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Past participle agreement in French – one or two rules?

Abstract: Past participle agreement in French has been taken to be conditioned (among other factors) by movement of the internal argument out of the VP, i.e. as a reflex of movement. However, drawing on data that have been neglected so far in the formal literature on the topic (Lahousse 2011), we show that this characterization is in part misguided: past participle agreement is also possible with in-situ internal arguments of unaccusative/passive verbs (that combine with the perfect auxiliary être), and hence cannot generally be considered a reflex of movement. We argue that a unified analysis of all past participle contexts in French is not only difficult – the sole attempt at a uniform analysis of a very similar pattern in Italian by D’Alessandro and Roberts (2008) cannot be extended to French – but also undesirable, because past participle agreement in contexts with the auxiliary avoir differs in a number of properties compared to past participle agreement in contexts that require the auxiliary être. We thus argue that past participle agreement in French is in fact not a homogeneous phenomenon but results from two different mechanisms: agreement between the past participle and the internal argument in its base position (not in a Spec-head configuration as is usually assumed), or from resumption (following a suggestion by Boeckx 2003).

Keywords: PAST PARTICIPLE AGREEMENT, FRENCH, AGREEMENT IN-SITU, RESUMPTION, REFLEXES OF MOVEMENT

1 Introduction

A well-studied phenomenon in the morphosyntax of Romance languages is past participle agreement (PPA): in sentences with a perfect or passive auxiliary, the past participle can (and sometimes must) agree in (a subset of) phi-features with an argument.
In this paper we will reconsider PPA in French and argue that despite the intensive research on this phenomenon, a comprehensive integration even of the basic facts in a formal analysis is still lacking. In particular, we will argue that a unified analysis of PPA under the auxiliaries *avoir* and *être* is not only difficult, but actually undesirable, since PPA has different properties in these contexts. Hence, we claim that PPA under *avoir* has a different status / source than PPA under *être*.

The paper is structured as follows: in the remainder of section 1 we will remind the reader of the distribution of PPA in French. Furthermore, we show that important facts in the context of the auxiliary *être*, though available in the descriptive literature, have not been considered in formal analyses of PPA; in fact, these data are unexpected in previous approaches. Section 2 summarizes the main ideas of existing analyses and points out their shortcomings. In section 3 we argue, based on a whole series of corpus facts, why, in our view, PPA in French is not a unified phenomenon and should be considered the result of two different syntactic mechanisms. In section 4 we present a formal implementation of these ideas. Finally, section 5 concludes.

From a descriptive point of view, the rules of PPA in standard French can be formulated as follows, in the terminology of Relational Grammar (following e.g. Perlmutter & Postal 1983):

"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* [= *a* is the internal argument of *p*]. "

(Loporcaro 1998: 53)\(^1\)

\(^1\) Past participle agreement in French
With *b* being a clause, *a* a nominal in *b* and *p* a past participle as part of a periphrastic verb form of *b*, *p* agrees in gender and number with *a* if and only if:

i. the clause is intransitive […].
ii. *a* is entitled to control the agreement.

a nominal is entitled to control the agreement iff:
(a) it is not a *chômeur* […]
(b) it is the initial 2 of *p* […].’ (our translation).
II(a) in the Italian quote above can be translated as “a is in an argument position” and II(b) as “a is the internal argument of p”. Generally, in a pan-Romance perspective and still following the observations in Loporcaro (1998), two factors determine past participle agreement in Romance: auxiliary selection (être, ‘to be’, with unaccusatives (3), passives (2a), reflexive constructions; avoir, ‘to have’, with unergative verbs and active-transitive constructions), and, in the case of active-transitive constructions, linear order between past participle and internal argument (DPint). In French, PPA is only possible in this context when DPint linearly precedes the past participle, i.e. when DPint has left its base position inside the VP because it has undergone cliticization, wh-movement, or relativization ((4a) and (4b) vs. (1) and (2b)). Moreover, whenever there is agreement with the subject, être is chosen in standard French (cf. Stark & Riedel 2013: 119).

1. Pierre a donné la pomme à Jean.  
Pierre has given the apple to John (active-trans., DPint in-situ, no PPA)

2. a. La pomme a été donné-e à Jean.  
the apple has been given-FEM.SG to John (passive, PPA with preposed DPint)
   b. Pierre a donné la pomme à Jean.  
Pierre has given the apple to John (active-trans., DPint in-situ, no PPA)

3. Marie est arrivé-e.  
Marie is arrived- FEM.SG (unaccusative, PPA with preposed DPint)
Pierre it-has given-FEM.SG to John (active-trans., PPA with cliticized DPint)
   b. la pomme que Pierre a donné-e à Jean.  
the apple that Pierre has given-FEM.SG to John (active-trans., PPA with relativized DPint)

4. a. Combien de pommes Pierre a-t-il pesé-es?  
how many of apples Pierre has-L-he weighed-FEM.PL (active-trans., PPA with ex-situ wh-
DPint)
   b. Pierre a pesé combien de pommes?  
Pierre has weighed how many of apples (active-trans., no PPA with in-situ wh-DPint)
Looking for a potential ‘function’, in semantic-pragmatic terms, of past participle agreement in Romance and especially standard French (cf. Stark 2013), one might assume that this kind of agreement functions as a ‘signal’ for reduced transitivity (cf. Kayne 1989: internal argument in Spec Agr = ‘object conjugation’, Blanche-Benveniste 2006, Loporcaro’s 1998: first condition). This could be so since the subject of a sentence with past participle agreement is very often a theme (patient), not of a higher thematic role (e.g. agent), i.e. there is no DP externally merged in Spec vP (cf. examples (2a), (3) against (1) and (2b), also Belletti 2017: chapter 5.1). However, that evidently only holds for past participle agreement in constructions with être. Subjects in past participle agreement constructions with avoir are agents (examples (4a) and (4b)), and still, we have agreement (not with the subject, but with the preceding, never the following, internal argument).

It is indisputable that linear order plays a role in the presence/absence of PPA in contexts with the auxiliary avoir in French. However, for some reason, the linear order factor has also been taken to be operative in cases where the auxiliary is être. Looking at the relevant passive and unaccusative examples in (2a) and (3) above, we can see that the PPA controlling argument, an underlying internal argument, has undergone movement and thus precedes the past participle. Indeed, this reordering of DP int takes place in the vast majority of contexts where the auxiliary être is used. This is because there is only a single argument in the structure with unaccusative/passive verbs, and since French has the EPP-property (the derived subject position SpecT must be filled), this sole argument is often the only candidate to fulfill the EPP, and it thus moves out of the VP. But the reason for this displacement of DP int is the EPP, it is not in any way triggered by the choice of the auxiliary or the presence of PPA. Nevertheless, in virtually all formal analyses of French PPA, the phenomenon is assumed to be conditioned by the preposing of DP int – regardless of the choice of the auxiliary. Indeed, PPA is mostly treated as a reflex of DP int-movement (see among others Belletti 2006, Déprez 1998, Kayne 1985). Put differently, movement of DP int is considered a necessary factor for PPA to occur (though not always a sufficient condition), and this is what unifies PPA-contexts with avoir and être.

