RESEARCH

Gender mismatches in partitive constructions with superlatives in French

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This paper examines the syntax of partitive constructions with superlatives in French and the realization of gender in constructions with an animate noun, and focuses on contexts that allow gender mismatches (*la plus intelligente de mes gentils professeurs* 'the most intelligent of my kind professors'). We show that such mismatches are allowed in French superlative partitives that contain a default masculine noun. To account for the mismatches, we propose that the nouns involved have an unvalued gender feature that can be assigned a sex specification in the course of the derivation. For superlative partitives we propose that this specification takes place in a Gender Phrase in the outer DP. Furthermore, we show that quantified partitives (e.g. *three of the books*) behave differently from superlative partitives, a fact we try to explain in terms of structural differences. We distinguish between partitives with an *of*-complement and non-canonical partitives with an 'among'-PP or a preposed 'of'-phrase. We also claim that our data can provide further insight into the role of locality in semantic agreement: we compare superlative partitives to quantified partitives in terms of agreement, and suggest that the two types of partitives should be placed in different positions on an Agreement Hierarchy.

1 Introduction

Partitive constructions that are discussed in the literature are often introduced by a quantifier ('three of the books'), see, e.g., Hoeksema (1996), Zamparelli (1998), Cardinaletti & Giusti (2006; 2016). However, partitive constructions can also be introduced by an ordinal ('the first of his books') or a superlative ('the best of his books'). Only in the first case does Jackendoff's (1977) Partitive Constraint on the presence of a definite determiner in the complement have to be respected (*'many of all books'). With ordinals and superlatives the complement can be introduced by 'all' ('the best of all possible worlds'), see, e.g., Hoeksema (1996). Ordinals can be analyzed as a subclass of superlatives (see, e.g., Barbiers 2007).

In this paper we show that superlative partitives also differ from quantified partitives in that the former may allow internal gender mismatches whereas with the latter this is for most native speakers of French far less acceptable. This paper investigates the syntax of partitive constructions in French and focuses on the realization of gender in constructions with an animate noun, in both the "outer" and the "inner" DP, where the former represents the subset and the latter the set. We show that the gender mismatches may occur when the overt noun in the inner DP is a default masculine noun.

According to Cardinaletti & Giusti (2006: §3.3.4) partitive constructions introduced by a quantifier can present mismatches in number, but not in gender, as illustrated in the French example (1):

(1)　　*une　　/ *un　　　de mes　　filles*
　　　　one.F.SG / one.M.SG　of my.PL　daughters.F.PL

In this paper we show that this also holds when the overt noun is a default masculine noun. In (2) the sex of the professors is unspecified (see Section 2):

(2)　　*un　　　/ *une　　de mes　　anciens　　　professeurs*
　　　　one.M.SG / one.F.SG　of my.PL　former.M.PL　professors.PL

According to Pougeoise's dictionary of grammatical difficulties in French (1998; under the heading "superlative"), in superlative partitive constructions, the superlative has to agree in gender with its complement, as illustrated in (3):

(3)　　*La　　/*le　　　plus jeune de mes　　gentilles　　filles　　　　est malade.*
　　　　the.F.SG / the.M.SG　most young of my.PL　sweet.F.PL　daughters.F.PL　is sick.SG
　　　　'The youngest of my sweet daughters is sick.'

In this example, the determiner, *la* 'the.F.SG', has to agree in gender with the noun in the inner DP, that is, *filles* 'girls'. That this noun is feminine is shown by the feminine agreement on *gentilles* 'sweet'. The masculine article *le* 'the.M.SG' would lead to ungrammaticality. Additional data, however, show that the gender in the outer part of the superlative partitive construction does not always match the gender in the inner part:[1]

(4)　　*La　　/le　　　plus jeune　　de mes　　gentils　　professeurs　　est malade.*
　　　　the.F.SG / the.M.SG　most young.SG　of my.PL　kind.M.PL　professors.PL　is sick.SG
　　　　'The youngest of my kind professors is sick.'

In (4), the determiner in the outer part can be feminine, *la* 'the.F.SG', i.e. fail to agree with the noun *professor*, which is (default) masculine as suggested by the agreement on the adjective *gentils* 'sweet'.[2] An analysis of the partitive constructions we are interested in has to account for the contrast between (3) and (4), on the one hand, and between (4) and (2), on the other hand. To explain the facts, we partly build on Ihsane & Sleeman (2016), who distinguish between several noun classes and propose a feature checking analysis of gender mismatches, which we will adjust to the mismatches in superlative partitive constructions, which are the topic of this paper.

Regarding the nouns involved in the gender mismatches we examine, Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) suggest that they belong to a noun class that does not have any gender feature in its structure, a property that results in default morphology (Preminger 2009; 2011), and more precisely in the masculine in the inner DP. In this paper we build on this approach, and propose a structural account of the possibility of gender mismatches in superlative partitive constructions as opposed to their absence or marginal acceptability in quantified partitives.

Besides accounting for the differences between superlative partitive constructions and quantified partitives with respect to gender mismatches, a theory of partitivity should

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[1] This example is our own but similar examples can be found in corpora and on the Internet. We submitted most of our examples containing gender mismatches to a small group of 8–10 (Swiss) informants. The mismatch in sentences such as (4) is also accepted by one of our reviewers, a native speaker of French.

[2] The acceptability, according to our (Swiss) informants, of the gender mismatch in (i) suggests that *seul* 'only' has to be analyzed as a superlative and not as a quantifier:

(i)　*la　　　seule　　de mes gentils　　professeurs　　qui　est malade*
　　　the.F.SG　only.F.SG　of my　kind.M.PL　professors.PL　that is　sick.SG
　　　'the only one of my kind professors who is sick'

address further issues, such as the structure of partitive constructions, the position of the "set" generally introduced by 'of' in the structure, and whether this constituent differs from 'among'-PPs. In this paper we show that our data provide evidence for a structural distinction between those types of partitive constructions (cf. Cardinaletti & Giusti 2006). If gender mismatches can occur inside partitive constructions, they should be discussed in relation to a general theory of semantic gender mismatches such as Corbett's (1979) Agreement Hierarchy. This is what we also do in this paper.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we distinguish several animate noun classes in French as they behave differently with regard to gender mismatches. In Section 3 we present our structural analysis of partitive constructions. In Section 4 our theoretical assumptions are presented, followed by the structural analysis of our gender data in Section 5. Section 6 places our data in the light of Corbett's (1979) Agreement Hierarchy. Section 7 concludes the paper.

2 Gender mismatches and noun classes

In this section we present the typology of animate nouns in French, partly based on Ihsane & Sleeman (2016), that we adopt to account for the mismatches discussed in this paper.

In French, both inanimate and animate nouns have gender distinctions, namely masculine and feminine. However, whereas the gender of inanimate nouns is completely arbitrary, in most of the cases grammatical gender and semantic gender, that is, the sex of the referent of the noun, match in animate nouns. Matching occurs with the following three classes of nouns:

a) *Suppletive forms:* These are nouns with unrelated morphological forms. The masculine form refers to males and the feminine form to females. Examples are the feminine noun (*une) fille* '(a) girl' and the masculine noun (*un) garçon* '(a) boy'.

b) *Stem change:* Sex differences may also be expressed by stems with an alternating suffix: animate nouns ending in the suffix *-teur*, such as *le directeur* 'the director', are masculine and refer to a male and nouns ending in the suffix *-trice* (*la directrice*) are feminine and refer to a female. Other examples are provided by the pairs *un étudiant* 'a male student' versus *une étudiante* 'a female student', *un chat* versus *une chatte* 'a cat', *un voisin* versus *une voisine* 'a neighbor', *un copain* versus *une copine* 'a mate', *un lecteur* versus *une lectrice* 'a reader' and *un héros* versus *une héroïne* 'a hero'.

c) *Fixed forms with article change:* Sex distinctions can also be expressed by the determiner only, the form of the noun being the same in the two cases: *un/une enfant* 'a child (masc./fem.)', *un/une secrétaire* 'a secretary', *un/une élève* 'a pupil', *un/une collègue* 'a colleague', and *un/une camarade* 'a comrade, a friend'. This class also includes some profession nouns that used to be masculine only, but for which nowadays the feminine form, expressed by the feminine article, is also accepted when they refer to females: *un/une professeur* 'a professor, teacher', *un/une mannequin* 'a fashion model'.[3]

In addition to these three classes of animate nouns, in which grammatical and semantic gender converge, there are also a number of nouns in French that (may) present a mismatch in grammatical and semantic gender:

d) *Forms with a fixed article:* There are some feminine nouns in French that may refer both to men and to women. One such example is the noun *la sentinelle* 'the sentinel', which

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[3] In addition to these forms, the French dictionary *Le Petit Robert* (Rey-Debove & Rey 2010) observes that the variants *une professeure* and *une mannequin* are nowadays also accepted in France. For *professeure* Le Petit Robert adds: "following the use in Canada". For a short survey of the history of the introduction of feminine forms of profession names in Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, and France, we refer the reader to, e.g., Arbour & de Nayves (2014). For some additional information on the phenomenon of feminization of profession nouns in France, see fn. 8 and Van Compernolle (2007).

has a fixed (feminine) grammatical gender, although it is generally used to refer to males. Other examples would be *canaille* 'scoundrel', *personne* 'person', or *victime* 'victim'. A masculine animate noun is *le léopard* 'the leopard', which has a fixed masculine gender, although it is used to refer both to male and female animals.

