

Does complex syntax always mean complex semantics?

A closer look at French *Faire-Que* constructions

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Introduction

Complex causation



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- Direct causation is: temporal contiguity, control, intentionality, physical contact, prototypicality (a.o., see Wolff 2003)
- **Indirect causation** seems to be everything else — although the main factor seems to be the presence of a *mediator*.



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- There are many factors that influence the way we express causal relations: number of causal factors, properties of participants, spacio-temporal constraints...
- Speakers' choices in expressing causal relations reflect both linguistic constraints and individual interpretations of the relationship between events.



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- Unlike in English, the Causee argument gets realised in *post-infinitival* position, as a direct object when the embedded verb is intransitive, and as an indirect object introduced by the preposition *à* ‘to’ when the non-finite verb is transitive.

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- We thus have a structure that is monoclausal yet bivalentive.

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- As such, they are typically understood as encoding *indirect causation* (see contrast between lexical causatives and syntactic causatives; Wolff 2003).
- While this often holds true, it is not always the case: FIs may also occur when no lexical causative verb is available; e.g. *faire tomber* ‘to drop’.

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- Each of these constructions is marked and triggers distinct semantic inferences: the FP shifts the focus on the Patient rather than on the Causee, while the ECM marks a high degree of coercion of the Causer on the Causee (Authier & Reed 1992; Abeillé et al 1997).

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- How does the morphosyntax of FQs influence their semantics? What even *is* their semantics? Overall, what is the contribution of FQs to the causative continuum?

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(11) a. *Il a fait **savoir sa leçon** à Pierre.
'He made Pierre know his lesson.'

b. *Il a fait **vouloir des bonbons** à Pierre.
'He made Pierre want candy.'

c. *Il a fait **ne pas pleurer** Pierre.
'He made Pierre not want to cry.'

***Faire-Que* constructions:
an overview**

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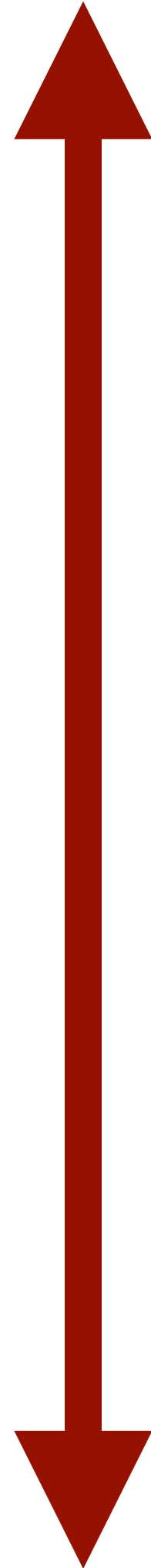
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Expectation: since FQs are morphosyntactically more complex than FIs, they should realise causal relations that are conceptually more intricate.

Givón's 'Binding Hierarchy'

(Givón 2001)

Influence of matrix agent over embedded agent, dependence of embedded subject, likelihood of realisation (success) of embedded event



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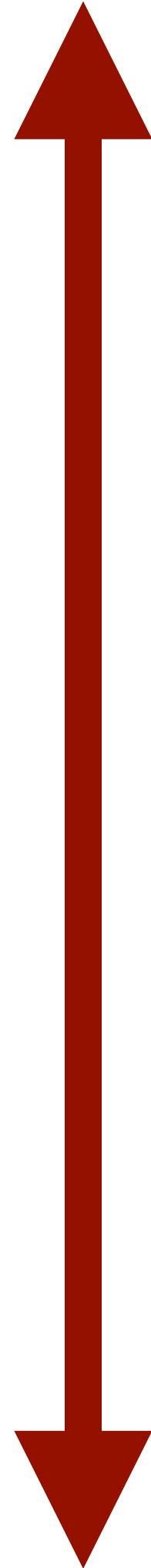
(12) The complementation scale

