

**WHERE'S THE EMBEDDED AGENT IN
FRENCH FAIRE-INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS?***

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In French, causativity of the sort 'X made/had/got Y (to) do something' may be expressed by the analytic construction composed of the verb *faire* in finite form followed immediately by a second verb in the infinitive form. The two verbs may not be separated by other material in the sentence, such as by an NP. The agent of the "lower" or infinitive verb must follow the *faire* + infinitive verb sequence, though not necessarily immediately. Where the agent appears depends on the transitivity of the embedded verb. Examples (1) to (4) illustrate the range of facts:

- (1) Lower verb is intransitive: agent appears in **direct object** position
 - (a) Jean a fait rire son ami.
Jean made laugh his friend
'Jean had his friend laugh.'
 - (b) Il a fait partir son ami.
He made leave his friend
'He had his friend leave.'
- (2) Lower verb takes a single indirect object: agent appears in **direct object** position
 - (a) Yves a fait parler Jean à Marie.
Yves made talk Jean to Marie
'Yves made Jean talk to Marie.'
 - (b) Marie a fait écrire l'enfant à sa mère.
Marie made write the child to his/her mother
'Marie had the child write to his/her mother.'
- (3) Lower verb takes a single direct object: agent appears in **indirect object** position
 - (a) Kim a fait manger le gâteau à son ami.
Kim made eat the cake at/to his friend
'Kim had his friend eat the cake.'
 - (b) Elle a fait réparer son auto au mécanicien.
She made repair her car at/to the mechanic.
'She had the mechanic repair her car.'
- (4) Lower verb is ditransitive: agent appears in **oblique object** position
 - (a) Louise a fait donner une pomme au professeur par son fils.
Louise made give an apple to the teacher by her son
'Louise had her son give an apple to the teacher.'
 - (b) Je ferai écrire une lettre au directeur par Jean.
I will make write a letter to the headmaster by Jean
'I shall make Jean write a letter to the headmaster.'

Goodall (1987) accounts for this range of facts by proposing that it is the Case-assigning properties of the causative morpheme *faire* that leads to the embedded agent surfacing where it does. I will briefly outline Goodall's proposal in §2. In this paper, I argue that it is more reliable to predict where the embedded agent will appear from the subcategorization properties of the lower verb. This will entail a discussion in §3 of the *faire...par* construction, a construction which has been analyzed as related to the passive (e.g., by Comrie, 1976). In discussing the *faire...par* construction, I will point out two types of data which need to be included in a complete account of where the embedded agent surfaces. These two types of data are ditransitive verbs (§3.1) and verbs with implicit goal arguments (§3.2). I will suggest that the crucial distinction between the causative *faire* construction and the *faire-par* construction is that the first type of construction gives rise to an agentive reading in which the embedded agent is directly acted upon by the causer—the agent of the matrix verb (i.e., *faire* in finite form). On the other hand, the *faire...par* construction gives rise to an instrumental reading, one in which the embedded agent is less directly involved in the action expressed by the embedded verb. In §4, I provide an account which differs from Goodall's and which extends to a broader range of facts.

2.0 GOODALL'S PROPOSAL

Goodall (1987) proposes parallel structures in syntax, or three-dimensional syntactic trees, to handle the facts of coordination. He extends this approach to Romance causatives in saying that causative *faire* subcategorizes for an infinitival clause and for a verb simultaneously (p. 108). With respect to the position of the embedded agent in the *faire* + infinitive construction, Goodall holds that this follows from Case-assignment under the assumption that the verb complex formed from *faire* and the infinitive verb has the Case array [___ACC (DAT)]. This means that the verb complex assigns accusative Case to the first NP following the *faire* + infinitive sequence and dative Case to the next NP, if present. Goodall states that "Accusative Case carries no special morphological marking, but dative Case requires the preposition *à*, through which Case is transmitted from the verb to the NP" (p. 111).