As was shown in (3), with class a) nouns there can be no gender mismatches in partitive constructions. The same holds for the nouns of class d). Although sentinels generally refer to men, syntactically the noun is feminine. *Léopard* is a masculine noun, even when it refers to female animals. In both cases there can be no gender mismatch in the partitive construction:

(5)　　*La　　plus grande　/*le　　plus　grand　de ces　　sentinelles*
　　　　the.F.SG　most tall.F.SG / the.M.SG most tall.M.SG　of these.PL　sentinels.F.PL
　　　　a　une barbe.
　　　　has a　beard
　　　　'The tallest of these sentinels has a beard.'

(6)　　*Le　　plus beau /　　　*la　　plus　belle　　de ces*
　　　　the.M.SG　most beautiful.M.SG /　the.F.SG most　beautiful.F.SG of these.PL
　　　　léopards　　allaite ses　　petits.
　　　　leopards.M.PL　feeds　his/her.PL　young
　　　　'The most beautiful of these leopards is feeding her young.'

Gender mismatches in partitive constructions with superlatives may only occur with nouns of classes b) and c). The nouns of these classes have a masculine form to refer to males and a feminine form to refer to females. In class b) the gender distinction is expressed by means of a suffix, and in class c) by means of the article. When the feminine form is used, no mismatches occur:

(7)　　*Voilà　la　　plus intelligente　/*le　　plus intelligent　de mes*
　　　　there.is the.F.SG　most intelligent.F.SG / *the.M.SG most intelligent.M.SG　of my.PL
　　　　anciennes　étudiantes.
　　　　former.F.PL　students.F.PL
　　　　'Here is the most intelligent of my former female students.'

(8)　　*La　/*le　　plus jeune　de mes　gentilles　enfants　est malade.*
　　　　the.F.SG/　the.M.SG most young.SG of my.PL　sweet.F.PL　children.F.PL　is sick.SG

(9)　　*la　　plus compétente　/*le　　plus compétent*
　　　　the.F.SG most　competent.F.SG / the.M.SG　most competent.M.SG
　　　　de mes　anciennes　professeurs
　　　　of my.PL　former.F.PL　professors.F.PL

However, the masculine form of the nouns of classes b) and c) can generally also be used as a default masculine form, which leaves the sex of the referent unspecified. The masculine form can be used to refer to both males and females in this case:[4]

(10)　　*Tout　　étudiant　　doit faire　un stage.*
　　　　every.M.SG　student.M.SG　must do　an internship

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[4] In Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) we created a special class for expository reasons, class e), for the default masculine use of the classes b) and c) nouns. Since two of the reviewers observed that the distinction of class e) leads to confusion, we do not distinguish it as a separate class here.

But the default masculine form can also be used when the sex of the referent is specified elsewhere in the sentence or the discourse:

(11) *Mon   professeur   favori   était Mme Lagarde.*
      my.M.SG   professor.M.SG favorite.M.SG was   Mrs. Lagarde

In French, with classes b) and c), masculine plural is not only used when the plural form refers to a group of males, but, as default masculine, also if it refers to a mixed group of males and females. The default masculine plural form is also used when the sex of the referents is left unspecified. In these cases, mismatches in the superlative partitive construction may, but do not have to, occur.[5] In (15), even if there is no gender mismatch, both *professeurs* and *le plus compétent* can refer to females:

(12) *la   plus intelligente   de mes   anciens   élèves*
      the.F.SG most intelligent.F.SG of my.PL former.M.PL pupils.PL

(13) *la   plus compétente   de mes   anciens   professeurs*
      the.F.SG most competent.F.SG of my.PL former.M.PL professors.PL

(14) *la   plus jeune   de mes   excellents   secrétaires*
      the.F.SG   most young.SG   of my.PL excellent.M.PL secretaries.PL

(15) *le   plus compétent   de mes   anciens   professeurs*
      the.M.SG most competent.M.SG of my.PL former.M.PL professors.PL

It has to be noted that there may be variation among native speakers of French, which may be regional. There are speakers who only accept (9) or (15), but not (13), when referring to a female.[6] The same might hold for (12). There are also native speakers of French who accept gender mismatches with nouns of class c), but not with nouns of class b). These speakers accept (13), but with a feminine article in the first part of the superlative partitive construction they only accept (16a) but not (16b).[7]

(16) a. *la   plus intelligente   de mes   anciennes   étudiantes*
          the.F.SG most intelligent.F.SG of my.PL former.F.PL students.F.PL

      b. *?*la   plus intelligente   de mes   anciens   étudiants*
          the.F.SG most intelligent.F.SG of my.PL former.M.PL students.PL

In general the class b) nouns, i.e. the suffixed nouns, are judged far less acceptable than the class c) nouns by most of our informants. Not only gender mismatches in superlative partitive constructions with *étudiant* are not accepted by most of our informants; this also holds for mismatches with class b) nouns such as *chat* 'cat' and *directeur* 'director':

(17) *?*La   plus jeune   de mes   chats   est malade.*
      the.F.SG most young.SG of my.PL cats.PL   is sick.SG

(18) *?*La   plus jeune   de nos   anciens   directeurs*
      the.F.SG most young.SG of our.PL former.M.PL directors.PL
      a   trouvé un nouvel emploi.
      has found a   new   job

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[5] Examples (12) and (13) were submitted to the judgment of a small group of native speakers of (Swiss) French, and (14) was provided by one of the reviewers.

[6] One of our (Swiss) informants accepts (13) only if the professors are all female.

[7] One of the reviewers of this paper and his/her informants accept both (13) and (16b), just like some of our informants, while the second author of this paper, a native speaker of (Swiss) French, and most of our (Swiss) informants only accept (13).

As for the class c) nouns, gender mismatches are not only accepted by our informants with profession nouns that used to be masculine only, such as *professeur*, but which are nowadays also used as feminine nouns. They are also accepted with class c) nouns that have always been used for both genders such as *un/une élève* 'a pupil'.[8] One of our informants does not accept a gender mismatch in a superlative partitive construction containing the class c) noun *enfant* 'child', judging the feminine use of this noun outdated, and therefore only accepts the default masculine form in the inner and outer DP to refer to a female. Despite the variation among native speakers, the fact that gender mismatches are possible in superlative partitive constructions should be explained by a theory of gender.

We have shown that gender mismatches in superlative partitive constructions do not occur with nouns of classes a) and d). With nouns of classes b) and c) they may only occur if the noun is used in its default masculine form. In Section 5 we propose a theoretical analysis that captures the differences. First we discuss the structure of partitive constructions.

3 The structure of partitive constructions

Whether partitive constructions involve one or two nouns is debated in the literature. The argumentation has mostly been based on quantified partitive constructions. One analysis adopting the former position has been proposed for French by Kupferman (1999). In his account, the partitive construction is analyzed as a DP selected by a quantificational head, as in (19)–(20). Similar analyses have been proposed in the literature, the difference being that the partitive complement is analyzed as a PP or a KP instead of a DP (see e.g. Abney 1986; Battye 1991; Mallén 1992; and López 2000).

