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The Syntax of *ne...que* Exceptives in French

Abstract

This paper examines the syntax of the French *ne...que* exceptive construction. For exceptive sentences like *je ne lis que le journal* 'I don't read anything but the newspaper', no satisfactory minimalist account has been given for the nature of the negation, the syntactic status of *que*, and the source of the exception semantics. Although *ne* is typically analyzed as the negative head, and *que* as a complementizer, in this construction, the distribution of these morphemes is anything but typical. While *ne* normally depends on a second negative element in the sentence, in *ne...que* none is required. A complementizer like *que* is expected to select a full clause, but in *ne...que*, a finite clause is the only type of phrase disallowed after *que*. In the spirit of lexical economy, this paper provides an analysis for *ne...que* that grants no special status to either *ne* or *que*, instead assimilating the construction to the syntax of a reduced clausal comparative. If the exception phrase following *que* is in fact the remnant of an elliptical relative clause adjoined to an optionally covert NPI, the syntactic properties of *ne...que* cease to be problematic.

The Syntax of *ne...que* Exceptives in French

Teresa Fredericks O'Neill*

1 Introduction

Economy has long been a guiding principle not only in syntactic theory but also in the theory of the lexicon. The most economical analysis of a given lexical item is one that seeks to account for its varied syntactic distribution without having to posit a family of homophonous but syntactically distinct morphemes. The *ne...que* exceptive construction of French presents a puzzle for this approach. In this paper, I consider sentences like the followings

- (1) Je n' ai vu que le professeur¹
I NE have see.PP QUE the professor
'I have not seen anyone but the professor.' / 'I saw only the professor.'

The interpretation of the *ne...que* exceptive construction is similar to English 'only', but (1) demonstrates that, unlike 'only', the French construction consists of two discontinuous elements: *ne*, which is normally analyzed as the head of NegP, and the morpheme *que*, traditionally assumed to be a complementizer or a wh-operator. Immediately following *que* is a phrase interpreted as the exception to the domain of predication (henceforth: exception XP). The nature of the negation expressed by *ne*, the syntactic status of *que*, and the source of the exception semantics in *ne...que* sentences have been extensively debated (cf. Baciú 1978, Barbaud 1985, Azoulay-Vicente 1985, 1988, Dekydtspotter 1993, Gaatone 1999, von Stechow and Iatridou 2007), but no analysis has emerged from this literature that is both empirically and theoretically adequate.

A superficial look at the *ne...que* construction reveals that its structure is not straightforward. The exception XP cannot be questioned: it is impossible to extract out of the *que*-phrase. The *que*-phrase distributes like an NPI, but in no other construction does *que* have NPI properties. Both *ne* and *que* exhibit different behavior in this environment than they do elsewhere, and at first blush, it is not clear that they are the same *ne* and *que* found in other environments. Are the peculiar syntactic properties of the *ne...que* construction and its two elements the result of special lexical representations, or do they follow from independently motivated principles of the grammar? Since the latter is desirable, this paper proposes a minimalist account of the *ne...que* that assimilates it to reduced clausal comparatives, thereby granting no special status to either *ne* or *que*. An additional advantage of this analysis is that it can be extended to counterparts of *ne...que* in other languages.

2 The Mystery of *ne...que*

2.1 *Ne* Under a Microscope

The presence of *ne* raises the question of whether or not *ne...que* involves negation. Negation in French normally involves the negative head *ne* with the negative marker *pas* or other negative word (n-word) in its c-command domain (cf. Belletti & Rizzi 1981, Pollock 1989, Haegeman 1995, Zanuttini 1997, Rowlett 1998). *Ne* is often assumed to be syntactically weak: it depends on a concord relationship with a second negative element in the sentence. In *ne...que* sentences, however, we do not normally find a negative word in the c-command domain of *ne*. When one occurs, it forces a double negation interpretation, rather than one of negative concord.

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¹Unless otherwise indicated, all examples in this paper are original, constructed with the assistance of native speakers.

