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The Distribution of French Raising Constructions

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1.   Introduction

The French subject-to-subject raising verbs appear in the two structures illustrated in (1) and (2).

(1) *Il semble que Jean comprend enfin*
    'It seems that John understands'
(2) *Jean semble enfin comprendre*
    'John finally seems to understand'

In the unraised construction in (1), the impersonal *il* is the main subject. *Jean* is the subordinate subject, and the subordinate verb is in the indicative mood. In the raised construction in (2), *Jean* is the main subject, and the subordinate verb is in the infinitive mood.

Most of the research has so far been concerned with the structure of the raised construction (Postal 1974, Ruwet 1972, 1983, Rooryck 1990, Achard to appear), but the conditions of occurrence of the two structures in discourse have received little attention. In this paper, I investigate the distribution of the raised and unraised constructions with the verb *sembler* 'seem' in a corpus of articles from the newspaper *Le Monde*. Using the concepts made available by the theory of Cognitive Grammar (henceforth CG, Langacker 1987, 1991), I show that each construction's meaning strongly predicts its distribution in text, and that the results of the corpus analysis confirm that prediction.

This paper is structured in the following fashion. Section two introduces the meanings of the raised and unraised constructions. Section three presents their distribution in text. Section four summarizes the results and concludes the paper.

2.   Meaning of the two constructions

In CG, the meaning of a linguistic expression is characterized as the specific construal its presence imposes on a conceptual base. Because *sembler* is an epistemic verb that evaluates the possible occurrence of a given event or

proposition in reality, our folk conception of reality represents the base relative to which the meaning of the unraised and raised constructions needs to be evaluated.

In our model of reality, certain facts can only be discovered if people make the conceptual effort to seek them out.[1] Others, however, become available for anyone to see with no particular effort on any conceptualizer's part. *Sembler* codes such situations where reality reveals itself, if only imperfectly and selectively.

The lack of conceptual effort on its subject's part allows *sembler* to exhibit maximum transparency with respect to subject choice. Langacker (1995:40) characterizes transparency as follows: "any element that can occur in the appropriate position in the subordinate clause can likewise occur in 'raised' position in the main clause". Because *sembler* profiles the coming into view of a particular scene (a possible facet of reality), the only entities available as its potential subject are elements of that scene. The choice between the raised or unraised construction depends on what entity receives focal prominence.

With the unraised construction *in* (1), the sentence profiles the speaker's evaluation of the proposition *Jean comprend enfin* as a potential candidate for insertion into current reality. That insertion is only possible if the proposition doesn't conflict with the other aspects of current and past reality that relate to it. At the very least, it can only be considered true if *Jean*'s current behavior is different enough from his past behavior to indicate a true change in understanding. The proposition is therefore embedded in a sub-section of reality that enables the speaker to identify it as a possible part of that reality. In Achard (1998 Chapter 7) I propose that the impersonal *il* codes the abstract setting identifiable as that sub-section of reality.

The unraised construction should thus be analyzed as a setting subject construction (Langacker 1991, Achard 1998 Chapter 7). The abstract setting is given focal prominence and thus marked as the subject, and the event or proposition as a whole (including its main participant) is viewed as the secondary figure and marked as the landmark. The main verb therefore profiles a relation between a specific sub-part of reality and an event or proposition that can be identified within it.

In the raised construction in (2), the main character in the located event is taken as the trajector of the main relation due to its focal prominence. The process she participates in is viewed as the landmark of that relation. Unlike the case with the unraised construction, reality remains an unprofiled part of the base.

This analysis might seem surprising because *Jean* appears to be the logical subject of *comprendre* rather than *sembler*, since the subject of *sembler* is usually not a person but an event (Langacker 1995). Rather than being problematic, however, this particularity points to the very essence of the raised construction. In order to fully understand its semantic import, we need to recognize Langacker's

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[1] These situations are usually coded by control verbs. This position is congruent with the well-attested semantic restrictions imposed on the subject of those verbs.

notion of the active zone of an entity, defined as: "those facets of an entity capable of interacting directly with a given domain or relation." (Langacker 1987:485). In the raising construction, the complement process (*comprendre*) represents the subject's (*Jean*) active zone with respect to its participation in the main relation. It is with respect to the process of *comprendre* that *Jean* can be considered the subject of *sembler*. To put things differently, the main subject represents the reference point with respect to which the process in the complement can be accessed. We will see in the next section that the subject's reference point function (Langacker 1995) represents an important aspect of the raised construction's meaning.