(19)   *Partitive*
         [$_{QP}$ beaucoup [$_{Q°}$ de [$_{DP}$ mes livres]]]
         'many of my books'

(20)   [$_{QP}$ trois [$_{Q°}$ de [$_{DP}$ mes livres]]]
         'three of my books'

In Kupferman's analysis, the partitive construction minimally differs from the quantitative construction, in which Q° selects an NP instead of a DP:

(21)   *Quantitative*
         [$_{QP}$ beaucoup [$_{Q°}$ de [$_{NP}$ livres]]]
         'many books'

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[8] In French, several nouns referring to professions that, in the past, were associated with men, received, accordingly, the masculine gender. Among these are nouns such as *le professeur* 'the.M professor, teacher', *le médecin* 'the.M doctor', *le juge* 'the.M judge'. Later, when professions could also be associated with women, these professions remained masculine nouns, even if they referred to women. In France, later than in other francophone communities such as Quebec, this situation changed at the end of the 20th century (see, e.g., Houdebine 2000; Baudino 2001). In 1984 the commission Roudy proposes to add the suffix –*e* to some masculine profession nouns, such as *professeur*, or to use the feminine article in cases such as *médecin*, when they refer to women. But the Académie française, the institution that controls the maintenance of the quality of the French language, keeps observing that in French the masculine gender for these professions serves as a neuter gender. In the present situation, Spanish and Italian, in contrast, do not have neuter gender for (singular) profession nouns. Only in 1999 are official proposals made with respect to the feminine form of, traditionally, masculine profession nouns in France. These proposals were made by the French institution INALF (Institut National de la Langue Française, or 'National Institute of the French Language') under the direction of Bernard Cerquiglini. This has accelerated the feminization of profession nouns in, e.g., the press.

(22) $[_{QP}$ trois $[_{Q°}$ $[_{NP}$ livres $]]]$
'three books'

Following Milner (1978), Sleeman & Kester (2002) argue against a 'one noun' analysis. They show that the partitive and the quantitative constructions behave differently w.r.t. agreement. Whereas the partitive construction can present a number mismatch, the quantitative construction cannot:

(23) a. *une de mes soeurs*
  one.F.SG of my.PL sisters.F.PL

  b. *une soeur /*une soeurs*
   one.F.SG sister.F.SG / one.F.SG sisters.F.PL

Sleeman & Kester furthermore show that there are also differences with respect to subject agreement with the verb. In the partitive construction the verb always agrees with the quantifier (24), whereas in the quantitative construction the verb may also agree with the noun in the inner DP (25) (Doetjes & Rooryck 2000):

(24) *Un de mes livres a été retrouvé par Paul.*
  'One of my books has been found back by Paul.'

(25) *Une foule d'étudiants se sont succédé.*
  'A crowd of students have come in one after the other.'

Some authors consider that the structure of quantified partitives is headed by an empty element, i.e. partitives contain two nouns (Jackendoff 1977; Milner 1978; Cardinaletti & Giusti 2006), a position adopted here (see also Ihsane 2008).[9]

 Another argument put forth by Sleeman & Kester, which has also been advanced by Cardinaletti & Giusti (2006), is provided by data such as the following (Milner 1978; Corblin 1995):

(26) *Quatre (peintures) de celles qui avaient été volées ont été retrouvées.*
  'Four paintings of those that had been stolen have been found back.'

If the inner DP does not contain a lexical noun itself, the quantity element can optionally be followed by a lexical noun (*peintures* 'paintings') instead of the empty category.

 The position of the partitive PP, i.e. the inner DP generally introduced by *of/de*, inside the partitive construction is debated in the literature (complement of the quantity element: Milner 1978; complement of the empty N: Jackendoff 1977; Abney 1987; Cardinaletti & Giusti 1992; specifier of a functional projection: Cardinaletti & Giusti 2006; Ihsane 2008).

 Zamparelli (1998) proposes that the quantifier takes an a Residue Phrase (RP) as its complement, with 'of' as its head.[10] The overt noun phrase in the second part of the

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[9] Others, such as Martí-Girbau (2003; 2010), argue against such a line of research. Martí-Girbau (1999; 2010) proposes a predicate inversion analysis in which the quantifier originates as the predicate. This type of analysis is criticized by Sleeman & Kester (2002). Kupferman (1999) and Zribi-Hertz (2003) are also among those who do not adopt a structure with an empty element.

[10] Zamparelli builds on Chierchia's (1998) work. For quantified partitives, Chierchia proposes (i) and for bare partitives (ii) (for an analysis of bare partitives, see also Zamparelli 2008, and Ihsane 2008 for French):

(i) $[_{DP}$ $[_{D}$ alcuni $]$ $[_{NP}$ $[_{N}$ $0_{[+part]}$ $]$ $[_{PP}$ di $[_{DP}$ i folletti $]]]]$
   some   of the goblins

(ii) $[_{DP}$ $[_{D}$ dei$_{j}$ $]$ $[_{NP}$ $[_{N}$ t$_{j}$ $]$ $[_{PP}$ t$_{j}$ $[_{DP}$ t$_{j}$ folletti $]]]]$
   ART.IND.PL   goblins

0[+part] in (i) is an empty relational noun. It is responsible for the partitive meaning and selects an obligatorily definite DP.

partitive construction is the complement of 'of'. In Zamparelli's analysis, represented in a simplified form here, the noun is copied to the specifier position of RP, where it remains unpronounced:

(27)　　　two [$_{RP}$ ~~friends~~ [$_{R°}$ of [$_{DP}$ his friends]]]

A similar analysis is proposed by Sleeman & Kester. In the spirit of Kayne (1994) and building on Hulk & Tellier's (2000) analysis of possessive constructions, Sleeman & Kester propose a base structure as in (28a) for French quantified partitive constructions, in which *e* is an empty noun moving to the specifier of FP, an unspecified functional projection, as in (28b).[11],[12] Movement of the empty preposition to the head of FP leads to its spell-out as 'of', see (28c).

(28)　　a.　deux [$_{FP}$ F° [$_{PP}$ *e* P° ses amis]]
　　　　　　　two　　　　　　　his friends

　　　　b.　deux [$_{FP}$ *e*$_i$　F° [$_{PP}$ t$_i$ P° ses amis]]

　　　　c.　[$_{QP}$ deux [$_{FP}$ *e*$_i$　de$_j$ [$_{PP}$ t$_i$ t$_j$ [$_{DP}$　ses amis]]]]
　　　　　　　'two of his friends'

A comparable spell-out structure, with DP representing an empty noun, is proposed by Cardinaletti & Giusti (2016):

(29)　　a.　[$_{QP}$ DP [$_{Q'}$ Q (PP)]]
　　　　b.　[$_{qP}$ [$_{q'}$ Q$_i$ [$_{QP}$ DP [$_{Q'}$　t$_i$ (PP)]]]]

The question of the presence of one or two nouns arises not only for partitive constructions introduced by a quantifier, but also for the superlative partitive construction. That superlative constructions do involve an empty noun is suggested by (30) (Matushansky 2008: 39):[13]

(30)　　a.　*Quelle maison　　est la　　　plus à gauche?*
　　　　　　　which house.F.SG　is the.F.SG　cmp to left
　　　　　　　'Which house is the leftmost?'

　　　　b.　*Quel bâtiment　　est le　　　plus à gauche?*
　　　　　　　which building.M.SG　is the.M.SG　　cmp to left
　　　　　　　'Which building is the leftmost?'

In (30), there is only one possible source of gender on the article in the predicate, namely the null head noun. The Prepositional Phrase cannot play a role here as it does not inflect for gender. Furthermore, as this null element is anaphoric, Matushansky proposes (2008: 55) that it is an NP-pronoun (cf. Sleeman 1993; 1996; Lobeck 1995, and others on NP-ellipsis). This pronoun is part of the spine of the structure, as well as the definite article. This null noun is one of the two nouns in superlative partitive constructions.

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[11] Whereas we are concerned with gender mismatches in superlative partitive constructions in this paper, Hulk & Tellier (2000) analyze gender mismatches in qualitative constructions (see also, e.g., Milner 1978) such as:

　(i)　*Ton phénomène　　de fille　　est distrait*(e).*
　　　　your phenomenon.M of daughter.F is absent-minded.F /*M

　(ii)　*Ce bijou　　d'église　　romane　　a été reconstruit(*e).*
　　　　that jewel.M of roman.F church.F has been rebuilt.M /*F

[12] Movement of the preposition has been proposed by Chierchia (1998) for bare partitives, cf. fn. 10, and has been adopted by Zamparelli (2008).

[13] In the glosses, "cmp" stands for "comparative".

Another argument in favor of a "two noun"-analysis is provided by superlative partitives containing a pronoun in the inner DP instead of an overt noun. Just as in the quantified partitive construction in (26), there may be an overt noun in the outer DP in this case:

(31)   *?La plus belle (peinture) de celles qui avaient été volées a été retrouvée.*
        'The nicest painting of those that had been stolen has been found back.'

