1. Introduction – Past participle agreement in Standard French – brief descriptive overview

- “Accordo del PP in francese
  Sia $b$ una proposizione, $a$ un nominale di $b$ e $p$ un participio passato di una forma verbale perifrastica di $b$. $p$ si accorda in genere e numero con $a$ se e solo se:
  (i) la proposizione è finalmente intransitiva [= internal argument is not in its post-verbal base position].
  (ii) $a$ è legittimato al controllo dell’accordo.
  Un nominale è legittimato al controllo dell’accordo sse:
  a. non è chômeur [= $a$ is in an argument position]
  b. è il 2 inizializzato da $p$ [= is the internal argument of $p$].“
  (cf. Loporcaro 1998 :53)

- According to Loporcaro 1998, two parameters determine past participle agreement in Romance:
  Auxiliary selection (être with unaccusatives, passives, reflexive constructions; avoir with unergative verbs and active-transitive constructions), and,
  In the case of active-transitive constructions, linear order between past participle and internal argument. Moreover, when there is agreement with the subject, être is chosen in French (cf. Stark/Riedel 2013: 119).

(1) Pierre donne la pomme à Jean.
    Pierre gives the apple to John
(2a) La pomme a été donné-e à Jean.
    The apple has been given to John
(2b) Pierre a donné la pomme à Jean.
    Pierre has given the apple to John
(3) Marie est arrivé-e.
    Marie is arrived-F
(4a) Pierre l’a donné-e à Jean.
    Pierre it-has given-F to John
(4b) la pomme que Pierre a donné-e à Jean.
    The apple that Pierre has given-F to John

2. Formalization – two different rules ?

- Function‘ of past participle agreement in Romance / French?
  Idea (cf. Stark 2013):
  ‘signal’: the subject of the sentence is a theme (patient), not a higher thematic role (e.g. agent) (= there is no DP externally merged in SpecVP) - idea of
Past participle agreement in French

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• Problem: that holds only for past participle agreement with être. Subjects in past participle agreement constructions with avoir are agents, and still, we have agreement (not with the subject, but with the preceding, never the following, internal argument).

• Question: Why should agreement be based on linear ('surface') order in one case (avoir) with certain types of internal arguments (interrogative and relative pronouns, clitics), and not the other (être), when the trigger for agreement is the same (= the internal argument)?

• One solution:
Past participle agreement is always triggered by the internal argument moving through SpecvP (originally Spec Agr_oP) at one point in the derivation, i.e. by a Spec-Head configuration (Kayne 1989), like subject-verb agreement.

DP . . . [_AgrOP (DP) AgrO] [VP V (DP)] . . .
(Kayne 1989, in the representation of D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008: 478)

• Shortcomings of that proposal:
  1) How can this movement be motivated in recent minimalist terms (and in a cross-linguistically convincing perspective; for a general theoretical critique see Georgi 2014: 239-244)? Note that past participle agreement in French requires movement (= internal Merge) to a certain position (SpecvP or Spec Agr_oP; cf. Georgi (2014: 242) and is realized only in the initial sentence of embedded structures with long wh-extraction).
  2) Why shouldn’t past participle agreement (with avoir) function exactly in the same way as subject-verb-agreement (cf. Kayne 1989: 85), e.g. as a case of AGREE (cf. Chomsky 2001)?
  3) If modeled as a probing relation between v° and a DP in its probing domain, past participle agreement with avoir needs, as opposed to past participle agreement with être, additional or different conditions, i.e. independently motivated preposing of the object DP (because of wh-movement or its clitic status, Kayne 1989, Belletti 2001) and the avoidance of AGREE with postverbal lexical DPs remaining in situ (cf. D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008:479f.).

• Ad 2) Why shouldn’t past participle agreement (with avoir) function exactly in the same way as subject-verb-agreement (cf. Kayne 1989: 85), e.g. as a case of AGREE (cf. Chomsky 2001)?

(5) a. Il a (*ont) été acheté(*es) trois chemises.
   It has (*have) been bought (*-F-PL) three shirts.

   b. Trois chemises (*a) ont été acheté(*es).
   Three shirts (*has) have been bought*(-F-PL)

   Pierre has bought(*-F-PL) three shirts.

   Pierre them-has bought*(-F-PL)

• But see 'Unaccusative inversion' or "ordinary inversion" (Fender 2002, Lahousse 2011): subject in SpecvP - AGREE without movement (with être):

1 (i) La lettre qu’il a dit(*e) que Pierre lui a envoyé(*e) (Chomsky 1995: 325).
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(7) a. *Une épreuve sera présentée à chaque candidat.
A test will be presented-F to each candidate.

b. A chaque candidat sera présentée une épreuve.
To each candidate will be presented-F a test.

(8) a. Je voudrais que soient inscrits tous les enfants de Marie.
I would like that would-be inscribed-PL all the children of Marie.

b. *Je voudrais que soient tous inscrits les enfants de Marie
*I would like that would-be all inscribed-PL the children of Marie.

