

## An Extra-Strong NPI? *Pantoute* in Québec French

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The goal of this paper is to identify a pattern of negative polarity item (NPI) distribution that, to our knowledge, has yet to be discussed in the literature. In particular, we will lay out the basic distribution of the adverb *pantoute* (pronounced /pā.tut/), which can be roughly translated as English *at all*, in the variety of French spoken in the province of Québec. Although, in this paper, we will exemplify the relevant empirical pattern with naturally occurring examples from a Québécois literary corpus<sup>1</sup> and native speaker judgements, it is our understanding (based on consultation with other speakers) that etymologically related elements in other dialects of French (ex. European French *du tout*; Acadian French *en tout* etc.) show a similar pattern<sup>2</sup>.

We can first observe that, like English *at all*, *pantoute* cannot appear in an assertion in which it is not c-commanded by an appropriate negative operator. One such appropriate operator is the sentential negation marker *pas* ‘not’. Thus, based on the contrast in examples such as (1) and (2), we can conclude that *pantoute* is some kind of negative polarity item.

- (1) a. \*C’est vrai *pantoute*.  
It is true PANTOUTE.  
‘\*It’s true at all.’  
b. \*I veut m’écouter *pantoute*!  
He wants me listen PANTOUTE  
‘\*He wants to listen to me at all.’  
c. \*T’es grosse *pantoute*.  
You’re fat PANTOUTE  
‘\*You’re fat at all.’  
d. \*Y ont les mêmes paroles que par icitte *pantoute*.  
They have the same words than around here PANTOUTE  
‘\*They have the same words as around here at all.’
- (2) a. C’est **pas** vrai *pantoute*.  
It is not true PANTOUTE  
‘It’s not true at all.’  
*Safarir: le magazine de l’humour illustré*. (1987) (p.46)

<sup>1</sup>The literary examples presented in this paper come from the *fichier lexical* of the *Trésor de la langue française au Québec* (<http://www.tlfg.ulaval.ca/>).

<sup>2</sup>Luis Alonso Orvalle (p.c.) also reports that the Spanish expression *en absoluto* patterns like *pantoute/du tout* in French.

- b. I veut **pas** m'écouter *pantoute*!  
He wants not refl listen PANTOUTE  
'He doesn't want to listen to me at all.'  
Rodolphe Girard. (1904). *Marie Calumet*. La bibliothèque électronique du Québec. (p.120)
- c. T'es **pas** grosse *pantoute*...t'es juste...disons, en chair.  
You're not fat PANTOUTE...you're just...say, in flesh  
'You're not fat at all...you're just...shall we say, healthy.'  
Michel Tremblay. (1974) *Bonjour, là, bonjour*. Leméac. (p.86)
- d. Pis les Français, des fois y te parlent pis tu sais pas ce  
And the French, some times they you speak and you know not what  
qu'y veulent dire, y ont **pas** les mêmes paroles que par icitte  
that they want say, they have not the same words that around here  
*pantoute*.  
PANTOUTE  
'And the French, sometimes they talk to you and you don't know what they're trying to say, they don't have the same words as around here at all.'  
Richard Levesque. (1979). *Le vieux du Bas-de-fleuve*. Castelriand inc. (p.24)

In addition to sentential negation, *pantoute* is licensed by some other negative operators. In particular, *pantoute* (like *at all*) can be licensed by *p(l)us* 'no more' (3), *rien* 'nothing' (4), and *sans* 'without' (5).