- (2) a. Je ne sors que le samedi
 I NE go.out.1SG QUE the Saturday
 'I only go out on Saturdays.' / 'I don't go out except on Saturdays.'
- b. Je ne sors pas que le samedi
 I NE go.out.1SG not QUE the Saturday
 'I don't ONLY go out on Saturdays.' (I go out on Fridays too.)

Although in the exceptive construction no overt n-word occurs in the c-command domain of *ne*, there is a dependency between *ne* and the *que*-phrase, illustrated in (3), below. The *que*-phrase must occupy the c-command domain of *ne*, which suggests that *que* may play a similar role to that of an n-word in canonical sentential negation.

- (3) a. Il n' est que Marie qui est venue
 EXPL NE is QUE Marie who is come.PP
 'No one but Marie came.' / 'Only Marie came.'
- b. *Que Marie n' est venue
 QUE Marie NE is come.PP
 (Only Marie came.)

In certain environments, *ne* can occur without a second negative element, but since this does not give rise to a negative interpretation, it is usually argued that in these cases *ne* is expletive (Giannakidou 2000). Expletive *ne* occurs in comparatives, in some counterfactual embedded clauses, and with intensional verbs of doubt. On the other hand, in a literary register and with the modal verbs *pouvoir* 'to be able', *savoir* 'to know', *cesser* 'to cease', and *oser* 'to dare', *ne* alone can contribute the full semantic force of negation (although *pas* is typically present in spoken French). To further complicate the picture, *ne* is often omitted in casual spoken French.

Given the range of behavior exhibited by *ne*, several options present themselves for treating its syntactic role in the exceptive construction. Since the *ne* of *ne...que* does not depend on a concord relationship with an overt negative word in its domain, it may be that in the exceptive construction, it is *que* that fulfills this role. Other possibilities are that *ne...que* involves expletive *ne* and no semantic negation, or that the exceptive construction is a special environment wherein *ne* alone encodes sentential negation. A final hypothesis to be considered is that *ne* stands in a concord relationship with a covert negative element. We will return to these hypotheses in Section 3.

2.2 *Que* Under a Microscope

While the status of *ne* in *ne...que* is quite puzzling, it is not so mysterious as that of *que*. In French, *que* normally behaves as a complementizer, as in (4), or a wh-operator, as in (5). It must always precede a finite clause:

- (4) a. Je t'ai dit que tu ne devrais pas le faire
 I you=have say.PP QUE you NE should not it=do.INF
 'I told you that you shouldn't do it.'
- b. *Je t'ai dit que ne pas le faire
 I you=have say.PP QUE NE not it=do.INF
 (I told you not to do it)
- (5) a. Que_in' a-t-il pas dit t_i?
 QUE_i NE has he not say.PP t_i?
 'What didn't he say?'
- b. Il a trouvé le livre_i que_j j' avais perdu t_i
 he has find.PP the book_iQUE_j I have.IMFV lose.PP t_i t_i
 'He found the book that I had lost.'

Que also occurs as the comparative marker. In comparative sentences like (6), *que* can be followed

by a full clause or by a non-clausal XP.

- (6) Marie est plus intelligente que Jean (ne l'est)
 Marie is more intelligent QUE Jean (NE it=is)
 'Marie is more intelligent than Jean (is).'

Here, I invoke the elliptical treatment of phrasal comparatives that derives them from underlying bi-clausal sources, preserving the generalization that *que* always subcategorizes for a finite clause (see references in Lechner 2004). What is important to note is that across its distribution, *que* must occupy a position in the left periphery of the finite clause.

The exceptive construction raises a problem for this generalization, however, since the *que* of *ne...que* can never be followed by a finite clause. The exception XP that immediately follows *que* can in fact be any category of phrase except a finite clause.

