

Syntactic position of contrast markers in different registers of French

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This paper presents a quantitative corpus analysis of three syntactically mobile contrast markers in different registers of French: contrastive adverbs, emphatic pronouns and emphatic pronouns introduced by *quant à* “as for”. We show that the preferred syntactic position of the three markers is influenced by their form and discourse function, but that the degree of this influence varies depending on the register. In informal written and spoken French, the impact of form and discourse function on the syntactic position is more important than in formal written French, where the standard word order “subject + verb + other clause elements” is favored, and the non-neutral (inter)subjective peripheries are avoided. Hence, our analysis provides evidence for the idea that informal written and spoken French are (becoming) more discourse configurational.

Keywords: syntactic position, register, discourse, (inter)subjectivity, French

1. Introduction

This paper is about syntactic variation across different registers of French. We focus on the position of three understudied, syntactically mobile contrast markers: contrastive adverbs (C-Adv), emphatic pronouns (E-Pros), and emphatic pronouns introduced by *quant à* “as for” (*quant à* E-Pros). These markers can occupy various syntactic positions in the clause. Example (1) shows possible positions (indicated in bold) for each type of contrast marker in French, as illustrated with *par contre* (“on the other hand”) as the C-Adv in (1a), *lui* (“him”) as the E-Pro in (1b) and *quant à lui* (“as for him”) as the *quant à* E-Pro in (1c).

- (1) – Que font les animaux ?
 (“What are the animals doing?”)
- La vache mange de l’herbe.
 (“The cow is eating grass.”)

- a. [Par contre] le chat [par contre] boit [par contre] du lait [par contre].
 (“[On the other hand] the cat [on the other hand] is drinking [on the other hand] milk [on the other hand].”)
- b. Le chat [lui] boit [lui] du lait [lui].
 (“The cat [him] is drinking [him] milk [him].”)
- c. Le chat [quant à lui] boit [quant à lui] du lait [quant à lui].
 (“The cat [as for him] is drinking [as for him] milk [as for him].”)

We present a quantitative analysis of 19,574 examples of syntactically mobile contrast markers from six corpora representing different registers: formal written French (national newspapers), semi-formal written French (regional newspapers), informal written French (online discussion platforms), and semi-formal spoken French (three corpora consisting of interviews). Previous research has demonstrated that this language is characterized by substantial (syntactic) register variation¹ (e.g. Coveney, 1996; Gadet, 1996; Massot, 2010; Rowlett, 2013). Notable examples include the deletion or retention of the negative particle *ne* “not”, and the form of interrogative sentences (see Etienne & Sax, 2009 and Zribi-Hertz, 2011 for other examples). Although these studies indicate that the *frequency* of certain variants depends on the register, they rarely discuss whether and how the specific *properties* of these variants are affected by register. The goal of this paper is therefore to analyze whether (and how) register influences the properties, and more specifically the syntactic position, of the contrast markers exemplified in (1). We will show that their syntactic position indeed varies by register: In informal written and spoken French, all three markers most frequently appear in the position which corresponds best to their form and discourse function (i.e. before the subject for C-Advs and between the subject and the verb for E-Pros and *quant à* E-Pros), whereas in formal written French, this influence of form and function is neutralized and all markers occur significantly more often inside the verb phrase.

2. Syntactic mobility of French contrast markers

This section gives a short characterization of C-Advs (Section 2.1), E-Pros (Section 2.2) and *quant à* E-Pros (Section 2.3), along with an overview of previous research on their syntactic positions. As far as we know, no previous studies compare the syntactic position of these three markers.

1. We use the term ‘register variation’ to refer to variation at the intersection of mode (spoken versus written) and formality (formal versus informal). See §3.1 below for more details.

2.1 Contrastive adverbs

C-Advs are a productive strategy to mark contrast in several languages, e.g. French (Csűry, 2001; Dupont, 2021), English (Altenberg, 2006; Dupont, 2021; Kunz & Lapshinova-Koltunski, 2014), Swedish (Altenberg, 2006), Croatian and Slovene (Bulc & Gorjanc, 2015), and German (Kunz & Lapshinova-Koltunski, 2014). These languages typically contain a variety of C-Advs to express nuanced types of contrastive discourse relations, such as antithesis (e.g. *par contre*, *en revanche* “on the other hand”) or concession (e.g. *néanmoins*, *toutefois* “nevertheless”). In this paper, we focus on C-Advs conveying antithesis or simple contrast, since these are often interchangeable with E-Pros and *quant à* E-Pros, as illustrated in Example (1) (see Brysbaert & Lahousse, 2022, for a discussion of the interchangeability).