- (3) a. Mais le jeu est **pus** *pantoute* comme y était.  
But the game is no more PANTOUTE as it was  
'But the game is no longer at all as it was.'  
Richard Levesque. (1979). *Le vieux du Bas-de-fleuve*. Castelriand inc. (p. 30)
- b. Mais, une fois que t'es mariée, ma fille, y'a **plus** de baisage  
But, one time that you're married, my girl, there is no more of screwing  
*pantoute*.  
PANTOUTE  
'But, once you're married, my girl, there's no more screwing at all.'  
Mailhot, Laurent and Doris-Michel Monpetit. (1980). *Monologues québécois, 1890-1980*. (p.192)
- c. Pis quand y sont **pus** bons *pantoute*, y font comme les  
Then when they are no more good PANTOUTE, they make like the  
joueurs de hockey qui se pognent des jobs de dépisteurs: y deviennent  
players of hocky that refl get some jobs of depisteurs: they become  
fonctionnaires.  
civil servants  
'Then when they aren't good at all anymore, they act like hockey players and get themselves 'depisteur' jobs: they become civil servants.'  
Richard Levesque. (1979). *Le vieux du Bas-de-fleuve*. Castelriand inc. (p.39)
- (4) a. Ensemble, on peut tout faire, séparés on est **rien** *pantoute*.  
Together, we can everything do, separated we are nothing PANTOUTE  
'Together, we can do everything, separated we are nothing at all.'

- Janette Bertrand. (2007) *Le bien des miens*. Libre Expression. (p.131)
- b. Aie! j'y pense, je t'ai **rien** offert *pantoute*...  
 Aie! I of-it think, I you have nothing offered PANTOUTE  
*Aie! Now that I think about it, I gave you nothing at all...* “  
 Richard Levesque. (1979). *Le vieux du Bas-de-fleuve*. Castelriand inc. (p.25)
- c. Si l'enfer ressemble au club où j'travaille, ça m'fait **rien** *pantoute* d'aller  
 passer mon éternité là, moé!  
*If Hell resembles the club where I work, it doesn't bother me at all to spend my  
 eternity there!*  
 Michel Tremblay. (1972). *Les belles-soeurs*. Leméac. (p.15)
- (5) I'mettaient leurs bateaux à l'eau **sans** y toucher *pantoute*.  
 they put their boats at the water without them touching PANTOUTE  
*'They put their boats in the water without touching them at all.'*  
 Émile Seutin. (1968). *Description grammaticale du parler de l'Île aux Coudes*.  
 (p.131)

However, this is where the similarities between *at all* and *pantoute* end. In particular, English *at all* can be licensed by expressions denoting downward entailing functions that are not anti-additive<sup>3</sup>, but, as shown in (6), *pantoute* cannot be licensed by these elements. In other words, while *at all* is what is often called a *weak* NPI, *pantoute* appears to be a *strong* NPI, i.e. an expression that is licensed only by anti-additive denoting expressions (cf. Zwarts (1998)).

- (6) a. \*T'es-tu allé à l'école *pantoute* aujourd'hui?  
 You were Q gone to the school PANTOUTE today  
**Compare English:** *'Did you go to school at all today?'*
- b. \*Si t'allais à l'école *pantoute* aujourd'hui, je serais content.  
 If you went to the school PANTOUTE today, I would be happy.  
**Compare English:** *'If you went to school at all today, I would be happy.'*
- c. \*Peu d'enfants sont allés à l'école *pantoute* aujourd'hui.  
 Few of students were gone to the school PANTOUTE today  
**Compare English:** *'Few students went to school at all today.'*

However, *pantoute* shows a distribution that differs from that of classic examples of strong NPIs. To see the difference, consider the case of the expression *de la journée* 'all day' (lit. 'of the day') in European and Québec French. As discussed in Corblin, Déprez, de Swart, and Tovenà (2004), *de la journée* is impossible in affirmative sentences and underneath weak NPI licensors (7).

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- (i) A function *F* is **downward entailing** iff for all properties *A*, *B*, if  $A \subseteq B$ , then  $F(B)$  implies  $F(A)$ .
- (ii) A function *F* is **anti-additive** iff *F* is downward entailing and, for all properties *A*, *B*,  $F(A) \wedge F(B)$  implies  $F(A \vee B)$ .