- (7) a. Je n' ai vu que le professeur (DP)
 I NE have see.PP QUE le professeur
 'I have only seen the professor.' / 'I have not seen anyone but the professor.'
- b. Tu n' as prêté le livre qu' à Marie (PP)
 you NE have lend.PP the book QUE to Marie
 'You lent the book only to Marie.' / 'You lent the book to no one but Marie.'
- c. Le bébé ne fait que pleurer (VP non-finite)
 the baby NE do.3SG QUE cry.INF
 'The baby only cries.' / 'The baby does nothing but cry.'
- d. On n' a que commencé à l'expliquer (VP past participle)
 one NE has QUE begin.PP to it=explain.INF
 'We have only begun to explain it.'
- e. Il n' est arrivé qu' hier (Adverbial)
 he NE is arrive.PP QUE yesterday
 'He arrived only yesterday.'
- f. La solution n' est que provisoire (AP)
 the solution NE is QUE temporary
 'The solution is only temporary.'
- g. Je ne t'ai demandé que si tu voulais venir (CP)
 I NE you=have ask.PP QUE if you want.IPFV come.INF
 'I only asked you if you wanted to come.'
- h. *Je n' ai vu que le professeur est dans son bureau (IP)
 I NE have see.PP QUE the professor is in his office
 (I saw only the professor is in his office.)

If exceptive *que* is the same as the complementizer *que* form discussed above, this distribution is precisely the opposite of what we expect. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the exceptive *que*-phrase has unexpected NPI properties. These facts lead us to consider two possibilities: either exceptive *que* is homophonous but syntactically distinct from the complementizer *que* or there is a way to reconcile the unexpected distribution of exceptive *que* with its status as a complementizer. In the interest of lexical economy, I will undertake the latter.

2.3 *Ne...que* at the Syntax-Semantics Interface

An additional challenge posed by *ne...que* is to provide a syntactic structure that is compatible with compositional semantics. It is not immediately clear how the collocation of the (optional) negative head and the morpheme *que* generates an exceptive interpretation. If *ne* is negative, then the *que*-phrase may be interpreted as *other than*, à la Von Stechow & Iatridou (2007):

- (8) $\llbracket \text{NE QUE Jean} \rrbracket = \lambda P \llbracket x(x \neq \text{Jean} \ \& \ P(x) = 1) \rrbracket$ (Von Stechow & Iatridou 2007:57)

Or, if *ne* is semantically vacuous, the exception semantics arise from an *only*-type interpretation.

The challenge remains to demonstrate how these would compose in detail.

3 The Syntactic Structure of *ne...que*

3.1 Problems with Previous Analyses

Existing analyses of *ne...que* tend to fall into two camps. Most (Azoulay-Vicente 1985, 1988, Baciú 1978, Dekydtspotter 1993, von Stechow 1993, von Stechow & Iatridou 2007) propose that the construction involves negation, encoded either in a covert negative element dependent on *ne*, or in *que* itself. A few (Gatone 1999, Grevisse 1993) deny that *ne...que* has any syntactic or semantic negative import at all. While I suggest that the first group are correct in proposing a covert negative element, all fail to establish adequately the role that *que* plays in the structure.

The latter hypothesis, that *ne* is expletive, has some appeal. If *ne...que* sentences do not actually involve negation, a key difference between these and canonical negative sentences can be straightforwardly explained. Indefinite DPs in French contain determiners bearing gender and number agreement features, while when the same DPs occur in the scope of negation, they must be introduced by a bare *de* with a negative polarity distribution like English 'any'.

- (9) a. Je veux du /(*de) bon vin rouge
 I want.1SG some.M.SG /(*any) good wine red
 'I want some good red wine.'
 b. Je ne veux pas de /(*du) vin rouge
 I NE want.1SG not any /(*some.M.SG) wine red
 'I don't want any / (*some) red wine.'

Gatone (1999) and Grevisse (1993) note that under *ne...que* the negative DP cannot occur; instead, the agreeing indefinite determiner is required:

- (10) a. Je ne veux que du /(*de) bon vin rouge
 I NE want.1SG QUE some /(*any) good wine red
 (I want only any good red wine.)