3.   Distribution of the two constructions
The relation between the raised and unraised variants of raising verbs is ultimately a matter of speaker choice, and therefore impossible to predict completely. However, the meaning of the constructions makes a strong prediction as to their distribution in discourse. In his analysis of English raising, Langacker (1995:37–38) expresses that prediction in the following way:

> It is claimed that, in *Don is likely to leave*, *Don* functions as a reference point with respect to the process of his leaving: the notion of leaving is accessed is accessed via the conception of *Don* and conceived in relation to that individual. The reference-point relationship is absent in the corresponding sentence *That Don will leave is likely*, which consequently has a slightly different meaning. The 'raised' NP can be thought of as a kind of local topic, i.e. a topic for purposes of ascertaining the actual (or direct) participant in the profiled main-clause relationship (*Don* calls to mind a process involving *Don*, and such a process can be accessed for likelihood). It makes the prediction that raised NPs should tend to exhibit greater 'topicality' than their unraised counterparts.

The remainder of this paper tests this prediction for French. The data consist of 300 examples of raised and unraised variants of *sembler* from articles published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* between 1988 and 1990. For both variants, the main participant in the conceptualized scene (coded as the raised nominal in the raised construction and the subordinate subject in the unraised construction) was analyzed for its 'cognitive availability'. That term was chosen over Langacker's 'topicality' to stress the fact that we are not solely concerned with the nominal's discourse status, but with a more general notion of conceptual prominence. In the following analysis, available information includes discourse topical, as well as inferrable information.[2] Nominals were ranked for topicality using Givón's notions of 'anaphoric accessibility' and 'cataphoric persistence' (Givón 1995). They were categorized as inferrable if they code information that hasn't been evoked in prior discourse, but that the speaker believes the hearer can

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[2] Inferrable and topical information have been independently been shown to have similar distributional properties. For example, Birner (1997:138) argues that with respect to English inversion: "the distribution of inferrable information matches that of explicitly evoked information."

plausibly infer from information that was previously evoked (Birner 1994, 1997, Prince 1992).

The results are provided in (3)–(5). The table in (3) concerns the overall distribution of raised and unraised constructions with *sembler*.

(3) Distribution of raised and unraised constructions

	Total	%
0 (Raised variant)	205	68.33%
il (Unraised variant)	95	31.66%

The table in (4) concentrates on the availability of *sembler*'s subject in the 205 examples of raised constructions.

(4) Subject availability in the raised construction[3]

Raised variant	Topical	Inferrable	Non-topical	Relative
Total	116	39	25	25
%	56.58%	19.02%	12.19%	12.19%

The table in (5) is concerned with the availability of the subject of the complement clause in the 95 cases of unraised constructions.

(5) Subordinate subject availability in the unraised construction

Unraised variant	Topical	Inferrable	Non-topical	Relative
Total	37	8	49	1
%	38.94%	8.42%	51.57%	1.05%

Tables (4) and (5) show that our hypothesis fares differently with the two constructions. It is clearly confirmed with the raised construction. When topical and inferrable nominals are grouped together, the subject of *sembler* is cognitively available in 75.60% of the cases. The situation with the unraised construction, however, is not as convincing. We would expect the subject of the complement clause to be neither topical nor inferrable, but this is only the case in 51.57% of the cases. In 47.36% of the cases, it is either topical or inferrable. These numbers are certainly not enough to lend strong support to the initial hypothesis.

In the remainder of this section, I show that our original prediction receives much stronger support when the examples that seem to challenge it are carefully examined. I will first concentrate on the cases (12.19%) where the subject of

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[3] Even though it will not be discussed here, the 'relative clause' category was created because the specific form and function of that construction seems to make it particularly well suited for the selection of the unraised construction, regardless of the availability of the relative pronoun's antecedent.

sembler is unexpectedly not cognitively available. I will then turn to the cases (47.36 %) where the subject of complement clause is topical or inferrable.