However, this is not true. The generalization holds for cases with the auxiliary avoir, but not for contexts that require être. As shown in Fender (2002) and Lahousse (2011: 184,186), there are contexts (called inversion constructions) in which DP int of passive / unaccusative v can actually stay in-situ because the EPP-property is satisfied by a different XP or is not satisfied at all (on the surface), and still there must be PPA with DP int, see (5) and (6):

5. a. Une épreuve sera présenté-e à chaque candidat.
   a test be.FUT.3sg presented-FEM.SG to each candidate
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‘A test will be presented to each candidate.’
5
b. *A  chaque  candidat  sera  présenté-e  une  épreuve.
to  each   candidate  be.FUT.3SG presented-FEM.SG a  test
‘Each candidate will be presented a test.’

6.  a. Je voudrais que soient inscrit-s tous les enfants de Marie
I   would.like  that be.SUBJ.3PL enrolled-PL all     the     children   of   Marie
b. *Je voudrais que soient tous inscrit-s les enfants de Marie.
I  would.like  that be.SUBJ.3PL all     enrolled-PL the children of Marie
‘I would like that all children of Marie are enrolled.’

Crucially, Lahousse (2006, 2011) provides evidence that DP\textsubscript{int} in the inversion constructions (5b) and (6a) is indeed in its base position: for example, this is suggested by the fact that quantifier float is impossible in (6b), and that the preferred reading in (5b) is a narrow scope reading of the existential quantifier in the scope of the universal quantifier in the indirect object *A chaque candidat – which follows naturally if une épreuve is positioned lower in the syntactic structure. The latter observation also renders implausible a generalized assumption of right dislocation with a null clitic for these structures as sketched in Kayne (1989, Belletti 2017) for PPA with avere with in-situ direct objects in some Italian dialects. These facts show that displacement of DP\textsubscript{int} (the linear order factor) is not a necessary condition for PPA (with the auxiliary être). Consequently, PPA in French cannot in general be described and analyzed as a reflex of movement; at least, the connection to movement of DP\textsubscript{int} only holds for contexts with the auxiliary avoir.\footnote{In earlier stages of French (Old French, see Dupuis 1992) and Italian as well as in some modern Romance varieties (e.g. in Catalan, Brown 1988) one can also find PPA with an in-situ internal argument of an active transitive verb. See Legendre (2017) for an overview of PPA-patterns in Romance.} For some reason, these facts have not been considered in the formal literature on PPA in French (see section 2 for further discussion).

Finally, note that the difference between avoir- and être-contexts with respect to the importance of the linear order factor leads us to the preliminary conclusion (to be expanded in section 3) that we are in fact dealing with two different rules which underlie standard French PPA: one is based on linear order (agreement in constructions with avoir with preceding clitics or wh-marked elements), something that is not in itself exotic (Corbett 2006: 199-200, see the remarks on subject-verb vs. verb-subject agreement in number in Slavonic, a phenomenon also found in many Romance varieties, e.g. non-standard Brazilian Portuguese), while the other one is not. The aim of our paper is to provide more arguments that PPA with avoir and être is not a unified phenomenon since the two constructions at issue differ in a number of properties, and to provide a formal analysis for both subtypes of PPA that derives these properties.
2 Previous analyses of (French) PPA

Most existing formal analyses of PPA (Belletti 2006, Bouchard 1987, Branigan 1992, Déprez 1998, Drijkoningen 1999, Friedemann & Siloni 1997, Kayne 1985, 1989, Lefebvre 1988, Lois 1990 and Obenauer 1992) are formulated on the assumption that PPA only occurs when an internal argument undergoes movement out of VP. Thus, they mostly take PPA to be a reflex of movement. As we have seen, this does not describe the whole pattern since it ignores the fact that PPA is possible with an in-situ DP_{int} of an unaccusative v in French (and Italian). As already noted in Bouchard (1987), Sportiche (1990), Déprez (1998), and Boeckx (2003), this pattern is totally unexpected in existing analyses which basically treat PPA as the consequence of a Spec-head-agreement relation between the participle head (a functional verbal projection) and DP_{int}, following the seminal analysis by Kayne (1989). Furthermore, even in the avoir-contexts where PPA co-occurs with DP_{int}-movement, it cannot simply be equated with a reflex of movement as noted in Branigan (1992) and Boeckx (2003). Reflexes of XP-movement have been shown to exhibit three patterns cross-linguistically with respect to their distribution across clauses under long-distance movement of an argument (see Georgi 2014, 2017): they occur in all clauses of the dependency, only in the clause in which the moved XP surfaces, or only in the clauses crossed by XP but in which XP does not surface. However, French PPA shows a different pattern: if DP_{int} undergoes long extraction, PPA can only occur in the lowest clause of the dependency, viz. in the clause in which DP_{int} has its θ-position, see (7).

7. a. *La lettre qu’-il a dit*(-e) que Pierre lui a envoyé*(-e)
   the letter which-he has said-FEM.SG that Pierre him has sent-FEM.SG
   (Chomsky 1995: 325)

   b. *Quelles chaises as-tu dit*(-es) qu’-il a repeint*(-es)
   which chairs have-you said-FEM.PL that-he has repainted-FEM.PL
   (Grohmann 2003: 287)

   c. *Combien de fautes Jean a-t-il dit*(-es) que Paul a fait(-es)?

More recent Minimalist approaches to PPA do not consider PPA to be directly triggered by movement, viz. the result of Spec-head-agreement. Rather, they postulate a downward Agree relation (in strict parallel to subject-verb agreement) where the participle head probes for its goal (the internal argument) inside the VP, see Chomsky (2001), D’Alessandro & Roberts (2008, see below), Belletti (2017: ch.3), Longenbaugh (2019). Thus, 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, Belletti 2006, Kayne 1989).
how-many of mistakes John has-PL he said-PL that Paul has done-PL

(Boeckx 2003: 60)

This is another argument for not treating PPA as a reflex of movement even in contexts with avoir.\(^4\)

The only comprehensive analysis of PPA that aims to cover both PPA with avoir (requires movement of DP\(_{int}\)) and être (independent of DP\(_{int}\)-movement) by the same mechanism is proposed in D’Alessandro & Roberts (2008, henceforth D&R) for standard Italian (with a very similar PPA-split). In their analysis, D&R adopt the clause structure in (8) for clauses with periphrastic tenses, illustrated for a transitive verb (p.481):

