

SUBJECT ISLAND?

(COUNTER)EVIDENCE FROM FRENCH DONT-RELATIVE CLAUSES

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INTRODUCTION: SUBJECT ISLAND ?

Extraction out of subjects is generally considered as ungrammatical (Ross 1967, Chomsky 2008...). Subject islands have nevertheless been claimed to vary across languages (Rizzi 1990, Godard 1992...) and across constructions (Sprouse et al. 2015...). Pragmatic (Kuno 1987, Goldberg 2013...) and processing factors also play a role on putative "islands" (Klunder 1992, Hofmeister et al. 2013...).

DONT RELATIVE CLAUSES IN FRENCH

French *dont* ('of which', 'whose') relativizes verbal (1), object noun (2), (4) or subject noun (3) 'de' complements. Minimalist approaches predict (1) to be easier than (2), and (3) to be out. Processing approaches such as DLT (Gibson, 2000) predict the reverse: (3) should be easier than (1), and (1) than (2), in terms of linear distance between *dont* and the gap. DLT also predicts (4), with a 1st person subject 'je', to be easier than (2).

Dont relative clauses

(1) Dont extraction from VP:

... cet accord *dont* nous [avons hérité _] ... (FTB)

(the agreement of-which we have inherited)

(2) Dont extraction from object NP (NP subject) :

... des fonds *dont* l'Etat a [la gestion _] ... (FTB)

(funds of-which the state has the management)

(3) Dont extraction from subject NP:

des PDG *dont* [le coeur _] penche ... à gauche (FTB)

(DEOs of-which the heart leans toward left)

(4) Dont extraction from object NP (clitic subject):

... une fille *dont* j'ai oublié [le prénom _] ... (CFPP)

(a girl of-which I forgot the name)

2 CORPUS STUDIES: WRITTEN (FRENCH TREEBANK) AND SPOKEN (CORPUS DU FRANCAIS PARLÉ PARISIEN 2000) FRENCH

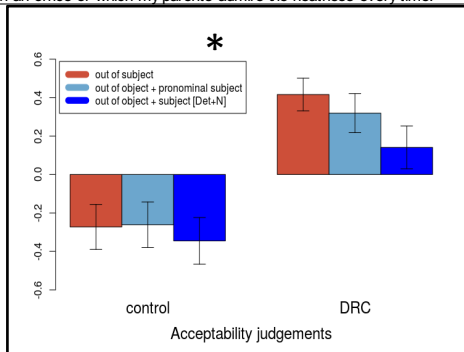
	Dont of extractions	of clpt	V subject NP	of out object NP	of Others	Total		
FTB	73	(19%)	217	(56,5%)	48	(12,5%)	46	384
CFPP	67	(63%)	19	(17,8%)	9	(8%)	12	107

- More *dont* extractions out of subject overall in written French (FTB)
- More *dont* extractions out of subject than out of object in both FTB (written) and CFPP (spoken)
- "external subjects?": 67% of the verbs for FTB and 47% of the verbs for CFPP are transitive / unergative
- Difference between subject and object extraction due to their overall frequency ? NO:
 - clitic subjects (77%) more frequent than NP subjects (23%) in spoken French (CFPP);
 - NP subjects more frequent than NP objects in both corpora BUT:
- Extraction rate for subjects (77% FTB, 80% CFPP) much higher than extraction rate for objects (48% FTB, 58% CFPP)
- almost all extractions out of object NP involve a pronominal subject
- => Subject island constraint disconfirmed; predictions of DLT confirmed

EXPERIMENT 1 ACCEPTABILITY JUDGEMENT (57 PARTICIPANTS)