C-Advs can occupy different positions in the clause (e.g. Altenberg, 2006; Csűry, 2001; Dupont, 2015, 2020, 2021), as illustrated in (2) with examples from our corpora (see Section 3.1 for a description of the corpora).²

- (2) a. **Par contre**, le problème du vestiaire n'est pas résolu.
 (“**On the other hand**, the problem of the cloakroom is not solved.”)
- b. Loïc Arnould, **par contre**, aura fait étalage de ses ambitions.
 (“Loïc Arnould, **on the other hand**, will have displayed his ambitions.”)
- c. Ces crises illustrent, **par contre**, les effets de la globalisation financière.
 (“These crises illustrate, **on the other hand**, the effects of financial globalization.”)
- d. Certain manga devra être plus cataloguée par degrés de violence **par contre**.
 (“Some manga should be more classified by degrees of violence **on the other hand**.”)

Corpus analyses on French C-Advs have been carried out on relatively small datasets, and there is no consensus regarding their frequency in different syntactic positions. For instance, Csűry (2001) examines the position of 21 C-Advs (838 occurrences) in a corpus of formal written and spoken French (1.4 million words) and observes that they most frequently appear in the clause-initial position exemplified in (2a). By contrast, Dupont (2015) focuses on 11 C-Advs (1,000 occurrences) and observes that they most often occur inside the verb phrase (2c) in her corpus of formal written French (0.75 million words).

The difference between these two sets of results suggests that the syntactic position of French C-Advs might be influenced by mode, i.e. written versus

2. We present the examples as they occur in our corpora, without correcting any spelling or grammar mistakes.

spoken (see Biber et al., 1999, on English). Other factors argued to affect the position of C-AdvS across and within specific languages include: (i) discourse and information structure, e.g. highlighting of a topical shift, new information (Altenberg, 1998, 2006; Dupont, 2015, 2021; Lenker, 2014; Quirk et al., 1985), (ii) lexical idiosyncrasy, here referring to placement preferences of individual C-AdvS (Altenberg, 2006; Dupont, 2015, 2021), (iii) text type, e.g. newspaper editorials versus research articles (Dupont, 2020, 2021), and (iv) level of formality, i.e. formal versus informal (Brysbaert & Lahousse, 2021).

2.2 Emphatic pronouns

There is very little research on cases where E-Pros modify a subject, which can be a noun phrase (NP) (e.g. *le facteur, lui, viendra* “the mailman, him, will come”) or a relative pronoun (e.g. *pour le facteur qui, lui, viendra* “for the mailman who, him, will come”).³ The function of these E-Pros is to single out the subject and emphasize its contrastive nature (Caddéo, 2004; Cappeau, 1999; Nølke, 1997; Rocquet, 2014).

In contrast to C-AdvS, which exist in many languages (Section 2.1), the use of E-Pros to modify contrastive subjects is typical of French. Moreover, unlike C-AdvS, E-Pros cannot occur before a nominal subject, as in (3).

- (3) La vache mange de l’herbe. ***Lui**, le chat boit du lait.
 (“The cow is eating grass. ***Him**, the cat is drinking milk.”)

The only researcher who examines the syntactic mobility of E-Pros, illustrated in (4), is Caddéo (2004). In her corpus of spoken and (both journalistic and literary) written French, E-Pros most frequently occur between the subject (S) and the verb (V) (4a), less often inside the verb phrase (VP) (4b), and only rarely after the VP (4c).

- (4) a. Russell Banks, **lui**, s’est déjà envolé vers l’Amérique.
 (“Russell Banks, **him**, has already flown to America.”)
 b. Le compostage était, **lui**, présenté de façon ludique.
 (“Composting was, **him**, presented in a fun way.”)
 c. Il faudrait tout d’abord savoir si ton copain est romantique **lui**!!
 (“First of all, you should know if your boyfriend is romantic **him**!!”)

3. We excluded cases in which the E-Pro is combined with clitic left dislocation, as in *le facteur, lui, il viendra* “the mailman, him, he will come”, since this reduces the syntactic mobility of the E-Pro. This use is quite rare in our written corpora (LM: 0.2%; ER: 0.2%; YCC: 6%), but much more frequent in the spoken corpora (28% of all instances of E-Pros), probably due to the higher overall number of dislocations in spoken French.

Caddéo (2004: 156) also argues that the syntactic position of E-Pros is influenced by the number of “elements” occurring in the “preverbal zone”. For example, E-Pros are more likely to appear inside the VP when the subject is followed by a (long) apposition. In Example (5), the subject is underlined, and the apposition indicated with a dotted underline.

- (5) Le troisième principe, celui de l'adéquation des installations d'élimination, est, lui, contesté par les autorités américaines et japonaises. (Caddéo, 2004: 156)
 (“The third principle, that of the adequacy of the disposal facilities, is, him, contested by the American and Japanese authorities.”)

However, she does not provide quantitative data about the frequency of each syntactic position, and she does not elaborate on the differences between the registers in her corpus.

2.3 Emphatic pronouns introduced by *quant à*

The syntactic and information-structural properties of French prepositional phrases introduced by *quant à* “as for” are well-studied (Anscombre, 2006; Choi-Jonin, 2003; Debaisieux, 2001; Fløttum, 1999; Lagae, 2007). However, these analyses almost exclusively focus on cases where the prepositional phrase (PP) is left-detached and consists of *quant à* “as for” + NP, which is subsequently taken up by a clitic pronoun. In Example (6), the NP is represented by a dotted underline, and the clitic pronoun by a full underline.

