

# French as differential object marking language

## A Nanosyntactic perspective on past participle agreement

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### Main claims

- ◆ Past participle agreement (PPA)  $\neq$  feature checking/valuation
- ◆ PPA = Differential Object Marking (DOM)
- ◆ PPAgreement marker = DOMarker spelled out on the participle

### Outline

1. PPA: data
2. Standard analysis
3. Present analysis
4. DOM in a nutshell
5. DOM in French
6. Analysis: DOM from a nanosyntactic perspective
7. Support for the analysis: object agreement in Hungarian
8. Remaining issues

### 1. PPA: data

- (1) Pierre a construit(\*e) la maison lui-même.  
Pierre has built the house himself  
'Pierre built the house himself.'
- (2) (La maison,) Pierre l'a construit-e lui-même.  
The house Pierre it has built-PPA himself  
'(As for the house,) Pierre built it himself.'

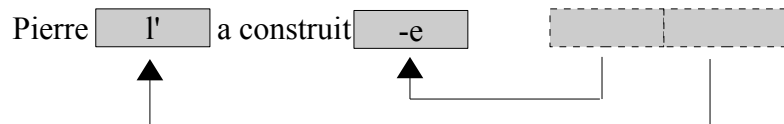
### 2. Standard analysis

Kayne (1989, 1993), Belletti (2001), Friedemann & Siloni (1997); Rizzi & Guasti (2002), among many others:

- ◆ On its way to the finite verb, the pronominal direct object passes via an AgrP position above the participle.
- ◆ PPA is a reflex of the establishment of a feature checking/valuation mechanism between the participle and the pronoun in specAgrP.

### 3. Present analysis

- ◆ The PPAgreement marker is a DOMarker.
- ◆ It is base-generated within the direct object.
- ◆ The direct object splits during the derivation.
- ◆ One part is spelled out by a clitic, one part is stranded and spelled out on the participle.



### 4. DOM in a nutshell

- ◆ DOM: crosslinguistically diverse patterns in which direct objects whose referents are high on a certain semantic scale are morphologically differentiated from direct objects whose referents are lower on this same scale (Aissen 2003: 436; Bossong 1991, 1998; Lazard 1984, 2001: 879).
- ◆ Substantive content of the semantic scale: definiteness/specificity, animacy, topicality, gender, person, number features (Heusinger & al. 2008).
- ◆ Other DOM triggers: aspect, mood or tense of the predicate. Or combination thereof.

#### Turkish: specificity

- (3) (Ben) kitab-ı oku-du-m.  
 I book-ACC read-PST-1SG  
 'I read the book.'
- (4) (Ben) bir kitab-ı oku-du-m.  
 I a book-ACC read-PST-1SG  
 'I read a certain book.'
- (5) (Ben) bir kitap(\*-ı) oku-du-m.  
 I a book read-PST-1SG  
 'I read a book.'

Turkish, Kornfilt (2008: 81, her (1))

- (6) personal pronoun > proper name > definite NP > indefinite specific NP > non-specific NP
- ←
→

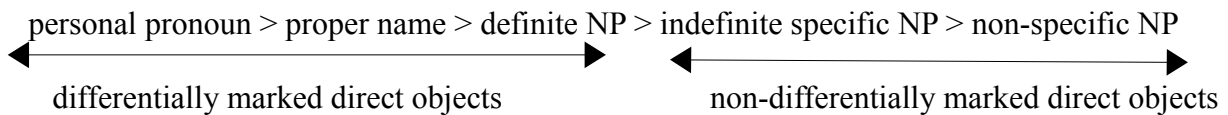
←
→
- differentially marked direct objects
non-differentially marked direct objects

### Hebrew: definiteness

(7) Ha-seret her'a 'et-ha-milxama.  
the-movie showed ACC-the-war  
'The movie showed the war.'

(8) Ha-seret her'a (\*'et-)milxama.  
the movie showed (ACC-)war  
'The movie showed a war.'