Similarly, these authors observe that when two exception XPs are conjoined under *ne...que*, the affirmative conjunction *et* occurs, and not the NPI conjunction *ni*, which is normally required under *ne*, as the minimal pairs in (11) demonstrate.

- (11) a. Je ne bois ni le vin ni la bière
 I NE drink.1SG neither the wine nor the beer
 'I drink neither wine nor beer.'
 b. *Je ne bois pas le vin et la bière
 I NE drink.1SG not the wine and the beer
 (I don't drink wine and beer.)
 c. Je ne bois que le vin et /(*ni) la bière
 I NE drink.1SG QUE the wine and /(*nor) the beer
 'I only drink wine and beer.'

While these facts call into question the negative status of *ne*, simply dismissing it as expletive does little to explain its behavior, since expletive *ne* remains poorly understood. In fact, there is direct evidence that *ne* is not expletive, which is crucial to the present analysis. The covert negative element defended in this paper alternates with an overt NPI phrase, like *rien d'autre* 'anything other' or *personne d'autre* 'anyone other'.

The data in (10) and (11) are unproblematic under the treatment given to the *que*-phrase in this paper. Since the *que*-phrase will be shown to be an elliptical clause, it shares the general property of French relative clauses of being a scope island with respect to matrix negation.

An additional problem with the analysis put forth by Gatone (1999) is that he identifies expletive *que* as an adverb analogous to *seulement* 'only'. There are, however, some robust contrasts

between the two. Exceptive *que* must immediately precede the exception XP, while *seulement* can associate with any phrase in its c-command domain. Because of this, exceptions with *seulement* give rise to scopal ambiguities, while under *que*, the exception is unambiguous:

- (12) a. J' ai seulement prêté le livre à Marie
 I have only lend.PP the book to Marie
 i. 'I only LENT the book to Marie.'
 ii. 'I only lent the BOOK to Marie.'
 iii. 'I only lent the book to MARIE.'
 b. Je n' ai que prêté le livre à Marie
 I NE have QUE lend.PP the book to Marie
 'I only LENT the book to Marie.'

The NPI behavior of the *que*-phrase remains unexplained. In Gaatone's analysis, as well as in those that take exceptive *que* to be imbued ad hoc with an NPI feature and highly variable argument structure, the goal of lexical economy is neglected. Other proposals for the structure of *ne...que* (Dekydtspotter 1993, von Fintel 1993, von Fintel & Iatridou 2007) do not directly address the syntactic status of *que* at all.

In her extensive treatment of this construction, Azoulay-Vicente (1985, 1988) suggests that *que* should be treated as a preposition, analogous to *sauf* 'except', *excepté* 'except', and *hormis* 'aside from'. She takes as evidence the behavior of pronominal object clitics under *ne...que*. Kayne (1975) and Azoulay-Vicente (1985) point out that pronominal objects are expected to cliticize onto the finite verb if *que* is a typical negative adverb or nominal NPI, but they do not.

- (13) a. Il ne t'aime plus (*toi)
 he NE you=love.3SG anymore (*you)
 'He doesn't love you anymore.'
 b. Il ne (*t') aime que toi
 he NE (*you=) love.3SG QUE you
 'He loves only you.'

Azoulay-Vicente (1985) compares this to the behavior of prepositional phrases, where cliticization is also blocked. *Que*, like prepositions, cannot be stranded by movement.

If we continue to compare the distribution of prepositions in French to the distribution of *que*, however, we find that they differ significantly. For example, exceptive *que* can precede a verbal past participle, as in (14a), while prepositions cannot, as shown in (14b). Even when *ne* is omitted, distributional differences are striking, contrasted in (15a) and (15b).

