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.
1. Introduction

Sexless animates?

Thom Wester, Petra Sleeman & Encho O. Aboh – Universiteit van Amsterdam
Going Romance 2018
Universiteit Utrecht – 12.12.2018

2. Sleeman & Ihsane (2016)

Sexual 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. Second chance to insert semantic gender value on Gend in outer DP
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

6. An analysis that seems to work...

(8) Le plus jeune des (nouveaux) ministres est Hélène.

(a) Class C noun, no gender mismatch in partitive
(b) Le plus jeune des (nouveaux) ministres est Hélène.

(9) La plus jeune des (nouveaux) ministres est Hélène.

Individual variation: difference in feature marking in the mental lexicon

(10) Le plus jeune des (nouveaux) sentinelles est Jean-Luc.

(a) Class D noun, gender mismatch in partitive
(b) Le plus jeune des (nouveaux) sentinelles est Jean-Luc.

Individual variation: difference in feature marking in the mental lexicon

6. Aims and methods

Sleeman & Ihsane’s results only based on a limited number of informants’ 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

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


