

University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics

Volume 14, Issue 1

2008

Article 2

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 31ST ANNUAL PENN LINGUISTICS
COLLOQUIUM

Against restructuring in modern French

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Abstract

Cinque (2002) examines those transparency effects that have been claimed to point to the existence of restructuring in French and concludes that quantifier and adverb climbing depend not on restructuring but, rather, on an irrealis context. In this paper, we show that restructuring does not play an active role in explaining the existence of *en* 'of-it' and *y* 'there' climbing or long movement in 'easy-to-please' constructions either, which leads to the conclusion that Modern French has no transparency effects of the restructuring kind. We then present three arguments against Cinque's (2004) thesis that verbs of the restructuring class are universally functional verbs that appear with infinitives in a monoclausal configuration. Instead, we adopt the Cinque (2001)/Cardinaletti & Shlonsky (2004) approach according to which restructuring verbs can be merged either as lexical or functional verbs. We argue that this approach should be parametrized to yield three options that account for cross-linguistic/dialectal variation associated with restructuring.

Against Restructuring in Modern French

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1 Introduction

The linking of clitic climbing and auxiliary switch as indicators of restructuring in Italian was first postulated by Rizzi in 1976 on the basis of paradigms like (1):

- (1) a. Maria *ha* dovuto venire molte volte.
Maria has had to-come-here many times
b. Maria *c'è* dovuta venire molte volte.
Maria here-is had to-come many times
c. *Maria *ci ha* dovuto venire molte volte.
Maria here has had to-come many times
'Maria has had to come here many times.'

Such paradigms indicate that restructuring is a necessary condition for clitic climbing, hence if clitic climbing has applied, auxiliary switch, which is a manifestation of restructuring, is obligatory. As reported in Pearce (1990), there is substantial evidence suggesting that exactly the same situation obtained in Middle French, as the data in (2) illustrate:

- (2) a. don't les biens leur sont peu venir
of-which the goods to-them are could come
'of which the goods could come to them'
(16C *Le Chevalier qui donna sa femme au dyable*, ATF III, 450)
b. Au paruant onques ennemi n'y estoit osé entrer
to-the before no enemy neg.-there was dared to-enter
en armes.
in arms
'Never before had an enemy dared to enter there armed.'
(16C Amyot, *Vies* (1594 ed.) fol. 401v)

Modern French, however, does not exhibit transparency effects of the clitic climbing variety as can be seen in (3a), nor does it allow auxiliary switch as can be seen in (3b), despite the fact that both *être* 'be' and *avoir* 'have' are found as auxiliaries in that language.

- (3) a. *Paul les veut voir.
Paul them wants to-see

- b. *Paul est voulu partir.
Paul is wanted-to-leave

In the late 1970's to early 1980's, the total sum of this evidence was taken to indicate that French had lost restructuring altogether (see, e.g., Kayne 1980). However, in recent years, it has become a fairly standard assumption in the literature to consider that some transparency effects exist in Modern French that point to the existence of restructuring in this language as well. These are: quantifier climbing as in (4), *en* and *y* climbing as in (5), long movement in 'easy-to-please' constructions as in (6), and adverb climbing as in (7):

- (4) a. Tu vas tout devoir apprendre.
You are-going all to-have to-learn
b. *Elle va tout avouer mépriser.
She is-going all to-confess to-despise
- (5) a. J'y voudrais aller.
I there would-like to-go
b. *Il y a cru avoir dormi.
He there has believed to-have slept
- (6) a. ?(Pour moi), ce livre serait impossible à commencer à
(for me) this book would-be impossible to to-begin to
lire aujourd'hui.
to-read today
b. *Ce genre de livre serait difficile à promettre de lire.
This type of book would-be difficult to-promise of to-read
- (7) a. (?)Vous avez mal dû raccrocher.
You must improperly have hung-up
b. *Il a mal dit avoir mangé.
He has poorly said to-have eaten

Cinque (2002) argues, convincingly in our view, that quantifier climbing and adverb climbing depend not on restructuring but rather, on an *irrealis* context. This leaves as possible evidence for restructuring in French *en* and *y* climbing and long movement in 'easy-to-please' constructions. In this paper, we will first demonstrate that this evidence is not sufficiently reliable to warrant the assumption that Modern French has restructuring. We will then discuss how this lack of evidence is to be interpreted in light of recent theories of restructuring. Finally, we will argue that the cross-linguistic variation tied to restructuring can be made to follow from a parameterized version of the Cinque (2001)/Cardinaletti and Shlonsky (2004) approach.