We assume that, just as in the quantified partitive construction, the empty noun is the result of copying the overt noun in the inner DP, followed by deletion/non-pronunciation, as in Zamparelli's analysis, or as in Sleeman & Kester's analysis, under the copy theory of movement:

(32) $[_{DP}$ le $[_{DegP}$ plus $[_{FP}$ intelligent F° $[_{FP}$ ~~ami~~ de $[_{PP}$ t$_e$ t$_{de}$ $[_{DP}$ ses amis $]]]$
        'the most intelligent of his friends'

That the first noun is a copy of the second noun is suggested by the fact that two different nouns are not possible, neither in the quantified partitive construction nor in the superlative partitive construction:

(33)   a. **un garçon de mes étudiants*
            a   boy   of my students

        b. **le   plus   jeune garçon de mes étudiants*
            the most young boy   of my students

If the first noun is a copy of the second noun, this explains gender agreement in quantified partitive constructions and superlative partitive constructions.[14] What we propose, is that in (34) it is the empty noun *e* which determines the gender of the outer DP. However, as this element represents/copies the lexical noun in the inner DP, it means that the agreement patterns we can observe depend on the gender properties of the inner N.

(34)   a. *Une   /*un   e de mes   gentilles   filles   est malade.*
            one.F.SG / one.M.SG   of my.PL sweet.F.PL daughters.F.PL is sick.SG

        b. *La   /*le   plus jeune e de mes   gentilles   filles*
            the.F.SG / the.M.SG most young.SG of my.PL sweet.F.PL daughters.F.PL
            est malade.
            is sick.SG

(35)   a. *Une   /*un   e de ces   sentinelles   anglaises   a une barbe.*
            one.F.SG / one.M.SG   of these.PL sentinels.F.PL English.F.PL has a   beard

        b. *La   /*le   plus jeune e de ces   sentinelles   a une barbe.*
            the.F.SG / the.M.SG most young.SG of these.PL sentinels.F.PL has a   beard

The animate nouns in these examples are a class a) (*suppletive forms*) and a class d) noun (*forms with a fixed article*), respectively. As we already showed, with these noun classes gender agreement in partitive constructions is compulsory. This also holds for the nouns of the classes b) (*stem change*) and c) (*fixed forms with article change*) when they are specified for gender. Gender mismatches may, but do not have to, occur with nouns of the classes b) and c) when they are used as default masculine nouns. This may only happen in the superlative partitive construction (36) but is unacceptable or downgraded in the quantified partitive construction (37).[15] In

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[14] For an account of the number mismatch, see Zamparelli (1998: 11).

[15] Partitive constructions may also be introduced by a demonstrative pronoun in French or 'the one' in English. Barker (1998) and Sleeman (2006) attempt to account for the fact that with these pronouns the PP alone

the quantified partitive construction there are only two options: either the default masculine form of the noun is used to refer to a female or the feminine form is used, as in (38). That *élèves* 'pupils' is feminine in this example is supported by the agreement on the adjective *anciennes* 'former'.

(36)   *La   /le   plus jeune   de mes   anciens   élèves   a   trouvé un*
        the.F.SG /the.M.SG most young.SG of my.PL former.M.PL pupils.M.PL has found a
        emploi.
        job

(37)   **Une* /   un   de mes   anciens   élèves   a   trouvé un emploi.*
        one.F.SG / one.M.SG of my.PL former.M.PL   pupils.PL   has found a   job

(38)   *Une   de mes   anciennes   élèves   a   trouvé un emploi.*
        one.F.SG of my.PL former.F.PL pupils.F.PL has found a   job

In Section 5 we propose a theoretical analysis of the possibility of gender mismatches in the superlative partitive construction.

According to our informants, the acceptability of a gender mismatch in the quantified partitive construction seems to increase if an 'among'-partitive, which can also be preposed, is used. Cardinaletti & Giusti (2006) argue that preposed 'of'-phrases behave like 'among'-phrases in certain respects.[16]

(39)   **Une   de mes   anciens   professeurs   a   déménagé.*
        one.F.SG of my.PL former.M.PL professors.PL   has moved

(40)   **Une   de mes   grands   enfants   est malade.*
        one.F.SG of my.PL grown.up.M.PL children.PL is   sick.SG

(41)   **Une   de nos   anciens   directeurs   a   démissionné.*
        one.F.SG of our.PL former.M.PL directors.PL has resigned

(42)   *?Parmi mes   anciens   professeurs,   seulement une   est devenue*
        among my.PL   former.M.PL professors.PL only   one.F.SG is   become
        doyenne.
        dean.F.SG

(43)   *Certaines   parmi mes   anciens   professeurs   ont   fait la grève.*
        some.F.PL among my.PL former.M.PL professors.PL have done the strike

_____

is not sufficient ('the Anti-Uniqueness Constraint'), but has to be accompanied by a relative clause. Our informants find a gender mismatch in this construction more acceptable than in a quantified partitive construction, but not so acceptable as in a superlative partitive construction:

(i) ?/??*Celle   de mes   grands   enfants   qui joue du   piano   est malade.*
          the.one.F.SG of my.PL grown.up.M.PL children.PL that plays of.the piano   is sick.SG

(ii) **Une   de mes   grands   enfants   est malade.*
       one.F.SG of my.PL grown.up.M.PL children.PL   is sick.SG

(iii) *La   plus grande   de mes   gentils   enfants   est malade.*
       the.F.SG most old.F.SG of my.PL sweet.M.PL children.PL is sick.SG

[16] It might be the case that the choice of the quantifier influences the acceptability of the gender mismatch. With *certains* 'several' our informants are more ready to accept a gender mismatch than with *un* 'one'. Why this is so should be investigated.

(i) ?*Certaines   de ses   anciens   professeurs   ont   fait la grève.*
       some.F.PL of his/her.PL former.M.PL professors.PL have done the strike

(44) ?*De mes   anciens   professeurs,   seulement une   est devenue*
    of my.PL   former.M.PL professors.PL only   one.F.SG is   become
    doyenne.
    dean.F.SG

To account for the data in (42)–(44), we propose that the empty noun in these examples differs from the one in the canonical 'of'-partitives in (39)–(41) (recall the discussion of (33)–(35)), as it is not a copy of a lower N, but an independent noun taken from the Lexicon, which is, in this case, empty. Support for this analysis comes from the fact that two different full lexical nouns (e.g. *enfants* 'children' and *garçons* 'boys') could be used in these constructions:

(45)   *De tous   ces   enfants,   seulement deux garçons   ont été malades.*
    of all.M.PL these.PL children.PL only   two   boys.M.PL have been sick.PL

The gender of the empty noun in examples like (42)–(44) is hence independent of the gender of another N, in particular of the noun in the *among*-PP or the preposed *of*-PP (*professeurs* in (42)–(44)). Such an analysis would account for the different agreement patterns in canonical partitives and other types of partitives ('among'-partitives and preposed 'of'-partitives).[17] For canonical partitives we assume that the empty noun is a deleted or non-pronounced copy of the overt noun in the inner DP (recall (32)).

In this section we have defended a "two noun" analysis for both types of partitives, quantified and superlative partitives. In Section 5 we will propose an account of the different behavior of the two types of partitive constructions w.r.t. gender mismatches.[18] First we present our theoretical assumptions.

4 Theoretical assumptions

In our analysis of gender, we make the following assumptions, like Kramer (2009) for Amharic and Atkinson (2015) for French (see also Ihsane & Sleeman 2016). First, we adopt Pesetsky & Torrego's (2007) conception of Agree, namely that both interpretable and uninterpretable features can be valued or unvalued. The reason is that in French, grammatical gender on, e.g., inanimate nouns, is clearly uninterpretable *and* valued, which is problematic for the standard Minimalist assumptions (Chomsky 1995; 2000; 2001). This contrasts with Chomsky's Agree (2000; 2001) as it means that interpretability and valuation are independent, in the sense that an uninterpretable feature is not necessarily unvalued (Pesetsky & Torrego 2007).

