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Craindre ("fear") and expletive negation in diachrony

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This paper investigates the distribution of expletive negation in the complement clause of *craindre* ("fear") in French. Building on Anand & Hacquard's (2013) proposal that fear verbs are hybrid attitude verbs, featuring both a doxastic and a (dis)preferential component, this paper argues that these two components are conveyed by different layers of meaning (in line with Giannakidou & Mari (2020)). More precisely, I argue that, in actual discourse context, *craindre* may receive two main interpretations: a volitive (dispreference-related) or a psychological (belief-related) interpretation, depending on whether the verb *asserts* or *presupposes* dispreference. Based on a diachronic corpus study of the distribution of expletive negation, I show that expletive negation, in the earliest stages of French, places semantic restrictions on the main verb, which are met when the interpretation of *craindre* is volitive.

Keywords: expletive negation, modality, mood, diachronic semantics, French

1.   Introduction

Expletive negation is the form-meaning mismatch whereby a negation marker (*ne* in French) is not interpreted as such in certain contexts, receiving an 'expletive', or semantically colorless, reading. Previous approaches to the issue of expletive negation have revolved around the idea that occurrences of expletive negation are restricted to so-called *adversative* contexts: contexts which share an abstract negative semantic property. One of the most sophisticated proposals within this perspective are those of Muller (1991) and van der Wurff (1999). These authors argue that the set of adversative predicates that trigger expletive negation are negative insofar as they can be paraphrased by a corresponding 'positive' verb embedding a negated proposition (e.g., fear that *p* = wish that not *p*). In the spirit of Jespersen's

(1917) seminal proposal that expletive negation is in fact a 'paratactic' negation in Latin, introducing its own independent clause, it has later been argued that the semantic colorlessness of expletive negation results from its redundancy with the main verb's 'silent' lexical negation. For instance, Parry (2013) defends the idea that paratactic negation could have historically lost its inherent semantic negativity as a consequence of tighter syntactic subordination to the main verb, and thus increased redundancy. Empirical studies have supported this hypothesis, showing that expletive negation in diverse Indo-European languages such as Greek, Albanian or Latin originates from the negation marker dedicated to the construction of prohibitive clauses, see Mari & Tahar (2020). Such studies allow for the stipulation that prohibitive negation in those languages underwent the following developmental pathway: May it not be true! > I fear: may it not be true! > I fear that it may (not) be true. The present paper builds on the claim that *ne* was a Latin speech-act negator that developed into an expletive negation (in line with Ageno (1955); Lakoff (1968); Chatzopoulou (2012); Parry (2013), and Mari & Tahar (2020)).

The goal of this paper is to address one of the important limitations of the adversative hypothesis. As the adversative hypothesis takes the expletive negation marker to somehow spell out the main verb's lexical negation, it cannot account for the syntactic and semantic factors underpinning the presence (rather than absence) of expletive negation in the predicate's subordinate clause. The present paper aims to address this issue by identifying differences in the meaning of *craindre* with and without expletive negation in its complement clause. Our starting point is a distributional puzzle often noticed in the French literature (see Gaatone (1971); Larrivée (1994)): the anti-licensing of expletive negation in the complement clause of the negated form of *craindre*.

(1) a. *Je crains   que vous **ne** soyez   en retard encore une fois.*
         I fear.1SG.IND that you   EN be.2SG.SBJV in late   again one time
         "I'm afraid you are late once again."

     b. *Je ne   crains   pas que vous **(#ne)** soyez   en retard encore*
         I NEG fear.1SG.IND not that you   EN   be.2SG.SBJV in late   again
         une fois.
         one time
         "I'm not afraid you are late once again."

As observed by Larrivée (1994), when *craindre* is under negation as in (1–b), it conveys the subject's negative belief with respect to the possibility that *p*. In other words, in Example (1–b), the speaker expresses disbelief with respect to the possibility that the addressee will ever be late again. Importantly, a subtle ambiguity can show up in the meaning of *craindre* under negation: it may as well express the subject's dispreference denial; see the contrast between (2) and (3).