- (14) a. On n' a que commencé à l'expliquer
 one NE has QUE begin.PP to it=explain.INF
 'We have only begun to explain it.'
 b. On a *de /*à /*par commencé à l'expliquer
 one has *of /*to/*by begin.PP to it=explain.INF
- (15) a. Je (n) ai vu personne sauf / excepté / hormis / (??que) Jean
 I NE have see.PP anyone except / (??QUE) Jean
 'I haven't seen anyone except Jean.'
 b. Sauf / excepté / hormis / (*que) Jean, personne (n) est venu
 except / (*QUE) Jean, anyone NE is come.PP
 'Except for Jean, no one came.'

Treating *que* as a preposition is thus not only empirically unsatisfying, but also theoretically unsatisfying, as it misses the fact that, elsewhere, *que* always subcategorizes for a finite clause.

A proposal developed in Baciú (1978) develops the hypothesis that *ne...que* contains an optionally null NPI + *d'autre* phrase, with the interpretation 'any other *x*'. Baciú points out a parallel with the comparative construction, which the analysis in this paper will elaborate. He implicitly

suggests, however, that the comparative marker *que* combines directly with the phrase that follows it, leaving the internal structure of the *que*-phrase largely unexplored. The crux of the present analysis is that *que* introduces an elliptical clause, whose remnant is the exception XP.

For exceptive structures in English, Reinhart (1991) gives a compelling non-elliptical analysis, which seeks to resolve the logical contradiction arising from an ellipsis approach.

(16) *I didn't see anyone, but I saw the professor

Reinhart proposes a mono-clausal structure wherein the exception XP is base-generated in a position adjoined to IP, and its correlate in the clause adjoins to it by QR at LF such that they form a constituent. The exception XP is assigned Case by 'except' or 'but' in English. Adjunction of the correlate to the exception XP is permissible provided that they are identical in category and Case.

This solution elegantly provides for the interpretation of the exception phrase, which an elliptical approach cannot do, since, as Reinhart points out, the exception XP and its correlate would have to be applied to the predicate separately. Her approach, however, cannot be straightforwardly extended to *ne...que*. As we have seen, the *que*-phrase is embedded under an NPI, which, for Reinhart's analysis, sets up a conflict at LF: the NPI must simultaneously undergo QR, and remain *in situ* to be in the scope of its licenser.² A further problem for conjunction analysis is the fact that the correlate of the exception is always nominal in French, while the category of the exception XP varies. Reinhart's analysis would thus wrongly predict non-nominal exception XPs to be disallowed. Additionally, it falls short of the goal of this paper: to reconcile the lexical subcategorization requirements of *que* with its behavior in *ne...que*.

3.2 An Alternative

Having sketched the principal parts of the analysis in the section above, I now turn to the task of making them explicit. As we have seen, some speakers accept *ne...que* sentences with an overt NPI host (*rien* or *personne*) for the *que*-phrase, and all speakers accept an NPI host modified by *d'autre* or even bare *d'autre*, suggesting that the NPI is always underlyingly present. Additional evidence for the covert structure is drawn from the facts below.

When the exception XP is a finite verb phrase, we might expect something like the following:

(17) *Le bébé ne (que) pleure (que)
 the baby NE QUE cry.3SG QUE

Neither position for *que* is licit, however. The light verb *faire* must be inserted to save the structure, and the lexical verb is spelled out as an infinitive directly following *que*.

(18) a. Le bébé ne fait que pleurer
 the baby NE do.3SG QUE cry.INF
 'The baby does nothing but cry.'

The light verb is evidence for the presence of covert structure preceding the *que*-phrase, namely, a covert nominal element, as *faire* requires a nominal internal argument. A more fleshed-out structure of (18a) including the covert NPI *rien d'autre* 'anything other' is given in (18b), below.

(18) b. Le bébé ne fait [QPRIEN D' AUTRE ... que pleurer]

The behavior of *ne* is thus unproblematic, since it scopes over an NPI.

Having argued against exceptive *que* being labeled a negative marker like *pas*, a nominal NPI, an adverb, and a preposition, I defend the position that it is, in fact, the canonical complementizer. *Que* introduces a full clause adjoined to the NPI that is elided under identity with the matrix clause, paralleling the elliptical analysis that has been proposed for phrasal comparatives. Like the

²However, see Merchant (2000) for a possible solution to this conflict for cases of antecedent-contained deletion.

complement of a comparative, the exception XP is the remnant of this ellipsis operation.