3.1 Raised variant with non-topical subjects
In 25 cases, contrary to expectations, the subject of the raised construction is not topical or inferrable. In these cases, however, some specific local condition of the surrounding discourse, or some semantic characteristics of the nominal itself acts as a primer and enhances its cognitive availability. These conditions motivate its use as the subject of the raised construction. This analysis is confirmed by the fact that the 25 unexpected cases naturally fall into a small number of rhetorical or stylistic patterns that exhibit a surprising degree of similarity. Furthermore, each pattern's form or meaning can be shown to booster the nominal's availability. Space considerations prevent me from considering each pattern in detail, but this section examines three representative samples.

The first condition that enhances the nominal's availability is the formal structure of the surrounding discourse. In 5 of the 25 cases, the subject of *sembler* is part of a list or a symmetrical structure in the narration. Being part of a set structure increases a nominal's salience and availability because the hearer can anticipate its occurrence on the basis of that structure. Any recurring pattern creates slots to be filled by specific entities. The existence of these slots results in the hearer's expectation for them to be filled by compatible entities, and thus in these entities' increased availability. This is illustrated in example (6).

(6) *France-Télécom, pour sa part, affiche un chiffre d'affaires en hausse de 7 %, à 94,4 milliards de francs.* **Le parc téléphonique** *s'est encore accru, de plus d'un million de lignes pour atteindre 27 millions d'unités. A noter que* **1,8 million d'abonnés** *(+ 42 %) ont opté pour la facturation détaillée. D'ailleurs depuis 1983,* **le taux de réclamations sur factures** *a été divisé par dix. En outre,* **la qualité du téléphone** *s'améliore aussi : moins d'un dérangement tous les sept ans en moyenne par ligne. Côté téléphone public,* **le nombre de cabines à cartes** *a augmenté d'un tiers, et 43 millions de télécartes ont été vendues (+50 %).* **La substitution des cabines à pièces par les publiphones à carte** *semble avoir vaincu le vandalisme : le taux moyen de dérangement dans les publiphones est tombé à 1 %.*

'France Telecom, for it part, is showing earnings of 94.4 billion francs, a 7 percent increase. **The telephone network** has still increased by over one million lines to reach 27 million units. Note that **1.8 million of customers** (+42%) chose the detailed invoice. In any case, since 1983, **the complaint rate about invoices** has decreased by a factor of 10. Besides, **the quality of the service** has also improved: less that one malfunction every seven years on average per line. As for public phones, **the number of card phones** has increased by one third, and 43 million of telecards have been sold (+50%). **The replacement of coin phones by card phones** seems to have defeated vandalism: the average malfunction rate of public card phones dropped to 1%'

Example (6) represents a point by point positive evaluation of the company France Telecom. Each item that characterizes the company is investigated and quantified (in bold in the text), all the elements adding up to a positive evaluation. The narrative is structured as a list format where each point under investigation is coded as the subject of the clause in which it occurs. The subject of *sembler* (underlined in the text) is a member of the overall list. It is non-topical, because it has never been mentioned in the preceding discourse. It is not inferrable either, because it is not part of any obvious abstract telephone company schema.[4]

However, its position as the subject of *sembler* is strongly motivated by its being part of the list of the items to be evaluated. The reader has become accustomed to the structure of the text, and she therefore anticipates that whatever aspect of the company is being scrutinized will be coded as the main subject of the sentence in which it occurs. Despite its own lack of discourse topicality, the subject of *sembler* therefore has a fair amount of cognitive availability due to the presence of a specific structural slot that it is expected to fill.

In order to understand the second factor that motivates the presence of a non-topical subject of *sembler*, we need to make specific one important consequence of the meaning of the two constructions as it was presented in the preceding section. The choice of the raised variant involves reduced conceptual distance between the conceptualizer and her object of conceptualization because her initial contact with the complement process is made directly with a participant in that process, or an entity directly inferrable from the context. In discourse, this characteristic of the construction represents a useful way of maintaining textual continuity by introducing new information through familiar entities used as reference points. Conversely, with the unraised variant, the complement process can only be located through the consideration of the more abstract notion of reality. The distance between the conceptualizer and her conceptualization is thus increased.

