

Non-canonical arguments and past participle agreement

Jesse Tseng

Cognition Langues Langage Ergonomie
Équipe de recherche en syntaxe et sémantique
CLLE-ERSS UMR 5263
CNRS & Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès
France

Constraint-based Syntax and Semantics
In honor of Danièle Godard
Paris, 27 March 2017

Normative rules for French

In compound tenses with the tense auxiliaries *avoir* [and *être*], the past participle of a transitive verb:

- ▶ shows no agreement with a nominal direct object:

(1) La tornade a détruit les maisons
the tornado.FSG AUX destroyed.MSG the houses.FPL
“The tornado has destroyed the houses.”

- ▶ shows agreement with a pronominal direct object:

(2) La tornade les a détruites
the tornado.FSG PRO.3FPL AUX destroyed.FPL
“The tornado has destroyed them.”

Normative rules for French (continued)

The past participle of a transitive verb:

- ▶ shows agreement with a relativized direct object:

(3) les maisons que la tornade a **détruites**
the houses.FPL that the tornado.FSG AUX destroyed.FPL
“the houses that the tornado has destroyed”

- ▶ shows agreement with a fronted interrogative direct object:

(4) Quelles maisons la tornade a-t-elle
which houses.FPL the tornado.FSG AUX.FSG
détruites ?
destroyed.FPL
“Which houses has the tornado destroyed?”

Traditional formulation in terms of word order

The past participle of a transitive verb:

- ▶ agrees in number and gender with a preceding direct object (*COD placé avant*)
- ▶ remains invariable otherwise

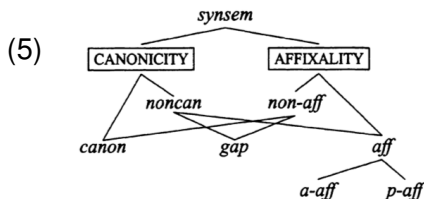
Since its invention in the mid-16th century, this rule:

- ▶ has been continuously challenged by grammarians (maximum consensus in the 19th cent.)
- ▶ has gradually acquired a list of recognized exceptions
- ▶ has never ceased to be routinely violated

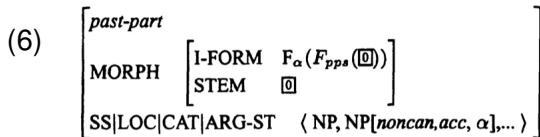
Formal analysis in HPSG

[Abeillé and Godard, 1996, Miller and Sag, 1997]

- ▶ Extracted and pronominalized elements subsumed under the type *noncanonical-synsem*



- ▶ A *noncan* argument as the 2nd element of a past participle's ARG-ST list triggers agreement morphology



where $\alpha \in \{[\textit{sgm}], [\textit{sgf}], [\textit{plm}], [\textit{plf}]\}$

Comparison with the traditional rule

- ▶ For core cases, empirically equivalent to the word-order formulation:
 - ▶ Fillers corresponding to *gap-synsem* arguments can only appear to the left of the participle.
 - ▶ Clitics (*affix-synsem*) must climb to the auxiliary, which always appears to the left.
- ▶ But the *noncan* analysis predicts agreement:
 - ▶ whether or not the argument is overtly realized
 - ▶ for any other subtypes of *noncan-synsem* that may exist alongside *gap* and *aff*

Tough-movement and infinitival relatives

- (7) a. une lettre difficile à avoir écrit / *écrite
a lettre.FSG difficult to have written.MSG / FSG
- b. des lettres à avoir remis / *remises
ART letters.FPL to have delivered.MSG / FPL

- ▶ The unrealized argument in these bounded dependencies is not a *gap*, but *canonical*, so the *noncan* formulation predicts no agreement [Abeillé et al., 1996]
- ▶ To what extent should *noncan* as a formal object correspond to pre-theoretical notion of canonicity?
- ▶ Top 10 things to have done. . .

“choses à avoir fait”	74 hits
“choses à avoir faites”	44 hits
“choses à avoir faite”	1 hit
“choses à avoir faits”	0 hits

Clitic cluster simplification

- ▶ Deletion of 3ACC clitics *le/la/les* before 3DAT *lui/leur*:

(8) Je la leur ai prise
 I ACC.3FSG DAT.3PL AUX taken.FSG

“I took it from them.”