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[17] For 'among'-partitives and preposed 'of'-partitives introduced by a *superlative,* we also suggest that the empty noun is not a copy of the overt noun in the structure but is an independent noun taken from the Lexicon. This independent noun may be an empty noun or a full lexical noun:

(i)   *De tous   mes   enfants,   seule   ma   plus jeune   fille   est malade.*
    of all.M.PL my.PL children.PL only.F.SG my.F.SG most young.SG daughter.F.SG is sick.SG

This accounts for the fact that our informants, most of whom do not accept a gender mismatch with *étudiants* in a canonical superlative 'of'-partitive, as in (16b), find the mismatch far more acceptable in non-canonical superlative partitive constructions:

(i)   ?*La   plus intelligente   parmi mes   anciens   étudiants   est malade.*
    the.F.SG   most intelligent.F.SG among my.PL former.M.PL students.PL is sick.SG

(ii) ?*De tous   mes   étudiants, la   plus intelligente   est malade.*
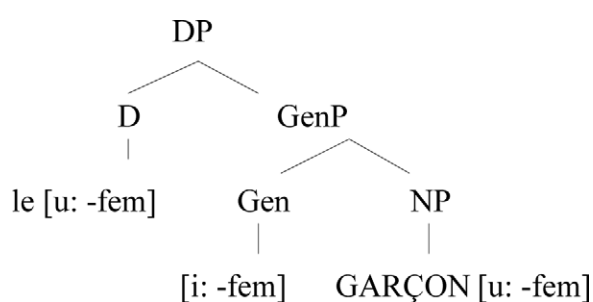   of all.M.PL my.PL students.PL the.F.SG   most intelligent.F.SG is   sick.SG

[18] As noticed in the Introduction, superlative partitives differ from quantified partitives in not obeying the Partitive Constraint. It is tempting to try to relate the difference w.r.t. gender mismatches to the different behavior w.r.t. the Partitive Constraint. In this paper we will not try to do so. Abbott (1996) argues against the Partitive Constraint, claiming that examples that are given in the literature to support the Partitive Constraint are downgraded for pragmatic reasons, and not for semantic reasons, as is generally assumed (e.g. by Barwise & Cooper 1981).

Second, we assume that grammatical and semantic gender should be differentiated and represented in two projections of the nominal structure, by a feature [+/−fem].[19] The reason is that in French semantic gender (sex) and grammatical gender do not necessarily go hand in hand, as shown by (35b) and (11): in the former, the noun *sentinelles* 'sentinels' is feminine (cf. agreement on the adjective), although sentinels generally refer to men, i.e. to male referents. In the latter, agreement with *professeur* 'professor, teacher' takes the masculine form, although *professeur* refers to a woman in this example.

Third, we follow Legate (2002), who proposes that uninterpretable features can be deleted in a global fashion, and that Agree deals with unvalued features before the derivation is sent to the interfaces. The reason for assuming that Agree depends solely on valuation is that the grammatical gender feature, which is uninterpretable, does not always co-occur with an interpretable semantic gender feature: for example, inanimates, which lack sex features, have an uninterpretable grammatical gender feature that should cause the derivation to crash, contrary to fact. This assumption contrasts with the standard assumptions of the Minimalist framework according to which an uninterpretable feature must be checked by its interpretable counterpart.

Related to the second assumption and building on the analysis proposed in Ihsane & Sleeman (2016), we consider that animate nouns have a grammatical gender feature [+/−fem] on N (except for one type of nouns, as will be seen below) and encode semantic gender in a Gender Phrase (GenP) between NP and DP.[20] Postulating a functional projection GenP in the nominal structure is justified, because semantic gender is interpretable, in contrast to grammatical gender (see, e.g., Alexiadou 2004, referring to Chomsky 1995; 2001). GenP plays an important role in our analysis because its properties allow us to account for our gender data. Gen receives its value from the grammatical gender on N; semantic and grammatical gender match when the feature on Gen is interpretable:

(46)   Classes a), b), c): *le garçon* 'the boy' (masc.); *le chat* 'the male cat'; *le secrétaire* 'the male secretary'

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP} \\
\diagup \quad \diagdown \\
\text{D} \qquad \text{GenP} \\
| \qquad\quad \diagup \;\; \diagdown \\
\text{le [u: -fem]} \quad \text{Gen} \qquad \text{NP} \\
\qquad\qquad\quad | \qquad\qquad | \\
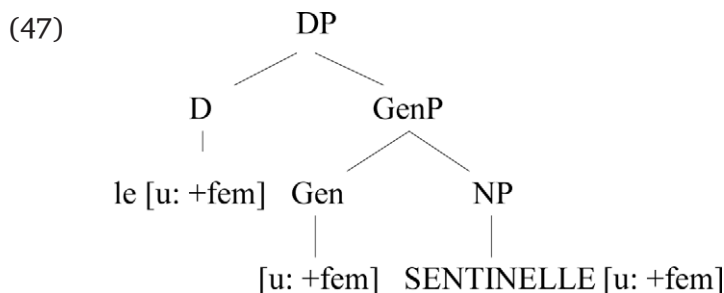\qquad\qquad \text{[i: -fem]} \quad \text{GARÇON [u: -fem]}
\end{array}
$$

With nouns such as *sentinelle* 'sentinel', semantic and grammatical gender do not necessarily match because the Gen feature is uninterpretable, that is, the information about the sex of the referent is not accessible: the semantic gender may

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[19] In his study of gender mismatches under ellipsis, Merchant (2014) also assumes that syntactic gender and semantic gender must be distinguished.

[20] We consider that sex and animacy go together, although it might be a simplification. The presence of GenP is restricted to the structure of animate nouns. In other words, inanimate nouns do not have this projection in their structure. In this respect our use of GenP differs from Picallo's (1991) and also from Bernstein's (1993) and Harris' (1991) use of the Word Marker Phrase.

not match the grammatical gender, without having any syntactic consequences (cf. Percus 2011):[21]

(47)

```
              DP
           /      \
          D        GenP
          |        /    \
  le [u: +fem]   Gen     NP
                  |        |
              [u: +fem]  SENTINELLE [u: +fem]
```

The uninterpretable feature that is valued in (47) means that the feature in Gen which represents semantic gender cannot be interpreted as such. Still, the feature is present and receives the value of the feature on N, representing grammatical gender. The result is that it is grammatical gender that surfaces inside the DP, hiding the information about semantic gender. In (46) in contrast, the feature in Gen is interpreted as semantic gender. As it gets its value from the feature on N, semantic and grammatical gender must match.

In partitive constructions, the gender *value* of N, i.e. [+/–fem,] is transmitted to the outer DP via the copied noun (see section 3) as can be seen in (48a–b).

(48) a. *la   /*le   plus jeune ~~fille~~ de mes   gentilles   filles*
          the.F.SG / the.M.SG most young   of my.PL sweet.F.PL daughters.F.PL

      b. *la   /*le   plus jeune ~~sentinelle~~ de ces   sentinelles*
          the.F.SG / the.M.SG most young   of these.PL sentinels.F.PL

In (48), no gender mismatches between the two DPs are possible: in a and b, the outer D is [+fem], like the noun in the inner DP, as the obligatoriness of the feminine article *la* attests.

As we have shown, some other nouns, however, allow gender mismatches in partitive constructions, see the contrast between (49a) and (49b). Such mismatches are, however, not always possible, as (50) repeated from (8) shows.

(49) a. *Le   plus jeune de mes   gentils   enfants   est malade.*
          the.M.SG   most young of my.PL sweet.M.PL children.PL is sick.SG

      b. *La   plus jeune de mes   gentils   enfants   est malade.*
          the.F.SG   most young of my.PL sweet.M.PL children.PL is   sick.SG

(50) *La   /*le   plus jeune de mes   gentilles   enfants   est malade.*
      the.F.SG / the.M.SG most young of my.PL sweet.F.PL children.F.PL is sick.SG

In (49a), agreement on *gentils* 'sweet' suggests that *enfants* 'children' is masculine. However, the article in the outer DP of the partitive structure may be feminine, as shown in (49b). In (50), in contrast, *enfants* 'children' is used as a feminine noun, as the agreement on *gentilles* 'sweet' shows. In this case, the article in the outer DP has to match the gender of the noun in the inner DP and no mismatch is possible.

To account for gender mismatches, we propose in Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) that nouns such as *enfant* 'child' are polysemous, in that they may have a [+/–fem] gender feature

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[21] The presence of GenP above N in the structure of animate nouns is particularly justified by nouns such as *sentinelle*, for which there is a mismatch in grammatical and semantic gender. This mismatch is expressed, in our analysis, by an uninterpretable feature in GenP.

on N like other nouns (e.g. *filles* 'girls' in (48a)), or no specified gender feature, when used in the default sense, as in (49b). The consequence is that gender mismatches with such nouns are possible when there is no gender specification on N but not when N has a [+/–fem] feature. The latter case is analogous to (48a–b) in the sense that the grammatical gender feature on N is transmitted to the outer DP via the copied noun. In the former case, when gender is not specified inside the inner DP, the gender feature on the probes remains unvalued and Agree fails (Failed Agree à la Preminger 2009; 2011). This results in default gender, which is, in French, masculine.