Semantic scale of verbs	Syntax of Comp-clause
a. She <i>let go</i> of the knife	co-lexicalized Comp
b. She <i>made</i> him <i>shave</i>	bare-stem Comp
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d. She <i>had</i> him <i>arrested</i>	
e. She <i>caused</i> him <i>to switch</i> jobs	infinitive Comp
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i. She <i>wanted</i> him <i>to leave</i>	
j. She'd <i>like</i> him <i>to leave</i>	
k. She'd <i>like for</i> him <i>to leave</i>	for-to Comp
l. She <i>suggested</i> that he <i>leave</i>	subjunctive Comp
m. She <i>wished</i> that he <i>would leave</i>	
n. She <i>agreed</i> that he <i>should leave</i>	
o. She <i>knew</i> that he <i>left</i>	indirect quote Comp.
p. She <i>said</i> that he <i>might leave</i> later	
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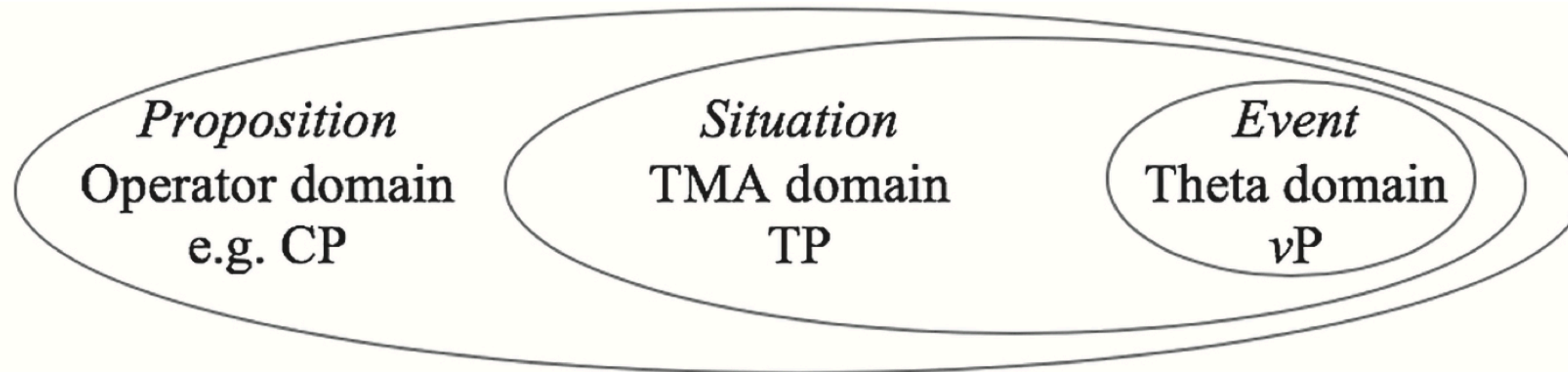
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- For W&L, however, the semantic influence is BI-DIRECTIONAL. In other words, the semantics of the embedding verb matters for the availability of given complements; in turn, the complement selected influences the semantics of the matrix verb, by yielding more fine-grained semantic distinctions.

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- Are these predictions borne out on the semantics side?

Two flavours of FQs

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the crisis economic makes that the farmers leave.IND of the country
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- Some FQs occur with their embedded clause in the indicative (IND-FQs), while others select CPs in the subjunctive (SBJV-FQs).

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 - (b) *faire que* + *SBJV*: ‘acting towards *p*’
- While *en sorte* (from Latin *sors* ‘lot, fate’) is omittable, it being overt simply reinforces the idea that the Causer is performing a highly goal-oriented action (or series of actions); *en sorte* meaning ‘in this fashion’.

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- While Spanish SBJV-FQs occur bare, Italian ones require for the adverb *si* (derived from *così*, ‘in this fashion’) to introduce the CP:

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IND-FQs vs. SBJV-FQs

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- While Spanish SBJV-FQs occur bare, Italian ones require for the adverb *sì* (derived from *così*, ‘in this fashion’) to introduce the CP:

(14) Il Presidente ha fatto **sì** che gli agricoltori abbandonassero le campagne.
the president has made so that the farmers leave.sbjv the country
‘The President has made so that the farmers would leave the countryside.’

