

The influence of formality on the expression of contrast in French:

A corpus analysis of contrastive adverbs and
emphatic pronouns

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Introduction

- **Two strategies** to explicitly mark contrastivity



Minou dort dans le fauteuil.

‘Minou is sleeping in the armchair.’

(I) CONTRASTIVE ADVERB

Simba, par contre, chasse dans le jardin.

‘Simba, on the other hand, is hunting in the garden.’

(II) EMPHATIC PRONOUN

Simba, lui, chasse dans le jardin.

‘Simba, him, is hunting in the garden.’ (lit.)

Introduction

- Contrastive ADVs & emphatic PROs: **several positions**

(1) *Minou dort dans le fauteuil.* ‘Minou is sleeping in the armchair.’

a. *[*Lui] Simba [lui] chasse [lui] dans le jardin [lui].*

‘[*Him] Simba [him] is hunting [him] in the garden [him].’

b. *[Par contre] Simba [par contre] chasse [par contre] dans le jardin [par contre].*

‘[On the other hand] Simba [on the other hand] is hunting [on the other hand] in the garden [on the other hand].’

Introduction

- Contrastive ADVs & emphatic PROs: **several positions**
! But emphatic PROs not before nominal S

(1) *Minou dort dans le fauteuil.* ‘Minou is sleeping in the armchair.’

a. **[*Lui]** *Simba* **[lui]** chasse **[lui]** dans le jardin **[lui]**.

‘**[*Him]** *Simba* **[him]** is hunting **[him]** in the garden **[him]**.’

b. **[Par contre]** *Simba* **[par contre]** chasse **[par contre]** dans le jardin **[par contre]**.

‘**[On the other hand]** *Simba* **[on the other hand]** is hunting **[on the other hand]** in the garden **[on the other hand]**.’

This talk

Syntactic position of ...

- contrastive ADVs *par contre* & *en revanche* ‘on the other hand’
- emphatic PROs *lui* ‘him’ & *eux* ‘them’

1. Differences contrastive ADVs ↔ emphatic PROs?
2. Influence of formality?
3. Influence of subjectivity?
4. Influence of idiosyncrasy (*par contre* ↔ *en revanche*)?

Methodology

Quantitative analysis of syntactic position in **3 corpora**
= 3 different levels of formality



1. ADVs ↔ PROs: most frequent position

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PROs

All corpora:

between S & V

	YCC (- formal)	ER (± formal)	LM (+ formal)
before S	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
between S & V	226 (83%)	1517 (54%)	1093 (61%)
after V	45 (17%)	1306 (46%)	703 (39%)
TOTAL	271 (100%)	2823 (100%)	1796 (100%)

1. ADVs ↔ PROs: most frequent position

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ADVs

- YCC & ER: **before S**
- LM: **after V**

	YCC (- formal)	ER (± formal)	LM (+ formal)
before S	1424 (92%)	2681 (68%)	320 (20%)
between S & V	32 (2%)	208 (5%)	256 (16%)
after V	98 (6%)	1069 (27%)	997 (63%)
TOTAL	1554 (100%)	3958 (100%)	1573 (100%)

1. ADVs ↔ PROs: most frequent position

PROs: between S & V

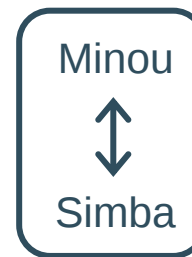
= in line with form & function: refer to antecedent (= S) & mark its contrastive nature

(2) *Minou dort dans le fauteuil.*

‘Minou is sleeping in the armchair.’

Simba, lui, chasse dans le jardin.

‘Simba, him, is hunting in the garden.’ (lit.)



1. ADVs ↔ PROs: most frequent position

PROs: between S & V

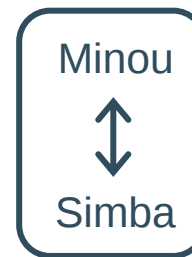
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ADVs: before S (but not in formal LM!)