3. A solution? D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008 on Standard Italian

- Recall 3):
  If modeled as a probing relation between v° and a DP in its probing domain, past participle agreement with avoir needs, as opposed to past participle agreement with être, additional or different conditions, i.e. independently motivated preposing of the object DP (because of wh-movement or its clitic status) and the avoidance of AGREE with postverbal lexical DPs remaining in situ (cf. D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008:479f.):

(10) Sono arrivate le ragazze.
Are arrived-F.PL the girls.

(11) Ho mangiato/*a la mela.
Have eaten/*-F the apple.

(12) L’ho mangiata.
It-have eaten-F.

- Idea:
  AGREE between v° and the DP in SpecVP always takes place, but for the “Phase Impenetrability Condition” (Chomsky 2001, 2005), it is only spelled out at LF when the head containing the probe and its goal are complements of the same phase head.
  ‘Transitive v°’ heads a non-defective phase, i.e. an active phase head, and the probe and its goal are not both contained in the complement of this phase head, hence no overt agrément (cf. example (11)), because of:
  “(13) [(11) in the original, ES] Given an Agree relation A between probe P and goal G, morphophonological agreement between P and G is realized iff P and G are contained in the complement of the minimal phase head H.” (D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008: 482)

(13) a. Hanno accolto bene il suo spettacolo.
Have (*well) received well the his play.

b. *Hanno bene accolto il suo spettacolo.

(14) a. Questo genere di spettacoli è sempre stato bene accolto.
This kind of plays is always been well received (well).

b. *Questo genere di spettacoli è sempre stato accolto bene.
(D’Alessandro/Roberts (2008: 482, quoting Cinque 1999:102)
Past participle agreement in French

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‘Passive/unaccusative/reflexive’ \( V^o \) heads a defective phase, i.e. not an active phase head (also no case-assignment), and thus, the probe and its goal are in the complement of the next higher active phase head, i.e. \( C^o \), hence overt agreement at LF.

Here (cf. example (10)), the past participles remains in \( V^o \) (not clear in D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008, 484; would be odd, because the probe is on \( v_{PRT}^o \)?) or there might be movement to \( v_{PRT}^o \) or even \( v_{AUX}^o \), but that is not relevant, \( v_{PRT}^o \) in this case heads a defective phase.

For past participle agreement with clitics (cf. example (12)): the clitic moves to the higher \( v^o \) head and incorporates there (D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008: 485), \( v_{PRT}^o \) heads a non-defective phase. At the moment of spell-out, goal and probe are both in the complement of \( C^o \), and past participle agreement is overtly realised.

4. More data from French (standard and non-standard)

4.1 Two problems with D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008

1. Past participle agreement with \( wh \)-elements in transitive clauses?\(^2\)

2. Different behaviour of the past participle: does not move (to \( v_{AUX}^o \)) in French (cf. Cinque 1999: 46, 146f.; see also D’Alessandro/Roberts 2010 on Eastern Abbruzzese), thus, agreement is always - or never - predicted:

(13) a. Hanno accolto bene il suo spettacolo.
   b. *Hanno bene accolto il suo spettacolo.

(14) a. Questo genere di spettacoli è sempre stato bene accolto.
   b. *Questo genere di spettacoli è sempre stato accolto bene.

(15) a. Ils ont bien accueilli son spectacle.
   b. *Ils ont accueilli bien son spectacle.

(16) a. Ce genre de spectacle a toujours été bien accueilli.
   b. *Ce genre de spectacle a toujours été accueilli bien

This kind of plays is always been well received (well).

4.2 Corpus data

- b. OFROM:
  more than 28 hours of recordings, 119 speakers from the whole Suisse romande (ca 232,536 words). (cf. Avanzi et al. 2012-2014)
- c. C-ORAL-ROM:
  Only ‘hearable’ agreements (= phonetically realized: \(<\text{écrit-e}>[ekrit] \) vs. \(<\text{vu-e}>[vy]\).

4.2.1 Corpus data - overall results

\(^2\) There should always be overt agreement (not the case in standard Italian, nor always in French):

(i) Je me demande combien de pommes ils ont produit(*es) cette année. (cf. Deprez 1998)).
Past participle agreement in French

Elisabeth Stark

Table 1: Past participle agreement in sms4science.ch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chiffres absolus</th>
<th>Pourcentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non marqué</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>10,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marqué</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>89,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 2: Past participle agreement in OFROM (only ‘consonantical’ agreement)

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<tr>
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<th>Pourcentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>14.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>83</td>
<td>85.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
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</table>

Table 3: Past participle agreement in C-ORAL-ROM (only ‘consonantical’ agreement)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chiffres absolus</th>
<th>Pourcentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non marqué</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Marqué</td>
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<td>85.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Past participle agreement in sms4science.ch according to the construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non marqué</th>
<th>Marqué</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoir</td>
<td>25 (23.4%)</td>
<td>82 (76.6%)</td>
<td>107 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etre</td>
<td>32 (7.8%)</td>
<td>377 (92.2%)</td>
<td>409 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>être</td>
<td>15 (7.7%)</td>
<td>179 (92.3%)</td>
<td>194 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ellipses/épithète</td>
<td>72 (10.1%)</td>
<td>638 (89.9%)</td>
<td>710 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(17) Ben oui c'était le gag, nous sommes allés y manger avec Ronny et nous n'avons pas pu résister à prendre les ravioli Carly quand nous avons vu les ravioli sur la carte.