In an unexpectedly large number of cases (13), the subject of *sembler*'s raised variant is a nominal such as *personne* 'nobody', *rien* 'nothing', *quelque chose* 'something' etc. that will be called 'indefinite' because it does not refer to a specific entity. These nominals are illustrated in (7) and (8).

(7) *Mr Modrow a mis en garde l'opposition contre une politique d'obstruction qui paralyserait l'action du gouvernement, lui refusant tout droit de veto sur celle-ci. Rappelant qu'il avait proposé aux formations d'opposition de nommer des représentants pour assister le responsable chargé du démantèlement de l'ancienne STASI, Mr Modrow leur a offert, jeudi, d'entrer directement au gouvernement avec "des personnes compétentes" de son choix. Les réactions ont été généralement négatives. Le refus du premier*

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[4] During the question period at the conference, Ellen Prince pointed out to me that these 'list' cases could be analyzed as a particular kind of inferrable information. Her comment is fully congruent with the analysis proposed here.

*ministre de revenir sur sa décision de reconstituer une nouvelle structure de renseignement promettait une empoignade pour la prochaine réunion de la table ronde, lundi 15 janvier, entre représentants du gouvernement et de l'opposition. **Personne** ne **semblait** pourtant réellement vouloir prendre, pour le moment, le risque d'une rupture. L'opposition semble penser que, quelles que soient les raisons de se méfier du gouvernement, un éclatement de la table ronde provoquerait une radicalisation de la situation que tout le monde redoute.*

'Mr. Modrow threatened the opposition against a stalling policy which would paralyze the government's action, and denied them any right to veto that action. He reminded the opposition parties that he had suggested they nominate representatives to assist the person in charge of dismantling the former STASI, and offered them on Thursday to become part of the government with "competent people" of his choice. Reactions were generally negative. The prime minister's refusal to reconsider his decision to form a new intelligence agency promised to start some confrontations during the next meeting of the round table between representatives of the government and the opposition on Monday January 15th. However, for the moment, **no one seemed** ready to risk a breakdown in the discussion. The opposition seems to think that whatever reasons there are to be suspicious of the government, a breakdown of the round table would trigger the radicalization of the situation everybody fears.'

(8) *A l'heure où l'art est religion, où les musées s'élèvent comme les cathédrales d'antan, **rien** ne **semble** échapper à ce phénomène de sacralisation.*

'At a time when art is religion, when museums are erected like the cathedrals of older times, **nothing seems** to escape this phenomenon of sacralization.'

The nominals illustrated in (7) and (8) pertain to the existence of an entity rather than its identification. For example, in (7), *personne* denies the existence of any individual possessing the qualities expressed in the complement. These nominals are so frequently attested as subject of *sembler* because, even when they are not topical or inferrable, their presence doesn't impede the natural continuity of discourse. First, they often recapitulate the set of characters presented in the immediate context. This is most evident in (7) where *personne* obviously refers to each of the representatives of the government and the opposition. Secondly, even when they don't summarize a set of textual participants as in (8), these indefinite nominals do not introduce a disruptive new entity in subject position, and can thus easily be tolerated in the raised construction.

Finally, the presence of a subject in the raised construction that is neither topical nor inferrable can simply be part of the speaker's strategy to get a specific point across. This is illustrated in (9).

(9) *Les Fidjiens n'ont pas de système ou de dogme sur l'ovale. Pas de théoriciens. Ils ont seulement une capacité inouïe à occuper l'espace, à*

changer la dimension du jeu, à perpétuer le mouvement. Est-il besoin dans ces conditions d'un pack classique ? En dépit de la malice d'un Dominique Ertbani et de la rigueur d'un Peter Winterbottom, les avants barbarians ont terminé la partie sur les rotules sans avoir pu un seul instant prendre l'ascendant dans les phases statiques de conquête. Jusqu'à présent __un seul homme__ semblait réunir toutes ces qualités : Serge Blanco, l'arrière du Quinze de France, que certains considèrent comme le meilleur du monde à ce poste. Or les Fidjiens en ont quinze comme lui à la parade sur le terrain.

