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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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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...
Preface

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.

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