

WHAT TO DO WITH MORPHOLOGICAL AND SYNTACTIC VARIANTS IN FRENCH?

Benjamin Massot

Universität Stuttgart
Graduiertenkolleg Linguistik
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- (1) a. k a ty köpri dy syze (Qu'as-tu compris du sujet ?)
what have_{PRES23} you understood of-the topic
'What did you understand of the question?'
- b. nu n l lyi dirõ pa (Nous ne le lui dirons pas.)
we NE it to-him tell_{FUT46} not
'We won't tell it to him.'

1 Language variation in French

1.1 Some French specificity? another French Paradox?

- what's described by linguists invoking 'French' and by French grammar schoolbooks? (cf. examples in (1))
 - Late Classical French (the so-called 'standard' French) (LCF)
- (2) "[...] les habitudes des grammaires françaises, qui liaient fortement l'étude de la grammaire à celle des textes littéraires." [BB03, p. 320]
- utterances that are not comprised in LCF are treated/considered as:
 - 'ghosts' ('it doesn't even exist!')
 - not French
 - 'just' spoken French
 - 'just' colloquial French
 - 'not really' French
 - not 'true' French

→ ‘non-standard’ French, ‘somehow deviant’ French

- most utterances produced by French speakers are not comprised in LCF

(3) “Le français, langue officielle de la France, est garanti par la constitution et régulièrement pratiqué par la majorité de la population” [Gad03, p. 91]

(4) a. *ty fe kwa dmě* (“Tu fais quoi demain ?”)
you do_{PRES123} what tomorrow
‘What are you doing tomorrow?’

b. *ʒ e pa fě* (‘J’ai pas faim.’)
I have_{PRES1} not hunger
‘I’m not hungry.’

c. *il a sa mer k e malade*
he have_{PRES23} his mother who be_{PRES23} sick
‘His mother is sick.’ (‘Il a sa mère qu’est malade.’)

d. *avek pier õ par ã vakãs la smen profen*
with Peter one leave_{PRES123} in hollydays the next week
‘Peter and I are going on hollydays next week.’ (‘Avec Pierre, on part en vacances la semaine prochaine.’)

- so that the standard (i.e. the most frequent utterances) of French is non-standard!

1.2 Describing Demotic French

various ways linguists take non-LCF utterances into account

- ‘popular French’, ‘ordinary French’, ...

→ Gadet, ...

sociolinguists ask the question “What part of the language is used in what situation?”

- the recent ‘spoken French’ tradition

→ Blanche-Benveniste and others

(5) “La langue parlée [...] serait donc privée d’organisation grammaticale. On peut montrer qu’il n’en est rien.” [BB03, p. 326]

- generativists

- each utterance is described for itself: what rule(s) can produce it?
- make correlations
- [ZH03]: to make correlations between syntactic properties, we need to be sure that the syntactic structures involved belong to the same grammar.

criticizing those approaches

- all variants are said to belong to a single huge grammar
 - but all of them are not always adequate to the situation
 - it misses the fact that all variants are not acquired the same way
 - language is seen from an external point of view
- (6) a. “L’hétérogénéité des formes linguistiques est constitutive de la notion même de langue.” [Gad03, p. 94]
- b. “[les] usagers du français” (Josette Rey-Debove, quoted in [Gad03, p. 107])
- the opposition between ‘spoken French’ and ‘written French’ focusses on the differences between orthography and pronunciation, as if it were two different outputs of the same input

some linguists deal with diglossy

- the question
 - (7) a. “Les français seraient-ils atteints de *diglossie* ?” [BB03, p. 317]
 - b. “ist der **Abstand** zwischen *français parlé* und *français écrit* schon **so groß, daß wir uneingeschränkt von einer Ferguson-Konstellation in Frankreich sprechen können?**” [Koc97, p. 238]

comparison with the Greek situation before 1974

- one (quite) old pretigious (variety of the) language, reserved for certain purposes (*katharevusa*)
- one (quite) recent non-prestigious (variety of the) language, reserved for other purposes (*dimotiki*)
- inadequacy of the written/spoken opposition
- both varieties are diachronically related
- answers