Aissen (2003: 453, her (25a,b))



- ◆ Almost all accusative languages have DOM (Jäger 2007:102).
- ◆ But French is said not to have DOM (Bossong 1998: 219-220, 229)

However...

### 5. DOM in French

- ◆ Just like Turkish *-i* in (3) and (4), the PPAgreement marker in French appears iff the direct object is specific (Obenauer 1994).
- ◆ Specific / D-linked (Delfitto & Corver 1998; Koopman & Sportiche 2009: 38-42; Rizzi 2001; Starke 2001: 108-111).

(9) Dis-moi combien de fautes tu as fait / fait-es.

Tell me how.many of mistakes you have made / made-PPA

'Tell me how many mistakes you made.'

Obenauer (1994: 173, his 16)

- ◆ In a context in which the specific interpretation of the direct object is excluded, PPA is odd.

(10) Jusqu'à combien de fautes ont-ils fait(\*es), vos élèves?

Until to how.many of mistakes have-they made your pupils

'Up to how many mistakes have they made, your students?' Rizzi (2001: his (50a))

### 6. Analysis: DOM from a nanosyntactic perspective

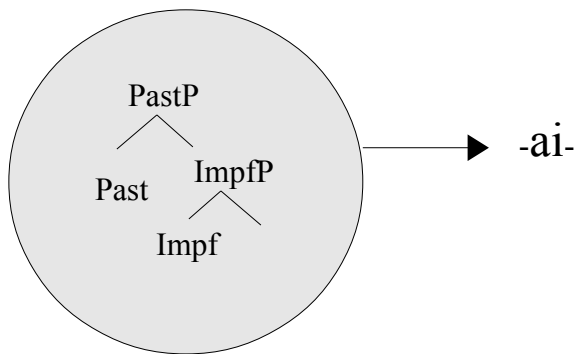
#### 6.1 Theoretical background

Nanosyntax (Starke 2005, 2009; Caha 2009; Pantcheva 2011; a.o.)

- ◆ Study of the fine-grained structure of lexical items.
- ◆ Morphemes are not the primitive units of words.

- ◆ Morphemes consist of smaller entities, the features.
- ◆ Each feature projects a syntactic layer.
- ◆ Morphemes are the realization of hierarchical structures composed of syntactic layers.

(11) Pierre lis-**ai**-t un livre.  
 Pierre read-**PAST,IMPF**-3.SG a book  
 'Pierre was reading a book.'

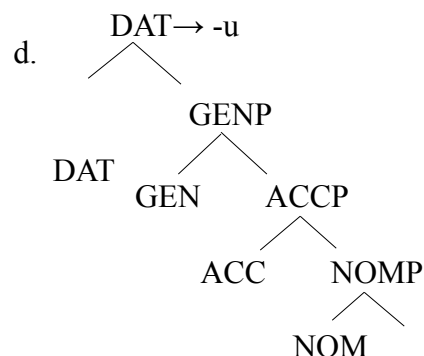
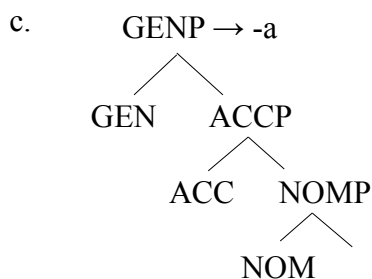
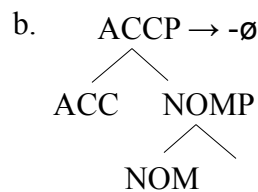
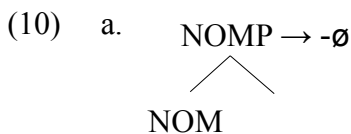


Caha (2009)'s case sequence:

- ◆ Individual case features project a structural layer
- ◆ Case morphemes spell out one or more of these layers at once

Example: partial declension of Russian *muzéj* 'museum'

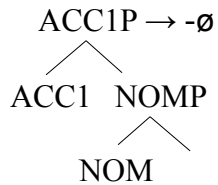
	muzéj 'museum'
NOM	muzéj-∅
ACC	muzéj-∅
GEN	muzéj-a
DAT	muzéj-u