- (6) Les enfants de Luc sont dans le jardin. Pierre joue avec ses autos. Quant à Arthur, il chante pour ses poupées. (adapted from Fløttum, 1999: 135)
 (“Luc’s children are in the garden. Pierre is playing with his cars. As for Arthur, he is singing for his dolls.”)

Given that these clause-initial PPs with *quant à* + NP are not syntactically mobile, they will not be considered in the present study. Instead, we will focus on examples such as (7) where *quant à* is combined with an emphatic pronoun (dotted underline) which is co-referential with the preceding subject (full underline).

- (7) Les enfants de Luc sont dans le jardin. Pierre joue avec ses autos. Arthur, quant à lui, chante pour ses poupées. (adapted from Fløttum, 1999: 135)
 (“Luc’s children are in the garden. Pierre is playing with his cars. Arthur, as for him, is singing for his dolls.”)

Emphatic pronouns introduced by *quant à* (*quant à* E-Pros) have the same function as E-Pros, i.e. to mark off the subject and highlight its contrastivity

(Section 2.2). They can **occupy** various syntactic positions, except before a nominal subject, as shown in (8).

- (8) La vache mange de l’herbe. ***Quant à lui**, le chat boit du lait.
 (“The cow is eating grass. ***As for him**, the cat is drinking milk.”)

Although several researchers distinguish *quant à* E-Pros from E-Pros, Choi-Jonin (2003) is the only one to analyze their specific syntactic properties. She observes that *quant à* E-Pros are mobile, but almost never appear in clause-final position (9c). However, she does not provide any quantitative data to support her hypotheses, nor does she systematically distinguish between cases where the *quant à* E-Pro immediately follows the subject (9a) and cases where it occurs inside the VP (9b).

- (9) a. Le baroque, **quant à lui**, est une notion à la fois complexe et délicate.
 (“Baroque, **as for him**, is a notion that is both complex and delicate.”)
 b. Xerox reste **quant à lui** très discret sur ses intentions.
 (“Xerox remains **as for him** very discreet about its intentions.”)
 c. Le champion a fait deux fautes **quant à lui**.
 (“The champion has made two mistakes **as for him**.”)

3. Methodology

In this methodological section, we discuss the properties of the six corpora used for this study (Section 3.1), explain how the data were extracted (Section 3.2), and present our classification of syntactic positions (Section 3.3).

3.1 Corpora

We analyze the syntactic positions of French C-Adv, E-Pros, and *quant à* E-Pros in six corpora. Three of these corpora consist of written data: *Le Monde* (LM) (SA Le Monde, 1999), which includes articles from the national quality newspaper *Le Monde*; *Est Républicain* (ER) (Gaiffe et al., 2018), which consists of articles from the regional newspapers *L’Est Républicain* and *Vosges Matin*; and the *Yahoo Contrastive Corpus of Questions and Answers* (YCC) (De Smet, 2009), which contains texts from the former online discussion platform *Yahoo! Answers*. The three remaining corpora consist of spoken French, primarily comprising interviews between an interviewer and one or more interviewees who are not familiar with each other: *Corpus Oral de Français de Suisse Romande* (OFROM) (Avanzi et al., 2012–2020), *Corpus de Français Parlé Parisien des années 2000* (CFPP) (Branca-Rosoff et al., 2011, 2012) and *Corpus de Référence du Français*

Parlé (CRFP) (Équipe DELIC, 2004). The properties of the different corpora are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Properties of the six corpora

	LM	ER	YCC	OFROM	CFPP	CRFP
Mode	written	written	written	spoken	spoken	spoken
Level of formality	formal	semi-formal	informal	semi-formal	semi-formal	semi-formal
Type	national news-paper	regional news-paper	online discussion platform	interview	interview	interview and public speech
Year	1998	2010–2011 *	2006–2009	2012–2020	2005–2019	1998–2004
Region	France	north-east of France	unknown	Switzerland	Paris and suburbs	38 towns across France
Number of words	25.7 million	74 million	6.1 million	1.01 million	0.7 million	0.44 million

* As this is a very large corpus, we only consulted the most recent years 2010–2011, which count about 74 million words. The full *Est Républicain* corpus contains data from 1999–2003 and 2006–2011.

