

Gender mismatches in partitive constructions, phases and locality

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Goal

The **goal** of the paper is to account for **gender mismatches** with animate nouns in **French partitive constructions**.

Gender mismatches: the data

- (1) *La/le plus jeune de mes gentils enfants est malade.*
the.F./M.SG. most young of my.PL. sweet.M.PL. children.PL. is sick
- (2) Talking about a woman:
Mon gentil professeur de français était toujours contente.
my.M.SG. sweet.M.SG. professor.SG of French was always happy.F.SG.
- (3) **Le/la plus jeune de mes gentils enfants est contente.*
the.M.SG./F.SG. most young of my.PL. sweet.M.PL. children.PL. is happy.F.SG.
- (4) **La plus intelligente de mes anciens étudiants est malade.*
the.F.SG. most intelligent.F.SG. of my former.M.PL. students.M.PL. is sick
- (5) *La plus intelligente de mes anciennes étudiantes est malade.*
the.F.SG. most intelligent.F.SG. of my former.F.PL. students.F.PL. is sick
- (6) *La plus intelligente parmi mes anciens étudiants est malade.*
the.F.SG. most intelligent.F.SG. among my former.M.PL. students.M.PL. is sick

➡ Gender mismatches occur with animate nouns that have a default masculine form, but can also be used as masculine or feminine nouns (except *étudiant*).

The Agreement Hierarchy

Corbett's (1979) Agreement Hierarchy: the "possibility of syntactic agreement decreases monotonically from left to right" (p. 204). We add **partitive**:

- (12) Attributive – **partitive** – predicate – relative pronoun – personal pronoun

Default nouns such as *enfant* or *professeur*:

- attributive agreement is grammatical: *mon gentil professeur*
- predicative agreement is semantic: *mon gentil professeur est contente*
- partitive agreement is grammatical or semantic:
le/la plus jeune de mes gentils enfants

This also holds for default nouns such as *étudiant*, BUT:

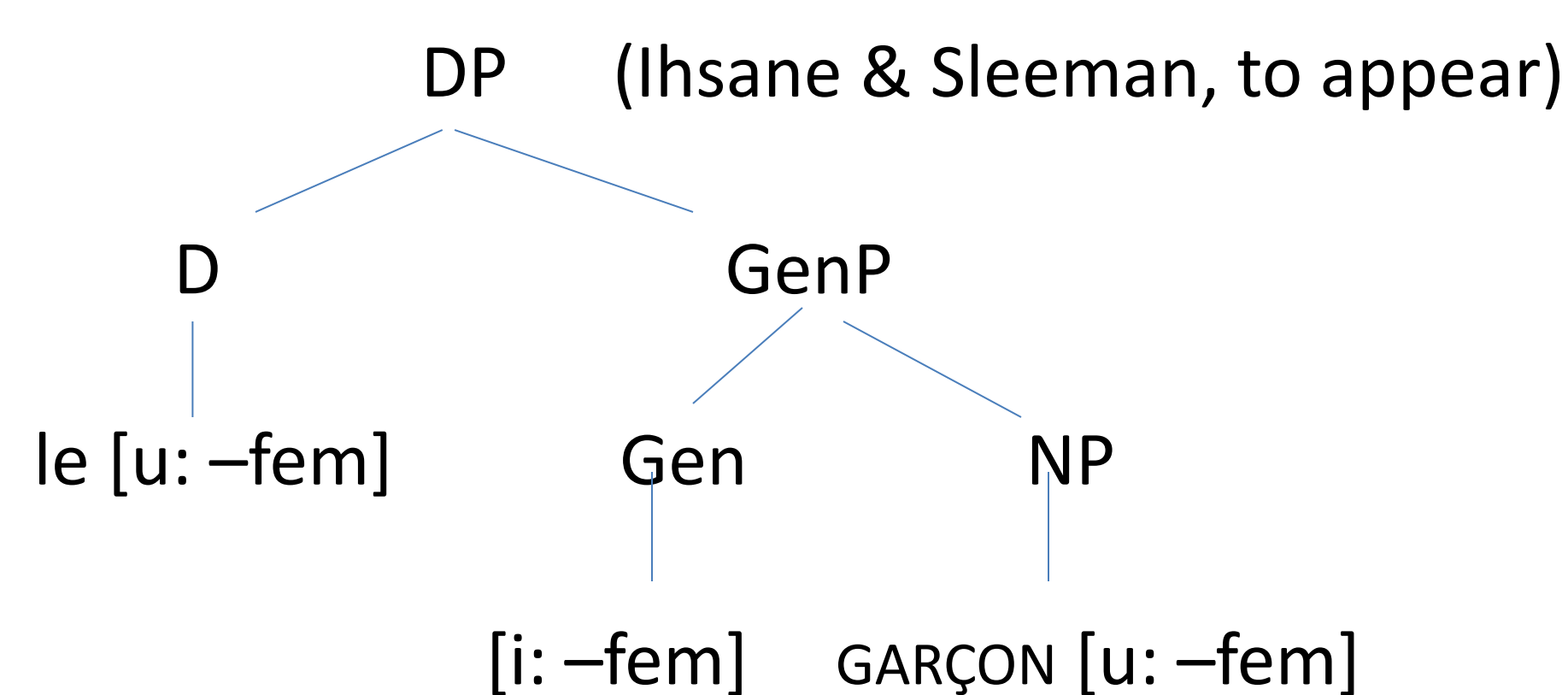
Since the **feminine** form *étudiante* is a well-integrated noun, masculine default *étudiant* only allows valuation of ϕ by a **masculine** feature:

