are characterised by the defective morphology of their main verb using only default indicative and person suffixes. In French, imperative verbs are only found in 2nd person singular and plural, and 1st person plural. For most verbs, the default person suffix is attached to an indicative stem, but for some irregular verbs, it is attached to a subjunctive stem: *savoir* (to know), *avoir* (to have): *être* (to be), *vouloir* (to want), etc., notably without the Tense morphology:<sup>10</sup>

12. a. Root: *chant* + [ə] (2sg) / [ɔ̃] (1pl) / [e] (2pl)

b. Root: *sach* + [ə] (2sg) / [ɔ̃] (1pl) / [e] (2pl)

13. Sachez cela!<sup>11</sup>

KNOW-IMP-2PL that.

'Know that!'

In French, the subject of the imperative verb is never expressed overtly. Two entities must be carefully distinguished though (Jensen, 2003): on the one hand, the 'addressee' of the utterance will always be a second person by definition, representing a salient group of people, and on the other hand, the external argument of the imperative verb, the agent performing the action, will be the ultimate target of the illocutionary force.<sup>12</sup> The former is sometimes expressed with the help of a vocative term of address (Danon-Boileau, Morel & Perrin, 1992) that I assume base-generated in a topicalised position:

<sup>9</sup> Note that the negation is buried under at least three v-phases: [vP a-v [vP été-v [vP pas tué-v]]].

<sup>10</sup> Even though the form of the imperative has person morphology, the absence of tense morphology can be linked to the hypothesis that Tense in imperatives is akin to a non-finite inflectional category (Han, 1998: 140).

<sup>11</sup> The form of the subjunctive would be *sachiez* as in *pour que vous sachiez* ('so that you know-SUBJ-2SG')

<sup>12</sup> The implicit and sometimes explicit addressee specifies that the subject must be (or include) a second person: even the first person plural must be inclusive of that pragmatically determined addressee: *Allons au cinéma!* ('Let's go to the movies') cannot mean that the addressee is not included in the suggestion. The first person can even be removed entirely as target of a request: *Eh les enfants, allons en classe, hein!* ('Hey children, let's go to class, won't you') can be uttered by a supervisor ordering pupils to attend their classes.

14. Paul / vous / quelqu'un, venez m'aider, s'il vous plaît.  
 Paul / you / someone, come-IMP-2PL me-ACC help, please.  
 'Paul / you / someone, come and help me, please.'

The latter is assumed by Han (1998, 2001) to be a PRO controlled by an implicit addressee argument contributed by the meaning of a [DIRECTIVE] feature in COMP (Han, 1998: 136).<sup>13</sup> Following Potsdam (2007), who analyses the position of overt subject in English imperatives, the PRO subject can be considered to move to the specifier of Tense to value an uninterpretable [ $\mu$ T\_] feature.<sup>14</sup> Inversely, Tense possesses n-related features (for instance, an uninterpretable and unvalued D-feature with a strong EPP property, [ $\mu$ D\_]EPP), triggering the immediate attraction of the PRO subject in its specifier.<sup>15</sup>

To account for the idiosyncratic properties of the imperative across languages, it is usually assumed that the illocutionary force of the sentence is represented by syntactic features located in the matrix COMP. For Han (1998), there is an imperative operator sub-label of COMP constituted by a bundle of [DIRECTIVE] features (encoding the illocutionary force of request/suggestion), and [IRREALIS] features (encoding the meaning that the situation or action denoted has not happened yet). Since the illocutionary force is linked with the 'here and now' of the speech time, it entails that the situation or action must be in the future. I propose the formal 'directive' feature of the operator to be an interpretable and unvalued Modality feature associated with an EPP property ([ $i$ Mod<sub>dir</sub>]EPP). The verb with uninterpretable imperative morphology is immediately attracted into COMP to value this feature and receive its illocutionary force in the process. As far as the associated unrealised interpretation is concerned, it is presupposed by the illocutionary force of request/suggestion. I assume the so-called 'irrealis' feature sub-label of COMP to be an unvalued and uninterpretable temporal feature devoid of EPP property ([ $\mu$ T<sub>irr</sub>]), that selects and enters into an Agree

<sup>13</sup> To answer an anonymous reviewer, I propose a PRO rather than a *pro* (but see Dobrovie-Sorin, 1983, and Jensen, 2003, for the second option), because French is not normally a subject pro-drop language, because the subject in imperatives is never lexically realised, a fact which indicates Obligatory Control (OC), and because the PRO is only partially controlled by its vocative controller (as shown in the previous note). This shows that the link between the addressee and PRO is only partial. Partial control is taken by Landau (2004, 2006) as an indication of a [+T] dependent TNS, which I take to be unrealised Tense. There is a debate however as to whether obligatory control should be reduced to movement as in Hornstein (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Following Pesetsky and Torrego (2001:395), [ $\mu$ T\_] is precisely the feature specification of COMP that allows for a PRO subject in TNS.

<sup>15</sup> Another property of the imperative in French is that positive imperatives take enclitic pronouns, see section 5.

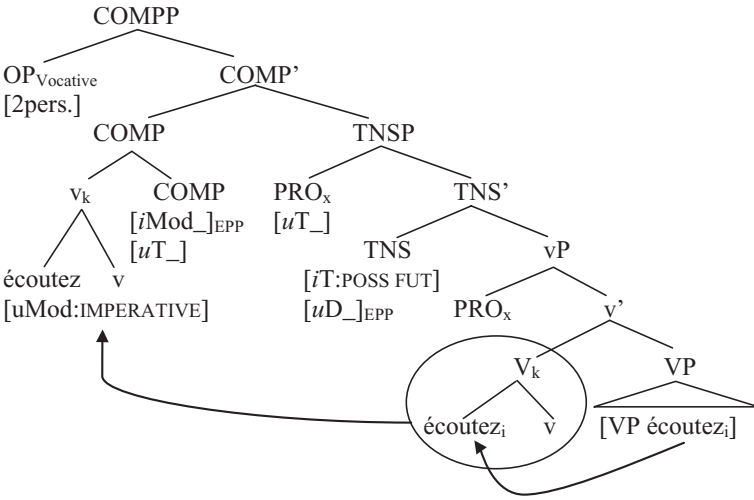
relation with the interpretable Tense valued as [POSSIBLE FUTURE] (Stowell, 1982: 562).<sup>16</sup>

15. a. Écoutez!

Listen-IMP-2PL.

'Listen!'

b.