- (7) a. \*J'ai mangé **de la** journée.  
 I have eaten of the day  
 '\*I have eaten all day.'
- b. \*Est-ce que Jean est venu **de la** journée?  
 Q that Jean is come of the day  
 '\*Did John come all day?'

However, *de la journée* is licensed by the full range of anti-additive quantifiers, as shown in (8).

- (8) a. J'ai **pas** mangé *de la journée*.  
 I have not eaten of the day  
 'I haven't eaten all day'
- b. **Personne** a mangé *de la journée*.  
 No one has eaten of the day  
 'No one has eaten all day.'
- c. J'ai **rien** mangé *de la journée*.  
 I have nothing eaten of the day  
 'I haven't eaten anything all day.'
- d. **Aucun** étudiant a mangé *de la journée*.  
 No student has eaten of the day  
 'No student has eaten all day.'
- e. Je suis allé **nullepart** *de la journée*.  
 I was gone nowhere of the day  
 'I went nowhere all day.'

In contrast, although *pantoute* is licensed by some anti-additive quantifiers (*pas* 'not', *p(l)us* 'no more', *rien* 'nothing', and *sans* 'without' cf. (2)-(5)), it is not possible under other anti-additive elements such as *personne* 'no one', *jamais* 'never', *aucun étudiant* 'no student', and *nullepart* 'nowhere', as shown in (9). Thus, *pantoute* is subject to stricter restrictions than other strong NPIs, making it what we might call an *extra-strong* NPI.

- (9) a. \***Personne** est venu *pantoute*.  
 No one is come PANTOUTE  
**Compare English:** 'No one came at all.'
- b. \*J'y suis **jamais** allé *pantoute*.  
 I there am never gone PANTOUTE  
**Compare English:** 'I've never been there at all.'
- c. \***Aucun** étudiant est venu *pantoute*.  
 No student is come PANTOUTE  
**Compare English:** 'No student came at all'.
- d. \*Je suis allé **nullepart** *pantoute* aujourd'hui.  
 I am gone nowhere PANTOUTE today  
**Compare English:** 'I went nowhere at all today.'

We can further observe that the split in the set of anti-additive quantifiers with respect to the licensing of *pantoute* is preserved in negative concord contexts. Like other Romance languages, Québec French is a negative concord language; that is, sentences with multiple

negative quantificational expressions and neutral focus are interpreted as only containing a single semantic negation ((10), cf. Vinet (1998), Corblin and Tovenia (2003), and Martineau and Déprez (2004) (among others) for a description of the Québécois negative concord system).

- (10)    Personne a rien vu.  
           No one has nothing seen.  
           ‘No one saw anything.’

Unlike in the standard dialect, sentential negation (*pas*) participates in the negative concord system in Québec French. Thus, in most sentences with negative quantifiers, a *pas* can be freely added without changing the meaning of the sentence<sup>4</sup>.

- (11)    a.    J’ai rien vu.    ≡ J’ai **pas** rien vu.  
               I have nothing seen.    I have not nothing seen.  
               ‘I didn’t see anything.’  
           b.    Personne est venu.    ≡ **Pas** personne est venu.  
               No one is come    Not no one is come  
               ‘No one came.’  
           c.    Je suis allé nullepart.    ≡ Je suis **pas** allé nullepart.  
               I have gone nowhere    I have not gone nowhere  
               ‘I went nowhere.’

However, the non-expletive nature of Québécois *pas* is revealed through the distribution of *pantoute*: although bare *personne* cannot license *pantoute*, when this element is modified by *pas* (12), the sentence is greatly improved (although it remains less than perfect for some speakers).

- (12)    a.    \*Personne est venu pantoute.  
               No one is come PANTOUTE  
           b.    **Pas** personne est venu pantoute.  
               Not no one is come PANTOUTE  
               ‘No one came at all.’