(9) → Je leur ai pris[[?]e]
 I DAT.3PL AUX taken.FSG

- ▶ Idiosyncratic morphology easily accommodated in Miller & Sag’s affixal analysis
- ▶ The analysis predicts agreement, which is sporadically attested.
- ▶ Non-normative structure

Object *pro*-drop

[Abeillé and Godard, 1996, Zribi-Hertz, 1996]

- (10) [la poésie] J' ai toujours adoré[^{?e}] /
the poetry.FSG I AUX always adored.FSG
détesté[^{?e}]
detested.FSG

(context: poetry) “I’ve always loved/hated [it].”

- ▶ The unrealized DO is a *noncan* null pronoun (silent *ça*) [Abeillé et al., 2008a,b]
- ▶ Examples of agreement can be found (normatively incorrect)
- ▶ Purely orthographic with this class of verbs

Preceding DOs that fail to trigger agreement

- ▶ Indefinite mass/plural *en*

(11) Il en a **mis**/***mise**/***mises** dans tous les plats.
“He put some of it/them in every dish.”

- ▶ Causative *faire* constructions

(12) On les a **fait**/***faites** partir plus tôt.
“We made them leave earlier.”

- ▶ Impersonal constructions

(13) les heures qu’ il a **fallu**/***fallues**
the hours.FPL that PRO AUX needed.MSG/FPL
“the hours that we needed”

- ▶ Non-clitic left dislocation [Sabio, 2006, Abeillé et al., 2008a]

(14) une antenne ils lui ont **jeté** sur la tête
“an antenna they threw at his head”

Status of the rule in contemporary French

- ▶ Most speakers are aware of the rule, but insecure about its application in many cases
- ▶ Errors are common, in both directions
- ▶ Spoken/written contrast:
 - ▶ Errors more stigmatized in writing, often pass unnoticed in speech
 - ▶ Agreement is purely orthographic for most verbs.
 - ▶ Consonant liaison is a confounding factor.
- ▶ Difficult to observe speakers' spontaneous usage, "competence"
- ▶ Naturalistic examples involving fronted *wh*-NPs (interrogative, and especially exclamative) are particularly rare.

Empirical studies: Proposed factors

[Audibert-Gibier, 1992, Blanche-Benveniste, 2006]

Wide variation in results, between 0% and 80%

- ▶ Lexical effects
 - ▶ Depends on the verb (e.g. *faire*, *se faire*)
 - ▶ Blocking by homophonous noun/adjective (e.g. *distracte*, *surprise*, *crainte*)
- ▶ Syntax (and/or semantics/prosody/???)
 - ▶ More agreement with clitics than relativized DO (*wh*-questions?)
 - ▶ More agreement with 3rd person clitic than 1st/2nd person
 - ▶ Agreement more likely with “empty post-verbal zone”
- ▶ Sociolinguistic patterns. . .

What about earlier stages of French?

[Levitt, 1973]

- ▶ traditional rule attributed to Marot (mid-16th century)
 - ▶ Not based on firmly established contemporary practice
 - ▶ Challenged by generations of grammarians
 - ▶ Vaugelas and others: No agreement if PP followed by post-verbal subject, predicate adjective/noun, or infinitive:
- (15) a. Les habitans nous ont rendu maistres de la ville
- b. La peine que m'a donné cette affaire
- ▶ Feminine agreement still audible through the 18th century
 - ▶ Basic rule not generally accepted until the 19th century
 - ▶ Examples of absence of agreement are common in all periods.

What about even earlier stages of French (and beyond)?