The six corpora are representative of different ‘registers’ of French, defined as the intersection of mode and formality. Drawing on the continuum between ‘language of distance’ (formal) and ‘language of immediacy’ (informal) developed by Koch and Oesterreicher (1985, 2007), and subsequently revised by Briz (2010), Landert and Jucker (2011) and Werner (2021) amongst others, the LM corpus is the most formal. The articles in this national newspaper are examples of the language of distance: they are written in a neutral, objective style, for a large unknown audience and discuss public topics and events without personal involvement of the journalist. The ER corpus also consists of journalistic texts, but sits somewhat further from the language of distance pole. The articles from the two regional newspapers in this corpus mainly report on more local events and topics (e.g. births, weddings, school activities, municipal politics), for a more specific local audience. Hence, journalists in ER often adopt a more personal writing style. The third written corpus, YCC, lies even further away from the language of distance pole. Although users of this former online forum do not know each other and generally remain anonymous (i.e. distance), they have very lively discussions about a wide range of topics that are often private (e.g. health issues, relationships) in a direct and non-edited writing style (i.e. immediacy). The three spoken corpora (OFROM, CFPP, and CRFP) contain data in a different mode, but are very similar to YCC in terms of their position on the continuum between

language of distance and language of immediacy. These corpora all consist of live face-to-face interviews — except for CRFP which also contains some public speech — on relatively personal topics, such as the interviewees’ childhood, school experiences, and friends and family (i.e. immediacy). However, the interviewer and the interviewee(s) are not familiar with each other, and some interviewees are not always comfortable with the recording setting, creating a certain distance. Note that we were not able to make a distinction based on the level of formality within the spoken subset due to the unavailability of large, freely accessible corpora for spoken French. Ideally, the effect of the level of formality in spoken French would also be tested, which we hope to do in future research.

As shown in Table 1, the corpora also differ with respect to their year(s) of collection, the region from which the data originate, and their size. We believe that the differences in years do not have a significant effect on the results of our study, since the oldest parts date from 1998 for both written and spoken French. As for the region, we aimed to extract data from different geographical areas to ensure an ecologically valid dataset. However, this was not possible with respect to the journalistic written data, because we did not have access to large corpora from outside France. Although we do not hypothesize that the syntactic position of contrast markers is subject to significant regional variation, it could be valuable to replicate our study with data from other French-speaking regions in future research. With respect to the size, we selected the largest spoken corpora accessible to us, but these are still much smaller than the written corpora. We will therefore group together the three spoken corpora for the purposes of this paper.

3.2 Data extraction

We extracted examples of seven C-Advs expressing a simple contrast or antithesis, as this fits best with the contrastive interpretation conveyed by E-Pros and *quant* à E-Pros (Section 2.1). We focused on this set of seven C-Advs — rather than on one specific C-Adv — to control for lexical idiosyncrasy, as it has been shown that individual C-Advs can have slightly different positional preferences (Altenberg, 2006; Dupont, 2015, 2021). The list of the seven C-Advs is given in Table 2.⁴

With respect to E-Pros, we extracted occurrences of the masculine singular form *lui* “him” and the masculine plural form *eux* “them”, following Cappeau (1999, 2004). In French, the feminine forms of the E-Pro (i.e. *elle* “her” and *elles*

4. No translations are provided, because all these C-Advs can be rendered as “on the other hand”, and it is impossible to find an exact equivalent in English for each C-Adv. The main difference between the seven C-Advs lies in their overall frequency. For example, *a contrario* is generally much less frequent than *en revanche* (see the frequencies in Table 3).

Table 2. List of analyzed C-Adv

French C-Adv

a contrario

à l'inverse

à l'opposé

au contraire

en revanche

inversement

par contre

“them”) are formally identical to those of the clitic pronoun (i.e. *elle* “she” and *elles* “they”). Hence, it is often difficult to distinguish clitic left dislocations (with *elle(s)* as a resumptive clitic) (10b) from constructions with an E-Pro (10a), unless relying on prosodic cues (but see Carton, 2009, on the variability of prosodic realization of E-Pros) or on punctuation, which is not always used consistently, especially in informal written French, and even in our newspaper corpora LM and ER. As shown in Example (10), the only visible difference between cases with clitic left dislocation and E-Pros is that E-Pros (10a) are in theory preceded and followed by a comma, whereas resumptive clitics (10b) are preceded but not followed by a comma.

- (10) a. La vache, **elle**_[E-Pro], mange de l’herbe.
 (“The cow, **her**_[E-Pro], is eating grass.”)
 b. La vache, **elle**_[clitic] mange de l’herbe.
 (“The cow, **she**_[clitic] is eating grass.”)

This ambiguity does not arise with masculine subjects, as masculine clitic forms (*il* “he” and *ils* “they”) (11b) are formally distinct from emphatic ones (*lui* “him” and *eux* “them”) (11a).

- (11) a. Le chat, **lui**_[E-Pro], boit du lait.
 (“The cat, **him**_[E-Pro], is drinking milk.”)
 b. Le chat, **il**_[clitic] boit du lait.
 (“The cat, **he**_[clitic] is drinking milk.”)

Accordingly, for *quant à* E-Pros, we limited our extraction to cases with the masculine forms, i.e. *quant à lui* “as for him” and *quant à eux* “as for them”. Consequently, our dataset is unbalanced with respect to the gender of the subjects. All examples with a (*quant à*) E-Pro have a masculine subject, as in Examples (17) and (22), while examples with a C-Adv can have either a feminine (14) or mascu-

line (15) subject. We believe that this asymmetry does not significantly affect the outcome of our analyses, as we have no reason to assume that the gender of the subject influences the syntactic position of the contrast marker. However, it might be useful to take this aspect into account in future research.

