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Workshop:

Gender in Romance languages Exploring how formal approaches can inform communication policies

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Book of Abstracts

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Grammaticalizing Inclusivity: French Gender Inclusive Doublets

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In this talk, we present a formal syntactic analysis of gender inclusive doublets in spoken French. In a gender inclusive doublet construction, constituents containing overt (i.e. pronounced) gender marking can be doubled, where one occurrence has masculine marking and one has feminine marking. Consider the example in (1), spoken by the feminist journalist, Victoire Tuaillon, on French television:

(1) De toute façon, en tant que humain humaine, on peut pas vivre seul, non? On est forcément en relation les uns les unes avec les autres.
    "In any case, as humans (human_M human_F), we can't live alone, no? We are necessarily in a relation with each other (lit. the ones_M the others_F)"

Gender inclusive doublets are instances of an innovative linguistic practice coming from feminist and LGBT+ activism and has been studied in the sociolinguistics literature (see, for example, Elmiger 2015, Abbou 2017, Burnett & Pozniak 2021). As these works describe, the doublets are used as a way of avoiding having a single masculine marked expression referring to people of all genders, i.e. avoiding *en tant que humain* as a human.M'. Although many francophones are supportive of gender inclusive language, others are sceptical or even critical. While much of the criticism is clearly related to the social and political questions that this linguistic practice aims to address (reducing gender equality and/or deconstructing the gender binary), it is true that the sentences in (1) have a property that is unusual for French: there are two nominal predicates (hum*ain humaine*) and two DPs (les uns les unes) where we normally find only one. From a theoretical perspective, gender inclusive doublets thus raise questions with respect to how syntactic selection works in such utterances, possibly challenging Chomsky (1986)'s Projection Principle.

The main goal of this presentation is to argue that French gender inclusive doublets are not only of interest to sociolinguists, but also to theoretical syntacticians. We will show that, despite their roots in feminist linguistic activism, these constructions not only obey general grammatical constraints that have been observed cross-linguistically, but also reveal new properties of the fine-grained structure of the spoken French nominal domain. We claim that, contrary to appearances, gender inclusive doublets do not challenge the Projection Principle since, as we will argue, a doublet contains only a single noun phrase. We propose that the illusion of multiple noun/determiner phrases in utterances like (1) arises from the doubling of interpretable phi features, which are then spelled out as chunks of nominal (or other) structure. We arrive at this proposal through a study of grammaticality and interpretation judgements with native speakers and a

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[1] This is collaborative work with Caterina Donati (LLF, CNRS - Université Paris Cité) and Marie Flesch (ATILF, CNRS - Université de Lorraine).

quantitative study of linguistic variation in the Cartographie linguistique des féminismes (CaFé) spoken corpus (Abbou & Burnett 2025).

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Formal and stereotypical gender in subject verb agreement

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Introduction.

In gendered languages like Italian nouns' gender reflect a formal (lexical) feature of (most) nouns; in the case of role nouns, it might also reflect semantic gender, i.e., a transparent relationship between the referent's gender and the gender of nouns/pronouns. From a sociolinguistic perspective, role nouns also involve a gender bias, i.e., stereotypical expectations (traditionally, doctor is male-biased, teacher is female-biased). All these factors might play a role in the process of grammatical agreement, i.e., the coordinate gender assignment across elements in the sentence. Previous studies show that grammatical gender takes precedence over semantic agreement in anaphoric dependencies (Cacciari et al., 1997 on Italian epicene words). Other studies also suggest that readers integrate (gender) stereotypes, experiencing a clash when the morphological gender and the stereotypical gender associated with a role noun do not match (Carreiras et al., 1996; Gygax et al., 2008). We aim to contribute to this debate by testing how gendered forms are processed in subject-verb agreement in reading, to answer these research questions: (Q1) *Are masculine and feminine forms equally involved in the process of morphological subject-verb agreement?* (Q2) *Are masculine and feminine forms equally permeable to gender stereotypes associated with role nouns?*

Our study.

