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

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Old French (OF) : time and space

- Middle Ages (9th-13th C.)
- northern half of France, Wallonia and England
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OF as a continuum of varieties

- OF is not a standardized language
- Describing OF
  = describing a common ground for all varieties
  = describing the differences between the varieties
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We will focus on the common ground
Old French: an overview

Morphosyntactic characteristics

- More analytic than Latin:
  - more extensive use of prepositions
Old French: an overview

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  - Only 2 cases in the nominal declension:
    - Nominative (NOM, fr. “cas sujet”)
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- The distribution of major constituents in the clause express information-structural properties
  ⇒ word order a lot freer than it is in modern French
Question

Declension in OF does not mark reliably dependents of the verb

- Other morphosyntactic and semantic clues are more important: valency, meaning of the verb (Schøsler 1984)
- Neither homogeneous, nor systematic (Chambon/Davidsottir 2007)
- Dependencies exist even when case markers are absent (Detges 2009)
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Focus of this contribution

- Grammatical markers are still observable
- Markers are constrained and cannot appear anywhere
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What is pursued:

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

Old French: an overview
Question

Theoretical grounds

Mel’čuk’s criteria for finding dependencies
Thomas Groß’s intra-word analysis
Alain Lemaréchal’s specification

Major relations in the clause in OF

Classical approach to declension in OF
Definite article
Theme variation
No overt marker at all

Conclusion
Given a dependency, which form is the governor?

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

- Passive valence (syntax)
- Morphological contact point (morphology)
- Most general referential class (semantics)
Mel’čuk’s criteria for finding dependencies

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

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- Morphological contact point (morphology)
- Most general referential class (semantics)

Criteria B are hierarchized:

- B2 is invoked if B1 fails
- B3 is invoked if B2 fails
Mel’čuk’s criteria for finding dependencies

B1 : Passive valence (syntax)

Passive syntactic valence of a lexeme/of a phrase : a set of syntactic roles which the lexeme/the phrase can take in larger constructions (maybe with some inflectional modifications). In other words, the passive syntactic valence of a lexeme/a phrase is its syntactic distribution. (2009 : 4)
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the white horse
Mel’čuk’s criteria for finding dependencies

B2 : Morphological contact point (morphology)
If B1 fails, the governor is:
- either the form that controls agreement or morphological government outside of the phrase
- or the form that is morphologically governed from outside the phrase

Je veux que' il vienne  
"I want him to come"
B2 : Morphological contact point (morphology)

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If both B1 and B2 fail the governor is the best representant of the referential class of the phrase
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*I eat this jam sandwich*
Grammatical markers in MTT

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

Only lexical units must be represented as nodes in the tree (Mel’čuk)
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KIND_{dat+pl}
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Extending dependency trees to morphology

Many bound morphs behave similar to grammatical words (prepositions and conjunctions). They constrain the distribution of the word they are attached to (= B1).
Extending dependency trees to morphology

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⇒ bound morphs too should be represented as well in trees (Groß 2011)
Thomas Groß’s intra-word analysis

Morphological dependencies (Mel’čuk)

*The wordform w2 is said to morphologically depend on the wordform w1 in the given utterance if and only if at least one grammeme of w2 is selected depending on w1.*
Morphological dependencies (Mel’čuk)

The wordform w2 is said to morphologically depend on the wordform w1 in the given utterance if and only if at least one grammeme of w2 is selected depending on w1.

Syntactic dependencies (IM) : criteria A

A1  the linear arrangement of \( f_1 \) and \( f_2 \) must be linearly constrained in a neutral utterance

A2  the combination of \( f_1 \) and \( f_2 \), or the combination of \( f_1 \) and the subtree governed by \( f_2 \) must form a potential prosodic unit (= phrase)
Syntactic dependencies (revised) : A2 works

*mit Wort -er -n des Dank -es*

with word **PLURAL DATIVE the-GEN thank GEN**

“with words of gratitude” (Groß 2011)
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⇒ -es \(\rightarrow\) des is not a syntactic dependency : it does not form a phrase
Thomas Groß’s intra-word analysis

Syntactic dep. (revised) : compulsory inflection in Latin

We have to posit:

\[ f_1 \rightarrow f_2 \text{ be a compulsory intra-word syntactic dependency. For all inter-word dependencies } f_2 \rightarrow f_3, \text{ A2 holds if either } f_1 f_2 f_3 \text{ or } f_1 f_2 \text{ and the subtree governed by } f_3 \text{ forms a phrase} \]
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\[ \text{Amic} \quad -um_1 \text{ car} \quad -um_2 \text{ video} \]

friend ACC dear Acc I see

“I see (my) dear friend”
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\[ Amic \quad -um_1 \quad car \quad -um_2 \quad video \]
friend ACC dear ACC I see
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- \( -um_1 \rightarrow amic \) = compulsory dependency and \( um_2 \) governs \( car \)
  \[ \Rightarrow amic \rightarrow um_2 \ (carum \ amicum \ is \ a \ phrase) \]