Some data (I)

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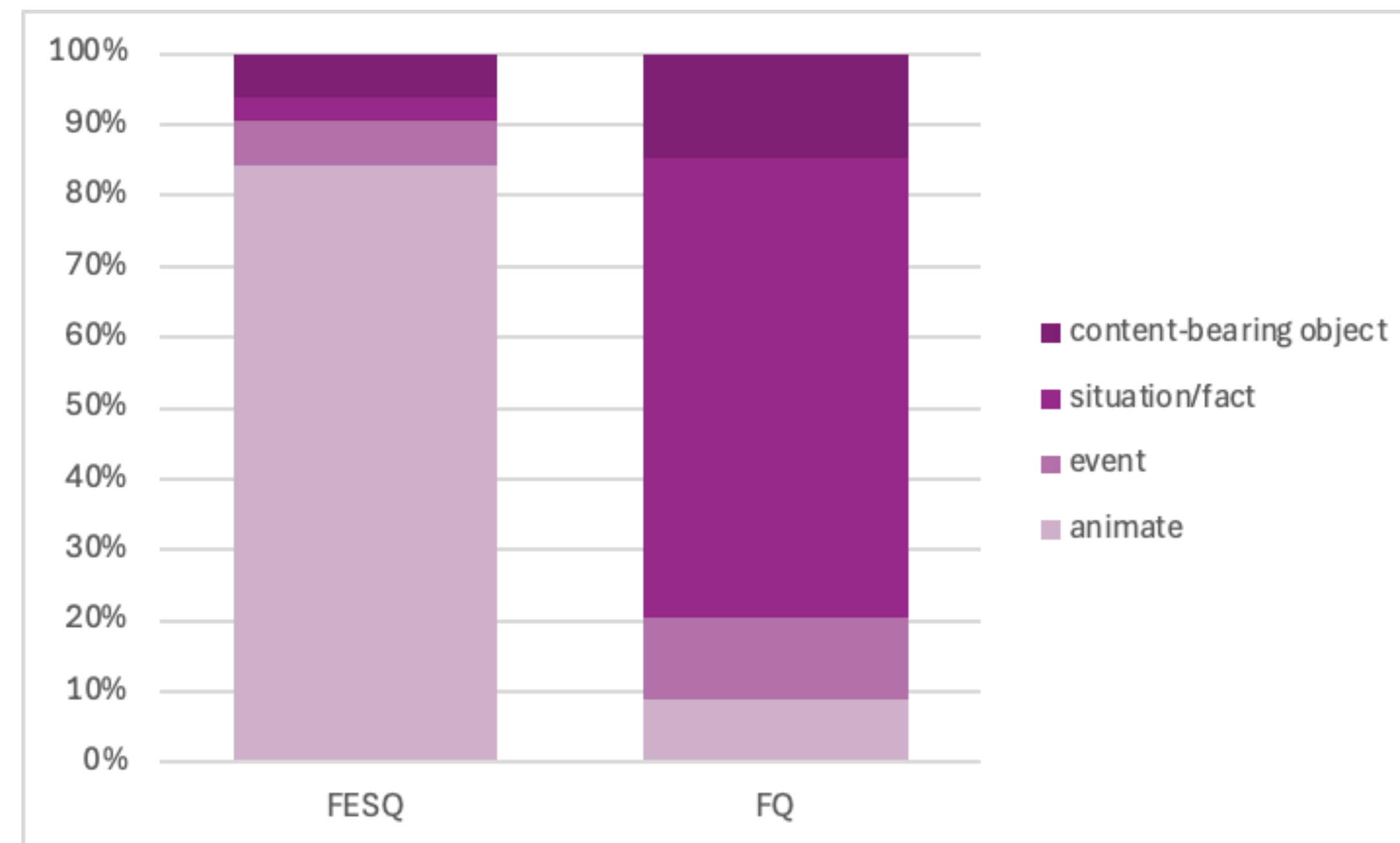
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- With causer subjects, the modal base is generally circumstantial, so the actual world is quantified over, supporting a **culminating reading**.