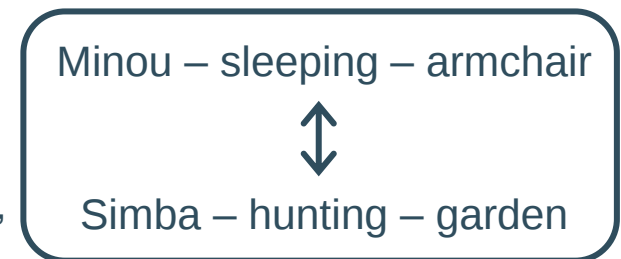
= in line with function: can indicate contrast of the whole sentence

(3) *Minou dort dans le fauteuil.*

‘Minou is sleeping in the armchair.’

Par contre, *Simba chasse dans le jardin.*

‘On the other hand, Simba is hunting in the garden.’



2. Level of formality

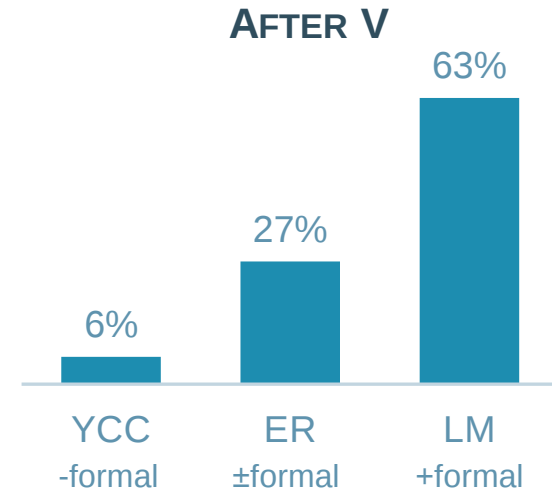
2. Level of formality

ADVs

more formal = more often after V:

YCC → ER → LM

statistically significant, χ^2 (4, N = 7085) = 1811.3,
 $p < .001$, Cramer's V = 0.36



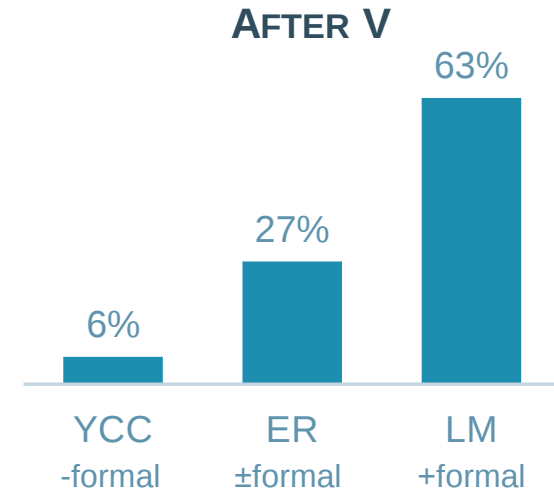
2. Level of formality

ADV's

more formal = more often after V:

YCC → ER → LM

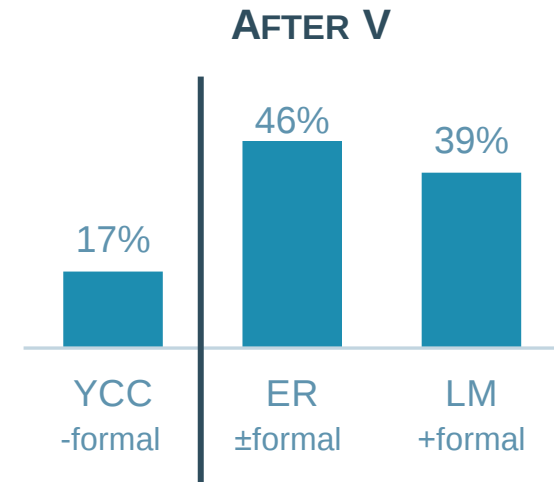
statistically significant, χ^2 (4, N = 7085) = 1811.3,
 $p < .001$, Cramer's V = 0.36