Material for both experiments

A / Extraction from subject NP	D / Control sentence for A
Elles travaillent dans un cabinet dont la propreté intimide mes parents à chaque fois. They work in an office of-which the neatness intimidates my parents every time.	Elles travaillent dans un cabinet et sa propreté intimide mes parents à chaque fois. They work in an office and its neatness intimidates my parents every time.
B / Extraction from object NP with a pronominal subject	E / Control sentence for B
Elles travaillent dans un cabinet dont nous admirons la propreté à chaque fois. They work in an office of-which we admire the neatness every time.	Elles travaillent dans un cabinet et nous admirons sa propreté à chaque fois. They work in an office and we admire its neatness every time.
C / Extraction from object NP with a nominal subject	F / Control sentence for C
Elles travaillent dans un cabinet dont mes parents admirent la propreté à chaque fois. They work in an office of-which my parents admire the neatness every time.	Elles travaillent dans un cabinet et mes parents admirent sa propreté à chaque fois. They work in an office of-which my parents admire its neatness every time.



Graph 1: Results of Experiment 1, acceptability judgements (standardized for subject and object)

The participants were asked to rate the sentences on a scale from 1 (bad) to 10 (good)

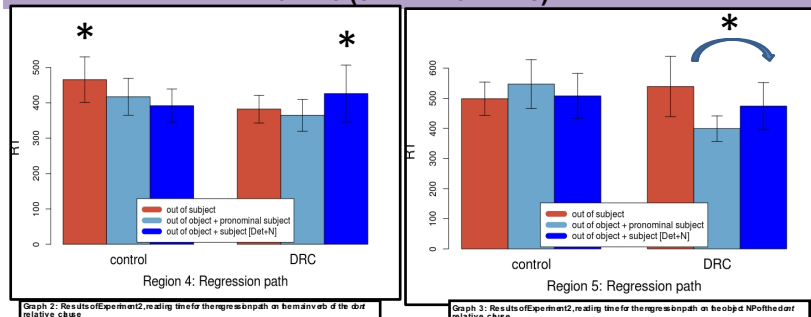
Results

Linear mixed models show:

- extraction out of the subject (A) was judged significantly better than extraction out of the object with a nominal subject (C); $p < .05$
- extraction out of object NP yielded a significant preference for pronominal (B) over nominal subjects (C); $p < .05$.
- No significant difference have been found between the control conditions.

* Significant difference

EXPERIMENT 2 EYE TRACKING (31 PARTICIPANTS)



Graph 2: Results of Experiment 2, reading time for the regression path on the subject of the dont relative clause

Graph 3: Results of Experiment 2, reading time for the regression path on the object NP of the dont relative clause

Results

Region 4 (main verb):

- Shorter RT for extraction out of subject (A) than for extraction out of object with nominal subject (C)
- => Confirms experiment 1 and corpus data

Region 5 (direct object):

- Longer RT for extraction out of subject (A) : extra cost of optional and human NP object (in A) (Gennari & McDonald 2007), explanation in terms of Surprisal (Hale 2001)
- Shorter RT for extraction out of object: the reader expects to bind the gap on the object (already failed on the subject and on the verb)

A PRIVILEGE OF DONT?

Dont is a complementizer (Godard 1988), extraction out of subject ruled out for wh-relativizer (*de qui, d'où*) ? Attested examples (contra Tellier 1991, Sportiche 1998):

- (5) Walter Van Beirendonck n'est pas seulement l'homme *de qui* le nom est à placer sur un plateau de Scrabble en mot compte triple (WWW, 2015)
Walter Van Beirendonck is not only the man of whom the name is to be placed on a Scrabble board as triple value word
- (6) un spot de kitesurf *d'où* le départ est très sécurisé (WWW, 2015)
a place of kitesurf from where the departure is very secured

A privilege of French ?

Hale 2003 reports a preference for *whose* subject over *whose* object relative clause: genitive of subject relativization easier than genitive of object?

CONCLUSION

- Relativization out of a subject NP cannot be an island, otherwise it would be ungrammatical, infrequent or create extra processing cost.
- Our production data (corpora) and comprehension data (experiment 1 and 2) disconfirm the subject island constraint for French and confirm processing accounts like DLT and surprisal.
- The extra cost of a lexical subject when extracting out of an object NP (new discourse referent between *dont* and the gap) is confirmed as well.
- Further studies: interrogatives with *de qui, duquel* as well