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- (III) All in all, FQs differ from FIs both syntactically and semantically — as it is, they seem to encode relations in which the causal relation between e_1 and e_2 is a lot *looser*.

The semantic contribution of FQs

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- In sum, *Faire-Infinitive* constructions encode relations which, while often indirect, still mark a higher degree of control of the Causer over both Causee and caused event than their SBJV-FQs counterparts.

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- The condition in (13c) accounts for the defeasibility of the result; however, it is clear that since the Causer has nonetheless created favourable conditions for the occurrence of the result, *leave* is more likely an alternative than *not-leave*.

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Causal modelling allows us to (i) represent all the different aspects of FQs mentioned previously in this talk, which in turn (ii) highlights that FQs encode relations that are conceptually more complex than their FI counterparts.

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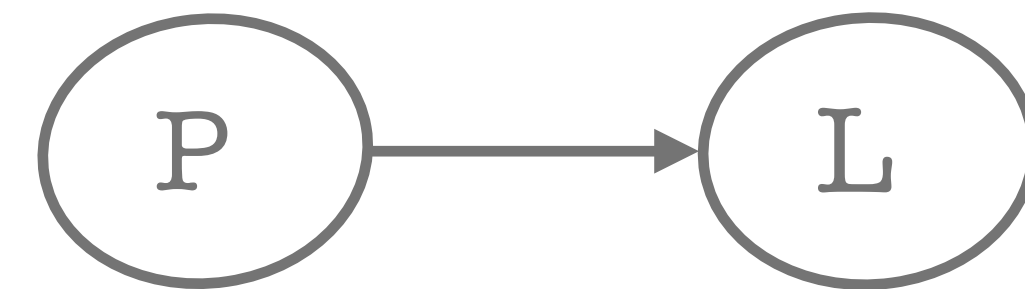
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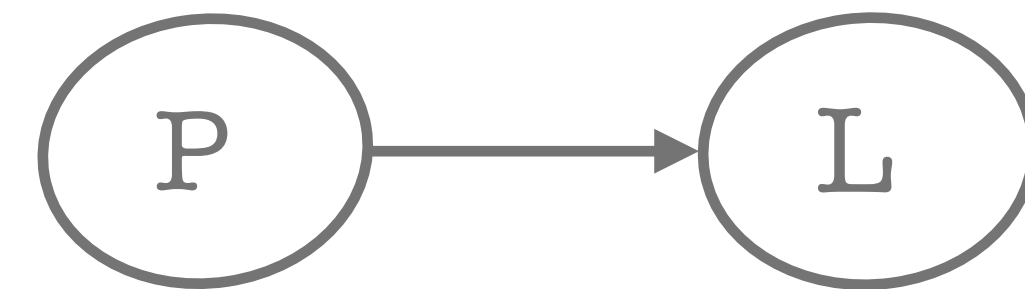
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P	L
1	1
0	0