2 Are *en* and *y* Climbing and ‘Easy-to-please’ Constructions Sensitive to Restructuring?

Let us consider first *en* and *y* climbing, taking as a point of departure the paradigm in (8) and (9), given in Cinque (2002):

- (8) a. J'en voudrais voir beaucoup.
 I of-them would-like to-see a-lot
 b. J'y voudrais aller.
 I there would-like to-go
- (9) a. *Il en a dit avoir vu trois.
 He of-them has said to-have seen three
 b. *Il y a dit être resté.
 He there has said to-be stayed
 c. *Il en a cru aimer beaucoup.
 He of-them has believed to-love a-lot
 d. *Il y a cru avoir dormi.
 He there has believed to-have slept

This type of paradigm is taken by Cinque to illustrate a restructuring effect in the sense that *en* and *y* climbing appears to be possible with verbs like ‘want’, ‘must’, ‘may/can’, ‘dare’, ‘finish’, etc., which correspond to restructuring verbs in Italian, and is impossible with verbs like ‘concede’, ‘say’, ‘believe’, ‘admit’, ‘declare’, etc., which correspond to non-restructuring verbs in Italian. However, the paradigm in (8) and (9) cannot be considered solid evidence in favor of restructuring for two reasons. First, sentences like those in (8) are usually judged to no longer be possible in spoken French (as first pointed out in Kayne (1975:chap.2)). Such sentences have, however, been used in literary works and journalistic prose as recently as the second half of the 20th century along with instances of clitic climbing involving accusative pronominal clitics. The examples in (10), taken from Grevisse (1988), illustrate this point:

- (10) a. M. Jean Marx, qui en veut démontrer l'action
 Mr. Jean Marx who of-it wants to-show the-influence
 prépondérante [...] dominating
 (E. Faral in *Romania*, 1952, p.264)
 b. On n'y peut pas chercher une base suffisante.
 One there can not to-look-for a basis sufficient
 (M. Roques in *Romania*, 1955, p.406)

- c. Sa vie, il la pouvait citer en exemple.
 His life he it could to-hold-up as-an example
 (M. Toesca in *Le Figaro*, June 4, 1971)

The sporadic presence of clitic climbing in literary French (as an archaism) explains why sentences like (8) are often judged acceptable by native speakers. It does not, however, fully explain the perceived contrast between (8) and (9). But how reliable are such intuitions? Again judging from the data made available by literary works, it is, in fact, doubtful that clitic climbing is systematically restricted to restructuring verbs. Consider in this respect the examples in (11), collected by Grevisse (1988), which illustrate instances of clitic climbing with the non-restructuring verb ‘believe’:

- (11) a. Les malices que j’y croyais lire
 the roguishness that I there believed to-read
 (F. Marceau, *Années courtes*, p.112)
 b. Pour ne pas se placer tout à fait où je l’avais
 in-order-to not self position exactly where I it-had
 cru voir [...]
 believed to-see
 (Jouhandeau, in *Le Figaro littéraire*, July 2, 1955)

Such sentences were obviously thought to be grammatical by the authors who wrote them yet these judgments are at odds with the ungrammatical status attributed by Cinque’s informants to (9c) and (9d), two examples also involving clitic climbing with the non-restructuring verb ‘believe’. Such discrepancies are, in fact, not altogether unexpected if we are dealing with an archaism since an archaism is, by definition, no longer part of the productive grammar of a speaker. But if such is the case, then clitic climbing cannot be considered to be reliable evidence in favor of restructuring in Modern French.

