

Gender mismatch and ellipsis: comparing French nouns and adjectives.

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According to Merchant (2014), nouns and adjectives behave differently with respect to gender mismatch under ellipsis: while adjectives allow for it (1a), nouns seem to fall into 3 classes: no mismatch (*prince/princess*) (1b), asymmetric mismatch (*actor/actress*) (1c), full mismatch (*teacher*), see Sudo & Spathas (2020) for experimental evidence.

- (1) a) I Maria ine ikani, ala o Alexandros dhen ine (ikanos). (Merchant, 2014)
'Maria is capable.F.S, but Alexandros is not (capable..M.S).'
- b) *John is a prince and Mary is too. *Mary is a princess and John is too (Sprouse et al., 2021)
- c) John is an actor and Mary is too. *Mary is an actress and John is too.

We extracted 648 stripping sentences from several French corpora (FrTenTen, ORFEO:spoken-part, Frantext:after-1980): 559 with adjectives, 89 with nouns. We show that French human nouns allow for more gender mismatches than previously thought, even for relational nouns (*fils/fille* 'son/daughter') (2b) and unrelated pairs (*homme/femme* 'man/woman') (2c).

- (2) a) Ses parents étaient musiciens... [...] Vous aussi. [étiez musicienne]
'His parents were musician.M.P. You too (were a musician.F.S). (Garat, 2006, Frantext)
- b) Maria Campallo serait une fille de disparus, votre copain aussi. [serait un fils de disparus]
'Maria Campallo would be a Daughter of the Missing, your friend.M.S too (would be a Son of the Missing).' (Ferey, 2012, Frantext)
- c) Vous êtes un homme très occupé [...] Moi aussi. [je suis une femme très occupée]
'You are a very busy man. Me too (I am a very busy woman).' (Garat, 2008, Frantext)

Predicative adjectives (with human subjects) show a high rate of gender mismatch: 41.6% (Frantext) and 35.5% (FrTenTen). For predicative nouns, the rate is lower (18.7% in Frantext and 14.3% in FrTenTen), but the same factors (pronominality, animacy, syncretism, author gender) are at play. Pronominality of remnant and correlate favors mismatch, as does the author's gender, with more mismatches by female authors (in Frantext). For adjectives, we found a preference for Feminine-first ordering (3a) and adjective homophony (3b), but not for nouns.

- (3) a) La moitié de Venise est folle de lui et toi aussi. [tu étais fou de lui]
'Half of Venice is crazy.F.S about him and you too (are crazy.M.S about him).' (Cluny, 1983, Frantext)
- b) Mon père est athée. Moi aussi. [je suis athée]
'My father is an atheist.M.S Me too (I am an atheist.F.S). (Monferrand, 1990, Frantext)

This suggests that previous theories on nominal ellipsis should be reconsidered by taking corpus data into account.

Selected References

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