Such an analysis is theoretically motivated by lexical economy: there need be nothing special about exceptive *ne* and *que*. It is also empirically motivated simply by process of elimination: no other candidate for the syntactic status of *que* stands up to scrutiny. Section 4 will present direct empirical support for an elided clause drawn from Case-connectivity effects in Greek. A desirable consequence of postulating an elliptical clause is that Gaatone's (1999) problem of the positive determiner and conjunction in *ne...que* is solved by the fact that a relative clause is a scope island for negation. The extraction restrictions on the *que*-phrase similarly follow from this account, as the NPI + *que*-phrase is a complex NP island.

A challenge the ellipsis proposal must address is that the non-elided counterparts of such sentences are ungrammatical.

- (19) *Je n' ai vu (personne d'autre) que je n' ai vu le professeur

The obligatory nature of the ellipsis in the embedded clause is not, however, unique to this construction. It has been motivated in other environments as well; for example, for subject comparatives, cases of antecedent contained deletion, and specificational pseudoclefts.

- (20) a. I saw more movies than John (*saw movies)
 b. *I tried every beer that you [_{VP} tried every beer that you [_{VP} tried...]]
 c. What nobody bought was (*nobody bought) any wine
 (den Dikken, Meinunger & Wilder 2000:6)

Another problem is that most types of *ne...que* sentences require non-constituent ellipsis. A solution to this falls out from the details of the derivation.

Let us elaborate on the derivation of *ne...que* sentences, adding a sketch of their semantics. The exception XP receives an interpretation similar to that of focused phrases associated with exhaustive focus particles like 'only' (cf. Rooth 1985, Büring & Hartmann 2001, Kayne 1998). É. Kiss (1998) and Horvath (2007) point out that in Hungarian, focused phrases associated with *csak* 'only' must raise to the left periphery of the clause, while other types of focused phrases are interpreted *in situ*. The focus particles that trigger movement encode exhaustive identificational focus:

- (21) An identificational focus represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold; it is identified as the exhaustive subset of this set for which the predicate phrase actually holds. (É. Kiss 1998:245)

Horvath (2007) proposes that movement associated with this kind of focus involves a quantificational operator (EI-Op) with an uninterpretable [EI] (Exhaustive Identification) feature and a functional projection of the abstract head EI. EI-Op requires a focused constituent in its immediate c-command domain, so it is generated in the specifier position of the focused phrase: the exception XP in the present analysis. EI-Op raises to the specifier of the EI phrase to check its formal feature, pied-piping the focused phrase. The specifier of the EI phrase, where the exception XP is spelled out, is the traditional focus position in the left periphery. I assume that the NPI in the matrix clause has the interpretation 'any other *x*', which generates the set of contextually salient alternatives (Rooth 1985). The matrix negation scopes over the NPI, such that for any member of the set of alternatives besides the exception XP, application of the predicate would yield falsity.

The derivation of the sentence in (1), reproduced below as (1'), illustrates the proposal. (1a') gives the basic structure of the clause embedded under *que*. The EI head then merges with the IP, attracting the EI-Op with the exception DP *le professeur* to its specifier (1b'). The complementizer merges with the clause and the operator sub-extracts out of the EIP to Spec,CP by QR(1c'). The newly formed relative clause is adjoined to the NPI in the matrix clause, which in this sentence has the contextually relevant interpretation of 'any other person' (1d'). The rest of the matrix clause is derived uneventfully by external and internal merge. Since the embedded IP is identical to the matrix clause, it is elided in keeping with economy of representation (1e').