PRO's

tendency less clear, but still difference
between YCC ↔ ER & LM

statistically significant, χ^2 (2, N = 4890) = 98.82,
 $p < .001$, Cramer's V = 0.14



2. Level of formality

Position after V ~ higher level of formality

- Formal texts more 'planned' → ADV/PRO more often integrated within VP
- Difference especially between 'unplanned' texts on discussion forum (YCC)
↔ 'planned' journalistic texts (ER & LM)

3. Subjectivity

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ADVs

before S very infrequent in formal LM (compared to YCC & ER)

→ **after V** is most frequent position

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3. Subjectivity

Position after V very frequent in LM → avoid subjectivity

- ADVs in left periphery often convey subjective interpretation (Traugott 2012)
- High-quality newspaper LM wants to provide objective information & avoids 'subjective' before S position (↔ regional newspaper ER)

4. *Par contre* ↔ *en revanche*

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Difference in ER (± formal)

before S: *par contre* > *en revanche*

after V: *en revanche* > *par contre*

	<i>par contre</i>			<i>en revanche</i>		
	LM (+ formal)	ER (± formal)	YCC (- formal)	LM (+ formal)	ER (± formal)	YCC (- formal)
before S	314 (21%)	775 (83%)	1194 (92%)	6 (14%)	1906 (63%)	230 (88%)
between S & V	248 (16%)	37 (4%)	22 (2%)	8 (19%)	171 (6%)	10 (4%)
after V	969 (63%)	120 (13%)	76 (6%)	28 (67%)	949 (31%)	22 (8%)
TOTAL	1531 (100%)	932 (100%)	1292 (100%)	42 (100%)	3026 (100%)	262 (100%)

statistically significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 3826) = 126.09, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = 0.18$

4. *Par contre* ↔ *en revanche*

Difference due to **formality**

- *En revanche* = ‘formal’ ↔ *par contre* = ‘informal’ (Brysbaert & Lahousse 2020)
- ‘Formal’ ADV more often in ‘formal’ after V position ↔ ‘informal’ ADV more often in ‘informal’ before S position

=> **No effect of idiosyncrasy** on position of semantically closely related ADVs (>< Dupont 2019)

Conclusion

1. Contrastive ADVs ↔ emphatic PROs

Most frequent position = in line with their form & function

ADV: before S (but not in formal LM!) → contrast on whole clause

PROs: between S & V → contrast on subject

2. Influence of level of formality: ADVs & PROs

Position after V more frequent in formal (planned) newspapers ER & LM

3. Influence of subjectivity: ADVs

‘Subjective’ position before S avoided in high-quality newspaper LM

4. No influence of idiosyncrasy

Difference *par contre* & *en revanche* explained in terms of formality

Further research

- Add more contrastive ADVs: *au contraire*, *à l'inverse*, ...
- Statistical model to measure importance of different factors (e.g. level of formality, syntactic complexity of the S, ...)
- Comparison with spoken French: interaction with prosody?

References

- Brysbaert, Jorina & Karen Lahousse (2020), Les marqueurs de contraste *au contraire*, *par contre* et *en revanche* en français parlé et écrit, formel et informel, in SHS Web of Conferences (ed), (2020), *Actes du congrès mondial de linguistique française [CMLF]*, vol.78, Online publication: EDP Sciences, paper n°01010.
- Dupont, Maïté (2019), *Conjunctive markers of contrast in English and French: From syntax to lexis and discourse*, Louvain-la-Neuve: UCLouvain. PhD thesis.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs (2012), Intersubjectification and clause periphery, *English Text Construction* 5(1), 7-28.

THANK YOU!

Questions or suggestions?

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<https://osf.io/4xb6k/>

What about life after SLE?

deadline for abstract submission:
3 September 2021



<https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/workshop-contrast-and-annotation-is/call-for-papers>