We conducted two eye-tracking reading studies in Italian. Study 1 (N=54) tested 90 inanimate nouns, cf. (1); Study 2 (N=53) 133 role nouns (83 bigender, like artista (artist), 50 gendered, like educatore/educatrice (educator), cf. (2). Each noun was followed by a gender-marked verb (past participle), either in the masculine or feminine form (arrivato/arrivata).

(1) a. Durante la prova, l'antidoto si è rovesciato$_{[+M]}$/rovesciata$_{[+F]}$ sul pavimento.
   During the test, the antidote spilled on the floor.
   b. Dopo l'incidente, l'amnesia si è manifestato$_{[+M]}$/manifestata$_{[+F]}$ subito.
   After the accident, the amnesia manifested (itself) immediately.
(2) Ieri l'artista$_{[M/F]}$/educatore$_{[+M]}$/educatrice$_{[+F]}$ è arrivato$_{[+M]}$/arrivata$_{[+F]}$ tardi.
   Yesterday, the artist/educator arrived late.

Statistical analyses of reading time measures were carried out using mixed-effects linear/logistic regression models. To address Q1, we first compared Study 1 and 2 and showed: (i) a symmetric pattern of agreement mismatch between +M and +F forms when the noun was inanimate; (ii) an asymmetric pattern for gendered nouns referred to people (Fig. 1). Specifically, the cost of reading a +M verb after a +F role noun is much reduced in total time measures (compared to the cost of a +F verb after a +M role noun), and it becomes nonexistent or reversed in go past and first pass time measures. This is not the

case (i) when the noun is inanimate; (ii) when the verb is +F: the cost of reading a +F verb after a +M noun remains high, and similar to the mismatch effect found for inanimate nouns. As for Q2, we modeled reading measures in bigender nouns including a previous norming rate as predictor (Authors, 2025). A consistent reduced cost for +M verbs (vs. +F) was found across measures. Late measures of processing also revealed a significant interaction of Gender Bias and Verb Gender (Fig. 2): for male-biased nouns and for unbiased nouns, there is a cost if followed by a +F verb, which decreases for highly female-biased nouns (e.g., *badante*); the effect of noun's gender bias is much reduced for +M verbs, and more constant across nouns. This effect was further corroborated in an Acceptability Judgment Study on the same materials (Fig. 3).

We show that the cost of gender mismatch is greater when a +F verb follows a +M noun than vice versa, but this only happens in the case of nouns referring to people. This effect cannot be reduced to frequency and does not emerge when gender is a formal property of the noun (as for inanimate nouns). When referring to people, the +M form can be considered ambiguous between a gender-specific and a gender-generic or underspecified form. +F forms, instead, entail femaleness (Percus, 2011). If the noun is inanimate, +M and +F are formal traits of the nouns, thus gender is always specific and requires formal agreement. In the case of bigender nouns, we show another asymmetry: +F forms are more sensitive to stereotypical expectations than +M: RTs are longer when a +F verb follows a bigender noun that is perceived as referred to a man, and it is reduced when a +F verb follows a female-biased bigender noun. Our explanation is that readers engage in gender-processing when the noun or the verb is marked (+F), but gender might remain underspecified (i.e., gender generic or gender neutral) in the case of +M forms. We discuss the impact of our results in explaining previous findings.

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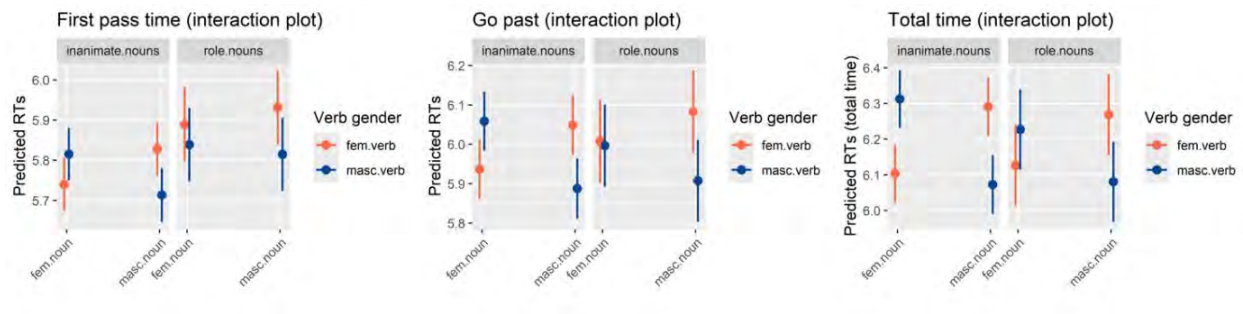
Figure 1. Interaction plot of linear mixed models on reading measures of the gendered verb (fem/masc) in Study 1 (inanimate nouns) and Study 2 (gendered role nouns).
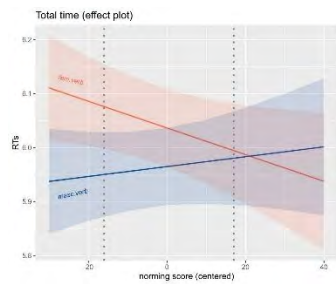
| **Figure 2.** Interaction plot of Verb and Gender Bias for bigendered role nouns (Study 2). | **Figure 3.** Interaction plot of Verb and Gender Bias for bigendered role nouns in an Acceptability Judgment Study using the same bigender role nouns. |