We turn next to instances of long movement in French ‘easy-to-please’ constructions. The crucial observation for our purposes is that such constructions generally do not allow the gap they contain to appear in any kind of embedded clause selected by the infinitive complement to the adjective of the ‘tough’-class, as shown in (12) and (13).

- (12) a. Il sera difficile d’admettre qu’on a cassé ce vase.
 It will-be difficult of to-admit that we have broken this vase
 b. *Ce vase sera difficile à admettre [qu’on a cassé _].
 This vase will-be difficult of to-admit that we have broken

- (13) a. Il sera difficile de demander à examiner ces documents.
 It will-be difficult of to-ask to to-examine these documents
 b. *Ces documents seront difficiles à demander [à examiner ____].
 These documents will-be difficult to to-ask to to-examine

However, as Rizzi (1982) observes, in Italian, the gap contained in an ‘easy-to-please’ construction can, in fact, be two infinitives distant provided that the higher infinitive belongs to the class of restructuring verbs. This is illustrated in (14):

- (14) a. Questa canzone è facile da cominciare [a cantare ____].
 This song is easy of to-begin to to-sing
 b. *Questo lavoro è facile da promettere [di finire ____ per
 This work is easy of to-promise of to-finish by
 domani].
 tomorrow

Kayne (1989) points out that Rizzi’s generalization seems to have some validity for French as well, given the sharp ungrammaticality of examples like (13b) versus the marginal acceptability of the sentences in (15):

- (15) a. ?Ce genre d’article est difficile à savoir où classer ____.
 This kind of-article is difficult to to-know where to-file
 b. ?(Pour moi), ce livre serait impossible à commencer à
 (For me) this book would-be impossible to to-begin to
 lire ____ aujourd’hui.
 to-read today

Kayne’s assessment of these facts is echoed by Cinque (2002), who takes long movement in French ‘easy-to-please’ constructions to be evidence that restructuring effects exist in that language. We would like to argue, however, that, upon closer examination, the evidence is not as compelling as it may first appear. First, even if we restrict ourselves to the only two examples given in the literature to illustrate long movement in ‘easy-to-please’ constructions, namely those in (15), it is remarkable that the acceptability of examples like (15a) is sensitive to the type of *wh*-phrase which appears in the lower infinitival. For example, the degraded status of (16b) and (17b), as opposed to (15a), suggests that much more is involved than the class membership of the higher infinitival verb.

- (16) a. Il est difficile de savoir quand/à quelle période de l'année
 It is difficult of to-know when/at what time of the-year
 élaguer ces arbustes.
 to-trim these shrubs
- b. ?*Ces arbustes sont difficiles à savoir quand/à quelle
 These shrubs are difficult to to-know when/at what
 période de l'année élaguer.
 time of the-year to-trim
- (17) a. Il est difficile de savoir jusqu'à quel point croire ce
 It is difficult of to-know up-to what extent to-believe this
 genre de personne.
 kind of person
- b. ?*Ce genre de personne est difficile à savoir jusqu'à quel
 This kind of person is difficult to to-know up-to what
 point croire.
 extent to-believe

Second, it is relatively easy to construct examples parallel to (15b), except for the (crucial) fact that the higher infinitive belongs to the class of non-restructuring verbs, and obtain from native speakers similar grammaticality judgments. So, for example, most of our informants did not report a significant contrast in grammaticality between (15b) and the sentences in (18), all of them being judged to be marginally acceptable.

- (18) a. ?Le bon vin, c'est difficile à renoncer à boire ____.
 The good wine it's difficult to to-give-up to to-drink
- b. ?Ce genre de demande est impossible à refuser d'approuver ____.
 This kind of request is impossible to to-refuse of-to-approve
- c. ?Ce genre de mensonge est difficile à admettre avoir
 promulgué ____.
 This kind of lie is difficult to to-admit to-have promulgated
- d. ?C'est le genre de snob qui est vraiment difficile à éviter de
 froisser ____.
 He's the kind of snob who is truly difficult to to-avoid of to
 -offend

Uncovering the mechanisms involved in accounting for the contrast between sentences like (13b) and those in (15) and (18) is beyond the scope of this paper. What is important for our purposes is that restructuring does not appear to play an active role in distinguishing between them.