- ▶ Compound tenses with HABERE generally assumed to derive from a passive participle construction:

(16) *habeō litterās scriptās*
I have letters.FPL written.FPL

“I have letters [that are] written”

- ▶ Straightforward adjectival agreement (head-modifier configuration)
- ▶ Through 12th & 13th century in Old French: agreement still observed in most cases:
 - ▶ with all types of syntactic realization of DO
 - ▶ regardless of the relative position of DO and participle (freely ordered)

A snapshot from the end of the 13th century

La Queste del saint Graal [Marchello-Nizia, 1999]

(17) DO \prec PP:

word order	MSG	agree	no agr	total
NP Aux PP	8	18	5	23
Aux NP PP	26	57	1	58
pro Aux PP	190	77	1	78
que Aux PP	109	84	9	93
total	333	236 (94%)	16 (6%)	252

(18) PP \prec DO:

word order	MSG	agree	no agr	total
Aux PP NP	85	115	47	162
PP pro Aux	7	2	0	2
PP Aux NP	1	0	0	0
total	93	117 (71%)	47 (29%)	164

Causes of change

- ▶ Grammaticalization of participle:
 - ▶ Modifier of DO with passive meaning
 - part of complex verbal predicate with active meaning
 - ▶ → Only case of object agreement in the language
- ▶ Fixing of linear position of NP object:
 - ▶ Agreement was useful for identifying the NP object when word order was freer
 - ▶ Less motivated once PP < NP order became fixed
- ▶ Loss of distinctions:
 - ▶ (Collapse of subject/object case system for nouns)
 - ▶ (Loss of final consonants)
 - ▶ Phonetic erosion of number/gender marking (final /s/ & /ə/)

A quick look at Spanish

- ▶ Past participle agreement already variable in 12th century [Menéndez Pidal, 1908, §171]
- ▶ Evidence of an upsurge of agreement in the 13th century, followed by long gradual decline
- ▶ Modern Spanish: Total invariability of the past participle

A slightly longer look at Italian

[Salvi, 1991, Maiden, 1998]

- ▶ In older Italian (and in certain Southern dialects): Object agreement, including with a following NP object

(19) Ho **mangiato** / %**mangiata** una pesca
AUX eaten.MSG / eaten.FSG a peach.FSG
“I ate a peach”

- ▶ Current normative rules:
 - ▶ Obligatory agreement with 3rd person object clitics (including *ne* = Fr. *en*)
 - ▶ Optional agreement with 1st & 2nd person object clitics
 - ▶ No agreement with other objects
 - ▶ Recognition of dialectal variation

Actual usage in Italian

Seems consistent with the rule:

- ▶ Widespread agreement with 3rd person clitics
- ▶ Low-frequency agreement with 1st/2nd person clitics, perceived as superfluous
- ▶ Sporadic agreement in other cases, not particularly stigmatized (?)

Comparative remarks on Spanish and Italian

- ▶ No phonetic erosion as in French
 - ▶ 4 distinct forms in adjectival agreement
 - ▶ Did not prevent total loss of PP agreement in Spanish
- ▶ Attitudes towards the norm
 - ▶ Less fixation on the rules, less stigma and linguistic insecurity around errors, compared to French
 - ▶ But speakers' behavior actually conforms to the norm.
- ▶ No apparent parallel between the two major types of non-canonicity (affixation and extraction)
- ▶ In particular, no mention of *wh*-extraction

The historical province of Rouergue

≈ modern-day département of Aveyron (12)



- ▶ Generalized DO agreement has been retained in the variety of Occitan spoken in this region

(20) Aviàm **ganhada** la guèrra
AUX.1PL won.FSG the war.FSG
“We had won the war.”

PP agreement in Rouergue Occitan

[Sibille, 2014, Stroh, 2002]

- ▶ As in Italian and French, the auxiliary switches to ESSE for reflexive verbs.
- ▶ As in Italian (but not always in French), the participle agrees with the subject in this case:

(21) Elles se sont **parlé** (Fr)
Se son **parladas** (Oc)
Si sono **parlate** (It)

“They.F talked to each other.”

- ▶ If the reflexive verb also has a DO → potential agreement conflict

Ladies first in Rouergue Occitan!

- ▶ The conflict is usually resolved in favor of the feminine:
 - ▶ If the subject is feminine → subject agreement
 - ▶ If the subject is masculine → object agreement preferred

(22) La vesina s' es **copada** lus piáls.
the neighbor.FSG REFL AUX cut.FSG the hairs.MPL
“The neighbor.F cut her hair.”