Such an account is consistent with the location of the embedded agent with verbs of the type in (1), (2), and (3). In (1) and (2), the *faire* + infinitive complex takes on the Case array of the causative morpheme *faire*. Accusative Case is assigned to the NP immediately following the verbal complex, this NP bearing the agent theta-role of the lower verb. The indirect object of the lower verb in (2) receives dative Case from the *faire* + infinitive complex, consistent with an optional DAT in the Case array. In (3), the direct object of the lower verb receives accusative Case from *faire* + infinitive and so the optional DAT slot is used to assign Case to the embedded agent NP, thus allowing it to pass the Case Filter.

However, this account does not extend to ditransitive verbs, as in the examples in (4). Here, the agentive NP appears in a *par* phrase (*by* phrase) after the dative NP. Although Goodall excludes examples in which the lower verb in the *faire*-infinitive construction is ditransitive, he discusses the *faire...par* construction (pp. 120-123) as a case in which the subject theta-role (the agent of the lower verb) is deleted by the causative morpheme *faire*. In this way, the agent may optionally appear in a *par* phrase as an instrumental.

3.0 THE *faire...par* CONSTRUCTION

The examples in (5) illustrate a type of *faire* + infinitive construction known as the *faire...par* construction. This construction is discussed extensively in Kayne (1975) and more recently in Legendre (1990).

(5) The *faire...par* construction:

- (a) Kim a fait manger le gâteau (par son ami).
'Kim had the cake eaten (by her friend).'
- (b) Elle a fait réparer son auto (par le mécanicien).
'She had her car repaired (by the mechanic).'

The parentheses around the *par* phrases in (5) indicate that the agent of the lower verb need not be expressed—sentences without these phrases are still grammatical. Kayne (1975:235-237) pointed out a number of similarities between the *faire...par* construction and the passive. For example, idioms which cannot be passivized, cannot appear in the *faire...par* construction and maintain the idiomatic reading. (6a) is one such idiom which can neither be passivized nor embedded in the *faire...par* construction, as shown in (6b). Notice, however, that embedding of the idiom under causative *faire* is fine, as shown in (6c):

- (6) Idioms and the passive and *faire...par* constructions (Kayne, 1975:235-237):
- (a) Sa famille a cassé la croûte.
'His family had a snack.'
 - (b) *La croûte a été cassée par sa famille. (passive)
*Il a fait casser la croûte par sa famille. (*faire...par*)
 - (c) Il a fait casser la croûte à sa famille.
'He had his family have a snack.'

A second similarity is illustrated in (7): possessive pronouns may not find their antecedents in a *par*-phrase, whether the *par*-phrase is in a passive construction or in a *faire...par* construction.

- (7) Possessive pronouns and the passive and *faire...par* constructions
- (a) Jean_i apprendra son_i rôle.
'Jean_i will learn his_i role.'
 - (b) *Son_i rôle sera appris par Jean_j. (passive)
*Tu feras apprendre son_i rôle par Jean_j. (*faire...par*)
 - (c) Tu feras apprendre son_i rôle à Jean_j.
'You'll have Jean_j learn his_i role.'

Kayne (1975) ultimately rejects the idea that the *faire...par* construction involves embedding a passivized sentence under *faire*, in part because of the lack of passive morphology. Consider this observation of Comrie's (1976):

"It seems to me that the availability of the Passive analysis for individual languages will depend on detailed study of those individual languages, in particular of subtle differences between active and passive and possible correlates with the use of the agentive/instrumental phrases in causative constructions" (pp. 272-3).

