

Subject pronoun omission in Montreal French: A Corpus Analysis

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Background

French is a **non-pro-drop** language (Holmberg & Roberts, 2009). Yet, some sentences have no (apparent) overt subject

Methods

Using a diachronic corpus analysis, we analysed 20 interviews ranging from 1 to 3 hours (Montréal 1995; MONT(REA)L 2016).

Phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic environments were all coded when a personal pronoun was omitted.

Results

- The reduced form of the pronouns favour reduction in **vv** and **cc** sequences.
- Omissions are most common with **high-frequency** words.

What's next?

- How frequent is subject pronoun omission in MF?
- Is it pro-drop?
- What is the phonological pattern, and can it be expanded to all pronouns?
- What roles do phonology and frequency play in pronoun omission, and how do we define them?
- Is it pronoun reduction (to zero) or subject omission?
- Are there any traces of the omitted pronouns?

Sont
où?

Montreal 1995 (Louise)

Elle a pas besoin de rien
3.SG.FEM has no need of nothing
'She does not need anything'

MONT(REA)L 2016 (Marc)

Je me suis fait un p'tit café
1.SG REFL have made a small coffee
'I made myself a little coffee'

MONT(REA)L 2016 (Guylaine)

Ben ils sont encore jeunes
Well 3.PL are still young
'Well they are still young'

Omissions: Phonological context

	#C	#V
1.SG [ʒ/ʃ]	97,5	2,5
3.SG.FEM [a]	2,95	97,05
3.PL [i(z)]	96	4

Total

	#C	#V
1.SG [ʒ/ʃ]	97,4	2,6
3.SG.FEM [a]	8,5	91,5
3.PL [i(z)]	87,9	12,1

Non-être contexts



For more information and references, see Carrier, E. et St-Cyr, J. (à paraître). *Sont où? Une description des pronoms sujet omis en français parlé à Montréal*. Actes du congrès annuel du Colloque des Étudiants en Linguistique 2025, 13 pages.