- ➡ (13) **la plus intelligente de ϕ mes anciens étudiants* (= 4)
the.F.SG. most intelligent.F.SG. of my former.M.PL. students.M.PL.
- (14) * *ϕ Cet étudiant est très intelligente.*
this.M.SG. student is very intelligent.F.SG.

Theoretical assumptions

1. Grammatical gender is expressed on the noun, semantic gender is expressed in a functional projection (Kramer 2009): Gender Phrase.
2. Both interpretable and uninterpretable features can be valued or unvalued (Pesetsky & Torrego 2007).
3. Agree deals with unvalued features before the derivation is sent to the interfaces (Pesetsky & Torrego 2007).

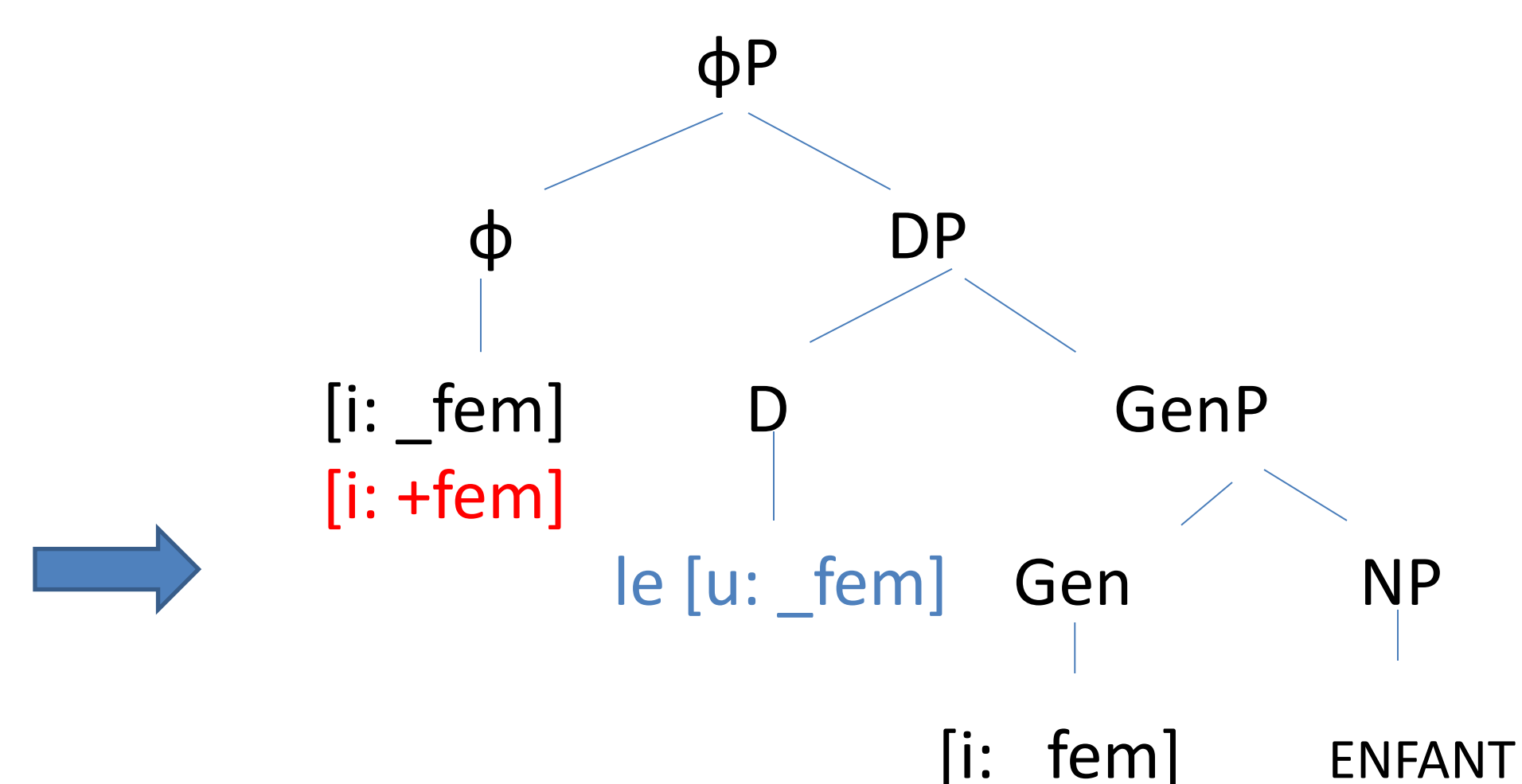
- (7)