Additionally, following Zanuttini (1991) and Laenzlinger (1994), I assume that the Tense functional category is deficient, but nevertheless projected (Jensen, 2003): lacking v-related features, it cannot agree with the imperative verb. Inversely, the imperative verb lacks T-related features. Therefore, as both Tense and the imperative verb have no feature in common, the former does not interfere with the triggered movement of the latter to COMP in order to receive its illocutionary force, and the imperative verb can safely skip the inert Tense functional category without violating the Head Movement Constraint.<sup>17</sup>

In relation to negation, there are two noticeable properties of imperatives. First, French employs true negative imperatives contrary to the many Romance languages, such as Spanish or Italian, that make use of a surrogate form of the subjunctive or the infinitive in negative imperative sentences.

<sup>16</sup> As demonstrated by Gross (1968: 163), even though the imperative verb does not show Tense morphology, it has properties of the future such as allowing a temporal adjunct with a verb inflected for the future: *Venez quand vous voudrez* ('come when you like-FUT'). Note also the acceptability of *Venez demain!* ('Come tomorrow!').

<sup>17</sup> This proposal presupposes that the Head Movement Constraint should be relativised to features (Chomsky, 1995): heads with no feature in common are not causing a violation of the constraint.

16. a. Venez                    ici!  
       Come-IMP-2PL here!  
       ‘Come here!’
- b. Ne venez pas ici!  
       NE come-IMP-2PL not here!  
       ‘Don’t come here!’
17. a. ¡Venid                    aquí! (Spanish)  
       Come-IMP-2PL here.
- b. \*No venid                    aquí > No vengáis/venir aquí. (Spanish)  
       NEG come-IMP-2PL here > NEG come-SUBJ-2PL/-INF here.  
       ‘Don’t come here.’

The examples in (17.b) show that, to express a prohibition in Spanish, the subjunctive or the infinitive moods must be used instead of the true imperative morphology found in positive imperatives as in (17.a).<sup>18</sup>

For Zanuttini (1996: 187–9), the use of a surrogate subjunctive or infinitive morphology is required by the assumption that Negation in Spanish or Italian (as opposed to Modern Standard French) obligatorily selects the Tense category and therefore that a verbal form marked for Tense (such as the subjunctive or the infinitive) must be used instead of the Temporally defective imperative form. For Han (2001), however, the use of imperative morphology in French is rather accounted for by the maximal projection status of the interpretable marker of sentential negation *pas*: XP negations do not interfere with the movement of the verb to COMP while in the many Romance languages that have a preverbal negative marker of category X<sup>o</sup> (Zanuttini, 1991), the negation does interfere with the assignment of Directive illocutionary force to the verb.<sup>19</sup>

The second property linked to negation is that pronominal arguments are procliticised to the verb in negative imperatives in Modern Standard French as in (18.a), as opposed to their enclitic position in positive imperatives and in all types of imperatives in vernacular varieties spoken in Canada (and elsewhere) as in (18.b).<sup>20</sup>

18. a. Ne le                    regarde pas. (Modern Standard French)  
       NE it/him-ACC look not.  
       ‘Don’t look at it/him.’

<sup>18</sup> A further restriction on the use of the infinitive is that the set of addressees must be plural.

<sup>19</sup> Some refinements on the interference of a negative head across languages are proposed in Zeijlstra (2006) who takes into account the concord properties of the overt marker of negation.

<sup>20</sup> According to a reviewer, this structure is attested in other vernacular varieties such as colloquial Swiss French. See also Rizzi (2000).

- b. Regarde-le pas. (Quebec French)  
Look it/him-ACC not.  
'Don't look at it/him.'

## 5. THE SYNTAX OF CLITICS IN FRENCH

Argument clitics are phonologically deficient pronominal elements that must attach to a verbal host at PF (see Cardinaletti & Starke, 1999).<sup>21</sup> They are 'special clitics' in the sense described by Zwicky (1977) in that they are obligatorily displaced from the position in which a corresponding full DP or a strong pronoun would be inserted in the syntactic derivation.<sup>22</sup>

19. a. Je leur parlerai.  
I them-DAT speak-FUT-1SG.  
'I'll speak to them.'  
b. \*Je parlerai (à) leur / eux.  
I speak-FUT-1SG (to) them / them.
20. a. Je parlerai à ton professeur.  
I speak-FUT-1SG to your teacher.  
'I'll speak to your professor.'  
b. Je parlerai seulement à eux.  
I speak-FUT-1SG only to them.  
'I will only speak to them.'

The clitic pronoun *leur* is obligatorily displaced to the left of the verb from the position in which (à) *ton professeur* or a strong pronoun (à) *eux* licensed by the modifying adverb are generated.

In Modern Standard French, pronominal clitics are preverbal in all verb tenses and moods, with the exception of positive imperative sentences. Positive imperatives (as opposed to negative ones) take non-nominative enclitic argument pronouns rather than proclitic ones.

<sup>21</sup> This section deals with internal argument clitics (direct and indirect object) and focusses on French, although comparative data with other Romance languages will be occasionally considered.

<sup>22</sup> Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) propose an elaborate theory distinguishing three kinds of pronouns: strong, weak and clitic. They explain the increasing deficiency of weak and clitic pronouns based on the progressive 'peeling off' of the functional layers of strong pronouns until only the core inflectional properties (gender, number, person) remain. They derive the displacement property characteristic of 'special clitics' from their absence of case and their prosodic deficiency.

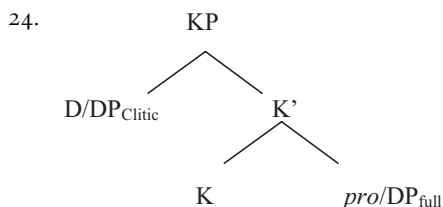
21. a. Je le                    prendrai.  
I it/him-ACC take-FUT-1SG.  
'I'll take it/him.'
- b. Prends-le!  
Take-IMP-2SG it/him-ACC!  
'Take it/him!'
- c. \*Le                    prends!  
It/him-ACC take-IMP-2SG!