In his work, Preminger shows that a failed Agree relation does not necessarily result in ungrammaticality. He reports examples from Icelandic where Agree is blocked by intervention as in (51) (Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir 2003), and focusses on Basque (Etxepare 2006).

(51)   (Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir 2003: 12; quoted in Preminger 2009)
          Það virðist/ *virðast einhverjum manni   [*hestarnir*   *vera seinir*].
          EXPL seem.SG/*seem.PL some   man.SG.DAT   the.horses.PL.NOM be   slow
          'A man finds the horses slow.'

In (51), the agreement between the verb *virðist* 'seem.SG' and the plural subject *hestarnir* 'the.horses.PL.NOM' is blocked by a dative experiencer *einhverjum manni* 'some man. SG.DAT' This does not result in ungrammaticality but in the default (i.e. singular) of the verb form. Preminger observes that this is not surprising as 'agreement is essentially a feature-valuation relation; thus, if it fails for some reason, those features on the host which were supposed to be valued by the target noun phrase are not valued, retaining their pre-existing or default values.' (Preminger 1998: 4–5). In Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) we extend this analysis to a type of animate DPs in French, and suggest that when the gender feature on D remains unvalued, default masculine results. As this happens in a phase, the whole DP is default masculine.

A structural representation of the *enfant*-type of noun, which has an unspecified gender feature, after Failed Agree, is provided below.[22] If the noun *enfant* is not specified for grammatical gender, its semantic gender also remains unvalued, i.e. unspecified.[23] Failed Agree results in the default masculine form of the adjective *gentils* in the inner DP. After copying of the unspecified noun to the outer DP, Failed Agree leads to default masculine spell-out of the determiner *le* in (49a).

(52)

DP
    D   GenP
  le [u: _fem]   Gen   NP
          [i: _fem]   ENFANT

---
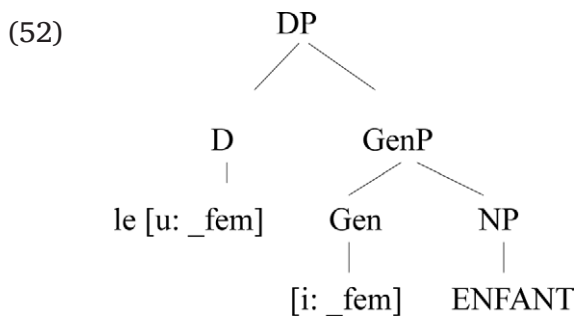
[22] Only the projections relevant for our discussion are represented. We do not exclude the presence of e.g. nP or NumP. The latter might be necessary to account for the mismatch in number between the overt noun and the copied noun in examples such as *la plus jeune de mes filles* 'the youngest of my daughters'.

[23] The noun *enfants* 'children' in (49a) could also be specified for grammatical gender, i.e. [–fem]; without any context, it is difficult to know which of the two situations we are dealing with. The [–fem] feature would then be transmitted to the outer D (*le*), via the empty/deleted noun. In (49b), however, *enfant* can only be unspecified for grammatical gender. If it were [+fem], the adjective *gentils* 'sweet' would have to be feminine, too, and if it were [–fem], the outer D would have to be masculine, i.e. *le*.

A crucial element of the analysis presented above is that animate nouns in French cannot be treated on a par when it comes to gender. Several classes have to be distinguished. In particular, we have associated the gender mismatches we are investigating to the *enfant*-type, i.e. nouns that can have a masculine, a feminine, and a default masculine realization (also *professeur* 'professor'). In the next section we present our analysis of the gender mismatch in the superlative partitive construction (49b).

5 Analysis of gender mismatches in partitive constructions

Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) claim that gender mismatches in French are the result of Failed Agree. For gender mismatches in superlative partitive constructions, they propose that the inner DP has the default masculine form because of Failed Agree. They suggest however that the unspecified gender feature can receive a value in the inner D, from the context, in the course of the derivation.[24] If this specification is [+fem], it gives rise to a gender mismatch with the default masculine. Postulating a gender feature valuation on the basis of the context, after Agree has failed, allows them to account for the mismatch in (53) (i.e. (4)). In (53) the outer DP is feminine because the gender feature of the head of the inner DP has been specified [+fem], after Agree has failed in the inner DP:

(53) *La   plus jeune de mes   gentils   professeurs   est malade.*
      the.F.SG most young of my.PL kind.M.PL professors.PL is   sick

A problem with this analysis, however, is that it suggests that the sex of the referents of the inner DP becomes female. This is, however, not the case. The inner DP refers to a mixed group of referents. An alternative would be to insert a feminine value in the head of the outer DP after Failed Agree in the outer DP, but before spell-out. This would account for the feminine form of the determiner in (53) and for the fact that only the outer DP refers to a female. Such an analysis can, however, not account for the gender mismatch in (54):

(54) *La   plus intelligente   de mes   gentils   professeurs   est malade.*
      the.F.SG most intelligent.F.SG of my.PL kind.M.PL professors.PL is   sick

If feature specification takes place in the outer D, only the outer D but not the adjective should have the feminine form.

These considerations lead us to suggest that the specification of the gender feature postulated by Ihsane & Sleeman does not take place in D of the inner or outer DP, but in a lower functional projection of the outer DP. What we propose in this paper is that in gender mismatches in superlative partitive constructions, feature specification takes place in

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[24] Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) claim that feature specification takes place in D because of examples such as (i), a mismatch accepted and even judged compulsory by Tabea Ihsane, who is a native speaker of (Swiss) French:

(i) *Talking about a woman:*
     Mon   ancien   professeur   de français était toujours contente   de   mon travail.
     my.M.SG   former.M.SG professor.SG of French   was   always   satisfied.F.SG with my work

There are native speakers of French, among whom one of the reviewers of this paper and his/her informants, who do not accept the feminine form of the predicative adjective. It might be the case that there is a regional difference, the use of the feminine form of *professeur* being more advanced in Switzerland than in France. Almost half of our informants, however, accept this sentence. For those who accept the sentence, Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) propose that feature insertion takes place in a high position within the DP. In fact it must even be a higher position than DP, because the determiner in D has the default masculine form and not the feminine form, as in (53). We suggest here that it takes place in φP (Sauerland 2004), a functional projection on top of DP that interacts with constituents "on the outside" (for a comparable projection, see, e.g., Ihsane 2008; Steriopolo & Wiltschko 2010). In a phasal approach (Chomsky 2000 et seq.), the complement of the head of φP, i.e. DP, would be sent to the Interfaces for spell-out before φP (because of Chomsky's Phase Impenetrability Condition; Chomsky 2000; 2001), and feature insertion would take place in the head of φP after spell-out of DP. This would account for the default masculine form of the DP and the feminine form of the predicative adjective.

the head of the GenP dominating the copy of the noun that is non-specified for gender.[25] The gender, provided by the situational context (e.g. the referent that the speaker has in mind) or the linguistic context (as in *Mme Lagarde, la plus jeune de mes gentils professeurs de français* 'Mrs. Lagarde, the youngest of my kind French teachers') is semantic gender, and therefore it is the head of GenP and not the head of DP that receives a value. If the specification takes place in GenP it also explains why the mismatches under discussion here are restricted to animate nouns: recall that the GenP projection is specific to those nominals. Via Agree the adjective and the determiner in the outer DP inherit the feminine feature value.[26]

(55)   [$_{DP}$ *la* [$_{DegP}$ *plus intelligente* [$_{GenP}$ F. [$_{FP}$ ~~*professeur*~~ [$_{PP}$ *de mes gentils* [$_{GenP}$ [$_{NP}$ *professeurs*]]]]]]]]

If feature specification can take place inside GenP, this may also have consequences for our lexical analysis of class b) and c) nouns, the nouns whose gender is expressed by a suffix or by the determiner, respectively. Ihsane & Sleeman (2016) assume that class b) and c) nouns are polysemous: they figure both as nouns specified for gender and as nouns non-specified for gender in the Lexicon. It is also possible to assume, however, that class b) and c) nouns are unspecified for grammatical gender in the Lexicon, and that the variant that is specified for gender results from the insertion of a semantic gender specification in the head of GenP, since Agree between the noun non-specified for gender and Gen has not taken place. Once the unvalued semantic gender in Gen has been valued on the basis of a referent in the situational or linguistic context (cf. Alexiadou 2004), dominating adjectives and determiners are valued via Agree with Gen. This is what we propose for the outer DP in (55), but also for non-partitive DPs like (56), where F is a feminine value. For class b) nouns (*stem change*) the feature specification in Gen has consequences for the form of the suffix of the noun: masculine (default) or feminine.[27]

(56)   [$_{DP}$ la   [$_{FP}$ plus gentille   [$_{GenP}$ F. [collègue]]]]
           the.F.SG   most kind.F.SG   colleague.SG

In our analysis, class b) nouns (*stem change*) and class c) nouns (*fixed forms with article change*) that are not specified for grammatical gender can either give rise to the default masculine or receive a gender specification from the context in their derivation. In the former case, the gender feature remains unvalued in DP, resulting in Failed Agree. In the latter case, the context gives a value to the gender feature in GenP. This value is then transmitted to the dominating adjectives and determiner.