8. \[vP vAux [vPrtP DP\(_{ext}\) [vPrt' vPrt [vP [V [DP\(_{int}\)]]]]]\]

The head v\(_{Prt}\) merges with VP and introduces the external argument (DP\(_{ext}\)). The auxiliary is hosted by v\(_{Aux}\), a raising predicate that attracts the structurally closest argument to its specifier. D&R (2008) assume that active transitive V in Italian moves to v\(_{Prt}\) to pick up the inflectional features on the latter. Evidence for this movement comes from the placement of certain manner adverbs and floated quantifiers attached to the VP that follow the past participle, see the examples in (11). For unaccusative/passive contexts, the movement of V is optional (cf. Cinque 1999, Guasti & Rizzi 2000). For D&R (2008), PPA is the result of a downward Agree relation between v\(_{Prt}\) (the probe) and DP\(_{int}\) (the goal) in the syntax. v\(_{Prt}\) bears an unvalued \(phi\)-probe that seeks gender and number values on DP\(_{int}\). This Agree relation always takes place. Whether the valued features on v\(_{Prt}\) are morphophonologically realized (= PPA) or not (= absence

\(^4\) Several analyses of the special French PPA-pattern under long movement have been proposed. Two main ideas are pursued: (a) there is no movement to the relevant specifier (Spec\(_{v}\) / Spec\(_{AgrO}\) in clauses other than the one where DP\(_{int}\) has its base position and hence no Spec-head-agreement (see Branigan 1992, Grohmann 2003); instead, cross-clausal movement proceeds from SpecC of the embedded clause directly to SpecC of the next higher clause. (b) DP\(_{int}\) targets Spec\(_{v}\) / Spec\(_{AgrO}\) only in the lowest clause of the dependency, while in higher clauses it adjoins to the projection of the participle head (an A'-position), and agreement (an A-relation) is impossible with adjuncts (cf. Chomsky 1995: 325f., following a suggestion in Kayne 1989). The latter is a pure stipulation to get the facts right, while the first is dubious given the ever-growing body of literature on movement reflexes that occur in the vP-domain (see among others Urk forthcoming and Korsah & Murphy 2019 for recent overviews). See also Georgi (2014: ch.4.3.) for a more detailed discussion of previous approaches to the long-movement PPA-pattern in French.
of PPA) is regulated in the postsyntactic morphological component by the condition in (9).

9. Given an Agree relation A between probe P and goal G, morphophonological agreement between P and G is realized if P and G are contained in the complement of the minimal phase head H. XP is the complement of a minimal phase head H if there is no distinct phase head H^0 contained in XP whose complement YP contains P and G.

According to (9), PPA (= the valued phi-features on vPrt) is only realized on vPrt if the probe (= vPrt) and the goal (= DP_int) are contained in the same spell-out domain of the minimal phase head. Phase heads are transitive active v and C (but no other heads, especially not unaccusative/passive v). They trigger the spell-out of their complements once they have projected a phrase (Chomsky 2000, 2001). Combined with the aforementioned assumptions, the PPA-pattern of Italian is derived as follows: (i) Active transitive verb, DP_int stays in-situ: V raises to vPrt, vPrt is a phase head, and DP_int stays inside VP. Hence, the probe vPrt and the goal DP_int are not in the same spell-out domain: the complement of the minimal phase head vPrt is the VP, but VP only contains the goal, not the probe. Thus, the phi-features on vPrt remain unpronounced, there is no PPA. (ii) Active transitive verb, DP_int undergoes movement (e.g. cliticization): again, V raises to vPrt and vPrt is a phase head. But crucially, DP_int leaves its base position and attaches to vAux (= cliticization). As a consequence of DP_int-movement, the probe vPrt and the goal are in the same spell-out domain, viz. in the complement of the next higher phase head C. Transitive vPrt is always in C’s spell-out domain, DP_int becomes part of it when it moves out of VP. As a consequence, the phi-features of vPrt are morphologically realized as PPA. (iii) Unaccusative/passive verb: V optionally moves to vPrt. Crucially, unaccusative vPrt is not a phase head – the next higher phase head is C. Thus, whether DP_int undergoes movement or not, both the probe vPrt and the goal are part of the same spell-out domain (= TP, complement of C). As a result, the phi-features on vPrt are morphologically realized (= PPA).

There are several aspects of this approach to PPA in Italian that strike us as problematic, either in general or with respect to extending the proposal to French PPA: (a) phase status of unaccusative v: Legate (2003) provides a number of empirical arguments (reconstruction, quantifier raising, parasitic gaps) that show that the specifier of unaccusative v serves as an intermediate landing site for movement, just like the specifier of transitive active v. Hence, unaccusative v must also be a phase head (see also the references in Richards 2011 for more work that comes to the same conclusion). But if vPrt is always a phase head, we should not see PPA with an in-situ DP_int of an
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unaccusative verb in D’Alessandro & Roberts’ analysis (2008) (only the goal is in the complement domain of vPrt), contrary to the facts.

(b) V-movement: in D&R’s (2008) account of PPA, (at least active transitive) V has to move to vPrt to pick up the inflection (PPA). However, in French no such movement takes place; the participle always follows the crucial class of manner adverbs, unlike in Italian, see examples (10) and (111) as opposed to (12) and (13). If V does not move in French, we should never see PPA show up on V (unless one postulates additional postsyntactic operations to bring the inflection and V together, e.g. Local Dislocation à la Embick & Noyer 2001).

10. a. *Hanno bene accolto il suo spettacolo.
   have.3PL well received the his performance
   b. Hanno accolto bene il suo spettacolo.
      have.3PL received well the his performance

11. a. Questo genere di spettacoli è sempre stato bene accolto.
   this kind of performances be.3SG always been well received
   b. Questo genere di spettacoli è sempre stato accolto bene.
      this kind of performances be.3SG always been received well

12. a. Ils ont accueilli bien son spectacle.
    they have.3PL well received his performance
    b. *Ils ont bien accueilli son spectacle.
      they have.3PL received well his performance

13. a. Ce genre de spectacle a toujours été bien accueilli.
    this kind of performance have.3SG always been well received
    b. *Ce genre de spectacle a toujours été accueilli bien.
       this kind of performance have.3SG always been received well (cf. Cinque 1999: 102-103)

(c) A’-movement of DP_int: D&R (2008) illustrate PPA triggered by DP_int movement with cliticization (A-movement) to the relatively low position vAux. This leads to PPA since DP_int moves to the same spell-out domain in which vPrt is located (= TP, domain of the phase head C). If, however, DP_int undergoes A’-movement to SpecC, it is no longer in C’s spell-out domain, unlike vPrt. Hence, A’-movement (wh-movement, relativization) should never trigger PPA in D&R’s account. In fact, this is true for Italian. However, it is not for (standard) French, where A’-movement of DP_int can trigger PPA, see (3b) and (4a).

