Sexless animates?

*Gender agreement in superlative partitives in French*

Westveer, T.J.T.; Sleeman, A.P.; Aboh, E.O.

**Citation for published version (APA):**

**General rights**
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Sexless anates? Gender agreement in superlative partitives in French

1. Introduction

Sexless anates?

Noun classes (adapted from Sleeman & Ihsane 2016)

- Class A: Suppletive forms: two distinct forms (la joie, la sister — le frère, the brother)
- Class B/C: Related forms: suffixes (B/determiner [C] change to chanteur — le chanteur [D])
- Class D: Fixed gender nouns (la nègre, ministe the minister)

Gender agreement in superlative partitives:

1. The gender of the noun in the inner DP
2. General differences between the noun classes
3. Replication of Sleeman & Ihsane's experiment on a larger scale:
   - 13 different nouns of noun classes B, C and D included
4. Previously investigated by Sleeman & Ihsane (2016)

2. Sleeman & Ihsane (2016)

Gender agreement in (superlative) partitives in French:

- Class D nouns: only grammatical agreement (not verified by them!)
- Class B/C nouns: semantic agreement possible (gender mismatch between set noun and subset noun accepted)

How do they explain these agreement patterns?

1. Distinction between grammatical and semantic gender
2. Valuation through insertion of semantic gender on GendP
   - No semantic gender value = Failed Agree (Preminger 2011)
3. Spell-out of default masculine gender

Two-noun analysis of superlative partitives: noun of inner DP (set) copied onto outer DP (subset), remains unpronounced

- If present, gender value copied together with noun (E)
- Second Gender Phrase in outer DP
- If Failed Agree has taken place in inner DP, second chance to insert semantic gender value in outer DP

3. Aims and methods

Sleeman & Ihsane's results only based on a limited number of informant's judgements

- Replicate Sleeman & Ihsane's experiment on a larger scale and in a more systematic way
- Provide a theoretical explanation for the agreement patterns we observe

Methodology:

- Grammaticality Judgement Task with 70 native speakers of French
- Online task using Google Forms
- 80 sentences judged on a 5-point scale, presented in random order
- 13 different nouns of noun classes B, C and D included
- Sentences with semantic and grammatical agreement
- Control sentences
- Background questionnaire

4. Results

![Comparison of noun classes](image)

![Judgments of class D nouns](image)

5. Towards an analysis

The theoretical analysis should explain:

- General differences between the noun classes
- Variation within the results

Gender agreement competition, the outer DP can agree with:

1. The gender of the noun in the inner DP
2. The gender of the predicate

(7) le plus jeune des nouveaux ministres est Hélène, the/M most young of the new/F minister/F is Hélène

Main theoretical assumptions:

- A two noun analysis of partitives (cf. Sleeman & Ihsane 2016)
- Inner DP's noun copied onto outer DP, but remains unpronounced
- There is a phase boundary between inner and outer DP

Gender feature hierarchy (based on Harley & Ritter 2002):

- Grammatical gender
- Semantic gender

Facts marking in the mental lexicon:

- [m] masculine only
- [f] feminine only
- [c, f] feminine + common
- [c, m] masculine + common

Sexless anates in French

- Compare the entries for the noun DP, pronom. and sentinelle in different editions of the French Petit Robert dictionary:


Petit Robert (2016)

- V雏 = DP
- V = V

Individual variation: difference in feature marking in the mental lexicon

6. An analysis that seems to work...

(8) Le plus jeune des (nouveaux) ministres est Hélène. the/M most young of the (new/F) minister/F is Hélène

(9) La plus jeune des (nouveaux) ministres est Hélène. the/F most young of the (new/F) minister/F is Hélène

- Class C noun, no gender mismatch in partitive

(10) La plus jeune des (nouveaux) sentinelle est Jean-Luc. the/F most young of the (new/F) guard/F is Jean-Luc

- Class D noun, gender mismatch in partitive

7. Conclusion

1. Replication of Sleeman & Ihsane's experiment on a larger scale:
   - Semantic agreement is preferred with class B and class C nouns
   - Grammatical agreement is preferred with class D nouns

2. We have proposed a theoretical analysis that explains the agreement patterns observed

Future research (i) Investigate quantified partitives (one of the X) & (ii) Investigate same phenomena in German

References