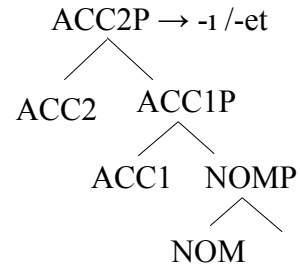
## 6.2 DOM in general

- ◆ We have seen that in DOM system, two types of direct objects are distinguished.
- ◆ **Proposal:** Caha's ACC-layer must be split (Rocquet 2013: 168-179)

Turkish non-specific / Hebrew indefinite DOs

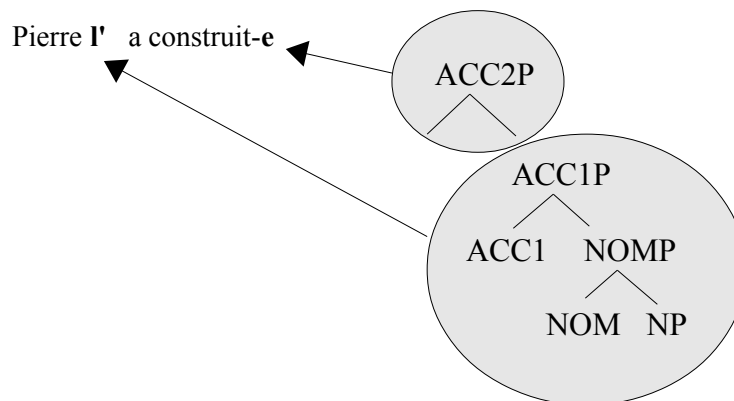


Turkish specific / Hebrew definite DOs

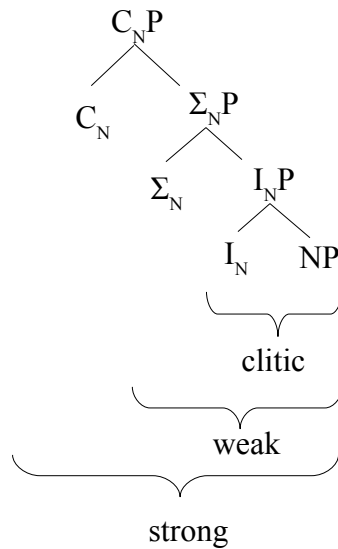


## 5.2 DOM in French

- ◆ The pronominal direct object is merged in the complement of VP. If it refers to a specific referent, the ACC2P layer is merged on top of the ACC1P constituent.
- ◆ In the course of the derivation, the lower part of the structure raises. It is spelled out by the clitic *l'*.
- ◆ The higher layer, ACC2P is stranded in situ and spelled out on the participle in V (cf. Caha 2009's Peeling Theory).
- ◆ The highest accusative layer is merged when the direct object refers to a specific entity.



- ◆ Recall Cardinaletti & Starke (1994/1999)'s decomposition of pronouns:



- ◆ C&S(1994: 94): pronouns are base-generated in their strong form. The structurally smaller form are obtained via *Erase a*, i.e deletion of the upper part of the structure.
- ◆ **Proposal:** the upper part of the structure is **not erased**, it is stranded and spelled out on the embedding category, i.e on the participle.

### 5.3. DOM in Spanish

- ◆ In Standard Spanish, the presence of the DOMarker *a* is required if the direct object is animate and specific (Heusinger & Kaiser 2003: 41-42).

(11) Vi                    **\*(a)**    la / una mujer.    (Standard Spanish)  
 see.past-1.sg    **DOM**    the a woman  
 ‘I saw the / a woman.’

- ◆ In certain Spanish dialects (esp. in South America), the presence of *a* is only definiteness- and specificity-driven (Heusinger and Kaiser 2003: 41-42).

(12) Vio                    **a**            las sierras .    (Puerto Rican Spanish)  
 saw.past-3.sg    **DOM**    the mountains  
 ‘(S)he saw the mountains’                    (H&K 2003: 42, their (1a), (2a))

- ◆ The absence of *a* leads to a non-specific interpretation (Leonetti 1999: 867). Hence, only a-less arguments may appear in existential-construction.