- (1') a. [_{IP} je n' ai vu [_{DP} Op le professeur]]

- b. [_{EIP} [_{DP_i} Op le professeur] [_{EIP} [_{EI}][_{IP} je n'ai vu t_i]]]
- c. [_{CP} [_{Op}] [_{CP} [_C que][_{EIP} [_{DP_i} t_{Op} le professeur] [_{EIP} [_{EI}][_{IP} je n'ai vu t_i]]]]]]]
- d. [_{QP} [_{QP} $\bar{\square}$ PERSONNE D'AUTRE] [_{CP} [_{Op}] [_{CP} [_C que] [_{EIP} [_{DP_i} t_{Op} le professeur] [_{EIP} [_{EI}][_{IP} je n'ai vu t_i]]]]]]]]]
- e. [_{IP} je [_{NEGP} [_{Neg} n'ai][_{VP} vu [_{QP} [_{QP} $\bar{\square}$ PERSONNE D'AUTRE] [_{CP} [_{Op}] [_{CP} [_C que] [_{EIP} [_{DP_i} t_{Op} le professeur] [_{EIP} [_{EI}][_{IP} je n'ai vu t_i]]]]]]]]]]]

All *ne...que* sentences can be derived in this way. When the exception XP is a non-finite verb, as in (7c), the embedded VP is associated with the EI-Op and raises to the focus position. For sentences like (7f) with adjectival exception XPs, the AP in the embedded clause is exhaustively identified, and the covert matrix quantifier is interpreted as 'no other quality'. Only constituent is required, as the exception XP has vacated the embedded clause. The relative clause structure described here avoids the logical contradiction Reinhart (1991) is concerned with, since the NPI dominates the exception XP. The exact semantics of the NPI complex containing the exception XP remain open for future research.

4 Cross-Linguistic Extensions

The *ne...que* construction is not unique to French. Von Fintel and Iatridou (2007) point out that what they call the NEG + EXCEPTIVE construction is also found in Spanish, Greek, Irish, and Arabic. This section will demonstrate that the analysis adopted here for French can be extended to NEG + EXCEPTIVES in other languages. Additionally, since the morphosyntax of French offers no direct proof of an elided clause, this section presents some cross-linguistic support for the analysis.

In Spanish, the equivalent of *ne...que* mirrors the comparative just as it does in French, employing a collocation of *no*, *más*, and *que*:

- (22) a. No quiero más que dormir
 NEG want.1SG more QUE sleep.INF
 'I only want to sleep.'

Von Fintel and Iatridou (2007) point out that the use of *más* in Spanish corresponds to the optional *d'autre* phrase in French. I would add that like its French counterpart, the *más* phrase in the Spanish matrix clause contains a covert NPI, which can be optionally spelled out in the above example as *nada más* 'nothing more'.

This structure also accommodates the NEG + EXCEPTIVE construction in Irish, which is similar to French in that the quantifier phrase in the matrix clause tends to remain covert. These languages also share the property that the exceptive distributes like an NPI (Von Fintel & Iatridou 2007). The Irish exceptive construction, like its English counterpart, introduces the embedded clause with the complementizer that normally means *but* as opposed to *than*, as in (23), below.

- (23) a. Níl ann ach saighdiúir
 NEG.is in.him but soldier
 'He is only a soldier.' (von Fintel & Iatridou 2007:127)
- b. Cad a thifeadh sé ach a dhearthair fein ar meisce?
 what COMP see.COMP he but his brother REFL drunk?
 'What should he see but his own brother drunk?' (Chung & McCloskey 1987:26a)

In Greek, Case-connectivity effects provide direct evidence for ellipsis of the embedded IP. Exception DPs bear overt morphological Case according to their position in the embedded IP. If these constructions are not biclausal, it is quite cumbersome to account for the Case feature on DP exception XPs. The exceptive complementizer in Greek is (transliterated as) *para*, and like French *que*, it also occurs in comparatives. If the preposition or adverb analysis were adopted for Greek *para*, Case connectivity would not be predicted. In fact, as von Fintel and Iatridou (2007) point out, when the genuinely prepositional exceptive *ektos* is used instead of *para*, a DP exception XP invariably bears accusative case, which occurs more generally on the DP complement of a prepo-

sition. The sentences in (24), below, demonstrate these crucial Case-connectivity effects.