(2) (A hypocondriac patient goes to see the doctor because he believes that he suffers from the polio virus. The doctor finds out that the patient is perfectly healthy.)

    a. *Je ne crains   pas que vous (#n') ayez   la polio.*
        I NEG fear.1SG.IND not that you EN have.2SG.SBJV the polio
        "I don't fear that you have the polio virus (you are in good shape)."

(3) (A banker, suspected of fraud, is ordered to show his account books, which he does.)

    a. *Je ne crains   pas que vous **ne** voyiez   mes livres*
        I NEG fear.1SG.IND not that you EN see.2PL.SBJV my books
        de comptes.
        of accounts
        "I don't fear that you see my books of accounts (I've got nothing to hide)."

In (2), *craindre* under negation has the same meaning it has in (1–b) – that of expressing disbelief – and anti-licenses expletive negation. In (3), however, *craindre* under negation expresses the banker's denial that he has a dispreference for his books of accounts to be openly checked. The possibility that his books of accounts will be openly checked is nonetheless very likely, if not factual.

It's only when *craindre* under negation expresses dispreference denial that it can license expletive negation. The contrast between (2) and (3) could be taken to indicate that expletive negation requires the main predicate to express the subject's positive belief with respect to the possibility that *p* in order to be licensed, as argued by authors like Espinal (2007) and Yoon (2011). This paper argues that the contrasted behavior of expletive negation in the complement clause of *craindre* under negation is also the manifestation of an ambiguity rooted in the verb's semantics.

Adopting Anand & Hacquard's (2013) proposal that fear verbs are hybrid attitude predicates, featuring both a doxastic and a (dis)preferential component, the core meaning of *craindre* is as given in (4).

(4) *a* craint que *p*:
    a. **Doxastic layer:** there is a *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*
    b. **Dispreference layer:** for every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*), not-*p* is true in *w'*

The doxastic component of *craindre* is captured as existential quantification over *p* belief worlds. This doxastic layer expresses belief with respect to the truth of the proposition *p*, as well as uncertainty (see Giannakidou (1999); Giannakidou & Mari (2017)). For simplicity, the semantics given above deals with dispreference as universal quantification over not-*p* desire worlds.

In the line of reasoning of authors like Farkas (1985); Giannakidou & Mari (2016), and Giannakidou & Mari (2020), I will argue that these modal components are conveyed at two distinct levels of interpretation. More specifically, I will argue

that *craindre* receives two main types of interpretations depending on whether it conveys dispreference at the level of the *assertion* or rather at the level of the *presupposition* (Paul Portner p.c). The first type of interpretation, labelled 'psychological', foregrounds the doxastic component of the verb, as in (5). The preferential layer is thus backgrounded.

> (5) (Calling out the neighbour for information)
> *Je crains   qu' il soit   arrivé   quelque chose à mon chien.*
> I fear.1SG-IND that it be.3SG.SBJV happened some   thing to my   dog
> "I fear that something happened to my dog (I haven't seen it this morning)."

Psychological *craindre* asserts the speaker's uncertainty. It raises the question of the truth or falsity of the prejacent p and thus indirectly constitutes a request for information. When psychological *craindre* is under negation, as in (2), repeated below as (6), it asserts disbelief, presupposes dispreference, and does not felicitously trigger expletive negation.

> (6) *Je ne crains   pas que vous (#n') ayez   la polio.*
> I NEG fear.1SG.IND not that you   EN   have.2SG.SBJV the polio
> "I don't fear that you have the polio virus (you are in good shape)."

> (7) *a* ne craint pas que *p*:
> a. **Disbelief assertion:** there is no *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*
> b. **Dispreference presupposition:** for every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*), not-*p* is true in *w'*

Contrary to the psychological interpretation of *craindre*, the second type of interpretation of *craindre*, labelled 'volitive', foregrounds the dispreference component of the verb. It asserts the speaker's dispreference with respect to a possible situation in the future course of events, see (8), while the doxastic layer is backgrounded.