Analysis

1. Default nouns are unvalued for gender. Default masculine is the result of Failed Agree (Preminger 2009, 2011).
2. The complement of the phasal head ϕ (Sauerland 2004) is sent to the interfaces (PIC), unvalued D is spelled out as the default masculine form.
3. In a second cycle of Merge, unvalued ϕ is valued through reference.

- (8)



- (9) *La plus jeune e de ϕ mes gentils enfants est malade.* (=1)
(10) *ϕ Mon gentil professeur de français était toujours contente.* (=2)
(11) **Le/la plus jeune e de ϕ mes gentils enfants est contente.* (=3)

'Among'-partitives

In contrast to canonical 'of'-partitives, 'among'-partitives and sentence-initial 'de'-partitives do allow gender mismatches:

- (15) *La plus intelligente parmi mes anciens étudiants* (=6)
(16) *De tous mes étudiants, la plus intelligente est malade.*
of all.M.PL. my students.M.PL. the.F.SG. most intelligent.F.SG. is sick
(17) [_{DP} [_{PP} parmi mes anciens étudiants] [_{D'} la plus intelligente e]]
(18) [_{DP} [_{PP} de tous mes étudiants] [_{D'} la plus intelligente e]]

The empty noun in 'among'-partitives is not the result of copying N, as in canonical partitives. Its gender is therefore independent of N, as in:

- (19) *De tous mes enfants, seule ma plus jeune fille est malade.*
of all.M.PL. my children, only.F.SG. my.F.SG. most young daughter is sick.
'Of all my children, only my youngest daughter is sick.'

- (20) [_{DP} [_{PP} parmi mes anciens étudiants] [_{D'} la plus intelligente e]]

Cf. structure of canonical 'of'-partitives (Sleeman & Kester 2002):

- (21) [_{DP} le plus intelligent [_{FP} e_i de_j [_{PP} t_i t_j [_{QP} ses amis]]]]
'the more intelligent of his friends'

or (22), with DP being an empty noun (Cardinaletti & Giusti, to appear):

- (22) a. [_{QP} DP [_{Q'} Q (PP)]]
b. [_{qP} [_{q'} Q_i [_{QP} DP [_{Q'} t_i (PP)]]]]

Conclusion

To account for our data we propose a feature checking analysis of gender agreement in relation to phase-theory and Corbett's Agreement Hierarchy. This allows us to distinguish between different agreement patterns, between structurally different types of partitives and between different noun types in constructions that have not been discussed so far.

References

Cardinaletti, Anna & Giuliana Giusti. To appear. Quantified expressions and quantitative clitics. *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax* (updated version), ed. by M. Everaert & H. van Riemsdijk. Oxford: Blackwell. * Corbett, Greville. 1979. The agreement hierarchy. *Journal of Linguistics* 15: 203-224. * Ihsane & Sleeman. To appear. Gender agreement with animate nouns in French. *Selected Proceedings of the 43rd Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages*, ed. by C. Tortora, M. den Dikken, I. Montoya, & T. O'Neill. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. * Kramer, Ruth. 2009. *Definite Markers, Phi-features and Agreement: A Morphosyntactic Investigation of the Amharic DP*. Ph.D. dissertation, UC Santa Cruz. * Pesetsky, David & Esther Torrego. 2007. The syntax of valuation and the interpretability of features. *Phrasal and Clausal Architecture*, ed. by Simin Karimi et al., 262-294. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins. * Preminger, Omer. 2011. *Agreement as a Fallible Operation*. Ph.D. dissertation, MIT. * Sauerland, Uli. 2004. A comprehensive semantics for agreement. Manuscript, ZAS, Berlin.