Interestingly, many other Romance languages such as Italian or Spanish have a wider range of enclisis contexts including untensed infinitival and gerund verbs, as shown in (23.a-d):

22. a. Je lui                    parlerai                    demain.  
I him/her-DAT speak-FUT-1SG tomorrow.  
'I'll speak to him/her tomorrow.'
- b. Lui                    parler                    demain                    serait une erreur.  
Him/her-DAT speak-INF tomorrow be-COND a mistake.  
'To speak to him/her tomorrow would be a mistake.'
23. a. Gli                    parlerá                    domani. (Italian)  
Him/her-DAT speak-FUT-1SG tomorrow.  
'I'll speak to him/her tomorrow.'
- b. Parlargli                    domani sarebbe un errore. (Italian)  
Speak-INF him/her-DAT tomorrow be-COND a mistake.  
'To speak to him/her tomorrow would be a mistake.'
- c. Lo comeré mañana. (Spanish)  
It-ACC eat-FUT-1SG tomorrow.  
'I'll eat it tomorrow.'
- d. Quiero                    comerlo. (Spanish)  
Want-PRES-1SG eat-INF it-ACC.  
'I want to eat it.'

Following the seminal work by Kayne (1975, 1991), and subsequent work by Laenzlinger (1993, 1994), and Rizzi (2000), this article argues that the difference between enclisis and proclisis, and the relative position of argument clitics with respect to each other, can be treated within narrow syntax. First, following Laenzlinger (1993, 1994), Uriagereka (1995), Belletti (1999), Rizzi (2000), Nevins (2011) and others, let us assume that clitics are of category D (or maybe more accurately 'Person' as in Roberts, 2010: 56, or IP (encoding all phi-features) as in Cardinaletti and Starke, 1999: 214) and that they are part of a big-DP structure, with the DP lexically realized in cases of clitic doubling. Following

Roberts (2010: 54), clitics can be considered at the same time maximal and minimal projections, a property allowed within a bare phrase structure theory (Chomsky, 1995). Furthermore, following Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) and Roberts (2010), clitics lack Case of their own (*contra* Laenzlinger, 1993, 1994), and therefore can escape the Case-marked DP structure of which they are part. In this article, I adopt the proposal made by Nevins (2011: 953) to generate the clitic in the specifier of an argumental KP (K for Case) merged to the full DP:<sup>23</sup>

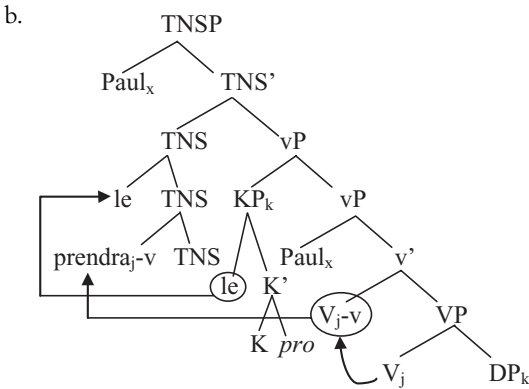


Furthermore, let us assume that clitics occupy an identical position in proclisis and enclisis, and therefore that the difference in positioning with respect to the verb essentially depends on the properties of the verb itself with regard to the functional projections it agrees with. In a normal proclisis situation with a tensed verb selecting one direct object argument clitic, the case-marked KP/DP initially moves to the checking domain of vP for Case-related checking purposes.<sup>24</sup> Once the Case of the big-DP is valued in the specifier of vP, the DP is frozen in place, but the clitic escapes its KP/DP when attracted to the Tense functional projection in order to check the phi-features (person, number, gender, that I assume to be uninterpretable, unvalued and associated with a strong EPP feature) sub-labels of Tense.

25. a. Paul le prendra.  
 Paul him/it-ACC take-FUT-3SG.  
 'Paul will take him/it.'

<sup>23</sup> Alternatively, as in Uriagereka (1995) and Belletti (1999), the clitics are intransitive Ds that take the Full DP in their specifier in cases of clitic doubling: [DP [DP<sub>full</sub>] D<sub>clitic</sub>].

<sup>24</sup> Nevins (2011) equates this first movement to the object shift of Germanic languages.



The tensed verb, independently attracted by the v-related sub-label features of Tense, tucks in to the Tense functional projection.<sup>25</sup> The clitic can remedy its prosodic deficiency and satisfy the requirement of attachment to a verbal host at PF.

Remembering that in a positive imperative sentence, the Tense functional category is entirely devoid of v-related features capable of agreeing with the imperative verb, but endowed with n-related features allowing it to attract PRO, I now propose that the same phi-features of defective Tense attract the argument clitics in essentially a similar manner to proclisis.<sup>26,27</sup> For example, in the course of the derivation, the clitic *le* is overtly attracted to the deficient Tense category while the verbal complex raises to COMP skipping Tense. The distribution of clitic pronouns in positive imperatives therefore follows.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See Richards (1999) for this type of crossed movement. Alternatively, as suggested by a reviewer, the verb complex [V-v] could move to Tense before the clitic. The latter would then appear to the left of the former without the need for a crossed movement. The choice of one or the other solution depends on whether the specifiers or the head of vP are considered to be closer to the probe in Tense.

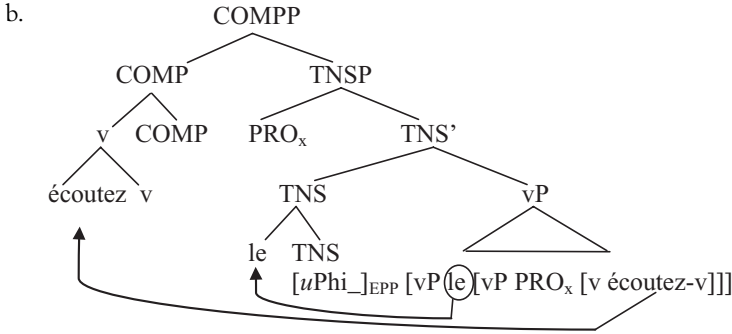
<sup>26</sup> Note that even pronouns underspecified for person such as *en* ('of it') and *y* ('there') are attracted to Tense (see Ruwet, 1990) for a demonstration that *en* and *y* are inherently not specified for person). I assume these to nevertheless be specified for number and gender and therefore that they still are attracted by the Phi-features of Tense: *en* for instance, can sometimes trigger past participle agreement in number and gender as a direct object: *Des erreurs, j'en ai commises des tonnes* ('Errors, I've made [FEM, PL] tons of them.').

<sup>27</sup> This requires the phi-features to be able to enter into several Agree relations until the end of the phase.

<sup>28</sup> If the directive feature of COMP was not associated with a strong EPP feature and was instead checked by agreement, then the verb would not raise to COMP. To get the enclitic order, it would require for the clitic itself (or the clitic cluster) to overtly attract the verb, as argued for by Shlonsky (2004) and Rowlett (2007: 125–7). In my opinion this approach



26. a. Écoutez-le!  
Listen-IMP-2PL him/it-ACC.  
'Listen to him/it!'