> (8) (Up on a hill, to a swimmer entering a zone full of jellyfishes)
> A: *Attention! Je crains   que vous **ne** vous fassiez   piquer par*
>   Watch-out! I   fear.1SG.IND that you   EN you do.2PL.SBJV sting by
>   *une méduse!*
>   a   jellyfish
>   "Watch out! I fear you will get stung by a jellyfish!"

The assertion is not meant to be challenged by the addressee on epistemic grounds, (for instance, with a request for the justification of the belief) but rather to be complied with or rejected. The addressee of (8) may (or not) comply with the indirect command to change his trajectory and go back to the shore in a hurry. When volitive *craindre* is under negation, it denies dispreference (i.e., is a case of 'illocutionary denegation' à la Searle (1969)), presupposes belief, as in (3), repeated below, and may felicitously trigger expletive negation.

(9) *Je ne   crains   pas que vous **ne** voyiez   mes livres*
     I   NEG fear.1SG.IND not that you   EN see.2PL.SBJV my   books
     de comptes.
     of   accounts
     "I don't fear that you see my account books (I've got nothing to hide)."

(10) *a* ne craint pas que … **ne** *p*:
      a. **Dispreference denial:** ~ASSERT(every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*) is such that not-*p*
          is true in *w'*)
      b. **Doxastic presupposition:** there is a *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*

In this paper, I explore the hypothesis that expletive negation is first and foremost sensitive to the volitive reading of *craindre*. To this end, a diachronic corpus study has been conducted, which takes a closer look at the diverse interpretations of the verb in actual discourse context. This corpus study aims to examine the influence of expletive negation on the verb's interpretation. Section 2 describes three possible uses of *craindre* and draws hypothetical correlations between the presence or absence of expletive negation in the complement and the pragmatic purpose of the assertion of *craindre*. Section 3 presents the results of the study, where these correlations are examined in a diachronic perspective. Section 4 presents an analysis for the distribution of expletive negation with the three uses of *craindre*. Section 5 concludes.

2. Psychological and volitive readings of *craindre*

This section provides a description of the different uses that *craindre* may receive in actual discourse context (as advocated by Yanovich (2013) among others), based on a fine-grained semantic analysis of examples from the Frantext corpus (to be introduced in the next section). In this section, I describe the prototypical uses that *craindre* may receive, in the presence or absence of expletive negation in its complement. I argue that *craindre* mostly receives a psychological reading with the mere complementation form *que*, as evidenced by the fact that the assertion of *craindre que* in context serves an inquisitive (belief-related) purpose. When *craindre* takes the complementation form *que … ne*, it mostly receives a volitive reading, as evidenced by the fact that its assertion may either serve an admonitive or reprehensive purpose (dispreference-related purposes). Note that the three uses singled out (inquisitive, admonitive and reprehensive) do not exhaust all possible uses of *craindre*. These are rather prototypical correlations observed between the range of uses that *craindre* may receive and its complementation forms.

2.1   Inquisitive *craindre que*

Practical goal

The assertion of *craindre que* has an inquisitive goal when used to make a conjecture, as in Example (11), (12). The speaker conjectures that *p* if s/he commits herself to the belief that *p* in a way which is liable to error.

(11)   *Moy (sotte) qu'ay-je à craindre ? … D'où me vient ceste crainte? Je crain qu'amour m'en soit la cause.*
       "Me (fool) what do I have to fear? Where does this fear come from? I fear that love may cause me this fear."   (Louis Des Masures, David Triomphant, 1566)

(12)   (Eugène confesses that he suspects Alix of cheating on him).
       Mon amour est douteuse : et je crains que cette mignarde d'aller autre part se hasarde.
       "My love is suspicious as I fear that this cute thing is seeing someone else."
                                                              (Etienne Jodelle, L'Eugène, 1573)

Presupposition projection under negation

Inquisitive *craindre que* under negation foregrounds disbelief, expressing that the attitude holder doesn't take the proposition *p* to be possible. In (13), the sentence expresses that the attitude anchor doesn't believe that the sky will fall. In (14), the sentence expresses that the attitude anchor doesn't believe that her parents will scold her. In both sentences, the attitude anchor's dispreference for *p* is conventionally implied.