(23) Lo vesin s' es **rasada**
the neighbor.MSG REFL AUX shaved.FSG
la mostacha.
the mustache.FSG
“The neighbor.M shaved his mustache.”

(24) Lo dròlle s' es **lavat** las mans.
the boy.MSG REFL AUX washed.MSG the hands.FPL
“The boy washed his hands.”

“The Unity of Extraction and Pronominal Affixation”

Expression of the subject of VP[inf] with opinion/declaration verbs

- (25) a. un travail qu' on reconnaît être dangereux
a work that one recognizes be dangerous
“a job that is recognized as being dangerous”
- b. Quel travail reconnaît - on être dangereux ?
which work recognizes one be dangerous
“Which job do we recognize as being dangerous?”
- c. On le reconnaît être dangereux.
one PRO recognizes be dangerous
“We recognize it as being dangerous”
- d. ? On reconnaît ce travail être dangereux.
one recognizes this work be dangerous
“We recognize this job to be dangerous.”
- (26) Une demi-douzaine de ces oiseaux moqueurs et chanteurs, que l'on reconnut être des « faisans de montagne » (J. Verne)

References

- Anne Abeillé and Danièle Godard. La complémentation des auxiliaires français. Langages, 122:32–61, 1996.
- Anne Abeillé, Danièle Godard, Philip Miller, and Ivan A. Sag. French bounded dependencies. In Sergio Balari and Luca Dini, editors, HPSG in Romance, pages 3–56. CSLI Publications, Stanford, CA, 1996.
- Anne Abeillé, Danièle Godard, and Frédéric Sabio. Two types of NP preposing in French. In Stefan Müller, editor, The Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar, pages 306–324. CSLI Publications, Stanford, 2008a.
- Anne Abeillé, Danièle Godard, and Frédéric Sabio. Deux constructions à SN antéposé en français. In Jacques Durand, Benoît Habert, and Laks Bernard Laks, editors, Actes du Congrès Mondial de Linguistique Française CMLF'08, pages 2361–2376. Institut de Linguistique Française, Paris, 2008b.
- Monique Audibert-Gibier. Étude de l'accord du participe passé sur des corpus de français parlé. Langage et société, 61:7–30, 1992.
- Claire Blanche-Benveniste. L'accord des participes passés en français parlé contemporain. In Céline Guillot, Serge Heiden, and Sophie Prévost, editors, À la quête du sens: Études littéraires, historiques et linguistiques en hommage à Christiane Marchello-Nizia, pages 33–47. ENS Éditions, Lyon, 2006.
- Jesse Levitt. The agreement of the past participle in Modern French: orthographic convention or linguistic fact? Linguistics, 11(114):25–42, 1973.
- Martin Maiden. Storia linguistica dell'italiano. Il Mulino, Bologna, 1998.
- Christiane Marchello-Nizia. L'accord du participe passé avec l'objet direct en ancien français. Verbum, 21(3): 323–338, 1999.
- Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Cantar de Mio Cid: Texto, gramática y vocabulario, volume I. Bailly-Baillière é Hijos, 1908.
- Philip H. Miller and Ivan A. Sag. French clitic movement without clitics or movement. Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, 15:573–639, 1997.
- Frédéric Sabio. L'antéposition des compléments dans le français contemporain. Linguisticae Investigationes, 29(1): 173–182, 2006.
- Giampaolo Salvi. L'accordo. In Lorenzo Renzi, Giampaolo Salvi, and Anna Cardinaletti, editors, Grande Grammatica Italiana di Consultazione, volume II. I sintagmi verbale, aggettivale, avverbiale. La subordinazione, chapter IV, pages 227–244. Il Mulino, Bologna, 1991.
- Jean Sibille. Description de l'occitan parlé à Sénailac-Lauzès (Lot). Habilitation à diriger des recherches, Université de Toulouse, 2014.
- Hans Stroh. L'accord du participe passé en occitan rouergat et en français. Grelh Roergàs, Rodez, 2002.
- Anne Zribi-Hertz. L'Anaphore et les pronoms. Presses du Septentrion, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1996.