The schwa as a gender-inclusive language strategy in spoken Italian: Too difficult to pronounce?

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Background.

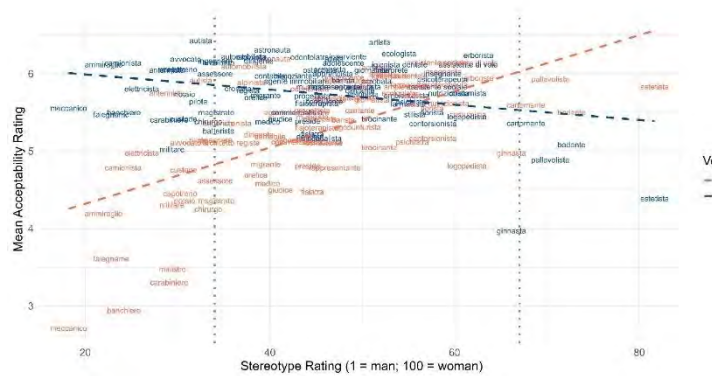Romance languages such as Italian have a binary grammatical gender system in which all nouns and the related syntactic elements are feminine or masculine. Several gender-inclusive strategies have been proposed to refer to non-binary individuals, with recent studies showing a shift in readers' representation of the referents' gender [1]. In Italian, the adoption of innovative forms (e.g., *maestrə*) as an alternative to gender-marked suffixes (e.g., *maestro/maestra*) has sparked off academic, societal, and political debate [2,3]. While the schwa (ə), unlike other typographic strategies such as the asterisk, may translate into speech, research on its use in spoken Italian remains scarce. A study on the perception of role nouns presented in isolation found that the schwa partially reduces stereotypical associations, although more effectively in the written than in the auditory modality [4]. The one study that has, to our knowledge, examined semi-spontaneous speech found that the schwa was generally used in an appropriate way, despite participants' concerns about its pronunciation and a perceived increase in cognitive load [5]. Since the /ə/ phoneme does not belong to the standard Italian phonemic inventory, but only to central and southern Italian dialects, the pronunciation of the schwa depends, at a basic level, on speakers' ability to produce a sound that is phonetically distinct from their native vowels. Against this background, in this study we conduct an acoustic analysis of Italian speech containing words (nouns, articles, adjectives, past participles, and pronouns) neutralized through the use of /ə/ to explore whether gender-inclusive schwa is, in fact, too difficult to pronounce as a distinct sound.

Methodology and results

The participants (N=10), all female native speakers of Italian in the final stages of a master's degree in Conference Interpretation, were recorded while completing a spoken translation task from English into Italian. The analysis involved the selection of words neutralized through the schwa (N=205), to avoid misgendering the English non-binary speaker and other referents, and of corresponding items containing the participant's native vowels. First, F1 and F2 values of Italian vowels ranging from low to mid-high (N=925) were Z-normalized and used to build the vowel space (/a/, /ɛ/, /e/, /ɔ/, /o/). Then a mixed effects linear model was fitted on the Euclidian distances from the space center [0, 0] for /a/, /e/, and /o/, the phonemes most likely to be pronounced in an unstressed syllable (such as a suffix) instead of the central vowel [6]. Preliminary results (Figure 1) revealed that, overall, participants produced /ə/ as a distinct sound with a higher degree of centralization than /a/ (t=4.31), /e/ (t=5.10), and /o/ (t=4.08). However, Tukey-adjusted