3 Does French Distinguish Between Restructuring and Non-Restructuring Verbs?

We turn next to the question of whether French has restructuring despite the fact that, as we argued, no transparency effects that can be tied to the presence of restructuring verbs can be found in this language. The answer to this question depends, in fact, on the particular analysis of restructuring one considers.

Roberts (1997) argues that restructuring verbs have in common the special syntactic property of triggering the raising of the T contained in their CP complement to either the T position or the V position of the clause in which they are merged, as illustrated in (19). This has the consequence of making the latter accessible to otherwise local operations (such as clitic placement) in the lower clause as the two clauses are combined into the same extended projection.

(19) ..._{[AgrS [VR Vinf +T] VR]} ..._{[CP ..._{[AgrSP ..._[AgrS Vinf] ...]} ...]}

An interesting feature of this analysis is that it predicts that Modern French lacks restructuring because infinitival AgrS has weak V-features, which means that the infinitival verb + T cannot move to the restructuring verb as in (19) without skipping the lower AgrS in violation of the Head Movement Constraint. Interestingly, both overt transparency effects and long infinitive movement for main verbs disappeared in the 17th century, which, given Roberts' theory, suggests that the V-feature of AgrS in French changed from strong in Old and Middle French to weak in Modern French, resulting in the loss of restructuring in the latter. This explanation of the facts is, of course, consistent with the evidence discussed in this paper.

Head movement accounts of restructuring, however, face a number of challenges, discussed in Cardinaletti and Shlonsky (2004). Such challenges have led a number of scholars to explore an altogether different type of account, one whose basic tenet is that restructuring verbs are not lexical verbs taking CP complements. For example, Cinque (2004) explores the possibility that restructuring verbs are universally always functional verbs that appear with infinitives in a monoclausal configuration like (20). This strong claim entails, of course, that Modern French does have restructuring even though it does not seem to have transparency effects.

(20) [_{FP} VR..._[VP Vinf ZP]]

We will now proceed to show that Cinque's position is untenable. One of the most intriguing pieces of evidence Cinque (2004) adduces in favor of his

hypothesis is the fact that when restructuring verbs co-occur, they appear to be subject to a strict ordering even in the absence of transparency effects. So, for instance, when the verb ‘tend’, which encodes the so-called predispositional aspect, and the verb ‘want’, which encodes volitional modality, co-occur, the order is rigidly ‘tend’ before ‘want’ as shown in (21).

- (21) a. Patrick tend à vouloir tout faire lui-même.
 Patrick tends to to-want everything to-do him-self
 b. *Patrick veut tendre à tout faire lui-même.
 Patrick wants to-tend to everything to-do him-self

Contrasts of this kind are taken by Cinque to reflect an ordering of the functional heads that harbor the two restructuring verbs. He reasons that if such verbs could also be lexical, it would not be clear how they could determine the choice of verb of their sentential complements, hence he assumes that they are always functional. This argument is, however, invalidated by the fact that it is possible to construct examples like (22) that show that the same ordering constraint obtains across clausal boundaries.

- (22) ?*Jean veut que Pierre tende à tout faire lui-même.
 Jean wants that Pierre tend to everything to-do him-self

Further, a consequence of the idea that restructuring verbs are always functional is that, like auxiliary verbs, they should have no arguments of their own. This is, in fact, what Cinque assumes. This means that even restructuring verbs like ‘want’ which are standardly thought of as subject control verbs inherit, just like auxiliary verbs, their “subject” from the infinitival lexical verb with which they co-occur. This view has undesirable consequences, however. Consider in this respect the French modal verbs *devoir* and *falloir* which both encode deontic modality (obligation) and are assumed by Cinque (2002) to belong to the class of restructuring verbs. As can be seen in (23), *falloir*, (but not *devoir*) occurs in contexts of non-obligatory control, just like *be fun* in English:

- (23) a. Il faut/*doit faire attention où on marche ici.
 It must to-pay attention where one walks here
 ‘One must be careful where one steps here.’
 b. It is fun to play baseball.

