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

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1. Introduction
Sexless animates?

Noun classes (adapted from Thorne & Sleeman 2016)

Class A: Suppletive forms: two distinct forms to leer: the "sister" = le frère, le "brother".

Class B/C: Related forms: suffix (B)/determiner (C) change to chanteuse, le chanteur.

Class D: Fixed-gender nouns: les garçons = the "guard"; les génies = the "genius".

⇒ Class D nouns can refer to both females and males!

Gender agreement in suppletive partitives:


2. Sleeman & Ihsane (2016)

Gender agreement in suppletive 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?

⇒ Distinction between grammatical and semantic gender
- Class B/C nouns unmarried for grammatical gender
- Valuation through insertion of semantic gender on noun
- No semantic gender value = Failed Agree (Preminger 2011)
- Spell-out of default masculine gender

Two noun analysis of suppletive 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

2. 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:
- Grammatical/semantics judgement Task with 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

3. Results

Comparison noun classes

Judgements of class D nouns

6. An analysis that seems to work...

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

⇒ If present, gender value copied together with noun (E)

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

⇒ Only present for animate nouns

Individual variation: difference in feature marking in the mental lexicon

7. Conclusion

1. Replication of Sleeman & Ihsane’s experiment on a larger scale:
- Semantic agreement is preferred with class B and 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