- \( -um \ carum \) is not a phrase \( \Rightarrow \) no syntactic relation between \( um_1 \) and \( um_2 \)
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Amic -um\(_1\) car -um\(_2\) video
friend ACC dear Acc  I see
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-um\(_1\) → amic = compulsory dependency and um\(_2\) governs car
⇒ amic — um\(_2\) (carum amicum is a phrase)

-um carum is not a phrase ⇒ no syntactic relation beween um\(_1\) and um\(_2\)
Hierarchy of markers

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

1. integrative markers (prosody)
2. lexeme order
3. part of speech compatibilities
4. segmental units (free relational morphemes and inflection)
Alain Lemaréchal’s *specification*

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**Markers and government**

- markers are added to an existing relation to *specify* it
- markers *stack* on it
- cp. Tesnière’s *translatifs*
Markers should be right...  
Markers may be compulsory...  
BUT if they appear, they have to be right (grammatical and semantic compatibilities)
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The man I see

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Stacking markers

Markers can be ambiguous (not specific enough on their own)
E.g., *que* is either, in traditional terms:

- a pronoun: *L’homme que tu vois* “The man you see”
- a conjunction: *Je veux que tu viennes* “I want you to come”
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Another marker makes the ambiguity disappear : the clause beginning with *que* works with a noun (*homme*) or with a verb (*veux*)
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Theoretical grounds
Mel’čuk’s criteria for finding dependencies
Thomas Groß’s intra-word analysis
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Major relations in the clause in OF
Classical approach to declension in OF
Definite article
Theme variation
No overt marker at all

Conclusion
Classical approach to declension in OF

Ideal system

Traditional ideal analysis:

- nouns are marked with a bound morpheme -s, that marks the role of the subject
- nominative case *cas sujet* vs. universal oblique case *cas régime* (all functions but the subject)
Classical approach to declension in OF

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\[ \Rightarrow \text{nominative case } cas \text{ sujet vs. universal oblique case } cas \text{ régime } \] (all functions but the subject)

\[ Charle \ -s \ respunt \]

Charles NOM answers

– Roland 156
Ideal system

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Classical approach to declension in OF

Problems

- Many other paradigms (no case marking for many feminine nouns, theme alteration for some nouns)
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Classical approach to declension in OF

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**TABLE:** Ideal case marker

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**TABLE:** Feminine nouns in -e
Classical approach to declension in OF

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**Table:** Ideal case marker

⇒ -s is **underspecified**

(has to stack with other markers for disambiguation)
Definite article

A more reliable marker

- The definite article is not compulsory
- BUT some of its forms fixate the distribution (B1); for masc. nouns:
  - $li$ = nominative (sg./pl.)
  - $le$ = oblique singular
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$li\text{}/le\text{/les} \rightarrow \text{noun}$. 
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Marker stacking

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Li nain -s [… ] vient
The-NOM dwarf “stacking” -s comes
“The dwarf comes” – Erec 161
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Intra-paradigm discrepancies

Feminine forms are not case-specific at all.

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⇒ *li* and *le* constrain the syntactic distribution of the noun phrase
BUT *la* and *les* do not

*La* reïne [...] *voit*

The-FEM queen sees

*le* chevalier

the-MASC-DIROBJ knight

– Erec 149
Definite article

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Theme variation

One theme is a NOM marker
A subset of nouns have two themes (e.g. : *ber/baron* “noble man”)
- the short one specifically corresponds to the nominative singular (*ber*)
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“The noble man would end like a hero”
– Roland 2867
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- *li . . . -s* would not form a phrase
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Feminine nouns and definite article are often underspecified

It happens frequently that no marker is to be found. . . (word order is not a grammatical marker)
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Semantic properties of the dependents are the only availables clue (Schøsler 1984): abesse is animate, nouvelle is not
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⇒ Meaning prevails!

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

Mel’čuk’s criteria for finding dependencies

Thomas Groß’s intra-word analysis

Alain Lemaréchal’s specification

Major relations in the clause in OF

Classical approach to declension in OF

Definite article

Theme variation

No overt marker at all

Conclusion
Dependencies... without morphological paradigms

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Thank → you!