

French verbal/adjectival genitives and construct states

French grammars generally assume that the external argument (the “*complément d’agent*”) of passive sentences can be encoded either as a *par*-comp., i.e. a complement introduced by the preposition *par* (*by*-comp.) or as a much more constraint *de*-comp. (*of*-comp.) (cf. (Spang-Hanssen, 1963), (Shapira, 1963), (Ruwet, 1993)). These complements are considered as “grammatically synonymous”, and it is often stated that a *de*-comp. is preferred when the participle is stative. But this account does not hold, since the *de*-comp. is often unacceptable even if the participle is stative. Furthermore, the synonymy between the two types of complements is not always confirmed, since the replacement of *by* with *of* can trigger semantic differences, as I will show. Finally, this statement does not account for the fact that in several cases, when replacing the *by*-comp. with an *of*-comp., one must often drop the noun article, which is obligatory with a *by*-comp.

In this paper, I challenge a long-standing view confining the genitive relation in Romance languages to the nominal domain (cf. (Jespersen, 1914), (Benveniste, 1966), (Calboli, 1972)), and show that the syntax/semantics of the verbal/adjectival *de*-comp. are better understood if we analyse it as a genitive comp. (G-comp.). I focus on the passive and attributive constructions [x être ‘be’+participle/adj. Y *de* z/Z°], where x stands for the individual referred by the subject, Y for the set of states denoted by the adjective or the participle. (cf. (Rothstein, 1999), (Kratzer, 2000)), z for the individual or the type of inalienable objects referred by a determinate G-comp., and Z° for the set of individuals or the type of inalienable objects denoted by a non-determinate Gcomp. I study in details the G-comp. of three classes of participle/adj.:

1. “Part/Whole” predicates: these participles derive from verbs as *couvrir*, ‘cover’, which entail a Proto-Part/Proto-Whole relation (cf. Barker & Dowty, 1993). I will argue that a G-comp. is either a predicate argument of these participles, or forms with them complex predicates.

These participles are in most cases target state passives (cf. (Parsons, 1990), (Kratzer, 2000)). The states they denote involve an individual i pertaining to the set I of objects which can be Incorporated Theme (cf. (Jackendoff, 1990) of the predicate (the set I is the set of liquid substances for “flooded”).

With these participles, I argue that “*de-Z*” denotes a function which maps the set of states Y into a set of states Y' whose Incorporated Theme i' pertains to Z° . If i' does not also pertain to I , the Gcomp. forms with the PARTICIPLE a complex predicate and the entailment from the sentence with a *de*-comp. to the same sentence without it is blocked, since in this case $Y \cap Y' = \emptyset$ (see ex. 1 & 3). If i' pertains to I , the G-Comp. is an argument of the predicate bearing the role Part and the entailment is triggered (see ex. 2 & 4).

2. Non-deverbal adjectives: when there is a Possessor/Inalienable relation between the subject and the *de*-comp., we have the adjectival construction studied by (Frei, 1939), (Fillmore, 1968) and analyzed by (Siloni, 1998) as an adjectival construct similar to the Hebrew adjectival construct. I show that the constraints bearing on the definite article of the inalienable noun in Hebrew do not apply to French (see 6-7), suggest that the definite article is obligatory when the inalienable noun is a mass noun and explain why (see 8-11). I suggest that in this type of adjectival construct, “*de-Z*” denotes a restrictive function which maps the set of states Y into a set of states Y' consisting of the states which are true of the individuals pertaining to Z° . This analysis predicts that the entailment from a sentence with a *de*-Obj. of this type to a sentence without this complement is blocked (see 12). But this does not imply that the adjective does not modify in any sense the noun describing the Possessor, as suggested by (Siloni, 1998). On the contrary, I show that if the state described by the adjective is true of the inalienable, it entails that the same state is satisfied at a higher degree by the Possessor (see 13). This explains the impossibility to have such an adjectival construct in contexts where this entailment could not be triggered. For instance, **une fille longue de nez* (‘a girl long of nose’) is ungrammatical because the length of a nose does not influence in any way the length of its Possessor. The same constraint seems to apply in Hebrew (see 14).

3. Obj.Exp. Psych.-predicates: I show that a Gcomp. is always an argument of a Object Experiencer Psych.-predicate, but not of the same type of the *by*-comp. With these predicates, e z corresponds to the object on which bears the psychological eventuality experienced by x . I argue that the Gcomp. denotes the result of the processing of z by x , and suggest that the genitival relation expressed by the G-Comp is responsible for the fact that the minding of z by x is represented as partial, as noted by (Lee 1974) and (MacCawley 1976). This analysis accounts for the semantic/pragmatic differences between the *de*-Comp and the *by*-Comp. and explains the selectional restrictions bearing on the *de*-Comp. of such predicates (see 15-19).

Data

1. Je suis zébré de courbatures.
I am stripped of aches.
---/---> Je suis zébré.
I am streaked.
2. Mon chat est zébré de rayures horizontales
My cat is stripped of stripes horizontals.
-----> Mon chat est zébré.
My cat is stripped.
3. La pièce est inondée de papillons.
The room is flooded of butterflies
---/---> La pièce est inondée.
The room is flooded.
4. La pièce est inondée de lait.
The room is flooded of milk.
-----> La pièce est inondée.
The room is flooded.
5. yalda yefat mar'e (Siloni, 1998)
girl beautiful look
'A good-looking girl'
6. ha-yalda yefat *(ha-) mar'e (Siloni, 1998)
the-girl beautiful the-look
'The good-looking girl'
7. Une/la fille grosse de/du visage.
A/ the girl big of/of-the face.
8. Une fille fragile *d'/des os. [plural massive]
A girl fragil of/ of-the bones.
9. Une fille fine de/ ??des doigts. [plural discrete]
A girl thin of/of-the fingers.
10. Une fille fragile *de/de la cervelle. [singular massive]
A girl fragil of/ of the brain.
11. Une fille large de/du bassin. [singular discrete]
A girl thin of/of-the pelvis.
12. La fille fragile de la cervelle est arrivée
The girl fragil of the brain arrived.
---/---> La fille fragile est arrivée.
The girl fragil arrived.
13. Cette fille est jolie des yeux.
This girl is beautiful of eyes.
-----> *Without these eyes, this girl would have been less beautiful*
-/-> *This girl is beautiful..*
14. ?* yalda arukat af
A girl long of nose
15. *J'étais éberluée de ses jambes.
I was astounded of her legs.
16. J'étais éberluée de la longueur de ses jambes.
I was astounded of the length of her legs.
17. Je suis satisfait de mon nez/#par mon nez.
I am satisfied of my nose/ by my nose.
18. Le chien était étonné *par* l'ambiance qui régnait dans la maison
19. #Le chien était étonné *de* l'ambiance qui régnait dans la maison
"The dog was surprised by/of the atmosphere in the house"

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