Agreeing invariable adjectives in French

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SinFonIJA 7, University of Graz
25 September, 2014
Aims

- to analyze non-agreeing (invariable) adjectives in French (such as (1) and (2)), and
- to present novel data and account of those variants which do show agreement (3)

(1) Marie mange sain.
Marie eats healthy.MASC.SG
‘Mary eats healthily.’

(2) Marie travaille dur.
Mary works hard.MASC.SG
‘Mary works hard.’

(3) Cette fleur sent bonne.
this flower smells.FEM.SG good
‘This flower smells good.’
Claims

We will look at various types of postverbal adjectives in French and claim that

- postverbal adjectives that can show agreement are all adjuncts
- they may be (re)analyzed as predicative adjuncts and in that case, they have to agree with a nominal
- in the latter case, they are structurally similar to depictive secondary predicates
Outline

1. Background

2. The data: “adverbial adjectives”

3. Analysis

4. Conclusions
1. **Background**

2. **The data: “adverbal adjectives”**

3. **Analysis**

4. **Conclusions**
Functions of adjectives in French

- French adjectives agree with a noun in gender and number, no matter if they are in attributive, or in predicative function
  - **attributive function**
    
    (4) les grandes maisons  
    the.PL big.FEM.PL house.PL  
    ‘the big houses’
  
  - **predicative function**
    
    (5) Les maisons sont grandes.  
    the house.PL are big.FEM.PL  
    ‘The houses are big.’
Adjectives as secondary predicates

Adjectives show agreement in this function as well (see Legendre 1997, Godard 2006):

- **subject-oriented depictives**

  (6) Marie est partie contente.
  Mary is left happy.FEM
  ‘Mary left happy.’

- **object-oriented depictives**

  (7) Elle loue des apparts vides.
  she lets flat.PL empty.PL
  ‘She lets flats empty.’
Adjectives modifying other categories

Adjectives can modify various other categories as well. In these cases they are (supposed to be) invariable, since there are no gender/number features to agree with:

- adjective or adverb

(8) Jean le voit tout clair.  
Jean it sees all clear  
‘John sees it absolutely clearly.’

(9) C’est fort bien.  
it is strong well  
‘It is very good.’

- verb

(10) Marie mange sain.  
Marie eats healthy.masc.sg  
‘Mary eats healthily.’

(11) Marie travaille dur.  
Marie works hard.masc.sg  
‘Mary works hard.’

- preposition

(12) Jean va direct à la gare.  
Jean goes direct to the station  
‘John is going directly to the station.’
Agreement without a noun

Adjectives can show agreement with a noun that they do not directly modify:

- modifying another adjective, where that adjective agrees with the subject nominal

  (13) Marie est toute émue.
  Marie is all.FEM.SG moved
  ‘Mary is totally moved.’

  (14) Les fenêtres sont grandes ouvertes.
  the windows are big.FEM.PL open
  ‘The windows are wide open.’

- modifying a verb

  (15) Cette fleur sent bonne.
  this flower smells.FEM.SG good
  ‘This flower smells good.’
1 Background

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Types of verb-adjective constructions I

1. Intransitive verb: the adjective is interchangeable with (and interpreted as) a manner adverb

(16) Jean parle **franc**/franchement.
Jean speaks frank/frankly.
‘John speaks frankly.’

2. Transitive verb: two construction types

1. Group A: the adjective-adverb is not compatible with any complement → two possible interpretations
Types of verb-adjective constructions II

★ the verb stands without a complement, but it is semantically transitive, the adjective modifies the verb and/or an implicit generic object

(17) Jean mange **sain** (**une salade**).  
Jean eats healthy a salad  
‘John eats healthily.’

★ the adjective is the direct complement of the verb

(18) **La valise pèse lourd** (**25 kilos**).  
the suitcase weighs heavy (**25 kilograms**)  
‘The suitcase weighs a lot.’