'The Fijians have no system or dogma about Rugby. No theoreticians. They simply have an uncanny ability to occupy space, to change the dimension of the game, and keep it in motion. Is there any need for a classic pack under these conditions? Despite the cunning of Dominique Ertbani and the rigor of Peter Winterbottom, the barbarian forwards finished the game exhausted without ever being able to dominate the static phases of the game. Up until now, __only one man__ seemed to gather all these qualities : Serge Blanco, the full back of the French team, that some people consider the best in the world at this position. However, the Fijians have fifteen like him ready to go on the field.'

The article from which the example in (9) is extracted is about the Rugby players from Fiji, and their extraordinary qualities. The nominal *un seul homme* is not topical or inferrable, but its use as the subject of *sembler* serves a clear stylistic purpose. The author makes use of the reference point function of the subject in the raised construction to manipulate the reader into thinking in a certain way.

The general purpose of the article is to present the Fijian players as different and noticeably better that the best players in the world. The beginning of the passage describes the qualities that allow them to stand out. However, mere description is not enough. The author wants to press his point more dramatically and resorts to comparison with specific players that the readers might better identify with. He therefore creates a local topic, invoked for the sole purpose of that comparison. This strategy is so far fully congruent with the selection of the raised construction.

The selection of *un seul homme* as the subject of that construction, however, deserves to be further explored. At first sight, it may seem to be a rather poor choice, because it provides little help in restricting the search domain within which the process in the complement (*réunir toutes ces qualités*) is located. *Serge Blanco* would have been a more efficient reference point, because its use would instantly bring up the mental image of the player and his qualities, and thus facilitate the access to the complement process. This is precisely why the author didn't select it.

His whole dramatic comparative strategy consists in stating that with respect to a specific set of qualities, every single one of the 15 Fijian players is as good as the uncontested number one non-Fijian in the world. The use of *un seul homme*

allows him to directly compare the numbers 1 and 15 for dramatic effect. Furthermore, the reference point function of the subject of *sembler*, as well as the poor quality of *un seul homme* to perform that function combine to create a sense of suspense in the identification of the player. By using a poor reference point, the author forces the reader to explore each player that might fit the description, and thus realize how limited the choice is. It ensures that the reader will spend time on the location of that unique player, and it will strengthen his argument. The mention of *Serge Blanco* signals the end of the search.

3.2 Unraised variants and topical subjects

In 47.36% of the cases (45 examples), the subject of the complement clause is topical (37 cases) or inferrable (8 cases). In order to understand these cases, it is important to remember that if we compare the two constructions, the presence of the unraised variant involves additional distance between the conceptualizer and the conceptualized scene, because the latter can only be located through the consideration of the sub-part of reality within which it occurs.

This section shows that in the cases where the main participant in the conceptualized scene is topical or inferrable, the speaker uses the unraised construction to increase the distance between the conceptualizer and the conceptualized scene. That choice is made in response to specific features of the situation, or simply for strategic reasons. This position is confirmed by the fact that in all the examples where the subordinate subject is available, the desire to increase the distance between the conceptualizer and her conceptualization is clearly visible independently of the choice of the unraised construction. Here again, the data naturally divide themselves into specific patterns where formal and lexical characteristics of discourse conspire to motivate the selection of that construction. This section presents three of these patterns.

In the first set of examples, the break in the continuity of discourse characteristic of the unraised construction indicates a shift in topic. The subject of the complement clause is reactivated as a new topic, even though it was already topical earlier in the text. This is illustrated in (10).