   To account for gender mismatches in Russian, Pesetsky (2013) claims, in a similar way, that feature specification may take place inside the DP. In Russian, gender mismatches are possible with masculine profession nouns. The Russian noun *vrač* 'doctor' is masculine, because it used to be a job occupied exclusively by men. However, nowadays also many women are doctors. Therefore, masculine is now rather default masculine, since the

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[25] If the specification does not take place in D, it also allows us to propose an analysis that respects the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC; Chomsky 2000) according to which the domain of a phase head is spelled out and becomes computationally inert, whereas the head of the phase, as well as its specifier, remains accessible for further operations (movement, selection, …).

[26] We follow Cinque (1994 and later work) in assuming that all adjectives, also the ones that surface postnominally in French if there is an overt noun, such as *intelligent*, are merged in the specifier of functional projections dominating NP cf. (32).

[27] In a Distributed Morphology-like approach (Marantz 1997) the suffix could be inserted at PF in the head of nP, dominating GenP (cf. fn. 22). Alternatively, the suffix could be inserted at PF in GenP itself or nP could assume GenP's function, as proposed by Lowenstamm (2008).

masculine noun can refer to both men and women. Interestingly, if the doctor is a woman, attributive adjectives, determiners, and predicates cannot only take the masculine form, but also the feminine form (Crocket 1976; Corbett 1979 and later work; Matushansky 2013; Pesetsky 2013). A mix is also possible, but once the feminine feature specification has been added agreement can only be feminine:

(57)   a. *Ivanova xorošaja vrač*
           Ivanova good.F   doctor.M
           'Ivanova is a good doctor.'
       b. *èta   vrač*
           this.F doctor.M
       c. *Naša zubnoj   vrač   umnica.*
           our.F tooth.ADJ.M doctor.M clever.person
           'Our dentist is very clever.'
       d. *Vrač   prišla*
           doctor.M arrived.F
       e. *Naš rajonnyj vrač   byla bol'na*
           our.M district.M doctor.M was.F sick.F
       f. **ètot   xorošaja vrač*
           this.M good.F   doctor.M

To account for the Russian data, Pesetsky (2013) claims that a zero feminine gender morpheme can be inserted at any level of the DP, modifying the masculine default gender of the noun. French would differ from Russian in allowing a feature specification to be added only in one position, viz. GenP (but see fn. 24).

   If, in French, in a simple DP containing an unspecified class b) or class c) noun a feature specification can be added in GenP, superlative partitive constructions minimally differ from simple DPs in having two GenPs in one of which a feature specification can be added. If the feature is inserted in the GenP of the inner DP no mismatch arises (58a). Feature specification in GenP leads to valuation of the features of the chain formed through Agree, including the feature on N. The valued feature is copied with the noun. If the feature is inserted in the GenP of the outer DP, this results in a mismatch if the specification is [+fem] (58b). If no feature specification is added, the whole partitive construction gets the default masculine form (58c):[28]

(58)   a. [$_{DP}$ la [$_{FP}$ plus gentille [$_{GenP}$ [$_{NP}$ ~~collègue~~ [$_{PP}$ de [$_{DP}$ mes anciennes [$_{GenP}$ F. [$_{NP}$ collègues]]]]]]]]
       b. [$_{DP}$ la [$_{FP}$ plus gentille [$_{GenP}$ F. [$_{NP}$ ~~collègue~~ [$_{PP}$ de [$_{DP}$ mes anciens [$_{GenP}$ [$_{NP}$ collègues]]]]]]]]
       c. [$_{DP}$ le [$_{FP}$ plus gentil [$_{GenP}$ [$_{NP}$ ~~collègue~~ [$_{PP}$ de [$_{DP}$ mes anciens [$_{GenP}$ [$_{NP}$ collègues]]]]]]]]
           'the kindest of my colleagues'

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[28] In Section 2 we observed that there is variation among native speakers of French with respect to the acceptance of gender mismatches in superlative partitives with class b) nouns, i.e. suffixed nouns: there are speakers who accept mismatches with nouns such as *étudiant* and thus accept (16b) besides (16a), but others do not accept mismatches and only accept (16a). The analysis that we propose here accounts for this variation. Gender specification in a simple DP accounts for the feminine form *une étudiante*, thus excluding *une étudiant,* and gender specification in the inner DP of superlative partitives accounts for (16a) without a gender mismatch. Speakers who accept (16b), with a gender mismatch, allow for a gender specification in the outer DP of partitive constructions with class b) nouns.

Finally we have to account for the non-acceptability of gender mismatches in quantified
partitive constructions. In Section 3 we argued that, structurally, quantified partitives
and superlative partitives are the same in that both constructions contain a copied, non-
pronounced, noun in the outer DP. If mismatches in superlative partitives are the result
of the valuation of Gen in the outer DP, this suggests that quantified partitives distinguish
themselves from superlative partitives in not having a GenP in the outer DP. Structurally,
quantified partitives would thus be rather bare, consisting only of the quantifier in NumP,
the head of which directly selects its FP complement (RP in Zamparelli's 1998 analysis),
without an intervening GenP:

(59)   a.   [$_{NumP}$ une [$_{FP}$ ~~collègue~~ de mes   anciennes   collègues]]
              one.F.SG   of my.PL former.F.PL colleagues.F.PL

        b.   *[$_{NumP}$ une [$_{FP}$ ~~collègue~~ de mes   anciens   collègues]]
              one.F.SG   of my.PL   former.M.PL colleagues.PL

        c.   [$_{NumP}$ un   [$_{FP}$ ~~collègue~~ de mes   anciens   collègues]]
              one.M.SG   of my.PL former.M.PL colleagues.PL

In (59a), the copied noun in the outer DP has a feminine grammatical gender value, cf. the
discussion of (58a). This value is inherited by the quantifier through Agree. In (59b), the
copied noun is unspecified for grammatical gender (a mismatch would require this type
of noun). Since it is not dominated by a GenP, the insertion of a feminine semantic gender
feature is not possible, which accounts for the ungrammaticality of a gender mismatch.
In (59c), the copied noun can also be unspecified for grammatical gender, resulting in the
default masculine form of the quantifier.[29] Or it can be [–fem], a feature that the adjective
and the quantifier inherit.

   That the structure of quantified partitives is not as complex as the one of superlative
partitives is supported by the fact that adjectives cannot follow the quantifier, whatever
the type of noun (and its gender: the masculine counterpart would be ungrammatical
too). This means that in the partitive construction the quantifier directly selects FP. The
quantified partitive is a purely quantificational construction.

(60)   a.   *une   jeune   [$_{FP}$ ~~collègue~~ de mes   anciennes   collègues]
              one.F.SG young   of my.PL former.F.PL colleagues.F.PL

        b.   *une   belle   [$_{FP}$ ~~professeur~~ de mes   anciennes   professeurs]
              one.F.SG pretty.F.SG   of my.PL former.F.PL professeurs.F.PL

        c.   *une   charmante [$_{FP}$ ~~fille~~ de mes   gentilles   filles]
              one.F.SG charming.F.SG   of my.PL sweet.F.PL daughters.F.PL

In this section we have claimed that superlative partitive constructions structurally differ
from quantified partitive constructions in the presence of a GenP in the outer DP, in
which feature valuation can take place because of the presence of an animate referent in
the situational or linguistic context. Agreement being thus semantic in the case of gen-
der mismatches, in the next section we relate partitive constructions to Corbett's (1979)
Agreement Hierarchy.

