

Grammatical markers and grammatical relations in the simple clause in Old French

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Old French : an overview

Old French (OF) : time and space

- ▶ Middle Ages (9th-13th C.)
- ▶ northern half of France, Wallonia and England

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- ▶ Describing OF
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We will focus on the common ground

Old French : an overview

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- ▶ The distribution of major constituents in the clause express information-structural properties
⇒ word order a lot freer than it is in modern French

Question

Declension in OF does not mark reliably dependents of the verb

- ▶ Other morphosyntactic and semantic clues are more important :
valency, meaning of the verb (Schøsler 1984)
- ▶ Neither homogeneous, nor systematic (Chambon/Davidsottir 2007)
- ▶ Dependencies exist even when case markers are absent (Detges 2009)
- ▶ However, grammars still deliver lists of paradigms (eg : Buridant 2000)

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What is pursued :

- ▶ Description markers where they appear (rejection of *zero* morphs)
- ▶ Use of a dependency framework to do so (Stein/Benneckenstein 2006)
- ▶ Surface-syntactic (henceforth “syntactic”) approach rather than a (paradigmatic) morphological one

Introduction

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Theoretical grounds

Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

Thomas Groß's intra-word analysis

Alain Lemaréchal's *specification*

Major relations in the clause in OF

Classical approach to declension in OF

Definite article

Theme variation

No overt marker at all

Conclusion

Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

Given a dependency, which form is the governor ?

Mel'čuk proposes three criteria, named “Criteria B”

- ▶ Passive valence (syntax)
- ▶ Morphological contact point (morphology)
- ▶ Most general referential class (semantics)

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Criteria B are hierarchized :

- ▶ B2 is invoked if B1 fails
- ▶ B3 is invoked if B2 fails

Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

B1 : Passive valence (syntax)

Passive syntactic valence of a lexeme/of a phrase : a set of syntactic roles which the lexeme/the phrase can take in larger constructions (maybe with some inflectional modifications). In other words, the passive syntactic valence of a lexeme/a phrase is its syntactic distribution. (2009 : 4)

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the white horse

Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

B2 : Morphological contact point (morphology)

If B1 fails, the governor is :

- ▶ either the form that controls agreement or morphological government outside of the phrase
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I want that he comes-SUBJUNCTIVE

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I eat this jam sandwich

Thomas Groß's intra-word analysis

Grammatical markers in MTT

- ▶ lexemes (free words)
- ▶ order of lexemes
- ▶ prosody
- ▶ inflection

Only lexical units must be represented as nodes in the tree (Mel'čuk)

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with child PLURAL DATIVE
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Extending dependency trees to morphology

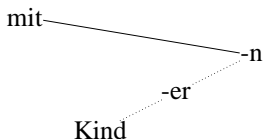
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⇒ bound morphs too should be represented as well in trees (Groß 2011)



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Morphological dependencies (Mel'čuk)

The wordform w_2 is said to morphologically depend on the wordform w_1 in the given utterance if and only if at least one grammeme of w_2 is selected depending on w_1 .

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Syntactic dependencies (IM) : criteria A

- A1 the linear arrangement of f_1 and f_2 must be linearly constrained in a neutral utterance
- A2 the combination of f_1 and f_2 , or the combination of f_1 and the subtree governed by f_2 must form a potential prosodic unit (= *phrase*)

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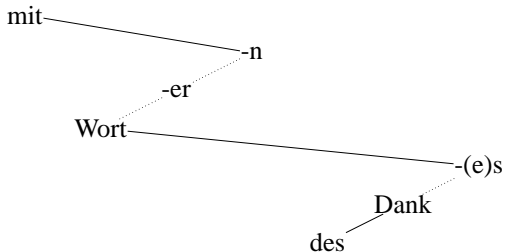
Syntactic dependencies (revised) : A2 works

mit Wort -er -n des Dank -es
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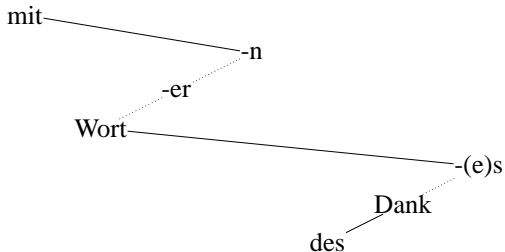
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⇒ *-es* → *des* is **not a syntactic dependency** : it does not form a phrase

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Syntactic dep. (revised) : compulsory inflection in Latin

We have to posit :