In total, our dataset contains 19,574 occurrences: 12,411 C-Advs, 5,252 E-Pros, and 1,911 *quant à* E-Pros. An overview of the extracted data per register is provided in Table 3.⁵

Table 3. Number of extracted occurrences per corpus

	LM	ER	YCC	CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM	Total	
C-Adv	<i>a contrario</i>	55	93	10	1	159
	<i>à l'inverse</i>	124	165	14	9	312
	<i>à l'opposé</i>	10	22	0	3	35
	<i>au contraire</i>	1,428	1,261	442	104	3,235
	<i>en revanche</i>	1,635	3,353	289	19	5,296
	<i>inversement</i>	79	76	53	12	220
	<i>par contre</i>	46	1,025	1,515	568	3,154
	Total	3,377	5,995	2,323	716	12,411
Total per million words	131	81	381	333	115	
E-Pro	<i>lui</i>	1,291	2,061	178	75	3,605
	<i>eux</i>	590	877	131	49	1,647
	Total	1,881	2,938	309	124	5,252
	Total per million words	73	40	51	58	49
<i>quant à</i> E-Pro	<i>quant à lui</i>	260	1,063	26	0	1,349
	<i>quant à eux</i>	82	472	8	0	562
	Total	342	1,535	34	0	1,911
	Total per million words	13	21	6	0	18

It is striking that *quant à* E-Pros are completely absent from our spoken corpora, but this aligns with Debaisieux (2001) who finds only 23 occurrences of *quant à* X (“as for X”, where X represents any possible element) in her spoken corpus of 1,250,000 words (18.4 occurrences per million words), compared with more than

5. For the LM corpus, examples were extracted by Piet Mertens (KU Leuven) and Serge Verlinde (ILT Leuven). For the five other corpora, we extracted all occurrences using the concordancer *AntConc* (Anthony, 2018).

400 occurrences in her written corpus of 300,000 words (1,333 occurrences per million words).⁶ Moreover, 79% of these spoken occurrences appear in planned speech, such as political or cultural debates led by professionals in the media context which are not included in our corpora.

3.3 Classification of syntactic positions

Our analysis of the positions of the three markers is based on the classification developed by Quirk et al. (1985: 490–501) for English adverbs in general, subsequently adapted by Altenberg (2006). Following Altenberg (2006), we exclude from our dataset: (i) clauses that do not follow the standard SV word order (12) and (ii) clauses without subject and/or finite verb (13). In total, about 14% of the extracted data – i.e. 2,383 occurrences of C-Advs (19%), 287 occurrences of E-Pros (5%), and 107 occurrences of *quant à* E-Pros (6%) – has been excluded.

- (12) Plus complexe, **en revanche**, est la question de l'influence d'Emile Zola lui-même.
 ("More complex, **on the other hand**, is the question of the influence of Emile Zola himself.")
- (13) Les priorités ne changeraient pas, mais le calendrier, **lui**, oui.
 ("The priorities would not change, but the calendar, **him**, yes.")

We distinguish four possible positions: (i) before the preverbal subject (indicated with a full underline in the following examples) (14), which is a position only possible for C-Advs (Section 2.1), (ii) between the subject and the finite verb (indicated with a dotted underline) (15)–(17), (iii) inside the verb phrase (18)–(20), and (iv) after the verb phrase (21)–(23), i.e. following all obligatory complements selected by the verb.⁷

BEFORE S

- (14) **Par contre** euh la photocopieuse est très utile pour nous pour faire des schémas.
 ("On the other hand uh the photocopier is very useful for us to make diagrams.")

6. The spoken corpus in Debaisieux (2001) consists of *Corpaix* (Université de Provence, 1 million words), a corpus compiled by P. Cappeau (Université de Poitiers, 50,000 words), and a personal corpus (200,000 words). Her written corpus contains scientific and literary texts, as well as rewrites of debates from the National Assembly (300,000 words).

7. We did not distinguish between main clauses and subordinate clauses. We leave this for future research.

BETWEEN S AND V

- (15) Le tennis loisirs, **par contre**, ~~rencontre~~ une baisse assez sensible du nombre des adhérents.
(“Recreational tennis, **on the other hand**, ~~experiences~~ a fairly significant drop in the number of members.”)
- (16) Après l’amour “passion”, à durée variable, vient l’amour “tendresse” qui, **lui**, peut résister à l’usure du temps.
(“After “passion” love, of variable duration, comes “tender” love, which, **him**, ~~can~~ withstand the test of time.”)
- (17) Jan Ullrich, **quant à lui**, était toujours revêtu du maillot jaune avant les trois grandes étapes alpines.
(“Jan Ullrich, **as for him**, was still wearing the yellow jersey before the three major alpine stages.”)

INSIDE VP

- (18) Ton chien peut **par contre** intégrer les notions de bon/mauvais (agréable/désagréable).
(“Your dog can **on the other hand** understand the notions of good/bad (pleasant/unpleasant).”)
- (19) Le dernier a préféré **lui** euh s’orienter vers la faculté de droit.
(“The latter has preferred **him** uh to go to law school.”)
- (20) Il sera accompagné au niveau supérieur par son compère Paul Grandidier, qui s’est, **quant à lui**, classé cinquième.
(“He will be accompanied at the next level by his friend Paul Grandidier, who was, **as for him**, ranked fifth.”)