(13) Había            **(\*a)** unas / todas las mujeres en la plaza.  
 there.was            some / all    the women in the place

- ◆ C&S (1994: 80): Spanish *a* spells out the C<sub>N</sub>P layer.

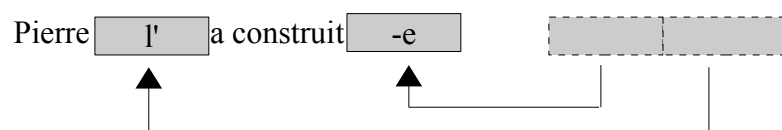
**Conclusion**

Spanish *a* = PPAgr marker in French = DOMarker *-i* in Turkish and *-et* in Hebrew

**7. Support for the analysis: object agreement in Hungarian**

7.1 Introduction

- ◆ Recall the proposal about French PPA:



- The patterns of object agreement and the morphology of pronouns in Hungarian provide support for this proposal.
- **Observation:** morphologically complete pronouns do not trigger agreement on the finite verb morphologically incomplete pronoun trigger agreement on the finite verb.
- **Proposal:** the morpheme missing in incomplete pronoun is the agreement marker on the finite verb

7.2 Data: object agreement in Hungarian

- ◆ In Hungarian, when a finite verbs takes a definite full direct objects DP or 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronominal direct objects, it is suffixed by an object marker (or by a portmanteau morpheme spelling out both object and subject agreement. I leave this aside here).

(14) (Ti) ismer-**i**-tek a lány-t / őt / őket.  
 You<sub>PL</sub> know-**DEF**-2.PL the girl-ACC him / them  
 ‘You know the girl / him / them.’

(15) (Ti) ismer-tek egy lány-t.  
 You<sub>PL</sub> know-2.PL a girl-ACC  
 ‘You know a girl.’

- ◆ When a finite verb takes a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronominal direct object, it is not suffixed by an object marker.

(16) (Mi) ismer-ünk téged / titeket.  
 we know-1PL.INDEF you<sub>SG</sub> / you<sub>PL</sub>  
 ‘We know you<sub>SG</sub> / you<sub>PL</sub>.’

(17) (Ti) ismer-tek engem / minket.  
 you<sub>PL</sub> know-2.PL.INDEF me / us  
 ‘You know me/us.’

### 7.3 Morphology of Hungarian pronouns

- ◆ While 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person personal pronouns contain two sets of phi-features, their 3<sup>rd</sup> person counterparts only contain one.

(18) en-g-em ; té-g-ed ; mi-nk-et ; ti-tek-et  
 1.SG-g-1.SG; 2.SG-g-2.SG; 1.PL-1.PL-ACC ; 2.PL-2.PL-ACC  
 ‘me’ ‘you<sub>SG</sub>’ ‘us’ ‘you<sub>PL</sub>’

(19) ő-t ; ő-k-et  
 DEF.SG-ACC ; DEF.SG-PL-ACC  
 him them

→ This suggests that 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronominal direct objects lack a morpheme

### 7.4 Analysis

- ◆ The data presented above suggests the following correlations

morpheme missing in a pronoun --> object marking on the finite verb  
 no morpheme missing in a pronoun --> no object marking on the finite verb

- ◆ Further support for this correlation: dative (and all other oblique) personal pronouns of all persons, and crucially 3<sup>rd</sup> person ones, are morphologically complete and do not trigger object marking on the finite verb.

(20) én-nek-em ; te-nek-ed ; ő-nek-i  
 1.SG-DAT-1.SG; 2.SG-g-2.SG; DEF.SG-DAT-DEF.SG  
 ‘to me’ ‘to you’ ‘to him’  
 mi-nek-ünk ; ti-nek-tek ; ő-nek-ik  
 1.PL-DAT1.PL ; 2.PL-DAT2.PL ; DEF.PL-DAT-DEF.PL  
 ‘to us’ ‘to you’ ‘to them’

(21) (Ti) ad-tok egy rózsá-t ő-neki  
 To.him give-2PL.INDEF a rose-ACC to him  
 ‘You<sub>PL</sub> give-2PL a rose to him.’