**A tentative model for
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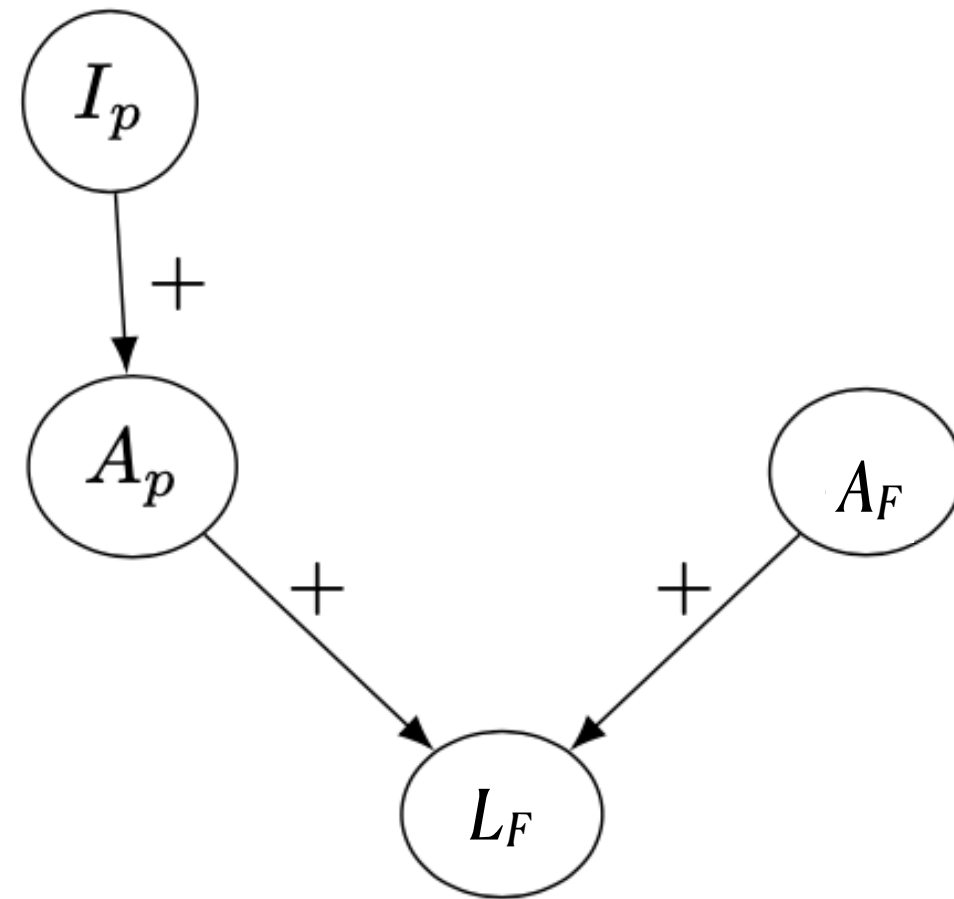
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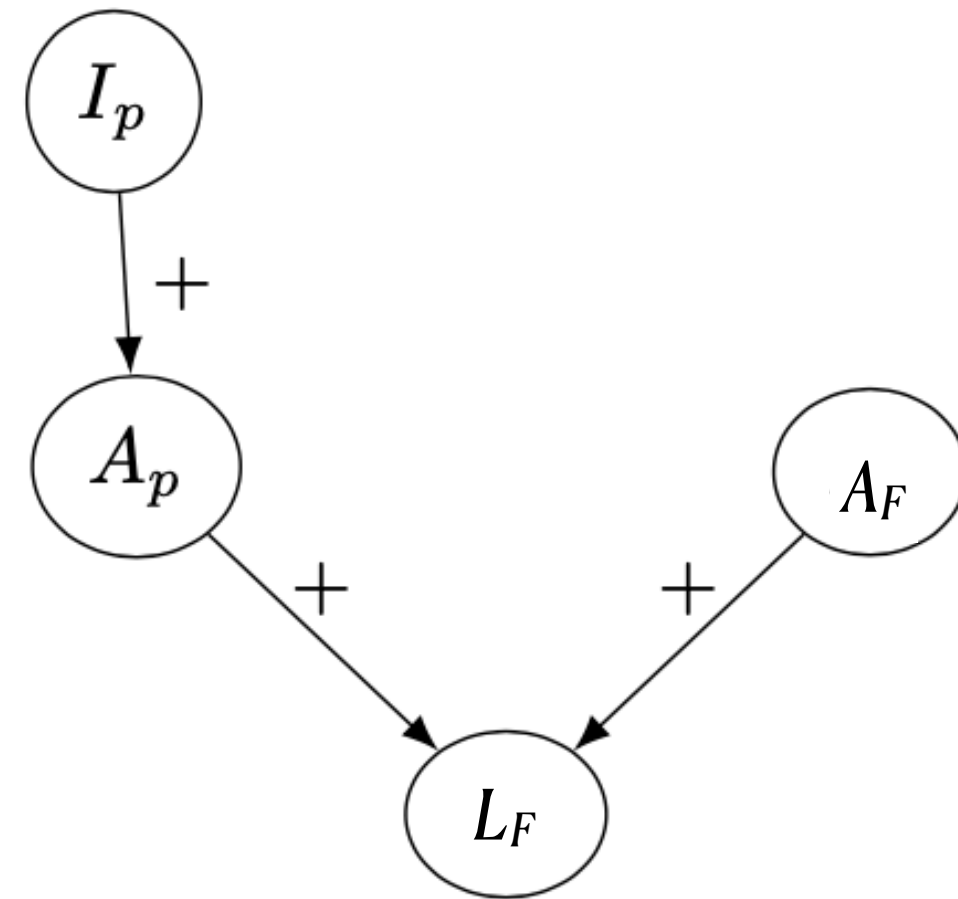
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The model on the left allows us to represent:

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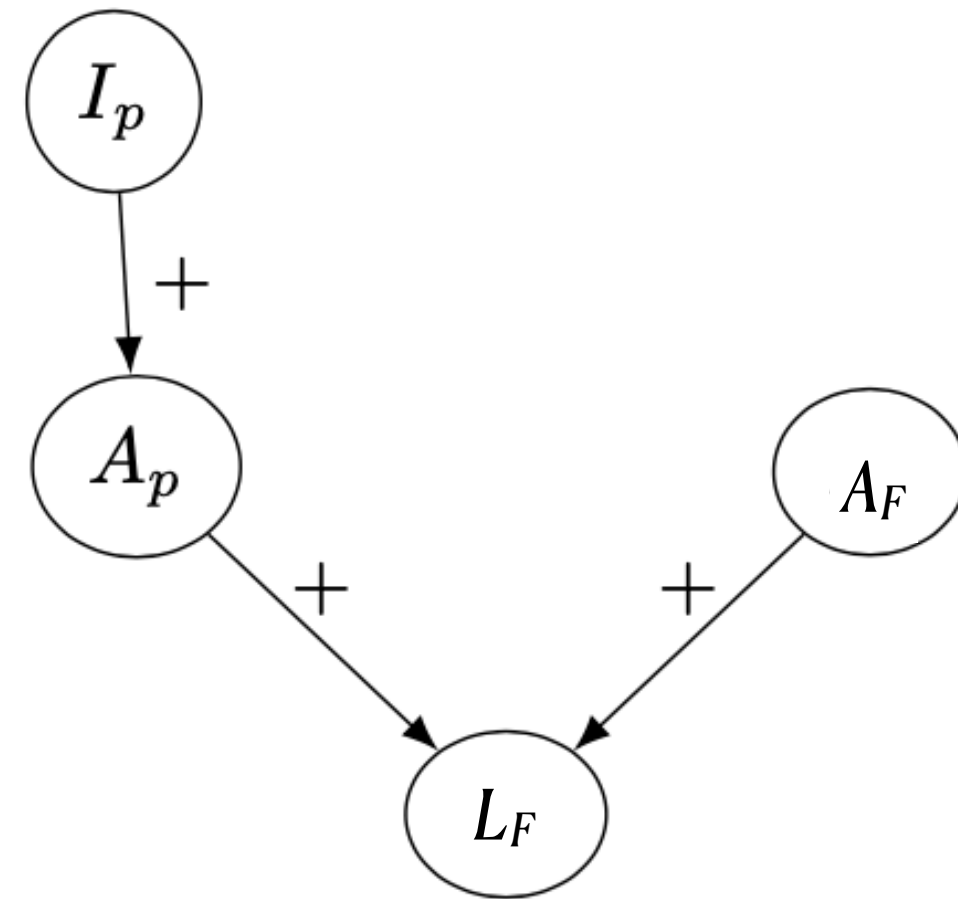
A_p = whether President acts towards e_2

A_f = whether farmers act toward e_2

L_f = whether farmers leave

A_p	A_f	L_f
1	1	1
1	0	0
0	1	0
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A tentative model for *x fait (en sorte) que* + *SBJV*



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(13) Le Président fait en sorte que les paysans partent.