pairwise comparisons suggested that the contrast between /ə/ and /e/ was problematic, as the difference in centralization did not reach significance for half of the participants: P2 (*t*=-1.01), P3 (*t*=-1.46), P9 (*t*=-1.61), P10 (*t*=-2.27), and P12 (*t*=-0.43). For two participants (P2 and P3) there was no difference in centralization between /ə/ and any of the native vowels examined; for two others (P9 and P12) /ə/ was different from /a/ but not from /e/ or /o/; for P5 /ə/ overlapped with /a/.

Discussion

Based on our preliminary results, it cannot be excluded that pronouncing the schwa to mark non-binary gender may be challenging for Italian speakers, especially those with no explicit phonetic training or expertise in spoken public communication. Since Italian suffixes are typically associated with a binary gender (-*a* and -*e* with the feminine singular/plural respectively, and -*o* with the masculine singular), and these regularities affect language processing more broadly [7], our findings call for further investigation into the effects of a lack of acoustic contrast between schwa and standard Italian vowels, and notably into the possible repercussions on gender associations during real-time language comprehension.
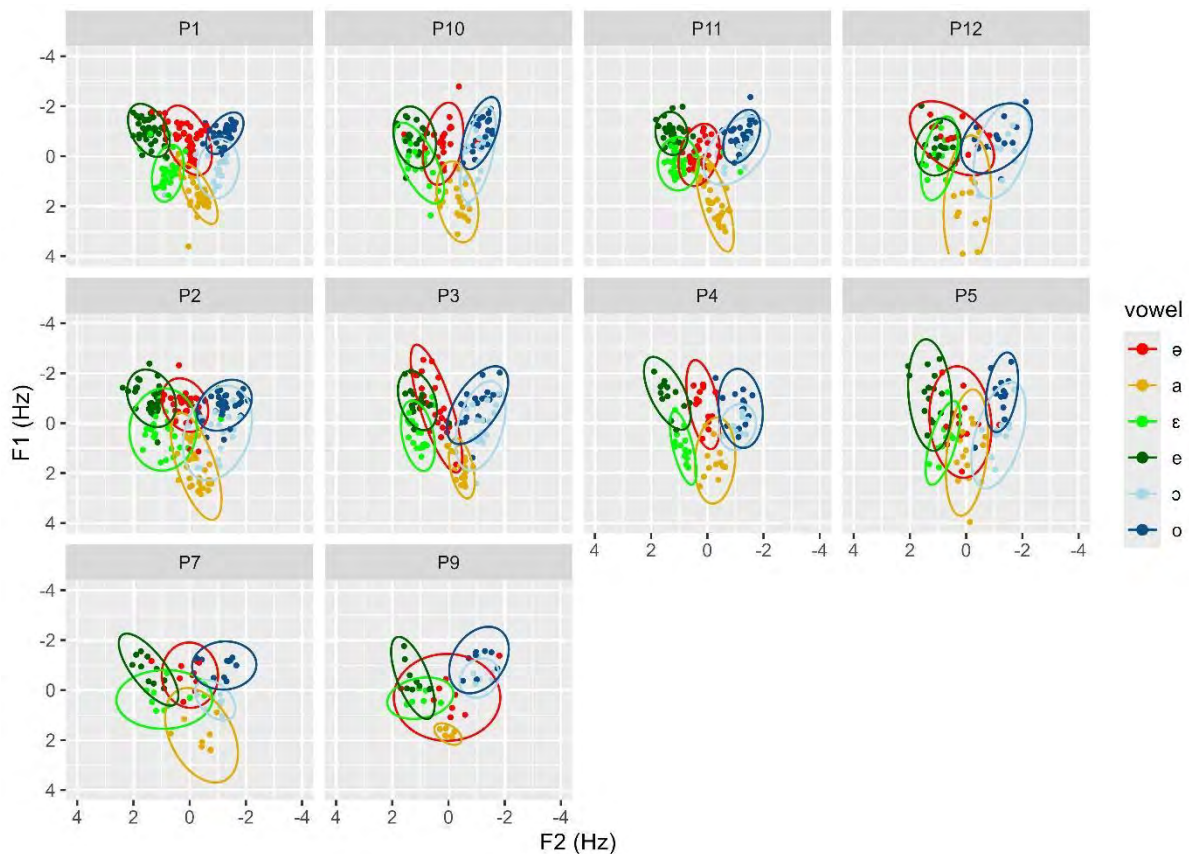
Figure 1. Normalized vowel space for selected vowels.