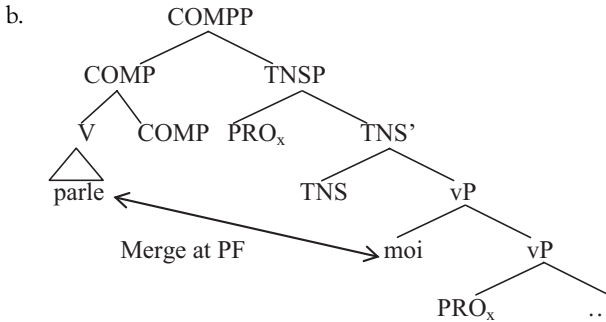
The clitic (in TNS) subsequently merges to its verbal host (in COMP) to satisfy its prosodic requirement at PF.<sup>29</sup>

Another crucial factor identified by Laenzlinger (1994) is constituted by the particular prosodic properties of French (as opposed to other Romance languages) in which phrases are stressed on the last syllable. The consequence is that, in positive imperatives, with the exception of the clitics *le*, *la*, *les*, word final clitics are substituted by their corresponding weak pronoun in order to bear stress: *me*, *te* are replaced by *moi*, *toi*. Laenzlinger assumes that the pronominal clitics and weak pronouns *lui*, *nous*, *vous*, *leur* are indistinguishable in form. Weak pronouns are not part of a big-DP structure: they are transitive Ds in which the NP complement is realised as *pro* (Laenzlinger, 1994: 87) and they do not cliticise to Tense, but remain in the specifier of vP in narrow syntax (AgrOP for Laenzlinger, 1994):

27. a. Parle-moi!  
Speak-IMP-2SG me-DAT.  
'Speak to me.'

encounters difficulties when it comes to explaining the differing word order of clitics in enclisis (*le-moi*) and proclisis (*me le*) as well as the differing orders of enclitics across dialectal varieties of French (*le-moi vs. moi-le*) as we will see. However, see Cardinaletti (2007) for Italian.

<sup>29</sup> Even though prosodic incorporation occurs, the verb-enclitic complex does not behave exactly like a single word in French. In a single word, the final schwa is deleted: *il coule* ('he is drowning') contrary to the verb-clitic: *couds-le* ('sew it').



In order to ensure that PF incorporation of the pronoun to a verbal host takes place, no phonetically overt material that would prevent the weak pronoun from finding its verbal host can therefore intervene between the pronoun and the verb in the linear sequence.<sup>30</sup>

Third, when two internal argument clitics are used simultaneously, the order across Romance languages for first/second person oblique object and third person direct object is normally ‘DATIVE + ACCUSATIVE’ in enclisis and in proclisis alike, as shown in the following Spanish examples:<sup>31</sup>

- 28. a. Me lo dio. (ME > LO in proclisis (Spanish))  
 Me-DAT it-ACC give-PAST-3SG.  
 ‘He gave it to me.’
- b. Dá-me-lo. (ME > LO in enclisis (Spanish))  
 Give-IMP-2SG me-DAT it-ACC,  
 ‘Give it to me.’

This is also the order observed for proclisis in all varieties of French (*me le*) in (29.a) and for enclisis in European and Canadian vernacular varieties of French (*moi/me-le*) in (29.b), but in Modern Standard French, the mirror order ‘ACCUSATIVE + DATIVE’ is observed in positive imperatives, as in (29.c), and it is in fact the only order prescribed in written French for this sentence type:

- 29. a. Paul me le donnera. (ME > LE in proclisis (French))  
 Paul me-DAT it/him-ACC give-FUT-3SG.  
 ‘Paul will give it to me.’

<sup>30</sup> As mentioned by a reviewer, if the weak pronoun *moi* merges as Spec. of vP while the imperative verb internally merges in COMP, the placement of the adverb *Parle-moi gentiment* (‘Speak to me nicely’) vs. \**Parle gentiment moi* is unexpected. I assume that even though the clitic has been replaced by a weak pronoun in order to bear phrasal stress, it still has some properties of clitics, such as a requirement to incorporate to a verbal host.

<sup>31</sup> Cardinaletti (2007) finds Italian counterexamples to the characterisation of the distribution of clitics in term of Case and proposes an account taking advantage of the distinction between pronouns specified for person vs. pronouns specified for number, and on the possibility for certain clitics to adjoin on a single head and others on separate heads, as in Kayne (1994).

- b. Donne-moi-le.<sup>32</sup> (MOI > LE, enclisis in Vernacular French)  
Give-IMP-2SG me-DAT it-ACC.  
'Give it to me.'
- c. Donne-le-moi. (LE > MOI, enclisis in Modern Standard French)  
Give-IMP-2SG it-ACC me-DAT.  
'Give it to me.'

Following Laenzlinger (1994), when the order in enclisis is identical to the order in proclisis, as in the varieties of vernacular French (29.a-b) or as in Spanish (28.a-b) above, it means that both pronouns are clitics, and are attracted to Tense in the expected order 'DATIVE + ACCUSATIVE' (with *moi* in these cases reinterpreted as a clitic by the computational system).<sup>33</sup> However, when the order is reversed, as in Modern Standard French, it means that only the pronoun closest to the verb (*le*) is actually a clitic while the one further away (*moi*) is a stress-bearing weak pronoun stranded in its Case checking position.

The co-occurrence of argument clitics clusters is however characterised by stringent restrictions such as the 'Person Case Constraint' (PCC) (Bonet, 1994), that is, a first or second person 'ACCUSATIVE' clitic cannot co-occur with a 'DATIVE' clitic, as in (30.a).<sup>34</sup>

- 30. a. \*Paul te leur présentera.  
Paul you-ACC them-DAT introduce-FUT-3SG.
- b. Paul te présentera à eux.  
Paul you-acc introduce-fut-3sg to them.  
'Paul will introduce you to them.'
- c. Paul te présentera.  
Paul you-acc introduce-fut-3sg.  
'Paul will introduce you.'

In French, a felicitous repair strategy to circumvent the PCC using syntactic means consists of using a periphrastic construction with a strong pronoun (or lexical DP) in place of the indirect object clitic, as in (30.b). As pointed out by a reviewer,

<sup>32</sup> The form *me* as in *donne-me-le* is also attested in vernacular European French (Laenzlinger, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Another solution suggested by a reviewer might be for *moi* to encliticise on the verb (presumably in a lower functional category of the expanded projection of the verb) and move with it to COMP over *le* in Tense.