The model on the left allows us to represent:

a) intentionality (through presence of I_p)

I_p = whether President has intention for e_2

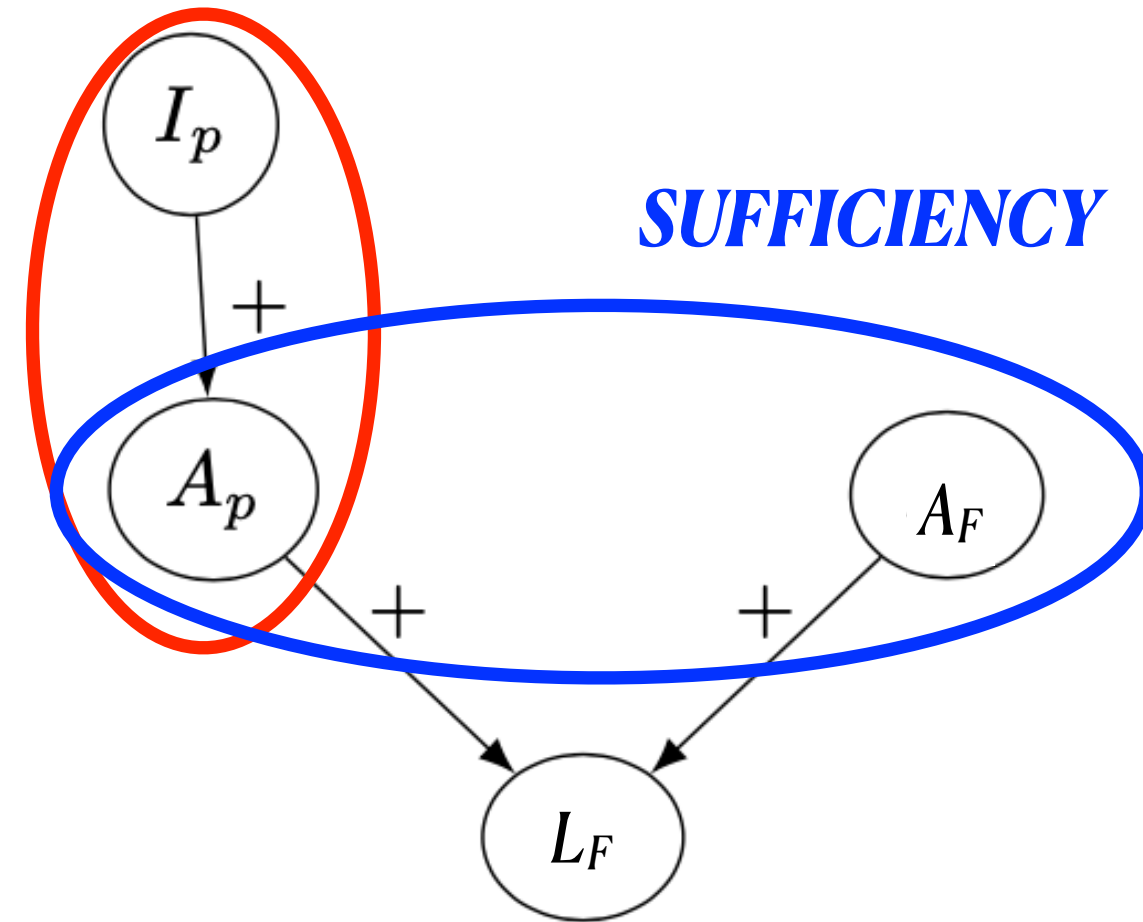
A_p = whether President acts towards e_2

A_F = whether farmers act toward e_2

L_F = whether farmers leave

A_p	A_F	L_F
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1	0	0
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**UNDERSPECIFIED FAIRE/
NECESSITY**