(8) “En revanche, la syntaxe de la langue parlée a peu de particularités qui ne pourraient être représentées dans la langue écrite. C’est une question de niveau de langue plutôt qu’une répartition entre oral et écrit.” [BB03, p. 326]

→ again, it seems that the external point of view guides the answer (cf. *une question de niveau de langue*)

(9) “Plus exactement il y a *deux langues distinctes* : l’une qui est le français, qui, vers le XVe siècle, a remplacé le “francien” [...] l’autre que l’on pourrait appeler le néo-français.” [Que65, p. 66]

Demotic French (DF): why define a new term?

- avoid misunderstandings
 - ‘non-standard’ can be understood as ‘unusually used’
 - ‘standard’ can be understood as ‘usually used’
 - ‘popular’ describes diastatic/sociolinguistic phenomena
 - we need a term to describe *diaphasic* phenomena
- ‘spoken French’ is too large and too small
 - spoken vs. written is a diaphasic opposition, but:
 - some ‘spoken French’ belongs to LCF (public speeches, TV news, reading aloud)
 - some ‘written French’ doesn’t (comics, chat, SMS, private emails)

(10) **Hypothesis 1** *French nowadays is a true Diglossy (in the sense of Ferguson 1959) between LCF and DF. And linguistic considerations (such as theoretical or typological ones, ...) should prefer LCF and DF to be two different grammars to be described. Without any sociolinguistic consideration, corpus data shall show it too.*

2 What are the data? How huge is the gap between DF and LCF?

2.1 Wh-Questions

- with verb-movement and wh-movement

(11) a. a ki obeit il (À qui obéit-il ?)
to who obey_{PRES123} he
'Whom does he obey?'

b. a ki pier obeit il (À qui Pierre obéit-il ?)
to who Peter obey_{PRES123} he
'Whom does Peter obey?'

- without verb-movement but with wh-movement

(12) a. a ki il obei
to who he obey_{PRES123}
'Whom does he obey?'

b. a ki il obei pier
to who he obey_{PRES123} Peter
'Whom does Peter obey?'

- without verb-movement and with in-situ wh-words

(13) a. il obei a ki
he obey_{PRES123} to who
'Whom does he obey?'

b. pier il obei a ki
Peter he obey_{PRES123} to who
'Whom does Peter obey?'

- with verb-movement and with in-situ wh-words

(14) a. * obeit il a ki
obey_{PRES123} he to who

b. * pier obeit il a ki
Peter obey_{PRES123} he to who

2.2 Negation

- (15) a. i (n) reflefi pa (Il (ne) réfléchit pas.)
He (NE) think_{PRES123} not
'He doesn't think.'
- b. i (n) reflefi ply (Il (ne) réfléchit plus.)
He (NE) think_{PRES123} anymore
'He doesn't think anymore.'
- c. i (n) reflefi zame (Il (ne) réfléchit jamais.)
He (NE) think_{PRES123} never
'He never thinks.'

2.3 Number in the DP

- (16) le solda(-z) amerikě(-z) e italiě
DEF-PL soldier(-PL) amerikan(-PL) and Italian
'the American and Italian soldiers'

3 Problems that arise with linguistic investigations

3.1 Typological considerations on Wh-questions

- languages that have verb-movement are rarely allowed not to use it; they also don't like in-situ wh-words

English:

- (17) a. Whom does Peter obey?
b. *Whom Peter obeys?
c. *Peter obeys whom?
d. *Does Peter obey whom?