Group B: the adjective is compatible with a direct object

(19) Jean a **refusé net ta** proposition.  
Jean has refused neat your proposal  
‘John has refused your proposal straightforwardly.’
Agreement on invariable As

Postverbal adjectives can show agreement with the subject of an intransitive verb, or with the object of transitive verbs from Group B

(20) Cette fleur sent bonne.
    this.fem flower smells good.fem
    (Noailly, to appear)

Literary examples from the Dicoadverbe databank (University of Graz):

(21) La lampe brûlait très haute.
    the lamp was burning very high.fem
    (Rougon-Macquart: Une page d’amour, 1878, via Frantext)

(22) Car, que la pluie tombe légère ou drue, les [...] spectateurs [...] as, that the rain falls light or thick, the spectators do not leave the position.
    (Roger Caillois ed., Jeux et sports 1967, via Frantext)
Examples from the Internet
they illustrate contemporary, more spontaneous language:

(23)  Je suis sur le point d’arrêter nette ma conso de cannabis.
I am on the point of stopping neat my consumption of cannabis


(24)  Cela signifie qu’ils vont faciles sur les articulations des
That means that they go easy on the joints of the
jambes
legs
http://www.articles-lib.com/gras-et-chauve.html (08.11.2013)

(25)  L’entraineur [...] exhorte les joueurs [...] à continuer par se
The coach encourages the players to continue to
battre durs pour le match [...].
fight hard for the match
1 Background

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Questions

- Are these (i) adjectives or adverbs, (ii) complements or adjuncts?
- Are they all the same structurally?
- What happens when they are not invariable?
Category: Adjectives or adverbs

- semantically they are closer to manner and resultative adverbials than to regular adjectives
- morphologically, they are generally invariable, but “look like adjectives” (cf. *net vs. nettement*)
- syntactically they are analyzed as adjectives and not adverbs (Bonami, to appear), since:
  - unlike adverbs, they cannot appear between the auxiliary and the past participle in complex verb tenses
    
    (26)  *Jean a  **dur** travaillé.
          Jean has hard worked

    (27)  Jean a  **soigneusement** travaillé.
          Jean has carefully worked

  - they cannot precede infinitives like adverbs do
    
    (28)  a.  **Il** a décidé de soigneusement travailler.
    b.  *Il** a décidé de **dur** travailler.
    c.  **Il** a décidé de travailler **dur**.
Complements or adjuncts

- Abeillé & Godard (2004) analyze them as direct complements to the verb, however
- We follow Noailly (to appear) in claiming that a difference between complements and adjuncts is necessary:
  - Group 1 adjectives (which modify intransitive verbs) are clearly adjuncts with a manner adverb interpretation
    
    (29) Jean parle **franc**.
    
    Jean speaks honest
    
    ‘John speaks honestly.’
Complements or adjuncts (cont.)

- Within Group 2, Group B adjectives are also adjuncts (since they can co-occur with a direct complement) (Abeillé & Mouret 2010)

(30) Jean a refusé net notre
Jean has refused neat our
proposition.

(31) Marie chante faux la
Marie sings false the
Marseillaise
Marseillaise.

- Group A adjectives can be complements (when the verb must have an object), or adjuncts (of transitive verbs that have an intransitive use) (Noailly 1994, Abeillé & Godard 2004)

(32) *Marie mange sain une salade.
Mary eats healthy a salad

(33) *Marie risque gros sa vie.
Marie risks great her life.

- The difference between these two is sometimes subtle, or impossible to clarify:

(34) Jean mange chinois.
Jean eats Chinese
‘Jean eats Chinese (food).’
Agreement: where do we stand?

Adjectives in French exhibit number and gender agreement when

- they modify a noun (which has $\phi$ features)
- they modify an adjective that agrees with a noun in $\phi$ features
- they are primary predicates (e.g. in copular constructions)
- they are secondary predicates (e.g. depictives)

They are invariable when

- they modify non-agreeing adjectives
- they are adjuncts next to an intransitive (agentive) verb
- they are complements/modifiers in the “manger sain” category
- they are adjuncts next to transitive/unaccusative verbs
  → this is the category that has variation w.r.t agreement

How do we account for this pattern?
Invariable that agrees

- unaccusative verb (Group 1)

(35) Cette fleur sent **bonne**.
    this.fem flower smells good.fem
    (Noailly, to appear)

(36) La lampe brûlait très **haute**.
    the lamp was burning very high.fem
    (Rougon-Macquart: Une page d’amour, 1878, via Frantext)

- transitive verb (Group 2/B)

(37) Je suis sur le point d’arrêter **nette** ma conso
    I am on the point of stopping neat  my consumption
    de cannabis.
    of cannabis
    (06.12.2013)
Proposal

Our take on the previous issues:

- These are adjectives, which can be used adverbially, i.e., can function as adverbial adjuncts in the clause
- The variable (usually invariable) adjectives are adjuncts
- They agree with a nominal since they are predicative
Proposal (cont.)