<sup>34</sup> The PCC has been accounted for within a theory of *Cyclic Agree* (Béjar & Rezac, 2009), without recourse to Case, using a calculus of person features such that the head of an ApplicativeP is a probe capable of entering into several agreeing relations with person features of clitics, but is unable to check further goals once a first/second person feature direct object clitic has been checked. This entails that only a 'non-person' feature direct object, third person by default, would still leave the probe available for further agreement, which accounts for the grammaticality of *le lui* or *me le* as opposed to the ungrammaticality of \**me lui*. Nevins (2011) reaches the same result within a theory of *Multiple Agree* with slightly different premises.

another frequently used repair strategy involves the ellipsis of the indirect object pronoun. This alternate repair strategy is of a morphological type (as opposed to the syntactic/periphrastic one): it allows the speaker to realise the underlying indirect object third person clitic with a phonetically null variant, a *pro*, as in (30.c). This empty clitic no longer creates a PCC violation because it is presumably underspecified for person features.<sup>35,36</sup>

## 6. FRENCH NEGATIVE IMPERATIVES

We are now in a position to account for the interaction of negation and clitics in imperatives in both Standard and separate vernacular varieties of French.

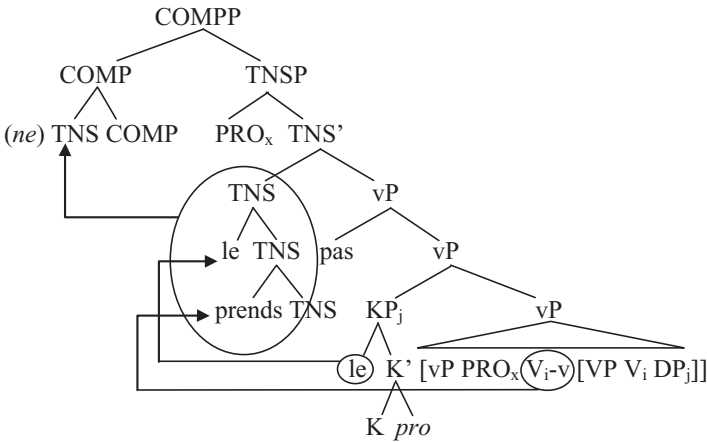
In negative imperative sentences, reinterpreting Laenzlinger (1994) and Zanuttini (1991), the Tense functional projection is activated by the presence of a v-related uninterpretable and unvalued sub-label Polarity feature ( $[\mu\text{Neg}_-]$ ). For its part, the verbal complex is, as proposed in section 3, endowed with an uninterpretable negative feature  $[\mu\text{Neg}; +\text{NEGATIVE}]$  valued *in situ*. Because it is valued, this uninterpretable feature has the ability to transfer its value via agreement with the corresponding negative sub-label of Tense (a probe in search of a value). Furthermore, being uninterpretable, this verbal negative feature also has to be eliminated by agreement with the relevant polarity sub-label of Tense before it reaches LF. The verbal complex is therefore required to pass through Tense on its way to COMP (in accordance with the Head Movement Constraint). Because of a ban on excorporation (Baker, 1988: 73; Laenzlinger, 1994: 77), the verb picks up the clitics previously adjoined to Tense. Finally, *ne* is inserted to the left of Tense in the usual manner. So, the derivation of negative imperatives can be represented as follows:

<sup>35</sup> This option of being a non-person also explains why clitics such as *en* and *y* do not trigger a PCC violation in *Paul t'y présente* ('Paul introduces you to it') vs. \**Paul te lui présente* ('Paul introduces you to him/her').

<sup>36</sup> Besides the PCC, Laenzlinger (1993: 250) notices difficulties with the co-occurrence of two third person direct and indirect object clitics. Romance languages make use of repair strategies: French uses the 'ACC + DAT' order: *Je la lui présenterai* ('I'll introduce her to him') instead of the 'DAT + ACC' one, Spanish makes use of a spurious reflexive pronoun *se* to avoid two third person clitics: *se lo diré* ('I'll tell it to him') and Italian replaces the expected *le lo* by a clitic cluster *glielo*: *Gianni glielo presenta* ('John introduces him to her') (but see Cardinaletti (2007) who rejects the claim that *glielo* is somehow abnormal). Laenzlinger (1993: 252) accounts for the French data in proclisis by assuming that *lui* directly incorporates to the verb/auxiliary (see also Roberts (2010: 141–2) for a solution using incorporation into v's), while *le* rises to the functional domain (AgrOP for Laenzlinger, 1993: 253). In Kayne (1994)'s system, the clitics *le* and *lui* adjoin to separate heads.

31. a. *Ne le prends pas.*  
*NE him/it-ACC take-IMP-2SG not.*  
 'Don't take him/it.'

b.



To summarise, the derivation can converge because all uninterpretable sub-label formal features are eliminated before LF and all unvalued features receive a value via four separate Agree relations between corresponding probes and goals:

- |        |  |  |  |
|--------|--|--|--|
| 32. a. | TNS: [ <i>u</i> Neg <sub>-</sub> ]     | [ <i>u</i> Phi <sub>-</sub> ] <sub>EPP</sub>     | [ <i>i</i> T:POSS.FUT]                       |
| b.     | <i>le</i> :                            | ↓  | [ <i>i</i> Phi:3SG-MASC]                     |
| c.     | <i>prends</i> : [ <i>u</i> Neg: +NEG.] | [ <i>u</i> Mod: IMPER.]                          | ↓  |
| d.     | COMP:                                  | [ <i>i</i> Mod <sub>(dir)</sub> ] <sub>EPP</sub> | [ <i>u</i> T <sub>(irr)</sub> ] <sub>-</sub> |

With respect to negative imperative sentences, Hirschbühler (2001) establishes a distinction between European and Canadian vernacular varieties. First, in European varieties, *ne* is optional and the clitic precedes the verb. They however identify some restrictions on the optionality of *ne* in this variety of French: when the GENITIVE or LOCATIVE pronouns *en* and *y* are used, either the negative particle *ne* is retained, or the pronoun is exceptionally encliticised:

33. a. (*Ne*) *le prends pas!*  
 (*NE*) *it-ACC take-IMP-2SG not.*  
 'Don't take it!'
- b. \*(*N'*) *en prends pas!*  
 (*NE*) *it-GEN take-IMP-2SG not*  
 'Don't take of it!'

- c. Prends-en pas!  
 Take-IMP-2SG it-GEN not  
 ‘Don’t take of it!’

