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French is a syntactically interesting language, and various aspects of its word order and clause structure have triggered a number of important developments in syntactic theory over recent decades. *The Syntax of French* is a concise and accessible guide to the syntax of the modern language, providing a clear overview of those aspects of French that are of particular interest to linguists with cross-linguistic and theoretical interests. A broad variety of topics are covered, including the development and spread of French; the evolution of its syntax; syntactic variation; lexical categories; noun, verb and adjective phrases; clause structure; movement; and agreement. Developing the work of a wide range of scholars, it highlights the important role of French in the development of syntactic theory and shows how French challenges some fundamental assumptions about syntactic structure. An engaging and in-depth guide to all that is interesting about French, it will be invaluable to students and scholars of syntactic theory and comparative linguistics.

PAUL ROWLETT is Head of the School of Languages at Salford University, UK. He is author of *Sentential negation in French* (1998) and *The French language today: a linguistic introduction* (2000).

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*For Danny and Jason*

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## Preface

This book has two distinct but related goals: broad description and selected theoretical depth. On the one hand, it provides a concise, empirical overview of the syntax of Modern French for the benefit of linguists unfamiliar with the language. While it doesn't rely on readers having any particular theoretical background, it does assume familiarity with traditional grammatical terminology.

On the other hand, it offers in-depth discussion of selected syntactic features of the language which are of particular interest, from either a theoretical or a cross-linguistic perspective. This is of relevance to syntacticians generally, irrespective of their degree of familiarity with, or specific interest in, French: my intention is to show how aspects of French syntax are relevant to syntacticians, whatever their theoretical or language-specific interests. Thus, unlike other English-language books on French syntax, or French linguistics generally, this book isn't specifically aimed at students or researchers with a particular focus on French. If anything, it aspires to take (the syntax of) French beyond its traditional constituency, showing a wider audience how it relates to their concerns.

For the benefit of readers in need of 'raw' data, the discussion is based on an uncontroversial empirical presentation of the facts relating to the syntax of French. For the benefit of theoreticians, the discussion goes on to show how the analytical tools of contemporary syntax have been able to shed light on those facts. Bearing in mind the interests of readers with comparative interests, I concentrate on syntactic aspects of French of cross-linguistic interest. Without making claims of comprehensiveness (this would be unreasonable given length constraints), the book thus has both breadth and depth. The theoretical discussion is couched within contemporary Chomskyan syntactic theory. This is for reasons having to do with my own background, rather than a desire to bang any particular theoretical drum. The purpose of the book is to make clear what's interesting about French syntax and what syntactic theory possibly has to say about it.

The book is structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides the context for the book, charting the development of French generally, and its syntax in particular. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the syntactic framework adopted throughout. Chapter 2 looks at the thematic and morphosyntactic properties of lexical categories. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the extended functional structure above noun phrases and verb phrases, respectively. Chapter 5 looks at left-clause-peripheral phenomena. Although this book focuses on syntactic issues, reference is



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regularly (and unavoidably) made to semantics. Readers interested in pursuing semantic matters are referred to the excellent collection of papers in Corblin and de Swart (eds.) (2004).

Book projects like this are rarely to be credited to the author alone, and I'm pleased to be able to record my thanks to a number of individuals and bodies. I would like publicly to express my gratitude for the award of two grants, one from the Arts and Humanities Research Council under the Research Leave Scheme, and another from the University of Salford's Research Investment Fund, without which I wouldn't have been able to take two semesters' study leave from February 2004 to January 2005 to write this book. At Cambridge University Press I would like to thank three of the series' general editors, Ian Roberts, Neil Smith and Nigel Vincent, for their initial encouragement to contribute a volume. I am also aware of my indebtedness to my commissioning editor, Andrew Winnard, whose patience in waiting for me to submit the original proposal, and whose enthusiastic support ever since, have been much appreciated. I would like to extend particularly heartfelt thanks to Adam Ledgeway, who was kind enough to read through an entire first draft of the manuscript and to provide me with very detailed and useful comment. Many improvements were made to the text thanks to his feedback.

Closer to home I am grateful to my colleagues in the School of Languages at Salford for their flexibility and forbearance in covering for me during my 2004–5 absence on study leave. Janet Lloyd deserves special thanks for looking after my administrative responsibilities during this time. I would also like to thank those native-French-speaking friends and colleagues who kindly agreed to remain on my email distribution list and to receive – and respond helpfully to – regular requests for grammaticality/acceptability judgements.

On a personal level, I would like to thank Danny and Jason who, between them, have kept an eye on me at home over the last six years. I can't even begin to imagine how empty life would have been without them, and gladly dedicate the book to them.

*Manchester*  
*December 2006*

P. R.

# Abbreviations and symbols

1/2/3	first/second/third person	NOM	nominative
A	adjective	Num	number
ADV	adverb(ial)	O	object
Agr	agreement	OBL	oblique
APPLIC	applicative	OF	Old French
BCE	before the christian era	P	preposition
C, COMP	complementiser, conso- nant	PERF	perfective
CE	christian era	PI	pronominal inversion
CI	complex inversion	PL	plural
CL	Classical Latin	PRS	present
CL	clitic	PRSPRT	present participle
COND	conditional	PST	past
ConF	Contemporary French	PSTPRT	past participle
DO	direct object	RD	right dislocation
EModF	Early Modern French	S	subject
F	feminine	SG	singular
FP	functional projection	SI	stylistic inversion
FUT	future	SUB	subject
Gen	gender	SUBJ	subjunctive
I, INFL	inflection	T	tense
IMP	imperative	UG	Universal Grammar
IMPF	imperfect(ive)	V	verb, vowel
IND	indicative	VL	Vulgar Latin
INF	infinitive	θ	theta role
IO	indirect object	φ	phi feature
IRR	irrealis		
K	case		
LD	left dislocation		
M	masculine		
MidF	Middle French		
ModF	Modern French		
N	noun		
N	neuter		
NEG	negative marker		