(d) the role of copies/traces: a way to avoid this problem in French and to have A’-movement trigger PPA in D&R’s approach would be to take into account not the terminal landing site of the moved DP_int (SpecC) but rather intermediate landing sites
of successive-cyclic movement (cf. Chomsky 1986 et seq.). The intermediate landing site of A’-movement would be in Spec_vPrt. The intermediate copy in Spec_vPrt is in the same spell-out domain as vPrt, viz. in TP, and could thus trigger realization of PPA. The same logic could be used to solve another problem in D&R’s system that the authors themselves mention: subject-verb-agreement (SV-Agr) should be suspended when the subject undergoes (local or long-distance) A’-movement since the subject in its landing site SpecC is no longer in the same minimal spell-out domain as the probe on the head T (domain = TP). This unwelcome result for Italian (and French) could also be avoided by considering the intermediate landing site of the subject in SpecT (inside C’s spell-out domain) for the calculation of morphological realization of probe features. However, this solution leads to an overgeneration problem elsewhere: under long-distance movement of DP_int in French, we should see PPA in all clauses of the dependency. This is because the intermediate trace of the moving DP_int in Specv of the higher clauses (viz. the clauses in which DP_int is not base-generated) is in the same spell-out domain as the probe vPrt of the respective clauses in a long-distance A’-dependency (assuming that these vPrt-heads have access to the moving DP_int in its intermediate landing site at the edge SpecC of the embedded clauses, which is the case given standard phase theory, see Chomsky 2001). However, this is not the case in French long-distance dependencies, PPA can only surface in the clause in which DP_int originates (see examples in (7) above). So taking into account intermediate copies cannot be the solution for French. In fact, D&R provide a different solution to the SV-Agr problem. Following Chomsky (2008), they assume that subject A’-extraction involves both an A- and an A’-chain. Then they propose that only A-chains (as in the context of cliticization) are subject to the realization condition in (9). Put differently, A’-positions are ignored for the algorithm in (9). Of course, this alternative solution cannot be used for French either, since this would wrongly exclude PPA triggered by A’-movement in French (the only A-position in such chains is the base position of DP_int, which is, however, not in the same spell-out domain as the probe vPrt). Thus, it does not help to consider only a subset of positions (only A- or A’-chains, or only intermediate or terminal copies in movement chains) – under none of these assumptions can the French PPA-pattern be captured in D&R’s system, as it either leads to over- or undergeneration of PPA. (e) Finally, problems arise in the morphological component when the morphological agreement rule in (9), only provided in prose in D&R, is technically implemented. The rule is relational in nature, viz. two elements need to interact to determine whether agreement is possible. This

5 Note that past participle agreement can occur in every clause of a long-distance dependency e.g. in the Algonquian language Passamaquoddy (Bruening 2001: ch.4), so the absence of PPA in higher clauses in French is not a general property of participle agreement.
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requires a memory device (e.g. a shared index) such that the PF component “knows” which elements have entered into Agree in the syntax. However, such empty devices are to be banned from the syntactic computation in the Minimalist Program (cf. Chomsky 1995 et seq.), the framework that D&R adopt (see also Rezac 2004: ch.3 for a critical discussion of derivational memory). For all of these reasons, we do not adopt (a version of) D&R’s attempt at a uniform analysis of PPA-contexts for French.

3 Against a unified treatment of PPA with avoir and être in standard French

At this stage the central question that arises is whether it is actually adequate and useful to try to unify the occurrences of PPA with avoir and être. In this section we provide arguments for a separate treatment of the avoir- and être-contexts. The argumentation is based on the observation that these contexts differ in several ways (each of which has individually been mentioned before in the literature on French PPA). We have already discussed the first one, viz. the role of linear order: movement of DP_int is only a necessary condition for PPA with avoir, but not with être (see section 1).

Second, PPA with avoir and être differ in their robustness. It has often been noticed that PPA with être is basically obligatory and indeed very robustly used in spontaneous spoken and written varieties of French, while the usage of PPA with avoir in the contexts where it is possible is (more or less) variable (Boeckx 2003, Branigan 1992, Friedeman & Siloni 1997, Guasti & Rizzi 2000, Sportiche 1992, Vega Vilanova 2018). More precisely, PPA with avoir is neglected in particular in A’-movement constructions (wh-movement, relativization of DP_int), but less so under DP_int-cliticization; PPA with avoir has been characterized as a phenomenon of (normed) written standard French but not of spontaneous spoken varieties. This split between PPA uses with avoir and être can also be corroborated by corpus data (Stark 2015a, b, Stark & Riedel 2013). While PPA is realized in about 90 percent of the cases in French text messages (corpus sms4science.ch), spoken French in Switzerland (corpus OFROM), spoken French in France (corpus C-ORAL-ROM) and spoken French from Switzerland and France (corpus PFC, Stark 2015a), a closer look at the distribution of unrealized PPA in these four corpora shows that the constructions with avoir differ from those with être in a significant way:

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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Past participle agreement in *sms4science.ch* according to the construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Not realized</th>
<th>Realized</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></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>Être</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>elliptical constructions</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 2: Past participle agreement in OFROM according to the construction (only consonantal, i.e. 'audible', phonetically realized agreement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Not realized</th>
<th>Realized</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 (F) + 1 (CH)</td>
<td>9 (F) + 2 (CH)</td>
<td>14 (F) + 3 (CH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.71% - 33.3%</td>
<td>64.29% - 66.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Être</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (F) + 0 (CH)</td>
<td>23 (F) + 6 (CH)</td>
<td>25 (F) + 6 (CH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8% - 0%</td>
<td>92% - 100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elliptical constructions</td>
<td>0 (F) + 0 (CH)</td>
<td>13 (F) + 2 (CH)</td>
<td>13 (F) + 2 (CH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Past participle agreement in C-ORAL-ROM according to the construction (only consonantal agreement)
Past participle agreement in French – one or two rules?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>7 (F) + 1 (CH)</th>
<th>45 (F) + 10 (CH)</th>
<th>52 (F) + 11 (CH)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.46% - 9.1%</td>
<td>86.54% - 90.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Past participle agreement in the French and Swiss parts of PFC according to the construction (only consonantal agreement)

14.  *En fait c’est c-* la géographie je l\(_{FEM,SG}\) ’avais découvert\(_{MASC,SG}\) en \(_{OFROM}\) pendant mon année de sciences sociales*

   (OFROM)

   ’For real it’s c- the geography I it-had discovered in /\_\_/ during my year of sciences social.’

15.  *C’est vraiment une destination complètement différente / de celle\(_{FEM,PL}\) que j’ ’avais fait-e\(_{FEM,PL}\) avant*

   (C-ORAL-ROM)

   ’It’s really a destination completely different / from the-one that I-had done-FEM-PL.’