Consider now the paradigm in (24):

- (24) a. De par la loi, il doit y avoir du savon dans toutes les toilettes publiques.
 As per the law there must be some soap in all the toilets public
- b. De par la loi, il faut qu'il y ait du savon dans toutes les toilettes publiques.
 As per the law it is-necessary that-there be some soap in all the toilets public
- c. *De par la loi, il faut y avoir du savon dans toutes les toilettes publiques.
 As per the law it is-necessary (for there) to-be some soap in all the toilets public

If we take the expletive subject of *y avoir* 'there be' to be inherited by *devoir* in (24a) but not by *falloir* in (24c), as the complement to *falloir* is a CP containing a PRO, the facts are expected since PRO can never be expletive. (Note that there is nothing wrong with *falloir* taking a sentential complement with an overt expletive subject as (24b) shows). If, on the other hand, we adopt Cinque's (2004) view that restructuring verbs are always functional and inherit the subject of the infinitive, the contrast between (24a) and (24c) remains mysterious or, to put it differently, the distinction between raising and control is lost.

Another verb of the restructuring class that constitutes a challenge to Cinque's (2004) hypothesis is Italian *volere*/French *vouloir* 'want'. First, as Cinque points out, in contexts with *volere*, adverbs that can only occur once in a single clause such as 'already' and 'always' can occur twice if no transparency effects obtain but only once in the presence of transparency effects. This is illustrated in (25):

- (25) a. Maria vorrebbe già averlo già lasciato.
 Maria would-want already him-to-have already left
- b. *Maria lo vorrebbe già aver già lasciato.
 Maria him would-want already to-have already left
 'Maria already would like to have already left him.'

Paradigms such as (25) suggest, of course, that the presence of transparency effects signals a monoclausal structure where *volere* is a functional verb, while the absence of transparency effects signals a biclausal structure where *volere*, being a lexical verb under V, takes a CP complement. The fact that *volere* appears to have lexical usages; that is, take a DP or a CP internal argument as in (26), also militates in favor of the claim that it cannot always be a functional verb.

- (26) a. Maria vuole una bicicletta.
 ‘Maria wants a bicycle.’
 b. Gianni vuole che Maria resti.
 Gianni wants that Maria stay
 ‘Gianni wants Maria to stay.’

Cinque (2004) addresses these potential problems as follows. First, he assumes that *volere* does not take a direct object but rather, a verbal complement with a null head that can be paraphrased as HAVE in (26a) and OBTAIN in (26b). On this view, it is not *volere*, which is a functional verbal element, but the phonologically null lexical verbal head HAVE or OBTAIN that takes the DP or CP as its object, as illustrated in (27).

- (27) a. Maria vuole [_{VP} HAVE [_{DP} una bicicletta]]
 b. Gianni vuole [_{VP} OBTAIN [_{CP} che Maria resti]]

When *volere* is followed by an infinitive, there are two possibilities: either the infinitive occupies the V slot of HAVE in (27) as illustrated in (28a), or it is part of an infinitival CP clause complement to the abstract verb OBTAIN as in (28b):

- (28) a. Gianni [_{FP} vuole [_{VP} restare]]
 b. Gianni [_{FP} vuole [_{VP} OBTAIN [_{CP} PRO restare]]]

Cinque is now in a position to correctly predict the facts in (25). Clitic climbing is only compatible with the structure in (28a), a monoclausal structure, hence only one adverb is allowed. The presence of two adverbs in (25b) signals a biclausal structure like (28b), a structure which disallows clitic climbing because the latter is clause bounded, hence (25b) is correctly predicted to be ungrammatical. We will now show, however, that Cinque’s treatment makes the wrong predictions with respect to French. In cases like (29a), French *vouloir* ‘want’ must, according to Cinque’s analysis, be associated with the structure in (29b):