(13)   *Oh! Je ne crains pas que le ciel me tombe sur la tête!*
       "Oh! I don't fear that somehow the sky would fall!"
                                            (Jules Vernes, Voyage au centre de la Terre, 1864)

(14)   *Elle ne craignait pas que nous la grondions (car nous ne la grondions jamais).*
       "She didn't fear that we would scold her (because we never did)."
                                                          (Philippe Forest, Toute la nuit, 1999)

I thus observe that superordinate negation here targets the doxastic layer of the verbs' semantics and leaves the dispreference component untouched, as represented in (15).

(15)   *a* ne craint pas que *p*:
       a.   **Disbelief assertion:** there is no *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*
       b.   **Dispreference presupposition:** for every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*), not-*p* is true in *w'*

Mood selection behavior

With the complementation form *que, craindre* patterns with *espérer* ("hope"), as it could select for the indicative mood from 1100 to 1650 (27 occurrences in total occurred in the corpus). Note that this is not uncommon on a cross-linguistic perspective, since, as observed by Farkas (1992), *fear* and *hope* obligatorily select for the indicative in Romanian.

> (16) *Je crains que c'est.*IND *un traître.*
> "I fear that he's a traitor."   (Michel de Montaigne, Les Essais, 1582)

> (17) *Si tu ne sais pas mieux donner remède à mon mal, j'ay grand peur que j'en seray.*
> IND *longuement malade.*
> "If you cannot cure my disease, I fear that I will remain sick for a long time."
>   (Honoré d'Urfé, L'Astrée, 1612)

The ability of *craindre que* to select for the indicative at a certain period of the history of French is revelatory of the fact that its assertion conveys the belief component of the verbs' semantics. It has indeed been argued that the belief layer of attitude verbs is responsible for indicative mood choice (see also Farkas (1985); Giorgi & Pianesi (1997); Giannakidou (1998); Villalta (2008); Portner & Rubinstein (2012); Anand & Hacquard (2013)).

2.2   Admonitive *craindre que … ne*

Practical goal

The assertion of *craindre que … ne* has an admonitive goal when used to express a warning, see (18), (19). When a sentence with *craindre* in it has a flavor of warning, the speaker expresses a public dispreference for the truth of *p* in the future course of events (implying the possibility of taking some precautions to avoid this possible future situation, see Lichtenberk (1995)). The addressee may thus draw the inference that s/he's requested to bring about the falsity of *p*. Note that, in Old French, admonitive uses of *craindre* often arise in the context of supplication for the intervention of an absent (and divine) addressee, to keep the speaker safe from danger, as in (18).

> (18) (The Lord begs the Virgin to help him against the Devil's temptations)
> *LE SEIGNEUR. Se vous ne m'aidiez sanz attente, je crain que je **n'**y soie atains;*
> *car je suis seur et certains, Vierge, que il me suit et gaite.*
> "THE LORD. If you don't help me immediately, I fear that I'll get caught;
> because I'm absolutely certain, Virgin, that he's watching out for me."
>   (Anonymous, Miracle de l'enfant donné au diable, 1339)

(19)   (The speaker is dying)
    *Hâte-toi, mon Georges, hâte-toi, je crains que tu **n'**arrives trop tard.*
    "Hurry on, my Georges, hurry on, I fear that you will be late."
                        (Léon Bloy, Le désespéré, 1886)

Presupposition projection

In the Frantext corpus, no occurrence was found of expletive *ne* in the complement of *craindre* under negation, except for one occurrence, given in (20).

(20)   (Phillis denies that she doesn't want Alexis to join her, Diane and Astrée, but makes it clear that she doesn't want Astrée to grow too close to Alexis)
    *Je ne crains pas que nous **ne** l'emmenions [Alexis] …. Mais je voy desja … que ceste Astrée nous quittera pour ceste nouvelle venue.*
    "I do not fear that we take Alexis with us …. However, I can foresee … that our Astrée will leave us for this newly arrived Alexis."
                        (Honoré d'Urfé, L'Astrée, 1612)

Sentence (20) conveys that Phillis denies having a dispreference for Alexis to come with her, Diane and Astrée. When *craindre* under negation selects for a complement with expletive negation, it thus denies the subject's dispreference for *p*, while presupposing the subject's positive belief with respect to the likelihood of *p*, as represented in (21).