16.  *La retraite [...] [...] [...] parce que je l\(_{FEM,SG}\) ’ai pris(MASC,SG) un peu plus tôt que, que prévu*

   (PFC France)

   ’The retirement [...] [...] [...] because I it-have taken a bit sooner than, than foreseen.’

17.  *Une amie [...] Donc au début ils, ils l\(_{FEM,SG}\) ’ont mis-e\(_{FEM,SG}\)*

   (PFC France)

   ’A friend [...] Thus at-the beginning they, they her-have put-FEM.SG.’

Examples (14) to (17) illustrate varying PPA with *avoir*. (15) and (17), with highly specific referents, show PPA, while (14) and (16) represent abstract referents as internal arguments, with a generic flavour – and without PPA.

In all four corpora the lack of normative obligatory PPA with *avoir* are considerably higher than those for *être* (the absolute numbers for the oral corpora being very low, we could not run statistical tests, but the descriptive quantitative difference is evident). PPA with *avoir* seems more or less randomly applied in these data.

A further difference between PPA with *avoir* and *être* concerns its interpretative effects. As discussed at length in Déprez (1998) for a variety of contexts, the use of PPA with *avoir* obligatorily leads to a specific/definite (also referred to as “referential”) interpretation of DP\(_{int}\), while the absence of PPA leads to ambiguity: in this case DP\(_{int}\) can be interpreted either as specific/definite or as non-specific/indefinite (Déprez 1998: 12, see also Boeckx 2003, Rizzi 2001). The basic observation goes back to Obenauer (1992). Consider example (19):
18. *Combien de fautes a-t-elle fait(-es)?* (Déprez 1998: 10)

> how.many of mistakes has-l-she made-FEM.PL

“*How many (amongst a known set of) mistakes has she made?*”  (with PPA)

“*What is the number of things that are mistakes and that she has made?*“  

(without PPA)

If PPA is used, we are talking about a specific, contextually presupposed set of mistakes; if PPA is absent, there is no such presupposition. Thus, PPA with *avoir* instantiates the cross-linguistically (and also in Romance languages) wide-spread phenomenon of differential argument encoding (cf. Aissen 2003, Bossong 1985, Enç 1991), which is always associated with interpretational differences of this kind (though it can also correlate with other dimensions than definiteness, e.g. animacy). Where French differs from most other Romance languages in this respect is that the split manifests itself as head-marking (viz. on the verb, also attested in other languages, e.g. in Persian) instead of dependent-marking (on an argument DP). In contexts with *être*, however, PPA is simply obligatory, regardless of the interpretation of the internal argument as specific or non-specific.

Finally, PPA with *avoir* and *être* differ in their “naturalness”. Inside the Romance family, the normative rules for French PPA with *avoir* are rarely found. Ibero-Romance (except Catalan), Romanian, Sicilian and the Walloon dialect of Liège do not know PPA with *avoir* and its equivalents. Older stages of French show that this type of PPA was largely disappearing as early as the 12th and 13th century (cf. e.g. Brunot 1899: 523-524, Jensen 1990: 336). There are many Romance varieties that show a generalized PPA with internal arguments, regardless of word order (e.g. Languedocian Occitan), Friulian, Central and Southern Italian dialects, also some archaic registers of Italian (LaFauci 1988: 81-82)); there are many others that show generalized agreement with (third person) object clitics, again irrespective of word-order (i.e. with pro- or enclisis), e.g. standard Italian, Provençal and Auvergnat (Occitan), Catalan, Ladin, some Rhaeto-Romance varieties, Northern Italian dialects (cf. Loporcaro 2010: 151-153). According to Loporcaro (1998: 13, but he doubts the dialectal data), only standard French, one Oïl variety and Aosta Valley Francoprovençal know PPA with *avoir* based on linear order. Furthermore, PPA with *avoir* in standard French meets all five criteria of “grammatical virus theory” (cf. MacKenzie 2013), and the variability of PPA with *avoir* correlates with lower socioeducative status of the speakers – it seems to be a learned rule (cf. Brissaud & Cogis 2008, Stark & Riedel 2013 for evidence from sms4science.ch). This is not the case for PPA with *être* corresponding to the parallel predicative construction and the historical adnominal origin of PPA (*elle est morte* meaning ‘she died’ as well as ‘she is dead’). In fact, the complex rules of PPA with *avoir* were allegedly formulated by the 16th century
poet Clément Marot (cf. Levitt 1973), copying and maybe partially misinterpreting the contemporaneous Italian facts.

We take all these differences between PPA with *avoir* and *être* in French to suggest a non-uniform analysis of the phenomenon, i.e. the source of *être*-PPA is different from that of *avoir*-PPA. Nevertheless, the two occurrences of PPA also have something in common: in French, PPA never targets the external argument (agent) as an agreement controller, the locus of PPA is always the past participle (never any other form of the verb, e.g. not the verb in simple present tense), and there is only a single set of exponents for PPA (the same suffixes are used, regardless of the form of the auxiliary). In addition, PPA is generally impossible in impersonal constructions (see Kayne 1989, Déprez 1998: 2: *Les chaleurs tropicales q’il a fait-*es. / Qui sait [combien d’erreurs] il sera fait-*es*?), regardless of the auxiliary. Any analysis of PPA in French must explain both the differences as well as the similarities of PPA with *avoir* and *être*. In the next section, we will propose such an analysis.

4 An alternative proposal

In a nutshell, we propose that PPA under *être* results from phi-agreement between past participle v and the internal argument in its base position, while PPA under *avoir* is an instance of resumption, where the resumptive pronoun (RP) that resumes the internal argument is incorporated into past participle v. Reanalyzing PPA in *avoir*-contexts as resumption derives its sensitivity to linear order (movement of DPint) and its restriction to the minimal clause under long movement. We couch our analysis within the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995 et seq.). Syntactic structure unfolds step-by-step from bottom to top by alternating application of the operations Merge (external or internal), which combines two elements, and Agree, which establishes feature transfer between a head and a phrase in its c-command domain. In Minimalism, syntactic operations are triggered by uninterpretable features [uF] that need to be discharged in the course of the derivation. These features occur in an ordered set on heads: Merge is triggered by a c-selection feature [uX] (where X ranges over category values) and is satified by combining the head that bears [uX] with an element of the matching category [X]; Agree is triggered by an unvalued probe feature [uX; __] that is valued by the corresponding valued features on a goal XP. We adopt the following functional sequence of verbal heads: V-v-Aux-T-C. The internal argument is merged as the sister of V; v is the head that introduces the external argument (this is triggered by the feature [uDθ] on v, which states that v requires a DP in its specifier and assigns a thematic role to it). V moves to v to pick up the inflection in v. Perfect auxiliaries are generated between v and T in the head Aux. The form of Aux (*avoir* vs. *être*) is
morphologically conditioned by the argument structure of V/v: if v introduces a thematic (agentive) external argument (unergative/transitive-active verb), viz. if it has a \([\text{uD}_0]\)-feature, Aux is realized as avoir, in all other cases Aux is realized as être.\(^6\)