German:

- (18) a. Wem gehorcht Peter?
Who_{DAT} obeys Peter
'Whom does Peter obey'
b. * Wem Peter gehorcht?
whom Peter obeys
c. * Peter gehorcht wem?
Peter obeys whom

- d. * Gehorcht Peter wem?
obeys Peter whom

Spanish (and Romance languages):

- (19) a. ¿A quién obedece Pedro?
to whom obeys Peter
'Whom does Peter obey?'
- b. * ¿A quién Pedro obedece?
to whom Peter obeys
- c. * ¿Pedro obedece a quién?
Peter obeys to whom
- d. * ¿Obedece Pedro a quién?
obeys Peter to whom

- languages that don't have verb-movement have in-situ wh-words

Mandarin Chinese:

- (20) Yuehan mai sheme shu [Don99, p. 35]
John buy what book
'What book will John buy?'

- my hypothesis is 'very compatible' with language typology

3.2 Negation: an optional rule or two different constructions?

- 'NE is optionally spelled out'

- (21) a. [i [NEGP n [IP refleji [pa]]]] / [i [NEGP n [IP refleji [ply]]]]
b. [i [NEGP ∅ [IP refleji [pa]]]] / [i [NEGP ∅ [IP refleji [ply]]]]

- BUT: negation without NE shows properties that negation with NE hasn't.

- (22) a. (*n) pa posibil ((*ne) pas possible!)
(NE) not possible
'No way! / Is it really true?'
- b. è (*n) s abij pur pa fer (Elle (*ne) s'habille pour pas cher.)
she (NE) REFL dress_{PRES1236} for not expensive
'She gets dressed for few money'

c. (*n) parl lyi ply ((*ne) parle-lui plus)
 (NE) speak to-him nomore
 ‘Don’t talk to him anymore.’

- pa, ply, ... are in LCF particles that get their negative reading from the presence of NE.
- whereas they are in DF heads of QPs (like pø ‘few’ or tro ‘too much’):

(23) a. [i [IP refleʃi [QP pa [VP t]]]] ↔ [i [IP refleʃi [QP pø [VP t]]]]
 b. [PP pur [QP pa [AdjP ʃer]]] ↔ [PP pur [QP tro [AdjP ʃer]]]

- one rule (cf. (21)) doesn’t predict the behavior in (22) whereas two rules ((21a) vs. (23a)) do; which is compatible with the hypothesis

3.3 A correlation between Number in the DP and some syntactic property

- DF and LCF are not on the same grade on a scale describing how/where languages express number in the DP (cf. table 1)

| Language | Affix | Number feature on | | Articles |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------|----------|
| | | N | Det | |
| Russian | synthetic | ✓ | - | × |
| English | ✓ | ✓ | rarely | ✓ |
| Spanish | with Agreement | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| LCF | little presence | rarely | ✓ | ✓ |
| DF | slightly more little presence | × | ✓ | ✓ |
| Poyaudin | × | × | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 1: how/where languages express Number

- There is a big correlation between the position in the scale in table 1 and the syntactic ability of expressing (un)definiteness without Article:

(24) The more a language focusses the expression of Number on the Noun and the less on the Article, the less it has constraints on expressing (un)definiteness without Article.

→ LCF and DF don’t have the same constraints regarding the expression of (un)definiteness

Russian definiteness and undefiniteness in both singular and plural as a subject; undefiniteness in both singular and plural as an object

- (25) a. pralajala sabaka
bark_{PAST3} dog_{NOM-FEM-SG}
'A/the dog barked.'
- b. pralajali sabaki
bark_{PAST6} dog_{NOM-FEM-PL}
'(the) dogs barked.'
- (26) a. ja videl sabaku
I see_{PAST1} dog_{ACC-FEM-SG}
'I saw a dog.'
- b. ja videl sabak
I see_{PAST1} dog_{ACC-FEM-PL}
'I saw dogs.'

English in the plural, rarely in the singular

- (27) a. 'dogs barked all night' / '* (a) dog barked all night'
b. (on a newspaper) 'President meets Queen'

Spanish undefiniteness in the plural, as an object, maybe as a subject

- (28) a. Tengo perros.
have_{PRES1} dogs
'I have dogs.'
- b. Tengo *(un) perro.
have_{PRES1} a dog
'I have a dog.'
- (29) a. * Amigos alemanes vinieron.
friends German_{PL} come_{PAST6}
'German friends came.'
- b. ? Vinieron amigos alemanes.
come_{PAST6} friends German_{PL}
'German friends came.'