(21)   *a* ne craint pas que … **ne** *p*
    a. **Dispreference denial:** ~ASSERT(every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*) is such that not-*p* is true in *w'*)
    b. **Doxastic presupposition:** there is a *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*

Note that the scarcity of sentences where *craindre* under negation triggers expletive negation in the Frantext corpus can be explained by the fact that the most natural use of *craindre* under negation is to assert disbelief.

Mood selection behavior

In French, expletive negation is, at least in attitudinal context, always correlated to the subjunctive mood. The sensitivity of expletive negation to the subjunctive mood is illustrated below with the verb *suspecter* ("suspect"), which allows for expletive negation on the one hand and for mood shift on the other, but not for expletive negation along with the indicative mood, see (22b).

(22)   a. *Ils suspectent que Jean **ne** soit.*SBJV *le meurtrier.*
       "They suspect that Jean is the murderer."
    b. *Ils suspectent que Jean (#**n'**) est.*IND *le meurtrier.*
       "They suspect that Jean is the murderer."

The sensitivity of expletive negation to the subjunctive mood highlights the fact that its presence in the complement of *craindre* foregrounds the verb's dispreference layer. Indeed, preferential semantics have been argued to license the subjunctive (see also Farkas (1985); Giorgi & Pianesi (1997); Villalta (2008); Portner & Rubinstein (2012); Anand & Hacquard (2013)).

2.3 Reprehensive *craindre que … ne*

Practical goal
Craindre que … ne can also be used with a more specific, reprehensive goal when used to express a reproach, as in (23), (24), or an apology, and thus to express a counterfactual negative preference for the prejacent *p*.

(23) (Martial reproaches his brother with being lazy)
  *Ma mère avait raison … je crains que tu **n'**aies du vice …*
  "My mother was right … I'm afraid you are vicious."
                          (Eugène Sue, Les mystères de Paris, 1843)

(24) (Emile seeks to humiliate Constantin Galuchet)
  *Je crains que vous **n'**ayez fait trop boire M. Constant Galuchet. Voyez donc comme il a les yeux rouges et le regard fixe!*
  "I'm afraid you pushed M. Constantin Galuchet to overdrink. Look how red and vacant-eyed he is!"   (Sand, George, Le péché de M. Antoine, 1845)

Compatibility with the speaker's knowledge that p
The reprehensive use of *craindre* presupposes strong belief. This use is accessible when the uncertainty presupposition encoded by *craindre* is violated and the speaker knows that the prejacent is true, unlike prototypical uses of *craindre* (see also Anand & Hacquard (2013)).

(25) It's raining.
  a. *Je crains qu'il **ne** pleuve.* ("I'm afraid it's raining.")
  b. #*Je crains qu'il pleuve.* ("I fear that it's raining.")

3. Corpus

The Frantext corpus covers periods corresponding to (Late) Old French (1100–1300), Middle French (1300–1550), Preclassical French (1550–1650), Classical French (1650–1800) and Modern French (1800–1950). The number of literary texts accessible for each period of the Frantext corpus are not homogeneous, as most ancient texts are scarcer than modern day texts. More concretely, the corpus has 28 texts from the 12th century, 30 texts from the 13th century, 115 texts from

the 14th century, 160 texts from the 15th century, 188 from the 16th century, 633 from the 17th century, 701 from the 18th century and 1150 from the 19th century. Occurrences of *craindre* with 1st person singular subject and finite complementation were retrieved within their larger context (700 words) for each period of the corpus. These sentences were first classified with respect to their complementation type (mere *que* vs. *que … ne*). They were then manually annotated by the author as either belonging to the category of assertions of *craindre* with an inquisitive, admonitive or reprehensive goal.