Movement (internal Merge) is subject to locality constraints such as the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC, Chomsky 2000, 2001), which enforces successive-cyclic movement through the edge (viz. the specifier) of every phase head on the way to its terminal landing site. As is standardly assumed, we take v and C to be phase heads (see Urk 2015 for recent discussion). As a consequence of the PIC, an internal argument that is to undergo A’-movement or cliticization needs to make an intermediate stop-over in an outer specifier of the vP. Following the aforementioned literature on phases, we take intermediate movement steps to phase edges to be triggered by edge features, rendered as \([\text{uEF}]\); edge features can optionally be added to phase heads when necessary (i.e. if the internal argument is to move out of the vP to the the TP- or CP-domain).\(^7\)

We take PPA to be the phonological realization of phi-features, which represent the internal argument, located on past participle v (represented as \([v, \text{status: PP}]\)). The difference is how these phi-features come to be on v: via agreement or incorporation of a resumptive pronoun. In the cases where PPA is obligatory and independent of movement (i.e. contexts with the auxiliary être), we assume that v agrees in phi-features with the internal argument in its base position (the complement of V). What these être-contexts have in common is that the head v does not introduce an externally merged DP in its specifier (unaccusative v does not select an external argument to begin with, and passive v is deprived of this ability e.g. by a lexical operation that deletes the relevant feature \([\text{uD}_0]\) on v prior to the syntactic computation, see Chomsky 1981). The connection between v’s inability to introduce a DP in Specv and its ability to trigger phi-agreement with DP\(_{\text{int}}\) can be formally expressed by the (language-

\(^6\) We adopt a post-syntactic realizational model of morphology. The choice between avoir and être can thus be modeled as a purely morphological phenomenon, viz. as contextual allomorphy (though nothing crucial hinges on this for present purposes): there is only a single Aux-head in perfect and passive clauses; what varies is the phonological realization of this Aux-head in the post-syntactic component. The choice is sensitive to the locally accessible features of the head v, the head of Aux’s sister node. Either v (or vP, which also bears the features due to projection) bears a (discharged) \([\text{uD}_0]\)-feature (unergative/active-transitive v) or not (unaccusative v). In the former case, Aux is realized as avoir, in the latter as être.

\(^7\) In French, Specv can only serve as an intermediate landing site, not as a terminal landing site since French has neither scrambling nor object shift. Hence, with respect to internal Merge-triggering features, v can only bear edge features, but not criterial features (in Rizzi’s 2006 sense). When exactly edge features can be added to phase heads is a controversial issue, since this seems to involve look-ahead; we will ignore this issue here since it is orthogonal to our main questions; see Georgi (2014) for an overview of the debate.
specific) negative feature cooccurrence restriction (FCR, Gazdar et al. 1985) in (19). This FCR states that the head $v$ bears a phi-probe (to Agree with $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$) only if it does not have a $[uD]$-feature, i.e. if it does not trigger merge of an external DP in Spec$\text{v}$. (20) shows the full set of features an unaccusative/passive $v$-head can thus bear: $[uV]$ (triggers Merge of $v$ with the VP), a phi-probe $[\text{uphi: } \_ ]$ (given the FCR in (19)) that seeks a value that is provided by Agree with a DP, and finally $v$ can optionally bear an edge feature $[u\text{EF}]$(triggers an intermediate movement step of $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$ to an outer Spec$\text{v}$ position, if $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$ is to undergo movement to the TP or CP-domain). These features on $v$ are ordered (indicated by ‘$>$’). i.e. they are discharged one after the other from left to right.

19. $\neg [uD] \supset [\text{uphi: } \_ ]$
20. unaccusative/passive $v$: $[uV > \text{uphi:__ } ( > u\text{EF} ) ]$

The derivation for such contexts proceeds as follows: $V$ merges with the internal argument $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$; $v$ merges with the VP (satisfying $[uV]$), attracts $V$ and probes in its c-command domain for valued phi-features. It finds those of $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$ and copies them to $v$ (valuing the probe: $\text{uphi: value}$). Next, if $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$ is to undergo movement, $v$ bears an edge feature that triggers an inter-mediate movement step of $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$ to Spec$\text{vP}$, see (21). vP will then be selected by Aux, AuxP by T, etc.

21. structure of unaccusative/passive vP (with $\text{DP}_{\text{int}}$-movement): $[vP \text{DP}_{\text{int}} [v^\_ v+V [VP tv t\text{DP}_{\text{int}} ]]]$

The phi-values on $v$ are morphologically realized, which gives rise to PPA. We assume a postsyntactic realizational model of morphology à la Distributed Morphology (DM, Halle & Marantz 1993, 1994) in which the abstract morphosyntactic features are paired with phonological features (viz. exponents) only after the syntax. The exponents, called vocabulary items (VIs) in DM, for phi-features on past participle $v$ are provided in (22):

22. VIs for PPA (phonic code, applies only to some lexically restricted PPs):$^8$
   a. $/_C/ \leftrightarrow [\text{fem}] / [v\_\_, [\text{status:PP}]]$

$^8$ The phonetic realization of PPA in (feminine) gender is dependent on the lexical item; participles such as $\text{mis}$, ‘put’, or $\text{écrit}$, ‘written’, show overt PPA-marking, participles ending in [-e] do not. The context restriction in (23) states that these exponents realize phi-features only if they are located on $v$ and if $v$ is in its past participle (PP) form (or status). This is a strictly local instance of allomorphy (all relevant features are on the same head). We assume that the form of $v$ (viz. its status: infinitive, past
PPA in être-contexts surfaces independently of whether the internal argument undergoes movement or stays in-situ (as in the inversion constructions under (5) and (6) discussed in section 2) because phi-Agree between v and this argument applies before DP\textsubscript{int} (possibly) undergoes movement; subsequent DP\textsubscript{int}-movement out of v’s probing domain can thus not bleed agreement. We have thereby derived that PPA in être-contexts is obligatory (otherwise the phi-probe on v would remain unvalued, leading to the crash of the derivation) and independent of whether DP\textsubscript{int} undergoes movement or stays in-situ.