AFTER VP

- (21) Mais ils me respectent pas **par contre** les petits.
(“But they don’t respect me **on the other hand** the little ones.”)
- (22) Le sérum antivenimeux est utile, **lui**, mais pas sur le terrain.
(“The antivenom is useful, **him**, but not on the ground.”)
- (23) Le champion a fait deux fautes **quant à lui**.
(“The champion has made two mistakes **as for him**.”)

4. Results: Different contrast markers, different preferred positions

This section presents the results of our quantitative corpus analysis, which demonstrate that the three contrast markers have different preferences for syntactic positions, in line with their form and discourse function.

4.1 Contrastive adverbs

Table 4 summarizes the results for the syntactic position of C-Advs. This contrast marker most often occurs before the S, with a varying frequency, accounting for between 67% and 89% of instances. However, in the LM corpus, it most often appears inside the VP (63%).

Table 4. Syntactic position of C-Advs per corpus

	LM	ER	YCC	CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM
Before S	22% (580)	67% (3,304)	89% (1,626)	84% (495)
Between S and V	14% (365)	6% (276)	3% (47)	1% (8)
Inside VP	63% (1,683)	27% (1,356)	6% (113)	5% (29)
After VP	1% (23)	1% (26)	2% (38)	10% (59)
Total	100% (2,651)	100% (4,962)	100% (1,824)	100% (591)

This general tendency for C-Advs to occur before the S (except in LM, see Section 5 below) supports the idea that the clause-initial position is the most natural for (contrastive) conjuncts (Biber et al., 1999; Quirk et al., 1985). C-Advs primarily function as linking devices, connecting the propositional content of the clause in which they occur to the preceding context. In this way, they typically express a broad contrast between two propositions: in Example (1) above, *vache* “cow” – *manger* “eat” – *herbe* “grass” ↔ *chat* “cat” – *boire* “drink” – *lait* “milk”, without singling out a particular constituent (e.g. the subjects *vache* “cow” ↔ *chat* “cat”).

Our analysis also puts in perspective the findings of Csúry (2001), who demonstrates that C-Advs have a slight preference for the clause-initial position in formal written and spoken French, and of Dupont (2015), who finds that they most frequently occur inside the VP in her corpus of formal written French (Section 2.1). In our formal written corpus (LM), C-Advs do indeed appear most often inside the VP (63% of occurrences), but this position is much less frequent in the semi-formal written corpus (ER) (27%) and is even rarer in the informal written (YCC) (6%) and spoken (CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM) (5%) corpora. These

differences indicate that the syntactic position of C-Adv_s is subject to a considerable amount of register variation, which will be discussed in more detail below (Section 5).

4.2 Emphatic pronouns

An overview of the syntactic position of E-Pros is given in Table 5. Recall that, unlike C-Adv_s, these pronouns cannot appear before a lexical S (Section 2.2).

Table 5. Syntactic position of E-Pros per corpus

	LM	ER	YCC	CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM
Before S	–	–	–	–
Between S and V	61% (1,093)	54% (1,519)	83% (235)	82% (67)
Inside VP	39% (690)	45% (1,275)	12% (34)	15% (12)
After VP	0.3% (6)	1% (18)	5% (13)	4% (3)
Total	100% (1,789)	100% (2,812)	100% (282)	100% (82)

In all registers, E-Pros most frequently occur between the S and the finite V (in 54% to 83% of instances), corroborating the findings of Caddéo (2004) (Section 2.2). This preference aligns with the form and function of E-Pros (see Caddéo, 2004; Cappeau, 1999; Nølke, 1997; Rocquet, 2014): they anaphorically refer to the subject, mark it off, and highlight its contrastive nature, as in *chat* “cat” in (1) above, rather than highlighting the contrastivity of the whole clause, as in *chat* “cat” – *boire* “drink” – *lait* “milk”.

However, like C-Adv_s, the syntactic position of E-Pros varies depending on the register. The position inside the VP is less frequent in the informal written YCC (12% of instances) and spoken corpora (CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM) (15%) than in the formal written (LM) (39%) and semi-formal written (ER) (45%) corpora (see Section 5 for a discussion).

4.3 Emphatic pronouns introduced by *quant à*

Table 6 presents the results for *quant à* E-Pros. This marker cannot appear before a nominal S (Section 2.3), is completely absent from our spoken corpora (Section 3.2), and is infrequent in our informal written corpus.