- (29) a. Jean veut cette moto.
 Jean wants that motorcycle
 b. Jean veut [_{VP} HAVE [_{DP} cette moto]]

The internal DP argument can be cliticized, in which case the structure is as in (30):

- (30) Jean la_i veut [_{VP} HAVE [_{DP} e_i]]
 Jean it wants

Notice now that (30) is an instance of clitic climbing; in fact, this is what Cinque assumes for similar examples in Italian. Modern French does not, however, allow clitic climbing, which means that accounting for the grammaticality of (30) versus the ungrammaticality of the structurally parallel (according to Cinque's theory) (31) becomes problematic.

- (31) * Jean la_i veut [_{VP} acheter [_{DP} e_i]] (cf. Jean veut l'acheter.)
 Jean it wants to-buy Jean wants it-to-buy

If, on the other hand, one assumes that in French all restructuring verbs, including *vouloir*, are lexical verbs the contrast between (30) and (31) follows from the resulting structures in (32), as does the presence of the two adverbs *toujours* 'always' in (33):

- (32) a. Jean la_i veut_j [_{VP} e_j [_{DP} e_i]]
 b. *Jean la_i veut_j [_{VP} e_j [_{CP} PRO acheter e_i]]
 (33) Jean veut toujours [PRO toujours dire la vérité]
 Jean wants always always to-tell the truth

It thus appears that verbs of the restructuring class must be allowed, at least in some cases, to be lexical rather than functional.

In fact, both Cinque (2001) and Cardinaletti and Shlonsky (2004) argue that restructuring verbs admit two distinct possibilities. They can either be merged under V and take a CP complement or they can be inserted in the functional head position, the semantic content of which they happen to match.

4 On the Cross-Linguistic Status of Restructuring

Assuming that this approach to restructuring is basically correct, how then is the lack of transparency effects in Modern French to be interpreted? There are two basic possibilities. First, we could hypothesize that Modern French, just like Italian and Spanish allows verbs of the restructuring class to be merged either as lexical or functional verbs. This is possible on the assumption that the option of inserting such verbs in the functional domain is a necessary but not sufficient condition for transparency effects to obtain. This hypothesis leaves open the question of why French lost transparency effects in the 17th century, however. It also seems to entail that the dual lexical/functional status of restructuring verbs is universal or, to put it differ-

ently, that UG does not allow languages to select more restrictive options for restructuring verbs (e.g. treat them as exclusively lexical or as exclusively functional). This is because, given the absence of transparency effects in Modern French, the language learner does not have access to positive evidence that restructuring verbs can have functional status and must therefore rely on an invariant principle of UG to have access to this knowledge. While this is not an outright impossibility, it is nevertheless somewhat surprising given the numerous instances in which options made available by UG lead to parametric choices in natural language. There is, however, a more straightforward, less problematic interpretation of the facts, one that consists in allowing the dual lexical/functional status of restructuring verbs to be subject to parameterization, resulting in the three basic options in (34):

- (34) a. Option A: restructuring verbs are either lexical or functional.
- b. Option B: restructuring verbs are lexical.
- c. Option C: restructuring verbs are functional.

Note first that of the three options in (34), Option A is the unmarked one, while Option B and Option C are more restrictive. Further, the possibility exists that the class of restructuring verbs may be divisible among options within a given language or dialect of a language. This, it seems to us, is the situation that obtains in Italian: while most Italian dialects select Option A for the entire class of restructuring verbs, for some speakers, there is a subclass of desideratives (including *desiderare* 'desire' and *preferire* 'prefer') that falls under Option B, hence such verbs are incompatible with transparency effects. English also appears to exhibit a split of this type as desideratives such as *want* arguably fall under Option B whereas the subset of non-periphrastic modal verbs known as modal auxiliaries falls under Option C. Diachronic change can also be viewed in this light. The complete loss of transparency effects in French can now be simply characterized as a shift from Option A (Middle French) to Option B (Modern French), a shift encompassing the class of restructuring verbs as a whole.

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