(10)   *Quarante-trois personnes sont mortes dans la nuit du samedi 13 au dimanche 14 janvier, lors de l'incendie d'une boite de nuit à Saragosse, à quelque 300 kilomètres au nord-est de Madrid. Cent trente personnes environ se trouvaient dans l'établissement au moment de la catastrophe. Le feu a pris peu avant 3 heures du matin, apparemment à la suite d'un court-circuit dans une petite salle servant à contrôler l'installation électrique et située juste à côté de la sortie d'urgence. Aussi, nombre de clients qui tentèrent de s'enfuir par cette voie durent-ils refluer en désordre vers le centre de la pièce brusquement plongée dans l'obscurité. Seule la porte de service principale permettait d'échapper à l'incendie. Les flammes dégagèrent rapidement une fumée âcre qui envahit en quelques secondes tout l'établissement par l'intermédiaire du système*

*d'air conditionné. Il **semble** d'ailleurs que <u>la quasi-totalité des victimes</u> aient péri asphyxiées et non carbonisées. Certaines d'entre elles ont été retrouvées encore assises sur leur chaise, ce qui montre combien la suffocation a été rapide.*

'Forty three people died in the night of Saturday 13th to Sunday January 14th in the fire that destroyed a night club in Saragossa, approximately 300 kilometers North East of Madrid. Approximately one hundred and thirty people were in the building when the catastrophe occurred. The fire started shortly before 3 a.m., apparently due to a short circuit in a small room located right next to the emergency exit, used to control the electrical equipment. Several customers who tried to escape that way therefore had to rush back toward the center of a room suddenly plunged into darkness. Only the main service door could be used to escape the fire. The flames immediately released an acrid smoke that spread throughout the entire building in a few seconds through the air conditioning system. It **seems**, in fact, that **the quasi totality of the victims** died of asphyxia rather than burns. Some of them were found still sitting on their chair, which indicates how rapid suffocation was.'

The text in (10) represents the beginning of the article. The first sentence presents all the protagonists (fire, victims, outcome), and the rest of the narration merely elaborates on that introduction. The subordinate subject of the unraised construction (underlined in the text) is obviously available, because its referent (the victims) is clearly the topic of the first sentence. However, when they appear in the unraised construction, the victims no longer constitute the focal point of the discourse.

The use of the unraised variant is thus motivated by the text's information structure. After presenting a brief summary of the disaster in the first sentence, the author shifts the emphasis to the fire itself, describing first its origins, and then the toxic properties of the fumes, as well as the way in which they propagated themselves. It is only with the evocation of the fumes that the author shifts back to the victims and the way in which they died. The presence of *d'ailleurs* 'in fact' provides a link back to the former topic, and the use of that link is a clear indication that the victims are no longer topical, because they need to be specifically reconnected to the current topic.

The presence of the unraised variant of *sembler* therefore enables the author to reintroduce the victims as focal elements of the text by treating them as new information. Once they have been reintroduced, they can be used as the subject of the next sentence. Despite the fact that it conveys available information, the nominal *la quasi totalité des victimes* does not appear as the subject of *sembler* because it is no longer the local topic of the immediately preceding discourse.

Also note that the use of the unraised variant makes explicit the shift from the description of the accident to the analysis of its possible source. The deductive process that leads the author to the conclusion expressed in the complement is

based on the observation of a particular facet of reality, namely the fact that some of the victims were still sitting on their chairs. Her reasoning is thus most efficiently coded by a construction that profiles the sub-part of reality that contains that facet as a focal point. In this case, the conceptual distance inherent to the unraised construction mirrors the distance between narration and analysis.

The second kind of situation that motivates the use of the unraised construction despite the availability of the main participant in the conceptualized scene is illustrated in (11) and (12).

(11)   *La compagnie américaine Northwest Airlines a décidé de supprimer ses vols entre la Scandinavie et les Etats-Unis en mars prochain. Trente-quatre des trente-huit employés de ses bureaux de Copenhague (ville terminale de ses vols) ont reçu leur lettre de licenciement. La Northwest Airlines, implantée au Danemark depuis 1979, desservait jusqu'ici une série de routes directement avec l'Europe du Nord et une série de villes américaines à des prix défiant toute concurrence. L'été passé, un billet Copenhague–New-York revenait à quelque 3 000 mille couronnes (environ 2 500 francs). Selon certains experts, Northwest Airlines aurait baissé les bras, victime d'une guerre sauvage des prix entre différentes compagnies privées et d'un remplissage insuffisant l'hiver hors de la saison touristique. Mais surtout il* **semble** *que* **les dirigeants de la compagnie** *craignent de voir leurs installations de Copenhague soumises, à plus ou moins long terme, à des représailles à la suite de la condamnation de quatre terroristes à Stockhlom, le 21 décembre dernier.*
'The American company Northwest Airlines decided to cancel its flights between Scandinavia and the United States next March. Thirty four out of the thirty eight employees of its Copenhagen office (the terminal city for its flights) were let go. Northwest Airlines have been present in Denmark since 1979, and up until now, they have been flying a series of direct routes between Northern Europe and several American cities for the cheapest fares on the market. Last summer, a Copenhagen–New-York ticket cost around 3000 crowns (approximately 2 500 Francs). According to certain experts, Northwest Airlines would have given up, the victim of an all-out price war between different private companies, and a shortage of business in the winter in the off season. But above all, it **seems** that **the directors of the company** fear possible retaliation against their Copenhagen installations following the sentencing of four terrorists in Stockholm on December 21st.'