- (24) a. Dhen irthe para o Yanis
 NEG come.3SG.PST QUE the.NOM Yanis.NOM
 ‘Nobody came except Yanis.’
 b. Dhen idha para ton Yani
 NEG see.1SG.PST QUE the.ACC Yanis.ACC
 ‘I did not see anyone except Yanis.’
 (von Fintel & Iatridou 2007:footnote 16)

Some speakers I surveyed report that they find these sentences more acceptable when *para* is immediately followed by *mono*, meaning ‘only’. This element *mono* could be analyzed as an overt instantiation of the EI-Op. There is also some speaker variation with respect to whether an overt NPI host is required. Some speakers find sentences like those in (24) to be awkward without an overt *kanena(n)* ‘anyone’ hosting the *para*-phrase. It is also possible to find a full phrase *kanena(n) allo*, analogous to the French *personne d’autre*, a similarity which suggests that the structure of NEG + EXCEPTIVE sentences in these languages is fundamentally the same.

There is a range of variation in NEG + EXCEPTIVE languages with respect to the host of the *que*-phrase. While I do not have an explanation for this, it is interesting to note that all the possibilities for the spell-out of this host are attested: in French, it may either be completely covert, partially spelled out as *d’autre*, or completely spelled out as NPI + *d’autre*, but for most speakers it can never be spelled out as NPI alone. In Spanish, the host can either be partially spelled out as *más* or completely spelled out as NPI + *más*. In Irish, it seems always to be completely covert. In Greek, all the permutations observed in French are possible, including a lone NPI. An additional difference between these languages and French is the fact that in French, the negative marker *ne* can be null, such that there is no phonetically overt material encoding either negation or the NPI.

The suppression of the negative and the host of the relative clause can be found in the (archaic) English exceptive construction, in which the conjunction *but* is the counterpart to the French *que*:

- (25) a. I saw but them, saw only them for hours (E. Poe 1885, *To Helen (I saw thee once...)*)
 b. They go but to return (Leno 1867, *Waterloo*)

The alternation in French between a fully non-pronounced host for the *que*-phrase and a fully pronounced NPI + *d’autre* phrase is paralleled in the English construction. Perhaps more informatively, English allows an alternation between a pronounced and an unpronounced negative element in the matrix clause, just as in French. These English sentences also share with French the property that the exceptive marker cannot immediately precede a finite verb, but instead follows a light verb *do*, which I suggested was evidence for the presence of a covert host for the *que*-phrase.

- (26) a. *le bébé (ne) que pleure
 b. le bébé (ne) fait que pleurer
 c. *the baby but cries
 d. the baby does but cry

Perhaps the absence of *ne* is not problematic for the analysis presented here: the NPI is always covertly present. It seems that to provide a full account for grammars in which both the negative marker and the NPI are phonetically absent, further research is needed.

5 Conclusions

This paper has sought to provide a syntactic treatment for the poorly understood *ne...que* exceptive construction in French that upholds economy principles. Unlike previous analyses, the approach argued here introduces no novel categories or operations, nor does it require the proliferation of homophonous morphemes in the lexicon. This paper has taken the alternation between an unhosted *que*-phrase and an overt NPI phrase in the matrix clause as evidence that an NPI host is always

present in *ne...que* sentences.

The similarities between comparative sentences and *ne...que* sentences motivate providing the two constructions with a similar syntactic analysis, in which the morpheme *que* is the canonical complementizer, and the clause it introduces is elided under identity with the matrix clause. The exhaustivity semantics associated with focus movement in Hungarian are extended to NEG + EXCEPTIVES, preserving the generalization that only constituents are subject to ellipsis. While some questions remain as to the spell-out possibilities of the NPI and the semantic type of the NPI + *que*-phrase, the proposal offered here has captured the syntactic behavior of a puzzling construction without complicating the grammar.

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