Table 1. Interpretations of *craindre* with the mere complementizer *que*

Period	1st person uses	Inquisitive	Admonitive	Reprehensive	Number of words
Old Fr.	6 (35%)	5	0	1	3 388 302
Middle Fr.	2 (11%)	2	0	0	9 776 478
Preclassical Fr.	62 (34%)	44	14	4	18 994 976
Classical Fr.	14 (4%)	11	3	0	49 820 596
Modern Fr.	16 (4%)	10	3	3	76 605 469

Table 2. Interpretations of *craindre* with *que …. ne*

Period	1st person uses	Inquisitive	Admonitive	Reprehensive	Number of words
Old Fr.	11 (65%)	0	10	1	3 388 302
Middle Fr.	16 (89%)	1	14	1	9 776 478
Preclassical Fr.	122 (66%)	26	77	19	18 994 976
Classical Fr.	338 (96%)	227	63	48	49 820 596
Modern Fr.	404 (96%)	291	43	70	76 605 469

Overall, the form of complementation *que* represents a significant share of the 1st person uses of *craindre* sentences in the three first periods of the corpus (from 1100 to 1650), before growing very weak by 1650, in comparison to the form *que … ne*. Besides, assertions of *craindre* with mere *que* are mostly associated with the inquisitive use in all the different periods of the corpus. Concurrently, for each period of the corpus, the share of assertions of 1st person *craindre* with the complementation form *que … ne* is higher than that of *craindre* sentences with the mere complementizer *que*. Expletive negation becomes even more productive with *craindre* by Preclassical French (by 1650). Interestingly, *craindre que … ne* doesn't receive the same use throughout the whole corpus. It is predominantly used with an admonitive goal in the three first periods of the corpus (from 1100 to 1650). By Classical French, the share of inquisitive and reprehensive uses of *craindre que … ne* strongly increases, as the share of admonitive uses recedes.

4. Diachronic analysis

4.1 The original semantics of *ne*: A speech-act negation

In Latin, *ne* introduces an embedded negative imperative clause on the mode of quasi-parataxis. Such a structure can still be found in Early Old French, as shown in (26) and (27).

(26) (Saint Thomas Becket advises the King of England not to conduct a policy hostile to the clergy.)
Mais cil qui tuz li munz ne remue ne tente, jo criem, Sire, **ne** *turt. Mais ja Deus nel consente !*
"But the one who is not affected nor tempted by the world, I fear, Sir, he will go away. But may God never allow that!"
(Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, Vie de Saint Thomas Becket, 1173)

(27) (Robin's master, John, is going through great suffering because of his love for Blonde. Blonde asks Robin what illness John has.)
"Dame", dist il, "bien le savés, pour noiant enquis le m'avés. Bien savés la mort ki le touce. Je criem Dix **ne** *le vous reproche."*
""Lady", he says, "you know well; you have asked me to no purpose. You well know the death that is touching him. I fear that God will reproach you for this.""
(Anonymous, Jehan et Blonde, 1240)

As a speech-act negation, I argue that *ne* places semantic restriction on the utterance context. Indeed, for the utterance of a negative imperative to be felicitous, the likelihood of the proposition *p* must be available in the conversational context, as shown with the contrast between (28) and (29).

(28) (To my friend who loves eating cookies.)
Don't eat the last cookie!

(29) (To my friend who is allergic to eating cookies.)
^#*Don't eat the last cookie!*

The belief condition that restrains the utterance of negative imperatives is violated in (29) and, as a consequence, (29) cannot fulfill the function of a negative imperative (here, that of prohibiting). I argue that prohibitive negation, in embedded imperative clauses, places a semantic restriction on the embedding context, thus activating the possibility that *p* (see also Ducrot (1985); Dryer (1996); Larrivée (2010)) at the level of presupposition, while asserting a preference for not-*p*.

(30) [[**ne** *p*]] is defined iff the embedding context conveys:
   a. **Doxastic presupposition:** there is a *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*
   b. If defined, [[**ne** *p*]] = for every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*), not-*p* is true in *w'*

As quasi-paratactic clauses ultimately develop into subordinate clauses, by Late Old French, *ne* can no longer occur without the complementizer *que*, the use of which is generalized. From Late Old French to the end of Preclassical French, I argue that expletive negation retains its original semantics as a Latin speech-act negator and thus constrains the interpretation of *craindre*. Indeed, from 1100 to 1650, there is a correlation between the presence of expletive negation and the admonitive interpretation of *craindre*, the purpose of which is to warn the addressee, see (31) and (32).