Within the current framework, this pattern is interpreted as meaning that, in European varieties, both the verb and Tense are endowed with negative features of polarity even in cases when *ne* is not phonetically realised,<sup>37</sup> thereby demonstrating that the verb passes through Tense and picks up the clitics on its way to COMP. I assume that obligatory *ne*-retention (in 33.b) could be influenced by different phonetic/lexical factors, such as the fact that the clitics *en* and *y* are vocalic, as suggested by a reviewer.<sup>38</sup> The other structure consisting of realising the GENITIVE pronoun post-verbally as in (33.c) could then be analysed as an alternative PF repair strategy allowing for the spelling out of a lower copy of a clitic when the realisation of the highest copy leads to a PF violation. In fact, Hirschbühler (2001) analyses this data by considering that, in imperatives, certain clitics are subject to a residual constraint retained from Old French which specifies that they cannot appear in an initial position (the so-called Tobler-Mussafia effect).<sup>39</sup>

Second, in Canadian varieties of vernacular French (as well as in various dialects from the Atlantic coast in France according to Hirschbühler, 2001), there is no difference between positive and negative imperatives: the *ne* is never realised in imperatives and enclisis is systematic in all cases, as attested by examples in (34.a–b) taken from the ‘Corpus de français parlé au Québec’ (CFPQ):<sup>40</sup>

34. a. Présente-moi-la pas.<sup>41</sup>  
 Introduce-IMP-2SG me-DAT her-ACC not.  
 ‘Don’t introduce her to me.’  
 b. Conjugue-moi-le.  
 Conjugate-IMP-2SG me-DAT it-ACC.  
 ‘Conjugate it to me.’

The generalised enclisis phenomenon observed in Quebec French with imperatives can be accounted for by assuming that, in this variety, there is no negative sub-label on Tense. The Tense functional projection remains inactive and incapable of

<sup>37</sup> Hirschbühler (2001) however rejects the hypothesis of an abstract *ne* in these cases of proclisis.

<sup>38</sup> Another context of *ne*-retention (of a different type) would be in cases of [l] deletion when 3rd person singular subject pronouns *il/elle* (‘he/she’) are followed by a vowel: *i’ n’est pas venu* (‘he didn’t come’) is preferred to *??i est pas venu*.

<sup>39</sup> It is less likely that this structure would be explained by the fact that the speakers shift to another variety.

<sup>40</sup> Thanks to Benedicte Mauguière for pointing out to me the existence of this corpus.

<sup>41</sup> According to a Swiss native speaker, the (a) sentence seems more degraded than the (b) one, being part of a more ‘Advanced’ French variety. See comments in Rizzi (2000: 111).

attracting the imperative verb raising to COMP. In such a variety, as suggested in Laenzlinger (1994: 84–5) and Rowlett (2007: 127), sentential negation is expressed solely by means of a negative quantifier *pas* that I still assume merged in the specifier of vP.<sup>42</sup>

In order to account for the word order in vernacular varieties of French, it is useful to follow Zribi-Hertz (1994) in distinguishing ‘Modern Standard French’ which she defines as ‘productive formal style, rid of various archaisms’ (1994: 460) (or ‘Late Classical French’ in Massot, 2010) from ‘Advanced French’ (or ‘Spoken French’ in Barro-Jover (2004), ‘Demotic French’ in Massot (2010)), which has two strata: ‘Colloquial French’ (CF): ‘the unmarked informal style used by those speakers who also master Modern Standard French’ and ‘Very Advanced French’ (VAF), a variety ‘including all forms regarded as substandard or dialectally marked by Modern Standard French and Colloquial French speakers’.<sup>43</sup>

I tentatively suggest that this tripartition can help us to clarify the data on imperatives which we have examined: the Modern Standard French variety would have enclisis in imperatives and proclisis in negative imperatives with *ne*-retention: *donne-le-moi / ne me le donne pas* (‘give it to me’ / ‘don’t give it to me’), the CF variety would then be characterised by the usual omission of *ne* (retained in certain phonological or lexical contexts): *donne-le-moi / me le donne pas* (‘give it to me’ / ‘don’t give it to me’) and by the alternative orderings of pronouns in enclisis: *donne-moi/me-le* (‘give it to me’) in which the ‘weak’ personal pronoun *moi* is reinterpreted as a clitic by the computational system, while the VAF variety (typical of Vernacular Canadian French, and of some varieties of European French) would be characterised by the systematic omission of *ne* (in all contexts) and by generalised enclisis and reordering of enclitic pronouns with the imperative sentence type: *donne-moi-le / donne-moi-le pas* (‘give it to me’ / ‘don’t give it to me’). This tripartition could be interpreted as the realisation in synchrony of the diglossic system proposed in Massot (2010) with ‘educated’ speakers navigating between the first two varieties and ‘non-educated’ speakers the last two (CF being a variety in common). The data is also compatible with the diachronic processes of the Jespersen’s cycle (1917) on the evolution of negation, characterised by the progressive appropriation of the expression of sentential negation by a negative auxiliary (in this case the quantifier *pas*) accompanying the weakening of the original

<sup>42</sup> In this analysis, the quantifier *pas* retains its value as ‘sentential’ negation even in negative imperative with enclisis. This differs from Massot (2010) who suggests that these cases represent instances of ‘constituent’ negation. Apart from the terminological difference, more research is needed on the position of floating quantifiers and on the interaction with other negative words (*personne* ‘no one’, etc.).

<sup>43</sup> For instance, the replacement of *cela* (‘that’) by *ça* or the ellipsis of *ne* in informal conversations are characteristic features of CF, while the doubly filled embedded COMP in relatives: *l’homme à qui que j’ai parlé* (‘the man to whom that I spoke’) or the generalisation of *avoir* (‘have’) as the auxiliary of the past: *il a parti* (‘he left’) can be included in VAF (Zribi-Hertz, 1994: 461).

marker of negation (in this case, the evolution of *ne* from being the head of sentential negation with clitic properties to becoming an optionally realised Tense affix) to its complete elimination. According to my proposal, this process is well under way since the pre-verbal negative marker has already been overtaken by the *pas* as the centre of sentential negation in the eyes of the computational system.

7. EXTENSION: PASSIVE IMPERATIVES AND INFINITIVAL DIRECTIVES

Interestingly, the previous account can be extended to two related constructions: passive imperatives and infinitival directives.