In contrast to C-Adv_s and E-Pros, *quant à* E-Pros generally occur inside the VP (71% and 74% of instances) in formal written journalistic French. The difference with E-Pros is striking, because both E-Pros and *quant à* E-Pros contain

Table 6. Syntactic position of *quant à* E-Pros per corpus

	LM	ER	YCC	CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM
Before S	–	–	–	–
Between S and V	25% (82)	28% (401)	56% (18)	0% (0)
Inside VP	74% (241)	71% (1,026)	44% (14)	0% (0)
After VP	1% (3)	1% (19)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Total	100% (326)	100% (1,446)	100% (32)	0% (0)

anaphoric pronouns that are co-referential with the subject and single out the contrastive nature of the subject, as in *chat* “cat” in Example (1) above, rather than that of the whole clause, as in *chat* “cat” – *boire* “drink” – *lait* “milk” (Section 2.3). Hence, one might expect *quant à* E-Pros to occur most often between the S and the V, just like E-Pros. We hypothesize that the general tendency for *quant à* E-Pros (but not E-Pros) to appear inside the VP is linked to their greater syntactic weight. The marking with a *quant à* E-Pro is “heavier” because it contains more material than the marking with an E-Pro, and this “heavier” marking might be disfavored in the position between the S and V, in which only a restricted set of short discursive markers can occur in French (Cappeau, 1999).

In sum, the three contrast markers in our study each have a different preferred position, which aligns with their different form and function: C-AdvS occur most frequently before the S (except in LM, see Section 5), E-Pros appear most often between the S and V, and *quant à* E-Pros are most frequent inside the VP (except in YCC, where there are very few examples).

5. Discussion: Impact of register

As we briefly mentioned in the previous section (Section 4), the syntactic position of the three contrast markers is to a certain extent influenced by register. This is further illustrated in Figure 1, which shows the relative frequency of each in the “inside VP” position, per register. The raw frequencies can be found in Tables 4–6 above.

In spite of the different frequencies of the three markers in the position “inside VP” they are all affected by register in the same way. This position is significantly more frequent in the two most formal written corpora (LM and ER) than in the informal written and spoken corpora (YCC and CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM) (for C-AdvS: $\chi^2(1, N=10028)=980.77$, $p<0.001$, with a moderate effect size, Cramer’s $V=0.31$; for E-Pros: $\chi^2(1, N=4965)=126.57$, $p<0.001$, with a small

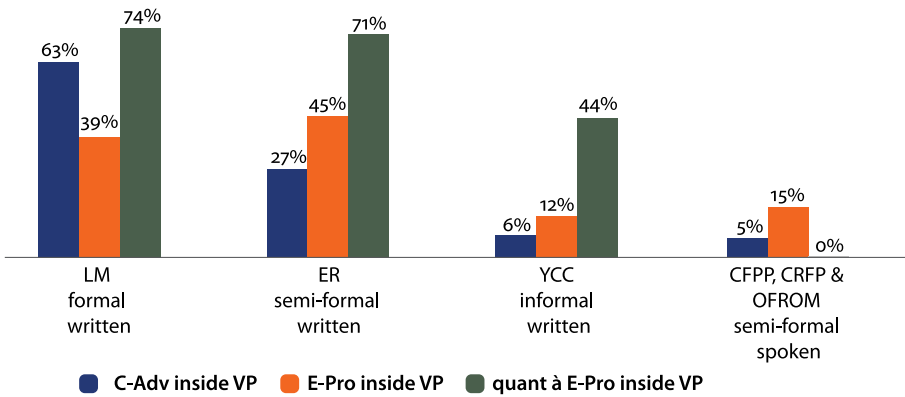


Figure 1. Frequency of C-Adv, E-Pro and *quant à* E-Pro inside the VP

effect size, Cramer’s $V=0.16$; for *quant à* E-Pro: $\chi^2(1, N=1804)=11.76$, $p<0.001$, with a very small effect size, Cramer’s $V=0.08$). This means that in formal written French, contrast markers occur less frequently in the positions that correspond best to their form and discourse function (Section 4), i.e. before S for C-Adv, to mark contrastivity of the whole clause, and between S and V for E-Pro and *quant à* E-Pro, to emphasize contrastivity of the subject. In other words, the influence of form and discourse on the syntactic position of the markers is register-dependent. In informal written and spoken French, the syntactic position is much more affected by this factor than in formal written French, where its influence is neutralized in favor of the standard French word order *S + V + other elements*. This differential impact of discourse on contrastive markers in formal written French (LM and ER) versus informal written and spoken French (YCC and CFPP, CRFP, and OFROM) supports the idea that informal/spoken French is (becoming) more discourse-configurational than other registers, i.e. that there is a systematic association between specific information-structural categories and particular syntactic constructions or word orders (De Cat, 2007; Leonetti, 2017; Wolfe, 2021).

Figure 1 also shows that level of formality (formal versus informal) plays a more influential role than mode (spoken versus written) on the syntactic position of C-Adv, E-Pro, and *quant à* E-Pro. The number of markers occurring inside the VP is very similar in the informal written YCC and the spoken corpora (C-Adv: 5%–6% of instances; E-Pro: 12%–15%), except for *quant à* E-Pro which are not used at all in our spoken dataset (0%–44%) (see Section 3.2). The same holds for the two more formal journalistic corpora (E-Pro: 39%–45%; *quant à* E-Pro: 74%–71%), with the exception of C-Adv, which appear significantly more often inside the VP in national newspapers (LM) (63%) than in regional news-

papers (ER) (27%) ($\chi^2(1, N=7613)=941.89$, $p < 0.001$, with a moderate effect size, Cramer's $V=0.35$).