4.2.2 Role of the auxiliary / construction – statistical significance!
Past participle agreement in French

Elisabeth Stark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non marqué</th>
<th>Marqué</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Avoir</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.67%</td>
<td>53.33%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Être</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.29%</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>être ellipses / épithète</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.58%</td>
<td>85.42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Table 5: Past participle agreement in *OFROM* according to the construction

(18) *en en pédagogie on n'a rien fait maintenant c'est des choses qui qui seraient | _ | qui seraient plus permis | _ | euh plus permises* [things which would-be not any longer allowed – F-PL]

(19) *j'avais des bottes rouges aussi [...] je sais même pas où je les ai mis* [where I them-have put]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non marqué</th>
<th>Marqué</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Avoir</em></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Être</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>89.39%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>être ellipses / épithète</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.55%</td>
<td>85.45%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Past participle agreement in *C-ORAL-ROM* according to the construction

4.2.3 Agreement with clitics and relative pronouns (as predicted by Kayne 1989)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non marqué</th>
<th>Marqué</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objet clitisé</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronom relatif (<em>qu</em>- )</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elément interrogatif (<em>qu</em>- )</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0,0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Past participle agreement in *sms4science.ch* according to the controller
5. Discussion: past participle agreement with *avoir* as 'grammatical virus'

- Idea (MacKenzie 2013):
  „[…] the rule is in fact a grammatical virus; that is, an epiphenomenon of language pedagogy rather than a genuine component of the French grammar.“ (MacKenzie 2013: 19)

- « La règle d’accord du participe passé conjugué avec *avoir* est passablement artificielle. La langue parlée la respecte mal » (Grevisse-Goose 1985: 1369).

  i) lexical specificity
  ii) directionality (i.e. sensitivity to a particular linear order):

  only with *avoir* is linear order a prerequisite of past participle agreement (see examples (6) and (7) from section 2):

    b. *Pierre les a acheté(*es).*

  (7) a. *Une épreuve sera présentée à chaque candidat.*
    b. *A chaque candidat sera présentée une épreuve.*

  iii) under-extension:

  (20) *ces arbres, je les ai vue(*s) abattre*  
  these trees, I them-have seen cut

  (21) *les airs que j’ai entendu(*s) jouer*  
  les melodies that I have heard play
Past participle agreement in French

(22) *les orchestres que j'ai entendu*(s) jouer (cf. MacKenzie 2013:27)
the orchestras that I have heard*(-PL) play

Why shouldn’t there be agreement in restructuring contexts with the preceding internal argument of the past participle whenever this is the theme/patient of the infinitive ((20), (21) against (22); see Radford/Vincent 1997, 155-157, for the lack of a syntactic explanation of the similar behaviour of *faire* and *laisser*)?

iv) over-extension:

(23) *Elle s’est fait(e) confectionner une nouvelle robe.*

she herself is made(*-F) make a new dress

v) late internalization:

Pirvulescu / Belzil (2008) for young French Canadian children exhibiting few cases of past participle agreement with *avoir*, Brissaud/Cogis (2008) reporting striking difficulties in marking the - basically graphic - past participle agreement with *avoir* of French high school children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pourcentage accord marqué</th>
<th>Pourcentage accord non-marqué</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sans indication</td>
<td>86,50</td>
<td>13,50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pas de maturité</td>
<td>77,00</td>
<td>23,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturité</td>
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<td>8,91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89,39</td>
<td>10,61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Past participle agreement in *sms4science.ch* according to education of participants

6. Summary and outlook

- Past participle agreement in French is not derivable by one rule / one explanation in minimalist terms (because of agreement also with internal arguments *in situ*, but only in the case of *être*, against Kayne 1989, because of agreement with preceding *wh*-elements, because of different movement properties of past participles in French, against D’Alessandro/Roberts 2008, because of unexpected behavior of the fixed order of movement and agreement in only the initial clause in structures with long *wh*-extraction, Georgi 2014, 239-244).
- Production data show statistically significant differences in error rates of past participle agreement with *avoir* vs. *être*, in both written and spoken spontaneous speech production.
- At least four out of five criteria of the ’virus theory diagnostics‘ (Slobin 1997, Lasnik/Slobin 2000, MacKenzie 2013) are met for past participle agreement with *avoir*: conclusion: *artificial rule*.
- More psycholinguistic experiments and acquisition data are needed to corroborate this hypothesis.
References

Website:

www.sms4science.ch


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Loporcaro, Michele (1998), Sintassi comparata dell’accordo participiale romanzo, Torino: Rosenberg e Sellier.


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