7.1 *Passive Imperatives*

In French, passive constructions are not allowed with positive imperatives, but are allowed with negative imperatives (Danon-Boileau, Morel & Perrin, 1992).

35. a. \*Sois           bouleversé par la nouvelle.  
      Be-IMP-2SG shattered by the news.  
      b. Ne sois           pas bouleversé par la nouvelle.  
          (NE) be-IMP-2SG not shattered by the news.  
          'Don't be shattered by the news.'

Assuming, as in Baker (1988), that passive morphology is encliticised on the inflectional category, the structure will not be licensed in positive imperatives, because the defective Tense does not provide a site for the generation of passive auxiliary support. In negative imperatives, however, Tense, being endowed with a *v*-related feature of polarity, does provide a merging point for the passive auxiliary.

A prediction of this account should be that, since there is no difference in the featural constitution of Tense in positive and negative imperatives in Quebec French vernacular varieties, passive imperatives should be as ungrammatical in negative imperatives as they are in positive imperatives. According to one informant I consulted, this is indeed the case, as both sentences are equally bad, and must be replaced by an alternative causative construction:

36. a. \*Sois           chamboulé par la nouvelle.  
      Be-IMP-2SG shattered by the news.  
      b. \*Sois           pas chamboulé par la nouvelle.  
          Be-IMP-2SG not shattered by the news.  
          'Don't be shattered by the news.'  
      c. Te laisse           pas chambouler par la nouvelle.  
          You-ACC let-IMP-2SG not shatter-INF by the news.  
          'Don't let yourself be shattered by the news.'



- d. Laisse-toi pas chambouler par la nouvelle.  
Let-IMP-2SG you-ACC not shatter-INF by the news.  
'Don't let yourself be shattered by the news.'

The specifications of Tense and the assumption that *ne* is simply the phonetic realisation of a negative sub-label of Tense can therefore naturally be extended to account for the behaviour of these imperatives in distinct varieties of French.

### 7.2 Infinitival Imperatives

In French, matrix infinitives, either positive or negative, with pragmatically induced injunctive meaning are attested in various contexts listed in Sandfeld (1978: 209): exclamation, detail of a plan or a recipe, etc. According to Han (2001), the COMP in infinitival directive structures is endowed with an [IRREALIS] feature, but lacks a [DIRECTIVE] one. The directive force of the infinitive in a matrix clause is generated via pragmatic inference since the directive force is compatible with the unrealised modality associated with the infinitive mood, but non-directive interpretations are also available given the right pragmatic context and are the only ones available in embedded clauses.<sup>44</sup>

However, in parallel structures with other modes of injunctions requiring a directive interpretation, only the negative infinitive is grammatical to express a prohibition (Pollock, 1989: 402; Sandfeld, 1978: 211 for more examples).

37. a. Attention! Ne pas faire de bruit!  
Look out! NEG not make-INF any noise.  
'Look out! Don't make any noise.'  
b. \*Attention! Faire du bruit!  
Look out! Make-INF some noise.

This infinitive with injunctive force is often considered somewhat archaic. According to Grevisse (1969: 690), the infinitive preceded by the negation could be used in Old French to express prohibition, albeit an abrupt one. But it is still part of the speakers' competence nowadays as attested by examples found on the Internet:

38. Attention! Ne pas répondre à ce message!  
Look out! NE not answer-INF to this message!  
'Look out! Do not answer this message!'  
(Retrieved from [canalpoult.forumgratuit.org](http://canalpoult.forumgratuit.org) on January 13, 2013)

The directive infinitive only seems to be felicitous when its use represents a voice of authority or expertise to express a warning that a certain action would have

<sup>44</sup> Another requirement would be for the PRO subject to be interpreted as 2nd person.

dire consequences.<sup>45</sup> Inversely, even though the actual addressee of the utterance may be identified in context, for instance with the help of a vocative term of address, the target of the illocutionary force of such an infinitive imperative may always be the generic set of potential individuals concerned. This is why the imperative negative is found in notices addressed to the general public under the auspices of an administrative authority: *Attention! Ne pas fumer!* ('Smoking not allowed').

Following Kayne (1992), Zanuttini (1997), Han (1998), Péters (1999), Rooryck and Postma (2007), I hypothesise an empty modal verb  $\mu$  with a wide scope deontic interpretation (equivalent to English 'must') at the source of the prohibition ( $\mu > \text{NEG}$ ). Kayne (1992) posits such a modal-like phonetically empty element in Italian in order to account for an unexpected proclisis in injunctive infinitives, as in (39.c), even though proclisis is normally ungrammatical with infinitives, as in (39.b):

39. a. Gianni ha deciso di farlo.  
 Gianni has decided to do-INF it-ACC.  
 'Gianni has decided to do it.'
- b. \*Gianni ha deciso di lo fare.  
 Gianni has decided to it-ACC do-INF.
- c. Non lo fare!  
 NEG it-ACC do-INF.  
 'Don't do it!'

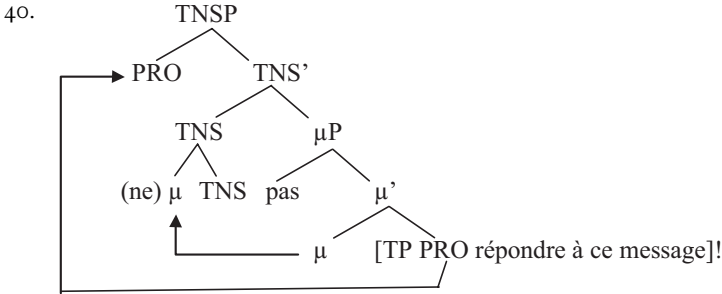
The irregularity disappears as soon as the apparently proclitic pronoun is analysed as an instance of clitic climbing to an empty modal.<sup>46</sup>

In French, besides the stringent pragmatic conditions on the use of the imperative infinitive, the interaction between negation and infinitival morphology appears to be crucial for the directive force to emerge. As argued in Péters (1999), the phonetically empty modal is primarily generated to serve as a placeholder for the negative marker *pas* merged in its specifier. The empty modal inherits the negative features of the negative marker (in the usual way) and checks the Polarity features sub-label of TNS (*ne* phonetically realised on TNS in the usual way). The light modal verb is required to raise overtly to the Tense functional projection in order to have an impact on interpretation at LF. The raising of the modal verb with deontic

<sup>45</sup> This semantico-pragmatic constraint on the use of imperative infinitives would account for its limited use and, I suggest, can be treated within the polyphonic theory of Ducrot (1984) in which speakers, or more precisely their linguistic internal manifestation, can express in their utterances a number of points of view, here a voice of authority, which are not necessarily their own. A structural treatment of this idea is pending, but could be implemented in a split CP framework with a formal treatment of the concept of 'point of view'.