(31) *S'or ne m'en fui, molt criem que **ne** t'en perde.*
"If I don't escape now, I fear that you will go through some trouble."
(Anonymous, La vie de Saint-Alexis, 1040)

(32) (A merchant advises Bérinus to follow his advice and accept bargaining with him)
"*Sire, par ma foy, voulentiers en feray par vostre conseil, mais mout crain que je **ne** mesface.*"
"Sir, I swear that I would like to do as you advise me to, but I strongly fear that I will do wrong." (Anonymous, Roman de Bérinus, 1350)

With the mere complementizer *que*, the assertion of *craindre* has a different function. It describes the speaker's epistemic state of uncertainty about whether or not the state of affairs described by *p* is the case, and the sentence is used as an indirect request for information as in (33).

(33) (A damsel confesses that she has never loved any man except Gauvain. Having given him her virginity, she wonders if Gauvain has lost interest in her.)
Car vos estes de tel renon que je vos ai amé pieç'a. Si crien que mon domaige i a, einsin que vos ne m'amez mie.
"For you have so great a reputation that I have loved you for a long time. Therefore I fear that I might have been treated unfairly and that you do not love me." (Wauchier de denain, Deuxième continuation de Perceval, 1210)

(34) *Je criendroie que m'en tigniez pour prinsaltiere se vous mandoie amor premiere.*
"I would fear that you would find me impulsive if I asked for your love beforehand." (Anonymous, Le roman d'Eneas, 1160)

In this perspective, the correlation between the presence of expletive negation and the admonitive use of *craindre* in the first three periods of the corpus is to be related to the fact that this use of *craindre* satisfies the semantic restriction that speech-act-like *ne* places on its embedding context.

(35) *a* craint-ADMONITIVE que … **ne** *p*
    a. **Dispreference assertion:** for every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*), not-*p* is true in *w'*
    b. **Doxastic presupposition:** there is a *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*

4.2 The gradual loss of *ne*'s speech-act potential

By the last two periods of the corpus, in Classical and Modern French, assertions of *craindre* without expletive negation remain associated with an inquisitive goal.

(36) *Mon fils bien-aimé est parti … et je pleure sur lui. Je crains qu'il souffre chez le peuple où il est allé.*
"My beloved son is gone … and I'm crying over him. I fear he might suffer among the people he's gone to."   (Leconte de Lisle, Odyssée, 1868)

Surprisingly, assertions of *craindre* with expletive negation are increasingly associated with an inquisitive goal as well, as the main point of the assertion with *craindre que … ne* is to express the speaker's uncertainty about whether or not the complement is true, see (37) and (38).

(37) *Votre carte … était bordée de deuil, et je crains que vous **n'**ayez eu la douleur de perdre votre sœur. Si je me trompe, comme je veux l'espérer ….*
"Your letter … was surrounded by grief, and I fear you have had the pain of losing your sister. If I'm mistaken, as I wish I am …."
(Mallarmé, Correspondance, 1975)

(38) *Je crains que Mam'zelle Choute **ne** me soupçonne d'avoir volé cet argent. On est tellement soupçonneux à l'égard des enfants noirs.*
"I fear that Mam'zelle Choute may suspect me of having stolen that money. People tend to be so suspicious towards black children."
(Joseph Zobel, La rue Case-Nègres, 1950)

I argue that this fact follows from the gradual path of semantic change that *craindre* underwent. Following a robust cross-linguistic tendency (see Lichtenberk (1995)), the semantics of *craindre* weakened from priority modality (i.e., the kind of modality expressing deontic, teleological or buletic (dis)preference, see also Portner (2009)) to epistemic modality. This trajectory, I argue, consists in the fact that the belief component of *craindre*, which attributes a certain psychological state of belief to the attitude anchor, moves to the foreground, while dispreference is backgrounded.