LCF only with coordinated bare plurals as a subject

- (30) a. (de) nyaʒ(z) e (dez) eklersi alternrõ dã | apremidi
(a_{PL}) cloud(s) and (a_{PL}) sunny spell alternate_{FUT46} in the afternoon
'Clouds and sunny spells will alternate along the afternoon'

- b. *(de) nyaʒ(z) aparetrõ dǎ l siel
 (a_{PL}) cloud(s) appear_{FUT46} in the sky
 ‘Clouds will appear in the sky’

DF no possibility

- (31) *(de) nyaʒ e *(dez) eklersi
 a_{PL} cloud and a_{PL} sunny spell
 ‘Clouds and sunny spells’

Poyaudin no possibility

- (32) *(de) nyaʒ e *(de) eklersi
 a_{PL} cloud and a_{PL} sunny spell
 ‘Clouds and sunny spells’

- Could the previous scale be replaced by the history of French?

→ Latin, Old French, Middle French, (Late) Classical French, Demotic French, ...

→ do things just move on? well ...

‘there’s a Number feature on the noun, but we just don’t hear it’

- (33) a. “la syntaxe française est incorruptible. C’est de là que résulte cette admirable clarté, base éternelle de notre langue. *Ce qui n’est pas clair n’est pas français* ; ce qui n’est pas clair est encore anglais, italien, grec ou latin.” [...] “Le français nomme d’abord le sujet du discours, ensuite le verbe qui est l’action, et enfin l’objet de cette action : voilà la logique naturelle à tous les hommes” [Riv83]
- b. “Tout changement n’est pas une détérioration, loin de là, sinon il faut mettre la notion de progrès à la poubelle.” (Josette Rey-Debove, cited in [Gad03, p. 106])

4 Corpus Evidence?

- Utterances of DF do exist! Do utterances of LCF still exist?

→ in a corpus of informal speech (of 291 sentences), 78 utterances of PAS, no utterance of NE!

- (34) ia ma grămer k abit pà lwě JIMY:IR:43
 there-is my grand-mother who live_{PRES1236} not far
 ‘My grand-mother doesn’t live far (from here).’

- In case of a diglossy, French speakers implement two different grammars. If so, I expect my corpus to reveal implications between typical characteristics of LCF and DF.

Especially, I expect that the presence of a DF characteristic excludes the presence of a LCF characteristic. I expect to find patterns like the one in (35).

- (35) a. \int e pa vy le \int iě(*z) āraze
 I have_{PRES1} not seen the_{PL} dog(s) rabid
 ‘I didn’t see the rabid dogs.’
- b. \int n e pa vy le \int iě(z) āraze
 I NE have_{PRES1} not seen the_{PL} dog(s) rabid
 ‘I didn’t see the rabid dogs.’

→ overcome the lack of judgement on the grammaticality of examples that combine LCF and DF

→ Among the previous 78 utterances of PAS, 6 are cases where a liaison was possible. No liaison was actually done.

- (36) \int e tu \int ur pà y d pet grav JIMY:IR:172
 I have_{PRES1} always not had of injury serious
 ‘I haven’t been seriously injured yet.’

→ DF-type negation triggers DF-type liaison behavior

Conclusion

- (37) a. DF: t a kōpri kwa o syze
 you have_{PRES23} understood what to-the topic
 ‘What did you understand of the question?’
- b. DF: ð lyi dira pa
 one to-him tell_{FUT23} not
 ‘We won’t tell it to him.’
- (38) a. DF: * k a ty kōpri dy syze
 what have_{PRES23} you understood of-the topic
 ‘What did you understand of the question?’
- b. DF: * nu n l lyi dirð pa
 we NE it to-him tell_{FUT46} not
 ‘We won’t tell it to him.’

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