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 /pã.tœ/), 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 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.

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 veu* 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)

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1 The literary examples presented in this paper come from the fichier lexical of the Trésor de la langue française au Québec (http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/).
2 Luis Alonso Ovalle (p.c.) also reports that the Spanish expression *en absoluto* patterns like *pantoute/du tout* in French.

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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 **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.’

b. Mais, une fois que t’es mariée, ma fille, y’a **pantoute** de baisage
   But, once you’re married, my girl, there is no more of screwing pantoute
   ‘But, once you’re married, my girl, there’s no more screwing at all.’

c. Pis quand y sont **bons pantoute**, y font comme les joueurs de hockey qui se pognent des jobs de dépisteurs: y deviennent civil servants.
   Then when they are no more good pantoute, they make like the players of hockey that refl get some jobs of dépisteurs: they become fonctionnaires.
   ‘Then when they aren’t good at all anymore, they act like hockey players and get themselves “depisteur” jobs: they become civil servants.’

(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.’

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…’

c. Si l’enfer ressemble au club ousque j’travaille, ça m’fait **rien** pantoute d’aller
passer mon éternité là, moé!
If Hell ressembles the club where I work, it doesn’t bother me at all to spend my
eternity there!


(5) I’mettaient leurs bateaux à l’eau **sans** y toucher pantoute,
it they put their boats at the water without them touching PANTOUTE
‘They put their boats in the water without touching them at all.’

(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\(^3\), 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 Tovena (2004), *de la journée* is impossible in affirmative sentences and underneath weak
NPI licensors (7).

\(^3\) 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 \(A, B\), \(F(A) \land F(B)\)
implies \(F(A \lor B)\).
(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’, plus ‘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 all 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 Tovena (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 Québécois French. Thus, in most sentences with negative quantifiers, a pas can be freely added without changing the meaning of the sentence.

    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.’

    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).

    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 Québécois French has a distribution that is more

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4The 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LICENSOR</th>
<th>AT ALL</th>
<th>DE LA JOURNÉE</th>
<th>PANTOUTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pas/not</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus/no more</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rien/nothing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans/without</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personne/no one</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aucun étudiant/no student</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jamais/never</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nullepart/nowhere</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other downward entailing expressions</td>
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<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 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)

    ‘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.”

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!’
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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