(12)   *Britanniques et Allemands de l'Ouest vont tenter, au début de cette semaine, de régler le différend qui les oppose sur le sort du projet d'avion de combat, dit EFA, concurrent du Rafale français. Un fort courant hostile à ce programme européen apparait en Allemagne fédérale, pour des raisons à la fois politiques, financières, techniques et industrielles. L'EFA (Eurofighter Aircraft), le chasseur de combat des années quatre-vingt-dix*

mis en chantier par un consortium regroupannt des constructeurs aéronautiques de RFA (MBB), de Grande-Bretagne (British Aerospace), d'Italie (Aeritalia) et d'Espagne (CASA), est si fortement contesté en Allemagne qu'il risque fort de ne pas voir le jour. <u>En dépit des assurances données par le ministre de la défense ouest-allemand, Mr Gerhard Stoltenberg,</u> qui assure que l'engagement de la Luftwaffe d'acheter deux cents appareils de ce type à partir de 1997 n'était pas remis en cause, il semble *que* **<u>les réticences devant la poursuite de ce projet</u>**, *dont le coût global est estimé à 100 milliards de deutschemarks (340 milliards de francs), soient en passe de prendre le dessus.*

'The British and West Germans will attempt, at the beginning of this week, to solve the differences that divide them about the fate of the so-called EFA fighter plane, a direct competitor to the French Rafale. A strong, hostile current to this European project is now surfacing in Germany, for political, financial, technical and industrial reasons. The EFA (Eurofighter Aircraft), the fighter for the nineties developed by a consortium of aeronautical firms from Germany (MBB), Great Britain (British Aerospace), Italy (Aeritalia), and Spain (CASA) is so strongly contested in Germany that it may never see daylight. <u>Despite the assurances given by the West German secretary of defense, Mr. Gerhard Stoltenberg</u>, who assures that the Luftwaffe's commitment to buying two hundred planes of that type starting in 1997 was never questioned, it **seems** that **<u>the reluctance to pursue this project</u>**, whose total cost is estimated at 100 billion deutschemarks (340 billion francs) is in the process of taking over.'

The examples that pattern with (11) and (12) are all very similar in structure. They all present a divergence of opinion with respect to a particular situation. The opinion of an expert (underlined in the text) is introduced, but a careful examination of the situation leads the author to a different conclusion. The explicit mention of the relevant sub-part of reality as the subject of *sembler* to present the author's conclusion emphasizes her claim that the expert's position is not based on reality, and thus validates her own opinion. In these examples, the conceptual distance inherent in the construction reflects the divergence of opinion between the expert and the author.

Finally, the unraised construction may also be selected because it best serves the author's narrative purposes. This is illustrated in (13).

(13)   *Lundi soir, Flushing Meadow s'était donc préparé à une sorte de veillée funèbre. Et cela commença bien ainsi: Edberg prit d'entrée de jeu le service de Connors et mena 2-0. Mais, à partir de ce moment, tout bascula. Qu'arriva-t-il réellement au Suédois? Avec le laconisme qui lui est coutumier, il s'est contenté de dire qu'il n'était plus parvenu à engager correctement. De fait, il n'a marqué que deux de ses onze jeux de service*

suivants. C'était pitié de le voir sombrer ainsi à nouveau. Car pareille mésaventure lui était déjà arrivée, en 1985, sur ce même Stadium, contre le même Connors. Quatre ans plus tard et trois titres du grand chelem plus loin, il **semblait** *qu'**Edberg** ne pourrait plus tomber dans de tels errements. Certes, il avait montré à Paris, contre Michael Chang, puis à Londres, contre Boris Becker, que sa détermination pouvait encore chanceler dans les grandes occasions. Mais, lundi, la panne n'est pas venue que de cela. En fait, rien ne marcha. Qu'il est pu jouer aussi pitoyablement ce soir-là restera sans doute une énigme.*