(39) *a* craint-INQUISITIVE que … (ne) *p*
a. **Doxastic assertion:** there is a *w'* in Dox(*a, w*) such that *p* is true in *w'*
b. **Dispreference presupposition:** for every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*), not-*p* is true in *w'*

This path of semantic change is reflected by the temporal orientation of the attitude, as displayed in Table 3. It has been argued (see for instance Condoravdi (2002)) that the temporal orientation of modals reflects the kind of modality they express, as certain types of preference-related attitudes are closely related to future-orientation.

What the data shows is that in the three first periods of the corpus, *craindre* was a future-oriented attitude, expressing a possibility about a state of affairs located in the future (thus a possibility upon which the addressee can potentially take action). It also shows that the temporal orientation of *craindre* gradually shifts towards the past, expressing a possibility about a state of affairs located in the past or in the present (which is thus metaphysically settled), by the last two periods of the corpus.

Table 3. Distributions of the temporal orientation of *craindre*

Period	1st person uses	Future	Non-future
Old Fr.	16	16	0
Middle Fr.	18	15	3
Preclassical Fr.	184	132	52
Classical Fr.	352	207	145
Modern Fr.	420	136	284

Importantly for the current discussion, as *craindre* shifts towards an epistemic meaning, the verb also develops a pragmatically specialized interpretation. By the last two periods of the corpus, indeed, *craindre* develops a reprehensive interpretation, arising with certain specific contextual factors to yield a flavor of reproach (or apology). Note that the reprehensive interpretation is almost exclusively available with the complementation form *que … ne*.

(40)　*Je crains, docteur, que vous **n'**abusiez un peu de ma crédulité. Prenez-y garde.*
　　　"I'm afraid, doctor, you are abusing my trust. Watch out."
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Diderot, Denis, Le rêve de d'Alembert, 1784)

(41)　*LE VICE-ROI : Je suis très mécontent de vous. De tous côtés on parle de votre coquetterie, et, s'il faut parler net, je crains que vous **ne** me fassiez jouer un sot rôle.*
　　　"THE VICE-ROY: I am very dissatisfied with you. Comments about your coquetry are coming from all sides. To put it bluntly, I'm afraid you are making a fool of me."　　　(Mérimée, Prosper, Théâtre de Clara Gazul, 1857)

I propose that this specialized interpretation of *craindre* grows stronger by the last two periods of the corpus because, with this use, *ne* retains its speech-act potential. Indeed, reprehensive-*craindre* satisfies the semantic restrictions that speech-act *ne* places on the context, as it presupposes (strong) belief.

(42)　*a* craint-REPREHENSIVE que … **ne** *p*
　　　a.　**Dispreference assertion:** for every *w'* in Bul(*a, w*), not-*p* is true in *w'*
　　　b.　**Doxastic presupposition:** for every *w'* in Dox(*a, w*), *p* is true in *w'*

5.   Conclusion

This paper has shown that superordinate negation may target distinct modal components of the attitude verb *craindre*, depending on contextual factors. On the one hand, if the goal of the assertion is belief-related (inquisitive), then superordinate negation will target the foregrounded doxastic component of the verb, and the whole sentence express disbelief. On the other, if the goal of the sentence is dispreference-related (admonitive or reprehensive), then superordinate negation will target the foregrounded dispreference component of the verb – and the whole sentence will express dispreference denial. Based on the observation that expletive negation is infelicitous in the scope of the inquisitive use of *craindre* under negation, I have argued that expletive negation is sensitive to the verb's modal layering. More specifically, I have argued that *ne* places semantic constraints on the embedding context, requiring it to convey a presupposition of (strong or weak) belief with respect to the prejacent, so that it can express dispreference with respect to the prejacent. This semantic constraint is met when *craindre* receives a volitive reading. I have argued that the presence of expletive negation is correlated to the volitive meaning of *craindre* in the first stages of the history of French, while *ne* later lost its speech-act potential along with the gradual semantic weakening of *craindre* towards a psychological reading.

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