

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

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# Old French : an overview

## Old French (OF) : time and space

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

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We will focus on the common ground

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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/Davidottir 2007)
- ▶ Dependencies exist even when case markers are absent (Detges 2009)
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What is pursued :

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

## Introduction

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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

# Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

Given a dependency, which form is the governor?

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

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

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Criteria B are hierarchized :

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

# Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

## B1 : Passive valence (syntax)

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

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*the white horse*

# Mel'čuk's criteria for finding dependencies

## B2 : Morphological contact point (morphology)

If B1 fails, the governor is :

- ▶ either the form that controls agreement or morphological government outside of the phrase
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*I eat this jam sandwich*

# Thomas Groß's intra-word analysis

## Grammatical markers in MTT

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

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

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with child PLURAL DATIVE  
“with children”

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MIT  
|  
KIND<sub>dat+pl</sub>

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## Extending dependency trees to morphology

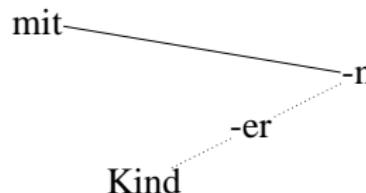
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⇒ bound morphs too should be represented as well in trees (Groß 2011)



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## Morphological dependencies (Mel'čuk)

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

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## Syntactic dependencies (IM) : criteria A

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

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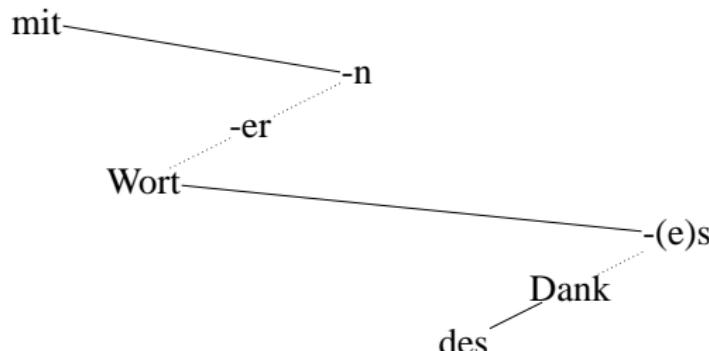
## Syntactic dependencies (revised) : A2 works

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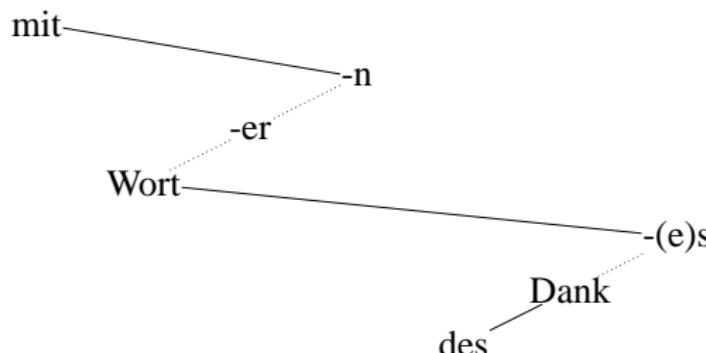
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⇒ -es → des is **not a syntactic dependency** : it does not form a phrase

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Syntactic dep. (revised) : compulsory inflection in Latin

We have to posit :

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

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friend ACC dear Acc I see  
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- ▶  $-um_1 \rightarrow amic$  = compulsory dependency and  $um_2$  governs *car*  
 $\Rightarrow amic — um_2$  (*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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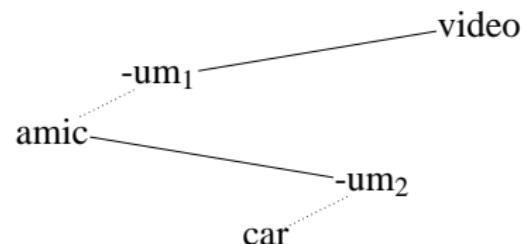
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# Alain Lemaréchal's *specification*

## Hierarchy of markers

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

1. integrative markers (prosody)
2. lexeme order
3. part of speech compatibilities
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## Markers and government

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

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Markers may be compulsory...

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

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## Stacking markers

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

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

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

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- Question

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- 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)

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*Charle -s respunt*

Charles NOM answers  
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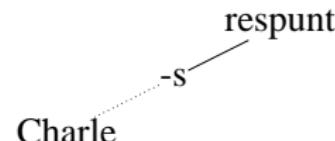
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OBL	-	-s

TABLE: Ideal case marker

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TABLE: Feminine nouns in *-e*

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⇒ -s is *underspecified*

(has to stack with other markers for disambiguation)

# Definite article

## A more reliable marker

- ▶ The definite article is not compulsory
- ▶ BUT some of its forms **fixate the distribution** (B1) ; for masc. nouns :
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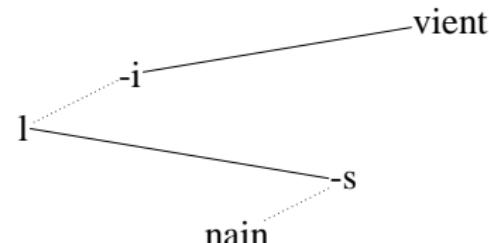
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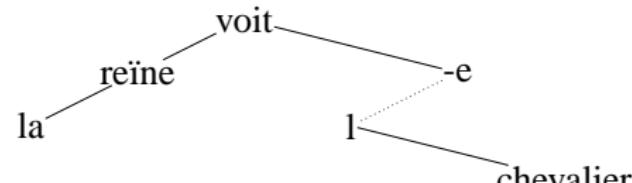
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# Theme variation

## One theme is a NOM marker

A subset of nouns have two themes (e.g. : *ber/baron* “noble man”)

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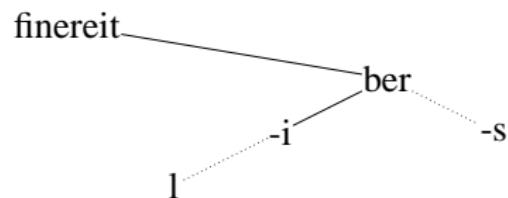
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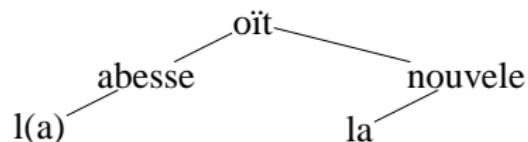
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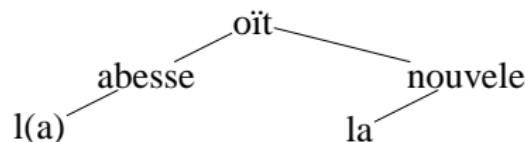
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⇒ Meaning prevails !

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

## Introduction

Old French : an overview  
Question

## Theoretical grounds

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

## Major relations in the clause in OF

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

## Conclusion

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**Thank → you !**