<sup>46</sup> Kayne (1992) also notes that this empty modal is overtly realised as *stá* + Inf. in Padouan.

interpretation above the negative is also necessary for the former to have scope over the latter in order to express a prohibition: MUST > NOT (Rooryck & Postma, 2007), or FALLOIR ('to-be-necessary') > NOT in French.



In Péters (1999), the presence of the light verb is in fact generalised to all negative infinitives. The directive interpretation is however not pragmatically licensed in embedded contexts. This hypothesis of a bi-clausal structure with an empty modal in infinitival clauses crucially provides an explanation for the stacking of negations analysed by Hirschbühler and Labelle (1993):

41. Il est irresponsable de ne pas ne pas travailler.  
 It is careless COMP NE not NE not work-INF.  
 'It is careless not to not work.'

This construction cannot simply constitute an instance of NEGP recursion in a mono-clausal structure. The presence of several T-related negative affixes (*ne*) suggests to us a multi-clausal structure. This impression is confirmed by the impossibility for the auxiliary verb *avoir* ('to have') to climb higher than the first adverbial negation. Indeed, the infinitival auxiliary verb, usually able to raise in a limited way to the inflectional level (Pollock, 1989), is clause bounded:

42. a. Paul dit ne pas ne plus avoir mangé de fruits.  
 Paul claims NE not NE no-longer have-INF eaten any fruits.  
 'Paul claims he hasn't no longer eaten fruits.'
- b. Paul dit ne pas n'avoir<sub>i</sub> plus t<sub>i</sub> mangé de fruits.  
 Paul claims NE not NE have-INF no-longer eaten any fruits.  
 'Paul claims he hasn't no longer eaten fruits.'
- c. \*Paul dit n'avoir pas ne plus mangé de fruits.  
 Paul claims NE have-INF not NE no-longer eaten any fruits.

This structure with a light modal verb is analogous to –and interacts with – overt modals: *devoir* ('must, need'), *pouvoir* ('can') or *savoir* ('to know how'):



## 8. CONCLUSION

The study of negative imperatives in French is a challenging topic because, through a theoretical lens, it lies at the intersection of syntactic theories on the imperative mood, argument clitics and sentential negation. Simultaneously, when viewed through an empirical lens, there exist observable differences in the syntax of this structure across varieties. These varieties which seem to coexist in a diglossic relation (Massot, 2010) represent a system in transition which may allow us to peek into the diachronic processes at play within the Jespersen's cycle.

Within the generative approach of the Minimalist Program, and the particular interpretation of 'Agree' as feature valuation (Pesetsky & Torrego, 2007), this article demonstrates how what is essentially an adverbial modifier/quantifier *pas* with constituent scope over the XP category it modifies (*un garçon pas sympa* 'a not friendly boy') can turn out to be the centre of sentential negation (*je parle pas* 'I don't speak'). By merging in the outer specifier of the highest vP category, *pas* acquires scope over the predicate and its arguments.

Argumental clitics are prosodically deficient pronouns in need of a verbal host (Laenzlinger, 1993; Cardinaletti & Starke, 1999). I have proposed that they are attracted to the functional domain of the clause (Tense endowed with phi-features in search of valuation), and that pro- or enclitization of the clitics to a verbal host depends mainly on the position of the verb in interaction with functional categories. For instance, when the verb is independently attracted to Tense, the clitics incorporate to the left of the verb, that is, in proclisis (*Paul me le donne* 'Paul gives it to me').

The assumption that *ne* is the instantiation of a polarity feature of Tense has allowed us to deduce the proclisis of argument pronouns in negative imperatives in Modern Standard French (*ne me le donne pas* 'don't give it to me') and most European vernacular varieties (*me le donne pas*) as opposed to their enclisis in positive imperatives across all varieties (*donne-le-moi / donne-moi-le* 'give it to me') (Hirschbühler, 2001). Assuming the Tense projection in positive imperatives to lack v-related features, Tense does not constitute a potential landing site for the imperative verb on its way to the left periphery in order to receive its illocutionary force of request/suggestion. The enclitic order of argumental pronouns, still independently adjoined to Tense in the usual way, follows. Additionally, following Laenzlinger (1994), in imperatives, the prosodic properties of the French language require some final position enclitics to be substituted by weak pronouns (\**donne-le-me > donne-le-moi* 'Give it to me') which sometimes happen to be indistinguishable from the corresponding clitic (*lui = lui*). These weak pronouns, because of their structural make up, are assumed to remain in their Case checking position, while clitics adjoin to Tense in the usual way.

The hypothesis that the negative sub-label of Tense is a v-related feature can explain why in negative imperatives, the imperative verb cannot skip the Tense projection on its ways to COMP. Because of a ban on excorporation, the verb must pick up the clitics adjoined to Tense and these end up procliticised to their host. The

fact, that in more ‘advanced’ varieties of the language (such as in vernacular Quebec French), the complete elimination of *ne* correlates with a generalised enclisis of pronominal arguments for positive and negative imperatives alike (*donne-moi-le / donne-moi-le pas* ‘give it to me / don’t give it to me’) suggests complete similarity in the featural constitution of the Tense category across polarities. Therefore, the enclitic order reveals the absence of negative features on Tense in these varieties. More research is needed on the order of enclitics and on the properties of *pas* (sentential or constituent negation) as well as on its interaction with other negative words.

The properties of clitics and the properties of Tense were correlated with the varying availability of passive imperatives in European and Canadian varieties of the language: allowed with negative imperatives in the former, and completely disallowed in the latter. Finally, the additional assumption of a light deontic modal verb, serving as a placeholder for the marker of sentential negation in root negative infinitives, allowed us to deduce the use of negative imperative infinitives as well as the structure of stacking of negations.

Stringent pragmatic constraints restricting the use of infinitival imperatives in French have been identified, pending a proper structural treatment. Most notably, an imperative infinitive seems to be felicitous only as a warning given by a voice of authority (*ne pas fumer* ‘smoking forbidden’). The distinction between an addressee (sometimes identified by a vocative term) and the external argument of the verbal predicate (referring to the generic set of all concerned individuals), which I assume to be the real target of the illocutionary force, seems particularly relevant. The study of negative imperative infinitives in interaction with clitics might provide a way to analyse further the interface between syntax and pragmatics.

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