6 The Agreement Hierarchy

The mismatches in the partitive constructions we analyze also lead us to consider
locality issues: indeed, the distance between the agreeing element and the noun
seems to play a role. Abstracting away from the analysis of the specified form of

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[29] The absence of GenP dominating the quantifier in the quantified partitive construction could simply
   be accounted for in a "one noun" analysis such as Martí-Girbau's (1999; 2010), in which the quantifier
   originates as a predicate. In Section 3, however, we have argued against a "one noun" analysis.

class b) and c) nouns proposed in the previous section, inside a simple DP, gender must be shared in French (*_la grande garçon_ 'the.F tall.F boy.M', *_la grand garçon_ 'the.F tall.M boy.M'). Elements that are less local, however, do not necessarily agree or do not agree at all in grammatical gender. Whereas attributive adjectives always agree in grammatical gender, partitive elements in complex DPs do not necessarily do so.

That distance may play a role in gender agreement has also been observed by Corbett (1979 and later work). On the basis of various constructions in several languages, among which English, French, German, and Russian, Corbett (1979) shows that local relations favor grammatical agreement, whereas less local relations favor semantic agreement.[30] This description is formalized by the agreement hierarchy proposed by Corbett (1979) on the basis of examples such as (61).

(61) a. The committee has decided.
b. The committee have decided.
c. This committee sat late.
d. *These committee sat late.

Whereas (61a) illustrates grammatical agreement, (61b) shows semantic agreement. This suggests that agreement in number in predicate position is optional in English. However, the contrast between a-b on the one hand and c-d on the other hand, shows that only some positions allow optionality. In the latter, which represent attributive positions, no optionality is possible.

The idea that the distance between the element that determines agreement (the controller) and the agreeing element has an impact on the kind of agreement that takes place, namely grammatical vs. semantic agreement, is captured by Corbett's Agreement Hierarchy reported in (62):

(62) Attributive – predicate – relative pronoun – personal pronoun

(62) represents different agreeing positions. The idea is that the "possibility of syntactic agreement decreases monotonically from left to right" (Corbett 1979: 204). The further left an element is in the hierarchy, the more likely syntactic agreement is to occur, the further right it is, the more likely semantic agreement is. Corbett further observes that "when there is a choice in two adjacent positions, semantic agreement is at least as likely (in fact, more likely) in the position on the right" (Corbett 1979: 211).

In our discussion of gender in French superlative partitives, we have seen that these constructions allow gender mismatches with default masculine nouns such as _professeur_ – recall (4), repeated here as (63) for convenience:

(63) _La_ /_le_ _plus jeune de mes_ _gentils_ _professeurs_ _est malade._
the.F.SG / the.M.SG most young of my.PL kind.M.PL professeurs.PL is sick.SG

This suggests that another position could be added to (62) (Ihsane & Sleeman 2016), a possibility not excluded by Corbett (1979: 214), who also suggests that there might be a fifth position for agreement purposes in Russian (Crockett 1976). In French, gender agreement between a noun and an attributive adjective is grammatical agreement. For part of the native speakers of French this also holds for gender agreement with a predicative adjective. If Agree takes place between the subject and the predicative

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[30] See also Wechsler & Zlatić (2003), for an HPSG account of agreement.

adjective in a Spec-Head relation in AgrP, as proposed by Chomsky (1995), it is
local:[31]

(64) *Mon   gentil   professeur   de français était toujours content(*e)*
      my.M.SG. kind.M.SG. professor.SG. of French   was always   happy.M.SG./*F.SG.
      de   mon travail.
      with my   work.

Gender agreement with relative pronouns may be semantic in French, especially in non-
restrictive relative clauses. If a restrictive specification referring to a female is added,
semantic agreement is compulsory, as in (66):

(65) *Mon   ancien   professeur   de français, avec la   fille*
      my.M.SG former.M.SG professor.SG of French,   with the daughter
      duquel/   de laquelle   j'ai   parlé,   est Mme Lagarde.
      of.whom.M.SG /of whom.F.SG I have spoken, is Mrs. Lagarde.

(66) *mon   ancien   professeur   de français Mme Lagarde, avec la   fille*
      my.M.SG former.M.SG professor.SG of French, Mrs. Lagarde, with the daughter
      *duquel/   de laquelle   j'ai   parlé
      of.whom.M.SG /of whom.F.SG I have spoken

With personal pronouns, which are the least local elements in the Agreement Hierarchy,
semantic agreement is also compulsory:

(67) *Talking about a woman:*
      Voilà   mon   ancien   professeur   de français.
      there.is my.M.SG former.M.SG professor.SG of French.
      *Il/ Elle vient de partir à la retraite.
      he/she just   retired

As (63) shows, with superlative partitives, semantic gender agreement can be optional.
We therefore place superlative partitives in the middle of the scale. For the sake of
locality, it should be assumed that the controller is the overt noun and not the copied
noun:

(68) Attributive – predicate – superlative partitive – relative pronoun – personal
      pronoun

In this paper we have shown that gender mismatches in quantified partitive constructions
are far less acceptable:

(69) **Une   de mes   gentils   professeurs   est malade.*
      one.F.SG of my.PL kind.M.PL professors.PL is sick.SG

The difference between the two partitive constructions suggests that two partitive posi-
tions should be distinguished in (68). For most native speakers of French, quantified parti-
tives do not or do only marginally allow semantic agreement:

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[31] As observed in fn. 24, there are also native speakers of French who do not accept grammatical agreement
in (64), but only semantic agreement.

  (i) *Talking about a woman*:
       Mon   gentil   professeur   de français était   toujours *content/contente.
       my.M.SG sweet.M.SG professor.SG of French   was   always   *happy.M.SG /happy.F.SG

For these speakers "predicate" would be placed to the right of "superlative partitive" in (68), probably even
to the right of "relative pronoun". Locality would for these speakers be determined by the surface distance
between the subject and the predicate.

(70)   Attributive – predicate – **quantified partitive** – **superlative partitive** – relative
        pronoun – personal pronoun

The distinction between two partitive constructions thus adds two positions to Corbett's
(1979) Agreement Hierarchy. If the outer part of the quantified partitive construction does
not contain GenP, as argued in the previous section, the relation between the quantifier
and the overt noun is relatively local, which justifies the placement of the quantified parti-
tive on the grammatical agreement side of the scale, to the left of superlative partitives.

7 Conclusion

In this paper we have contributed to the discussion on the distinction between different
partitive constructions. On the basis of data from French, we have shown that, whereas
superlative partitive constructions allow internal gender mismatches, canonical quanti-
fied partitives do not or do only marginally do so. We have argued that both canoni-
cal superlative partitive constructions (in opposition to superlative partitives with an
'among'-phrase or a preposed 'of'-phrase) and canonical quantified partitive constructions
contain an unpronounced copy of the noun. To account for gender mismatches in partitive
constructions with animate nouns we have proposed a feature checking analysis of gender
agreement. Following Ihsane & Sleeman (2016), we have adopted the idea that default
masculine forms are the result of Failed Agree and that Agree fails when the gender fea-
ture of some animate nouns remains unspecified inside their DP. In this paper we have
proposed that the gender feature of these animate DPs, initially unvalued, can receive
a feature specification in GenP on the basis of the sex of a referent in the situational or
linguistic context. In superlative partitive constructions with gender mismatches, this fea-
ture specification takes place in the GenP in the outer DP. The unacceptability of gender
mismatches in canonical quantified partitives suggests that these constructions structur-
ally differ from superlative partitives, and lack the GenP dominating the unpronounced
copied noun. We have argued that in preposed 'of'-partitives and 'among'-partitives the
silent noun in the outer DP is not a copy of the overt noun in the inner DP. This accounts
for the fact that two different nouns are allowed, each dominated by its own GenP, and
that gender mismatches are possible, even in the quantified partitive construction.

   We have added partitives to Corbett's Agreement Hierarchy, distinguishing quantified
partitives from superlative partitives. Our data have shown that only the latter allow gen-
der mismatches and thus semantic agreement.

   In this paper we have presented data that, to our knowledge, have not been discussed
before. Since there is variation among native speakers of French, which may be regional,
a larger scale research with more informants is needed. More data, especially with other
nouns, but also from other languages than French, are needed to obtain a more complete
picture of gender mismatches in partitive constructions. We leave that for future research.

Abbreviations

ADJ = adjective, ART = article, CMP = comparative, DAT = dative, EXPL = expletive,
F = feminine, M =masculine, IND = indefinite, NOM = nominative, PL = plural,
SG = singular

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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