We now turn to the second case, avoir-contexts, where PPA is sensitive to linear order and exhibits DOM-effects. Aux is realized as avoir when v selects an external argument, viz. if it has [u\theta]-feature (unergative + active-transitive verbs). Given the FCR in (19), such a v-head does not bear a phi-probe, and hence, PPA under avoir cannot be the result of agreement between v and the internal argument. Instead, we argue that PPA results from resumption + incorporation. The idea that PPA in these contexts is related to resumption goes back to Boeckx (2003). He draws the connection because of two facts: (i) same interpretative effects: in dependencies that involve resumption (usually relative clauses), the DP associated to the resumptive pronoun (RP) is interpreted as specific/definite, and PPA under avoir leads to the same interpretation of the moved DP\textsubscript{int}; (ii) island amelioration: just as resumptives do in many languages, PPA ameliorates island violations caused by DP\textsubscript{int} in French (Boeckx 2003: 60). There are different approaches to resumption in the literature (see Salzmann 2017: ch.3 for a recent overview). We will adopt the widely-assumed stranding / BigDP-approach (see Aoun et al. 2001, Belletti 2006, Boeckx 2003, Donati & Cecchetto 2011). According to this approach, the resumptive and its associate DP start out

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9 In Romance varieties in which PPA is possible with in-situ internal arguments under avoir, e.g. in Languedocian Occitan, v would always bear a phi-probe that probes for phi-features in its c-command domain, regardless of the context (viz. the argument structure of the verb). Thus, the (language-specific) FCR in (20) would not be active and PPA has only one source, viz. phi-agreement, in these varieties, not two different sources under avoir vs. être, as we claim for French.
as one constituent, i.e. nominal arguments have an additional layer, a head that combines with the DP. We will call this head H. H bears the phi-features of its sister DP due to a phi-Agree relation between H (bearing a phi-probe) and the DP. By assumption, when the nominal argument is to undergo movement, either the whole HP can move or the DP subextracts and strands the head H. A stranded head H (adjacent to a gap) is realized as a resumptive pronoun; if H moves along with the DP and is thus adjacent to DP, this pronoun remains phonologically silent if we postulate a VI as in (23):

23. /Ø/ ↔ [H] / ___ DP

We will adopt the stranding/BigDP-analysis to resumption but add the assumption that a stranded head H incorporates into the closest c-commanding head, viz. into v (to have a host for the affixes that spell-out H’s features). Since H bears its associated DP’s phi-features, these are located on v after incorporation and are phonologically realized there by the VIs in (22) (these VIs do not care about where the phi-features on the past participle in v come from: Agree or incorporation). Thus, PPA in *avoir*-contexts is basically the head-marking equivalent of resumption. The stranding/BigDP-approach also offers an explanation for why PPA with *avoir* requires movement of DP\textsubscript{int} and for the distribution of PPA under long-distance DP\textsubscript{int}-movement. We will illustrate this in what follows for an active-transitive verb. In this context, the v-head bears the ordered set of features in (24) ([uD] is replaced by [uH] since nominal arguments are assumed to be HPs now, but this feature still triggers Merge of the external argument). As before with unaccusative v, v first triggers Merge with the VP, then it assigns accusative case to DP\textsubscript{int} (triggered by the feature [uchase:acc]). Afterwards, v triggers Merge of the external argument (of category HP now due to the H-layer above the DP) and assigns the agent theta-role to this argument.

24. transitive-active v: [ uV > ucase:acc > uH\textsubscript{θ} ( > uEF ) ]

What is of interest is whether DP\textsubscript{int} undergoes movement out of the vP. If it does, v must bear an edge feature [uEF] to trigger an intermediate movement step of HP\textsubscript{int} to Specv; if DP\textsubscript{int} stays in-situ, v does not bear [uEF]. There are three scenarios to consider: in the first, the internal argument HP\textsubscript{int} does not undergo movement (v does not bear [uEF]). We do not see PPA with in this context with an in-situ internal argument because H cannot be stranded (and hence cannot incorporate into v) if no movement of HP\textsubscript{int} is triggered in the first place. In the second and third scenario, the internal argument HP\textsubscript{int} does undergo movement; thus, v bears the feature [uEF]. Let us first
assume that the whole HP_{int} moves to Spec{P} and then further to a higher position (= second scenario). Since the head {H} is not stranded but is still adjacent to the DP, it does not incorporate but is realized as zero (cf. (23)); hence, there is no PPA with a moved internal argument. In the third scenario, only the DP-part of HP_{int} moves to its intermediate landing site Spec{P}. In this case, H is stranded, incorporates into v and gives rise to PPA when its phi-features are phonologically realized (by the VIs in (22)). Hence, we have a case in which movement of the internal argument cooccurs with PPA. Since resumption (and other doubling phenomena), of which PPA is considered a subcase here, gives rise to a specific/definite reading of the associated DP and since resumption presupposes movement in the stranding analysis of resumption, we have derived Déprez’ (1998) DOM-generalization: if there is PPA, the internal argument receives a specific/definite reading (because the DP-part of it must have moved out of the VP); if there is no PPA, there is ambiguity – the internal argument can have a specific reading (scenario two where the whole HP moves out of the VP) or a non-specific reading (HP does not move at all and stays inside VP, the domain of existential closure, cf. Diesing’s 1992 Mapping hypothesis). Furthermore, we have also implemented in our analysis the generalization that PPA in French never targets the external argument, but only internal arguments. In être-contexts, this is because the probe on v probes downwards into its c-command domain of which the external argument is never a part.\(^{10}\) In avoir-contexts, PPA results from incorporation of a stranded head and we know independently (see Baker 1988) that incorporation targets higher (c-commanding) heads, but cannot involve lowering of the head to a c-commanded host. PPA on v triggered by the external argument would, however, require lowering of the stranded H to v (since HP_{ext} is base-merged in Spec{v}). Finally, the resumption / stranding analysis of PPA also offers an explanation for the distribution of PPA under long-distance movement of the internal argument in active-transitive constructions (cf. Boeckx 2003: 60): stranding is impossible in positions other than the base position of HP. In higher positions it would involve extraction from a moved phrase, but moved phrases are islands for subextraction. This is a general constraint on movement dependencies known as the Freezing Principle (Wexler

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\(^{10}\) The probing direction of \([\text{uphi:__}]\) on v is of course just a stipulation, but it is suggested by the fact that only internal arguments trigger PPA. There is a consensus in the agreement literature that languages, and even individual heads in a given language, can differ in the direction of probing (upwards or downwards, see Baker 2008); the probing direction must be learned and is not predictable. In varieties in which PPA is triggered by (some) external arguments (e.g. in Abruzzese cf. D’Alessandro & Roberts 2010), the probe searches upwards for a goal.
Past participle agreement in French – one or two rules? 21

& Culicover 1980), a subcase of the even more general condition on extraction Domains (Huang 1982).11 12