In summary, we have shown that *pantoute* in Québec French has a distribution that is more

<sup>4</sup>The distribution of *pas* with other negative elements is, however, subject to certain structural restrictions that are not particularly relevant here. For example, *pas* can both c-command an N-word and appear in the scope of an other N-word (i), but it cannot appear in the scope of an N-word without also c-commanding one (ii).

- (i)    a.    Y’est **pas** venu personne.  
               There is not come no one.  
               ‘No one came.’  
           b.    Personne a **pas** rien lu.  
               No one has not nothing read  
               ‘No one read anything.’  
       (ii)    \*Personne est **pas** venu.  
               No one has not come

restricted than both the distribution its English counterpart *at all* and the distribution of other strong NPIs in the language (ex. *de la journée*). The licensing patterns that were discussed are summarized in table 1.

LICENSOR	AT ALL	DE LA JOURNÉE	PANTOUTE
<i>pas/not</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>p(l)us/no more</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>rien/nothing</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>sans/without</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>personne/no one</i>	✓	✓	×
<i>aucun étudiant/no student</i>	✓	✓	×
<i>jamais/never</i>	✓	✓	×
<i>nullepart/nowhere</i>	✓	✓	×
Other downward entailing expressions	✓	×	×

Table 1: The licensing patterns of *at all*, *de la journée*, and *pantoute*.

In the final part of the paper, we highlight some additional features of *pantoute* that a full analysis of this puzzling lexical item must take into account. Although, when it is used in assertions, this element has a very restricted distribution, *pantoute* has additional uses outside assertive contexts that are unusual for a polarity element. For example, as shown in the dialogues in (13) and (14), *pantoute* can be used as an answer to a yes-no question. Note that, although bare *pantoute* is acceptable in these environments, the expression *pas pantoute* ‘not PANTOUTE’ is also possible.

- (13) a. **-Père:** Veux-tu me sacrer patience toé, c’est tu une honte d’aller voir un psychiatre?  
**-Father:** *Leave me alone, will you, is it shameful to go see a psychiatrist?*  
b. **-Maurice:** *Pantoute.*  
**-Maurice:** *Not at all.*  
Barette. (1973). *Papa*. (p.57)
- (14) Par exemple y disaient: “As-tu peur d’un mort, toi, Joseph?” J’étais: “*Pantoute*, moi j’ai pas peur des morts. Les morts ça n’revient pas ça.”  
*For example they said: “Are you afraid of a dead man, Joseph?” I responded: “Not at all, me I’m not afraid of the dead. The dead don’t come back.”*  
Brodeur, René and Robert Choquette. (1979). *Villages et visages de l’Ontario français*. Office de la télécommunication éducative de l’Ontario. Éditions Fides.

Finally, *pantoute* can be used as an exclamation to indicate that the speaker is in disagreement with their interlocutor, as shown in (15) and (16).

- (15) a. **-Père:** Moé, j’ai jamais été capable de parler, ni avant, ni pendant, ni après!  
**-Father:** *I have never been able to talk, neither before, nor during, nor after!*  
b. **-Mère:** C’est normal ça Ernest!  
**-Mother:** *That’s normal Ernest!*  
c. **-Père:** *Pantoute!*  
**-Father:** *Not at all!*

Barette. (1973). *Papa*. (p.88)

- (16) a. **-M. Ménard:** J'arrive!...J'ai gagné.  
**Mr. Ménard:** 'I'm coming!...I won.'  
 b. **-M. Tremblay:** Pantoute! Ça fait un bon bout d'temps qu'j'ai feni.  
**-Mr. Tremblay:** 'Not at all! It has been some time since I've finished.'  
 Marie Laberge. (1981). *Ils étaient venus pour...* VLB éditeur. (p.71)

We therefore conclude that *pantoute* can also be licensed by certain discourse configurations in addition to a very restricted set of negative quantificational elements. However, we leave a full analysis of this element's semantics and its licensing patterns to future research.

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