'Monday night, Flushing Meadow had prepared itself for a wake. And indeed, it started that way. Right away, Edberg took Connors' serve and led 2-0. But from that point on, everything shifted. What really happened to the Swede? With his habitual reserve, he simply said that he didn't serve well. In truth, he only won two of his next eleven service games. It was a pity to see him drawn again. Because such misfortune already happened to him in 1985, in the same stadium, against the same Connors. Four years later, and three grand slam titles further, it **seemed** that **Edberg** could no longer make such mistakes. It is true that in Paris against Michael Chang, then in London against Boris Becker, he had shown that his determination could still flicker in pressure situations. But on Monday, his break down didn't only come from that. In fact, nothing worked. That he could play so pitifully on that night will certainly remain a mystery.'

The whole passage is about the Swedish player, so *Edberg* is highly topical. However, its occurrence in the unraised construction serves the overall narrative purpose of the text. The author is comparing the episode he is describing to a similar incident involving the same player four years earlier. His point is that even though Edberg did experience a comparable breakdown before, the circumstances are now so different that this latest episode is totally unexpected. Consequently, his narrative strategy consists in emphasizing the differences in the circumstances, in order to make the similarity of outcomes all the more striking. This is most clearly indicated by the phrase *quatre ans plus tard, et trois titres du grand chelem plus loin*, 'four years later and four grand slam titles further' which sets the episode under mention as far apart as possible from the one that occurred in 1985.

The use of *Edberg* in the unraised construction partakes of the same strategy. It further increases the distance between the two episodes, because it doesn't treat the player as a topic, and thus as an element of continuity between 1985 and 1989. Time passing and success mounting created a certain kind of reality, which includes the expectation that the Swedish player is no longer susceptible to unexplainable lapses. The coding of the elements of that reality as the subject of *sembler* enhances that expectation. The use of the unraised construction allows the author to further increase the conceptual distance between two different representations of the same individual at different times.

4. Conclusion

The main claim of this paper was that the meaning of the French raised and unraised variants of *sembler* predicts their distribution in discourse. The meaning of the constructions was characterized as the specific profile they impose on a common conceptual base, namely how specific facets of reality reveal themselves to us. The difference between the two structures pertains to which entity of the conceptualized scene has focal prominence. If a participant has particular salience, it will be chosen as the subject of *sembler*. If no entity of the scene is prominent, the sub-part of reality within which the event or proposition in the complement is located (profiled by *il*) is chosen as the main subject.

This definition of the constructions was shown to predict their distribution in discourse. Raised NPs were shown to be cognitively available (topical or inferrable) in 75.60% of the cases. Furthermore, in the 12.19% of the cases where *sembler*'s subject was not available, some local property, namely the structure of the text, the lexical properties of the nominal, or the author's strategy, was shown to enhance its availability, and thus motivate its use in the raised construction. The initial prediction received similar confirmation from the consideration of the unraised construction. The subordinate subject was found to be neither topical nor inferrable in 51.57% of the cases. Furthermore, in the remaining 47.36% of the cases, the increased conceptual distance between the conceptualizer and her conceptualization characteristic of the construction was shown to be used strategically to indicate a break in the continuity of discourse.

For the raised and unraised constructions alike, the unexpected cases do not challenge the prediction that the constructions' meanings determine their distribution, because the authors exploit one of their semantic characteristics for strategic purposes. These cases simply remind us that subject selection remains a matter of construal, and that the numbers presented in (4) and (5) merely represent statistical tendencies. The important point is that grammatical constructions provide speakers with tools for conveying specific construals, and their strategic use of these tools is virtually limitless.

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