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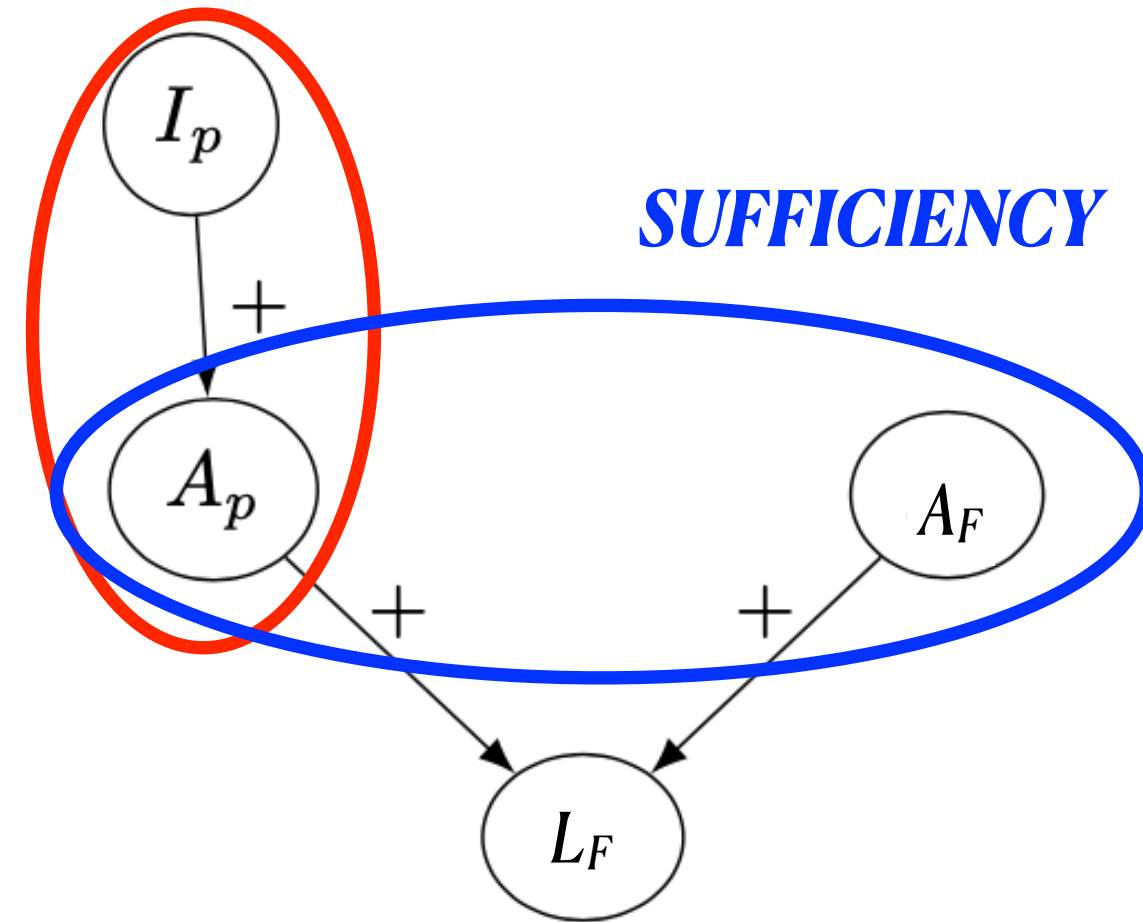
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SBJV-FQs are conceptually complex as they require the combination of causal factors

Some answers, more questions

Some remarks (I)

Conclusions leading to open questions

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- **However, ...**

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(28) Le professeur **a fait** danser les enfants.
‘The teacher made the children sing.’

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‘The teacher made so that the children would sing.’

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- Therefore, SBJV-FQs have an ‘**evidential flavour**’.

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- Testing for SBJV-FQs: testing out the evidential hypothesis with Fabienne Martin (namely, do SBJV-FQs refer to distinct causal situations or can they refer to the same situation from distinct perspectives?)
- Looking at the rest of the Romance family: most of the other Romance languages only allow for SBJV-FQs, either bare or not (IND-FQs generally ruled out, see Grano 2024) — do other Romance SBJV-FQs pattern with French ones?

Thank you!