We argue that this difference between the two newspaper corpora can be explained by the idea that journalists in LM avoid placing C-Adv before the S or after the VP to prevent an (inter)subjective interpretation of the clause. According to Traugott (2012) and Degand (2014), markers in the left periphery are typically speaker-oriented and convey subjectivity, whereas markers in the right periphery are hearer-oriented and convey intersubjectivity. Hence, when a C-Adv occurs in the left or right periphery, it automatically adds an (inter)subjective layer to the propositional content. This effect is unwanted in LM, a high-quality newspaper that aims to provide objective information to a broad readership from a neutral perspective. In ER, avoiding (inter)subjectivity is less critical, as this regional newspaper is written by local journalists for a local readership and mainly deals with more personal topics, such as weddings, births, and local sports competitions (Section 3.1). Hence, the extent to which the left and right periphery are avoided because of (inter)subjectivity is also register-dependent: in very formal written French (LM), C-Adv are more often used inside the VP to ensure objective interpretation, while this plays no (important) role in the other registers.

The hypothesis that LM avoids the subjective left and intersubjective right periphery is further supported by a more detailed analysis of examples where C-Adv appear before the S or after the VP. This analysis makes a more fine-grained distinction between absolute sentence-initial and -final positions, i.e. C-Adv that occur at the very beginning (24) or end (25) of a sentence, and non-absolute sentence-initial or -final **position**, e.g. C-Adv preceded by (26) or followed by (27) another clause element (underlined).

ABSOLUTE SENTENCE-INITIAL/FINAL

- (24) Les allocations familiales sont rétablies pour tous, et même élargies; **en revanche** le quotient familial est abaissé pour les très hauts revenus.
 ("The family allowances are restored for all, and even extended; **on the other hand** the family quotient is lowered for very high incomes.")
- (25) Après les événements, quand tant d'anciens acteurs estimeront avoir perdu, Romain Goupil fait l'analyse inverse. On a gagné, **au contraire**.
 ("After the events, when so many former players will consider themselves to have lost, Romain Goupil makes the opposite analysis. We have won, **on the contrary**.")

NON-ABSOLUTE SENTENCE-INITIAL/FINAL

- (26) Depuis dix à quinze ans, **au contraire**, cette politique est victime de son succès.
 ("For ten to fifteen years, **on the contrary**, this policy has been a victim of its own success.")

- (27) Elle ne sera pas valable, **en revanche**, pendant les vacances scolaires.
("It will not be valid, **on the other hand**, during school holidays.")

As shown in Table 7, C-Advs most often follow another clause element in the left periphery (75% of instances) (26) or are followed by another clause element in the right periphery (91%) (27). In these positions, they can single out and emphasize the contrastive nature of the clause element, just like E-Pros and *quant à* E-Pros do for NPs or relative pronouns.

Table 7. Syntactic position of C-Advs in the left and right periphery in the LM corpus

	Sentence-initial	Sentence-final
Absolute	25% (144)	9% (2)
Non-absolute	75% (436)	91% (21)
Total	100% (580)	100% (23)

These findings suggest that the LM corpus allows C-Advs to appear in non-absolute sentence-initial or -final positions to mark contrastivity of a clause element that cannot be highlighted by an E-Pro or *quant à* E-Pro. However, in general, the LM corpus avoids using the leftmost and rightmost positions for C-Advs.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we show that the syntactic position of three French contrast markers is influenced by their form and discourse function. Overall, contrastive adverbs (C-Advs) occur most often before the S, where they can have scope over the whole clause in line with their linking function. Emphatic pronouns (E-Pros) most frequently appear between the S and the V, where they single out the subject and highlight its contrastivity. As for emphatic pronouns introduced by *quant à* “as for” (*quant à* E-Pros), while their main discourse function is similar to that of E-Pros, their “heavier” syntactic weight **which** causes them to occur most often inside the VP.

However, the degree to which form and discourse function influence syntactic position varies by register. In (semi-)formal written French, all three markers appear significantly more often inside the VP than in informal written and spoken French. This finding indicates that the impact of form and discourse on the syntactic position is greater in informal written and spoken French than in formal written French, where it is neutralized in favor of the basic French word order S +

V + other clause elements (such as contrast markers). With respect to C-Advs, the influence of (inter)subjectivity on syntactic position is also register-dependent: in the most formal journalistic corpus *Le Monde*, C-Advs occur significantly more often in the neutral non-(inter)subjective position inside VP than in the less formal journalistic corpus *Est Républicain*. In sum, this paper shows that not only the frequency of a certain phenomenon in French, but also its specific linguistic features, vary by register. In this sense, our findings align with recent research on the English dative alternation, which revealed that register modulates the relative importance of language-internal factors governing the choice of a particular dative construction (see e.g. Engel et al., 2021).

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