3.1 Ditransitive Verbs and *faire...par*

A relevant example, in light of Comrie's observation, is given in (8)—a *faire* + infinitive construction in which the embedded verb is ditransitive:

- (8) J'ai fait distribuer des prospectus aux maisons par Jean.
I made distribute the flyers to the houses by Jean.
'I had Jean distribute the flyers to the houses.' (agentive reading)
'I had the flyers distributed to the houses by Jean.' (instrumental reading)

Given that there are an agentive reading and an instrumental reading arising from the single sentence in (8), it appears that what we have been calling the *faire* + infinitive construction can be homophonous with the *faire...par* construction, namely in the case of ditransitive verbs. This suggests too that, in French, *par* marks both (i) the embedded agent for ditransitive verbs which have been causativized under *faire* and (ii) demoted subjects in passives, when expressed. Alsina (1992) points out that "unlike what happens in other languages (Romance, Shona, Swahili,

Kinyarwanda, Marathi, etc.), in Chicheŵa the oblique causee and the demoted subject of passives are marked with different morphology: the oblique causee is marked with the preposition *kwà*, and the demoted subject of passives is introduced by *ndi*" (pp. 537-538). It may well be the case, then, that French simply lacks the luxury of morphological marking which distinguishes the agentive reading from the instrumental reading in examples such as (8).

Recall the data in (7), the relevant parts repeated here in (9), and consider the additional data in (10):

- (9) (a) Jean_i apprendra son_i rôle.
'Jean_i will learn his_i rôle.'
- (b) Tu feras apprendre son_i rôle à Jean_i.
'You'll have Jean_i learn his_i rôle.'
- (c) *Tu feras apprendre son_i rôle par Jean_i.
- (10) (a) Elles ont fait peindre sa_i maison à Jean_i.
'They had Jean_i paint his_i house.'
- (b) *Elles ont fait peindre sa_i maison par Jean_i.

Zubizarreta (1985) interprets the data in (9) and (10) as evidence for the adjunct status of the NP appearing in the *par*-phrase: "As in the case of the passive, the *par*-phrase in the *faire-par* construction has the grammatical status of an adverb." (p. 263). That this adverbial has adjunct status follows from the constraint Zubizarreta proposes (p. 256): "If X is an argument of Z and Y is an adjunct of Z, then X cannot be referentially dependent on Y." (I interpret X as *son rôle/sa maison*, Y as *Jean*, and Z as the verb or verb complex).

We have seen that ditransitive verbs which are embedded under causative *faire* can give rise to two readings—an agentive reading and an instrumental reading. In the case of the agentive reading, the NP appearing in the *par*-phrase should not have adjunct status and reference to it by a possessive pronoun should be possible. The sentence in (11) shows exactly this:

- (11) Le professeur_i a fait donner sa_{i/j} feuille de notes à sa mère par l'étudiant_j.
'The teacher_i had the student_j give his_{i/j} report card to his mother.'

Though the sentence in isolation is potentially ambiguous, the NP in the *par*-phrase (*l'étudiant*) may be coindexed with the possessive pronoun found earlier in the sentence.

3.2 Verbs with an Implicit Goal Argument and *faire...par*

Further evidence for an agentive (as opposed to instrumental) *par*-phrase in the causative *faire* construction comes from verbs which have an implicit goal argument. An implicit goal argument is one which is semantically present but syntactically optional. In such cases ambiguity arises since the dative NP may be interpreted as either the agent or the goal of the embedded verb. The example in (12) shows this for the verb *chanter* 'sing':

- (12) J'ai fait chanter les chansons à l'enfant.
I made sing the songs at/to the child.
'I had the child sing the songs.' (*l'enfant* as agent)
'I had the songs sung to the child.' (*l'enfant* as goal)

In one reading, the verb *chanter* behaves like a single object transitive verb: the agent of the verb appears in indirect object position and receives dative Case. In the second reading, *chanter* is like a ditransitive verb: the dative NP is the goal rather than the agent. To avoid the ambiguity, the sentence in (13) may be used:

- (13) J'ai fait chanter les chansons par l'enfant.
'I had the child sing the songs.' (*l'enfant* as agent)

What is crucial in (13) is that the agentive reading is available. The embedded agent appears in oblique object position although the first available *surface* position is indirect object position. The examples in (14), taken from Quicoli (1982:247 Fn. 21), show the same thing with a different embedded verb.

- (14) (a) Jean fera porter ce valise à son domestique.
'John will make his servant carry the suitcase.'
'John will have [Unspecified] carry the suitcase to his servant.'
- (b) Jean fera porter ce valise par son domestique.
'John will make his servant carry the suitcase.'