- ◆ **Proposal:** the object marker occurring on finite verbs taking a 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronominal direct object originates as part of the structure of the direct object pronoun.
- ◆ **Morphological evidence:** the morpheme we would expect to find within 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronominal direct objects has the same form as that referencing the object on the verb:

(22) ő-nek-i ; \*ő-i-t  
 DEF.SG-DAT-DEF.SG ; DEF.SG-DEF.SG-ACC  
 ‘to him’ ‘him’

(23) (Ti) ismer-i-tek ő-t  
 You<sub>PL</sub> know-DEF-2.PL him



‘You know the girl / him

### Conclusion

- Spanish *a* = PPAgr marker in French = DOMarker *-i* in Turkish and *-et* in Hebrew = object marker on Hungarian finite verbs = spell-out of the upper structural layer(s) of the direct object
- French PPA is the spell-out of a differential object marker on a participle
- No need of mechanism such as feature checking/valuation
- Simpler system: (i) unifies PPA and DOM, (ii) only uses independently needed mechanisms: Merge, subextraction and spell-out.

## 8. Remaining issues about French PPA

Until now, I have glossed over the following facts

- ◆ Gender plays a role in French PPA, i.e. DOM
- ◆ Aspect plays a role in French PPA, i.e. DOM
- ◆ The definiteness hierarchy plays a role in French PPA, i.e. DOM

### 8.1 Gender

- ◆ Another condition for the occurrence of the PPAgreement marker, i.e. the DOMarker, is that the direct object refer to a feminine entity (plural marker is never audible).

(24) (La maison,) Pierre l'a construit-**e** lui-même.

The house Pierre it has built-**PPA** himself

'(As for the house,) Pierre built it himself.'

(25) (Le bateau,) Pierre l'a construit(\***e**) lui-même.

The boat Pierre it has built himself

'(As for the boat,) Pierre built it himself.'

- ◆ But gender and other features play a role in DOM in other languages as well:
  - Russian animacy-driven DOM system only applies to masculine nouns. That is, animacy is not a sufficient condition for DOM to appear, the direct object must also be of masculine gender.
  - In Cappadocian, DOM targets masculine and feminine nouns but not neuter ones (Janse 2004: 5).
  - Aissen (2003: 456) points out that “in Yiddish, DOM is restricted to humans, but does not cover the entire category. Among common nouns, overt case-marking is restricted to eight common nouns [masculine and feminine], most of which denote individuals worthy of respect (father, mother, teacher,...).
  - Number seems to play a role in Palauan DOM (Georgopoulos 1991: 24-36)
- ◆ How to formalize this? Does it indicate that the ACC2P-layer actually corresponds to several layers: specificity, gender, number...?

## 8.2 Aspect

- ◆ In French, another condition for the occurrence of the DOMarker is the presence of a past participle. This goes hand-in-hand with perfective aspect in French. Thus, we can reformulate: another condition for the occurrence of the DOMarker is the presence of perfective aspect.
- ◆ Aspect (as well as mood and tense) play a role in DOM in other languages as well, e.g. in Finnish (Aikhenvald 2008: 583; Aissen 2003: fn 3, fn 29; Heusinger et al. 2008: 1), Uzbek (Heusinger et al. 2008: 12) and Mordvin (Georgi 2010).

## 8.3 Full DPs vs pronouns

- ◆ As seen above, in Hungarian, Hebrew, Turkish and Spanish, DOM also takes place with full DPs.
- ◆ In Modern French, however, PPA does not occur with (non-wh-) full DPs (but note that this used to be the case a couple of centuries ago, cf. *Ay lettres écrit-es* (Grevisse 1969))
- ◆ In Portuguese as well, DOM is restricted to pronouns (Bossong 1998: 223). Kanuri (Cristofaro 2013: 73)?
- DOM/PPA in French is driven by specificity, gender, aspect and form (DP vs pronoun).

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