What is still missing in our analysis is a discussion of cases where PPA is impossible, viz. impersonal constructions. How can this be explained? Recent results from the research on expletives as we find them in impersonal constructions lead to the conclusion that expletives are base-merged in SpecvP (and not in SpecTP); hence, they occupy the same position as external arguments. The only difference with external arguments is that expletives do not receive a theta-role from v, but both compete for the same position (at least in languages without transitive-expletive constructions like French). Expletives are thus only possible when v does not select a thematic external argument (cf. Alexiadou & Schäfer 2012, Deal 2009, Richards & Biberauer 2005). We can thus say that v that does not select an external argument, viz. passive/unaccusative v, can still have a c-selection feature \([uH]\), but one that is not associated with a theta-role (unlike the feature \([uH_\theta]\) of unergative/active-transitive v). This non-thematic \([uH]\)-feature can be discharged by external merge of an expletive.13

11 Boeckx’s (2003) resumption analysis of French PPA differs from the one presented here (which follows more closely his general analysis of resumption in other languages) in that he postulates a silent resumptive; this resumptive does not incorporate into v, rather, v agrees in phi-features with the resumptive element in its in-situ position. We do not adopt this view because French is not a pro-drop language, so we would have to stipulate that pronouns can be zero only in this special case. Furthermore, we do not see how this agreement with the silent resumptive is blocked when the internal argument does not undergo movement at all, viz. why there is no agreement with in-situ internal arguments – the resumptive could still be present in the BigDP-structure. Boeckx does not say anything about the analysis of cases where PPA is obligatory or impossible.

12 Once we say that arguments are HPs and not just DPs, this holds in general, and thus also in the être-contexts with unaccusative/passive v – the sole argument must be an HP here, too. This requires a few amendments to the derivation in être-contexts. If the sole (internal) argument undergoes movement, either the whole HP moves (corresponding to the derivation sketched in (22), if we replace DP by HP), or the DP subextracts – a possibility not considered above for these contexts. As a consequence, H is stranded and incorporates into v. Thus, v bears the phi-features of its internal argument twice, once via Agree and once via incorporation. However, this does not lead to a double spell-out of these features, viz. double PPA. The reason is that the features of an element form a set, and for sets it holds that \(\{a,a\} = \{a\}\). Hence, the two instances of the same phi-features are reduced to a single instance, and we see PPA only once. Thus, the extension required for the avoir-contexts (arguments are HPs) does not have any undesired consequences for the être-contexts.

13 Obviously, the empirical observation that expletives are only possible in French (and many other languages) when the verb does not have a thematic external argument does not hold for languages with transitive expletive constructions (TECs). In such languages, external arguments and expletives do not compete for the same base-Merge position, but rather occupy different specifiers of v. This is also supported by the observation (= Bures’s generalization) that TEC-languages have object shift/scrambling, and hence clearly an additional position available at the edge of vP (see e.g. Alexiadou & Schäfer 2012 for discussion).
Now recall the FCR in (19): it says that only v-heads that do not have an externally merged specifier (external Merge triggered by [uD], which is now [uH] given our new assumptions) bear a phi-probe. The [uH]-feature in the FCR is underspecified for theta-roles, so it holds for heads with [uH] regardless of whether discharge of [uH] goes hand in hand with theta-role assignment (active-transitive v) or not (as in impersonal construction). Since in an impersonal construction v also bears [uH], it cannot bear a phi-probe by (19). As a consequence, there cannot be PPA as a result of Agree with HP_{int} in impersonal constructions. What would technically remain as a source of PPA is thus resumption + incorporation. Syntactically, nothing rules out such a derivation (scenario 3 above). We follow Déprez’s (1998) insight that this derivation is excluded for semantic reasons. Recall that PPA under avoir leads to a specific/definite interpretation of the internal argument (because it involves movement of a subpart of the argument out of the VP, the domain of existential closure). However, impersonal constructions are subject to a definiteness restriction, viz. the associate of the expletive (= the internal argument of the verb) must be indefinite/non-specific. This clashes with the required interpretation of PPA (or resumption more generally) as definite/specific. Hence, the structure can only be interpreted if HP_{int} stays in-situ and thus necessarily receives a non-specific interpretation. To conclude, the two sources of PPA that we have proposed for French (downward Agree and resumption) are not available in impersonal constructions, and hence PPA is excluded.

To summarize, we have presented two different mechanisms that give rise to PPA in French, run-of-the-mill agreement and resumption. The choice of the strategy is connected to the argument structure of the verb (more precisely, the existence of an externally merged specifier in SpecvP). The different properties of PPA under avoir and être as well as the obligatory vs. optionality vs. impossibility of PPA in the various contexts fall out from general properties of the corresponding fairly standard formal implementations of these phenomena, viz. Agree (for agreement) and the stranding/BigDP-approach (for resumption).

5 Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued for two different analyses to account for PPA in standard French. While it is generally assumed that PPA in French is triggered or at least correlated with the absence of the internal argument in its original position (movement through a specific syntactic position), PPA with in-situ internal arguments is commonplace in constructions with the auxiliary être, as opposed to those with the auxiliary avoir. Auxiliary selection is related to argument structure, i.e. to the presence of an external argument in SpecvP. PPA in unaccusative, passive and related
constructions (être), common in the history of and in modern varieties inside the Romance language family and robust also in production data, are analyzed as regular Agree operations between a probe in v and the goal, the internal argument, irrespective of any further movement operations. Contrary to PPA in these constructions with être, PPA in constructions with avoir, especially the standard French regularities (PPA with all kinds of moved internal arguments, including wh-elements, never with in-situ direct objects) are almost never attested in other Romance varieties. They were lost early in the history of French (before its normalization in the 17th century) and are not applied consistently by native speakers in French (neither in spoken nor in written corpora). As they seem to correlate with a certain specificity effect (cf. Déprez 1998), absent in the case of generalized PPA with être, they can be compared to the phenomenon of DOM, widespread in Romance, but usually realized as dependent-marking. We therefore argue that PPA with avoir can be assimilated to DOM, as a kind of differential head marking, and be analyzed as resumption and incorporation of the phi-features of the internal argument as subextraction (out of VP see Diesing 1992) from the internal argument. This analysis also accounts for the unusual distribution of PPA under long-distance movement of the internal argument as well as for the impossibility of PPA in impersonal passive constructions. The fact that standard French possesses two different mechanisms that trigger PPA is maybe related to the origin of PPA with avoir as a kind of ‘reinvented’, originally artificial rule (cf. Stark 2015a) which became reinterpreted as a kind of differential argument marking device, otherwise absent in standard French. The optionality (or variation) in PPA with avoir observed in many speakers is due, we suggest, to the contradiction that the learned normative rule (generalized PPA with the moved internal argument in constructions with avoir) creates with the actual system (no PPA with non-specific internal arguments), leading to a conflict between the internal grammatical system and the prescriptive norm.

6 References

6.1 Corpora


6.2 Studies