Let $f_1 \rightarrow f_2$ be a compulsory intra-word syntactic dependency. For all inter-word dependencies $f_2 - f_3$, A2 holds if either $f_1 f_2 f_3$ or $f_1 f_2$ and the subtree governed by f_3 forms a phrase

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Amic -um₁ car -um₂ video

friend ACC dear Acc I see

“I see (my) dear friend”

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- ▶ *-um₁ → amic* = compulsory dependency and *um₂* governs *car*
 \Rightarrow *amic - um₂* (*carum amicum* is a phrase)
- ▶ *-um carum* is not a phrase \Rightarrow no syntactic relation between *um₁* and *um₂*

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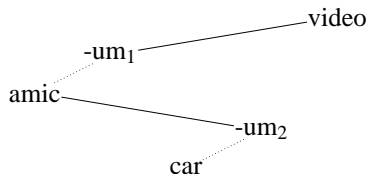
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Alain Lemaréchal's *specification*

Hierarchy of markers

To AM, grammatical markers are the following (in decreasing order of importance) :

1. integrative markers (prosody)
2. lexeme order
3. part of speech compatibilities
4. segmental units (free relational morphemes and inflection)

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Markers and government

- ▶ markers are added to an existing relation to **specify** it
- ▶ markers **stack** on it
- ▶ cp. Tesnière's *translatifs*

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Markers may be compulsory. . .

BUT if they appear appear, they have to be right (grammatical and semantic compatibilities)

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Stacking markers

Markers can be ambiguous (not specific enough on their own)

E.g., *que* is either, in traditional terms :

- ▶ a pronoun : *L'homme que tu vois* “The man you see”
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Another marker makes the ambiguity disappear : the clause beginning with *que* works with a noun (*homme*) or with a verb (*veux*)

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Ideal system

Traditional ideal analysis :

- ▶ nouns are marked with a bound morpheme *-s*, that marks the role of the subject
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Charle -s respunt

Charles NOM answers

– Roland 156

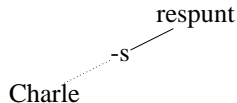
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	sg.	pl.
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OBL	-	-s

TABLE: Ideal case marker

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TABLE: Feminine nouns in *-e*

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TABLE: Feminine nouns in *-e*

⇒ *-s* is *underspecified*

(has to stack with other markers for disambiguation)

Definite article

A more reliable marker

- ▶ The definite article is not compulsory
- ▶ BUT some of its forms **fixate the distribution** (B1); for masc. nouns :
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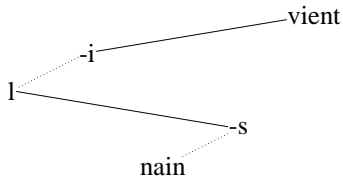
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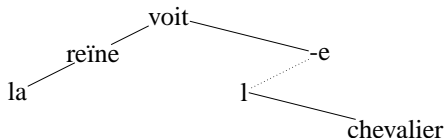
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“The noble man would end like a hero”

– Roland 2867

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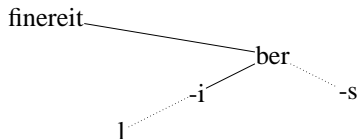
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The news heard the abbess

“The abbess heard the news”

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Semantic properties of the dependents are the only available clue (Schøsler 1984) : *abesse* is animate, *nouvele* is not

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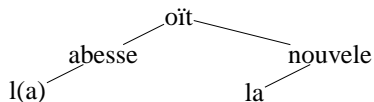
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Semantic properties of the dependents are the only available clue (Schøsler 1984) : *abesse* is animate, *nouvele* is not

No overt marker at all

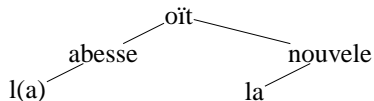
Feminine nouns and definite article are often underspecified

It happens frequently that no marker is to be found. . . (word order is not a grammatical marker)

La nouvele oït l'abesse

The news heard the abbess

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⇒ **Meaning prevails !**

Markers must be seen as an additional mean to express argument structure of sentences that are mostly understandable without them (Detges 2009).

Introduction

Old French : an overview

Question

Theoretical grounds

Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

Thomas Groß's intra-word analysis

Alain Lemaréchal's *specification*

Major relations in the clause in OF

Classical approach to declension in OF

Definite article

Theme variation

No overt marker at all

Conclusion

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Dependencies... without morphological paradigms

- ▶ Mechanical rules (B1, stacking) show the differences between the internal structures of NP in OF

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Some markers are permanently promoted/demoted

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Dependencies... without morphological paradigms

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Thank → you !