I will suggest in the account given in §4 that the goal argument occupies the indirect object position—though it may be syntactically suppressed and is in (13) and (14b)—and that the first available position is in fact the oblique object position. Goodall's account would not be able to predict this since the relation changing is carried out by the matrix verb—the causative morpheme—and not the embedded verb.

4.0 IMMEDIATE VERSUS EXTENDED DEMOTION

A complete account of where the embedded agent surfaces in the *faire* + infinitive construction needs to include the ditransitive verbs where the reading is agentive (§3.1) and verbs which have implicit goal arguments (§3.2). The account should also extend to data provided by Goodall (1987:114), and repeated here in (15):

- (15) (a) Marie a fait écrire l'enfant.
(b) Marie a fait écrire à l'enfant.
'Mary made the child write.'

Like the verbs which have implicit goal arguments, it seems that *écrire* 'write' in (15b) has an unexpressed theme argument in what would be the direct object position. In (15a), by contrast, *écrire* patterns with the intransitive verbs with respect to where the embedded agent appears. The account needs to allow for this intransitive/transitive alternation possible in the interpretation of certain verbs.

The range of facts may be accounted for in the following model: on combining with causative *faire*, the embedded verb demotes its agent to the first available argument position in its argument structure. This 'immediate' demotion—in the sense of 'to the first available position'—gives rise to the agentive reading, or the reading in which the causer acts directly on the agent of the embedded verb. The schemata in (16) are meant to represent this. The underlined Case labels correspond to the embedded agents in each type.

- (16) Immediate demotion, agentive ('direct') reading:

- (a) $V_{\text{intr}} [\text{___ ACC}]$ e.g., Jean a fait rire son ami.
(b) $V_{1\text{tr}} [\text{___ ACC DAT}]$ e.g., Kim a fait manger le gâteau à son ami.
(c) $V_{2\text{tr}} [\text{___ ACC DAT OBL}]$ e.g., Je ferai écrire une lettre au directeur par Jean.

In the case of verbs with implicit goal arguments, two schemata are possible, one which contains the syntactically suppressed goal argument and one which does not, as represented in (17) for the verb *chanter* 'sing'. The implicit argument is given in parentheses to indicate that it is syntactically unexpressed. Again, these schemata are for the verb as embedded under causative *faire*.

- (17) *chanter* [___ ACC_{theme} DAT_{agent}] or [___ ACC_{theme} (DAT_{goal}) OBL_{agent}]

The data in (15) are accounted for with a similar pair of schemata, given in (18).

- (18) *écrire* [_____ ACC_{agent}] or [_____ (ACC_{theme}) DAT_{agent}]

The metaphor of extended demotion can be used for *faire...par* constructions in which the agent is optionally expressed in an instrumental *par*-phrase. For ditransitive verbs in which the embedded agent surfaces, the instrumental reading is the relevant one here. Extended demotion can be represented as in (19).

- (19) Extended demotion, instrumental ('indirect') reading:

- (a) V_{1tr} [___ ACC] (OBL) e.g., Marie fera boire cette eau par son chien.
'Marie will have that water drunk by her dog.'
- (b) V_{2tr} [___ ACC DAT] (OBL) e.g., Je ferai écrire une lettre au directeur par Jean.
I will have a letter written to the director by Jean.

In the representation, the *par*-phrase is outside the Case array of the verb embedded under the causative to indicate its adjunct status. It is also within parentheses to indicate that it is an optional element. Notice that the representational distinction between (16c) and (19b) captures the distinction in the two readings for ditransitive verbs which are combined with *faire* in the causative construction. Such a distinction, as well as the situation for verbs with implicit arguments, cannot be described if the grammatical relation changing is relegated solely to the causative morpheme, as in Goodall's account. Indeed, reference to the lexical properties of the embedded verb is necessary to accurately predict where the embedded agent appears in French *faire*-infinitive constructions.

NOTES

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