Analysis:

- French adjectives show agreement when predicated of a nominal.
- The agreeing forms of ‘invariable’ As suggests that they are reanalyzed as predicative adjuncts.
- Since they are VP adjuncts (even as regular adjuncts), they agree with internal arguments.

(38) \[ \text{verp} [\text{refusé}] \text{verp} [\text{net} [\text{verp} [\text{refusé}] [\text{DP notre proposition}]]] \]

They show formal agreement with a nominal:

They agree with the object of transitive verbs or the subject of unaccusative verbs (not with Agents) (see also Ledgeway 2011 on Southern Italian dialects)
Ledgeway 2011 on Southern Italian

- intermediate stage between classical Latin and modern Romance: active/stative orientation in the morphosyntactic (nominal and verbal) system
- verbal system: “split intransitivity” — perfective forms of unaccusative verbs and passives formed with auxiliary esse, perfective forms of unergative and transitive verbs with habere
- nominal system: the accusative case generalized to mark all undergoer participants (also subjects)
- adverbal syntax: in Southern Italian dialects, manner adverbs are expressed by the corresponding adjective, which can agree with undergoer participants

(39) tu li sa canusciri **buoni** li disturbi di saluti
you them know know good.masc.pl the.masc.pl complaints masc.pl of health
‘You can recognize health problems expertly.’
(eastern Sicilian dialect, from Ledgeway 2011: 38, ex. 10a)

(40) havi tri ghiorna ca mi priparu, ma **bona** nisciu, averu?
it.has three days that me prepare but good.fem.sg come.out true
‘I’ve been preparing for three days, but I’ll do alright, won’t I?’
(eastern Sicilian dialect, from Ledgeway 2011: 38, ex. 10c)
A similar construction: depictives

- Depictive secondary predicates are also usually considered to be adjuncts
  they can be subject-oriented or object-oriented
- Object-oriented depictives are assumed to be VP-adjuncts in general
  for French they have also been proposed to be complements of V
  (Legendre 1997, Irimia 2005)
- Object-oriented depictives agree with the internal argument
  Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann (2004): cross-linguistically what
  often differentiates depictives from general adjuncts in agreement
  marking

(41) Jean mange la viande
Jean eats the meat

(42) Marie a vu Claire bourrée.
Marie has seen Claire drunk.

‘John eats the meat raw.’

‘Marie saw Claire drunk.’
Word order properties

- depictives follow the complement of the verb (when there is one)

  (43) Jean loue son appartement vide.
  Jean lets his flat empty.

- ‘invariant’ adjectives generally precede the complement

  (44) *Jean a refusé notre proposition net.
  Jean has refused our proposal neat

- however, these adjectives can follow the object nominal when they are
  themselves modified

  (45) Il a refusé notre proposition tout net.
  he has refused our proposal completely neat
  ‘He has absolutely straightforwardly refused our proposal.’

- This word order is the same as that of depictives, and is a further difference
  between complement and adjunct adjectives
Reanalysis

- The As in question are associated with the internal argument (as part of the VP)
- The V-(DP)-AP surface order probably helps their reanalysis into predicative adjuncts as it is the same as that of secondary predicates although it is hard to find evidence that there would be more agreeing examples in final position (i.e., following the object when there is one)
- Since these elements are adjectives, they agree with the nominal they are (structurally) predicated of (contrary to PPs, AdvPs)
Conclusions

- We looked at the types of invariant adjectives, and found that some of them have agreeing variants.
- The agreeing variants always agree with the internal argument of the verb
  - they are predicative adjuncts
  - them being (structural) predicates is what gives rise to the agreement pattern
- This makes them similar to depictive secondary predicates, but their word order is different (though it exhibits variation)
- Analyzing agreeing ‘invariant’ adjectives as predicative adjuncts has the consequence that predicates are shown to uniformly agree with their subjects in French, distinguishing them from complements and general adverbial adjuncts.
Thank you!

The research presented here has been supported by the Austrian Science Research Fund (FWF) under project no. P 25467-G23, and by the Hungarian National Science Research Fund under grant no. 100804.
Selected references


http://languageserver.uni-graz.at/dicoadverbe/