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Gender assignment to novel words in Italian: formal and semantic cues

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Background

Italian is a highly gender transparent language in which almost all nouns end with a vowel and are thus grammatically gender-marked. Typically, nouns ending in -a are grammatically feminine (F), those ending in -o are masculine (M), with the latter being more frequent overall [1]. Nouns ending in -e are opaque and can be M or F; nouns ending in consonant (-c) tend to be borrowings, typically anglicisms. *Which gender is assigned to loan words?* Corpus research shows that borrowings tend to be assigned either the gender of the Italian equivalent (semantic analogy) or 'default' M, although some degree of variation is attested [2]. Experimental studies with novel words in Spanish, which has a grammatical system similar to Italian but more frequent consonant endings, reveal a preference for morpho-phonological (over semantic) cues by native speakers and Spanish-dominant early bilinguals [3]. We investigate the role of morpho-phonological traits and semantic cues in gender assignment by L1 (and L2, planned) Italian speakers during first exposure to novel words, manipulating word ending (to test the *formal* strategy) and the noun's gender of the objects associated with these words to serve as translation equivalents (to test the *semantic* strategy).

Method

We ran a production study in E-Prime 3 in which a set of images of inanimate objects (N=180, from the MultiPic database [4]; 50% F in Italian) and pseudo-objects (N=90, NOUN Database [5]), were associated with pseudowords ending in -a/-o/-c (N=270). The picture-pseudoword association was random to control for semantic associations [6], and fully counterbalanced across lists in 3x3 conditions: congruent, incongruent, or opaque, considering *word ending* of the same root (dimaba/dimabo/dimab) and the gender of the *object* (or non-object, N) in the picture (M/F/N). Participants (N=45) were asked to produce a sentence starting with 'è un/una…' (it's a$_{F/M}$) + pseudoword. We coded the gender assigned to the word on the basis of the article produced (*un/uno*$_{[M]}$, *una*$_{[F]}$) and recorded speech onset time.

Results

Results of a logistic mixed model regression (Table 1) on the article produced (Figure 1) show a prevalence of the formal strategy for words ending in vowels and default M for words ending in consonant: -a endings were more likely assigned F, -o endings M, compared to -c (1st z=-55.69; 2nd: z=-26.26). Semantic effects emerged in association with F objects, as words ending in -c were more likely assigned F compared to words ending in -o (z=-5.83). Exploratory analysis of speech onset latency (Table 2) showed longer RTs for

words ending in -a vs. -c when associated with an M (vs. N) object (z=2.69), supporting a possible interference of the object's gender (Figure 2).


Discussion

In line with previous research on novel words, we show evidence for (i) a prevalence of the morpho-orthographic strategy in gender assignment to transparent novel words; (ii) M as the "default" for opaque novel words ending in -c. In addition, we find (iii) limited but consistent evidence for an influence of the gender of the associated object. The emergence of semantic effects may have been facilitated by an increase in statistical power compared to previous studies [e.g., 7], while controlling for semantic associations with randomized picture/word pairs. Further planned studies with L2-Italian speakers of L1 French (gender-marked language), and L1-Dutch (no gender assigned to inanimate nouns) will allow us to explore the effects of cross-linguistic influence and L2 proficiency on gender assignment strategies.

Tables 1-2. Outputs of the logistic regression (1) and linear model (2) on gender assignment to nonwords (M/F) and speech onset latencies, with Ending (-c, -a, -o) and Object (N/F/M), contrasts set at (0.5, -0.5, 0) and (0.5, 0, -0.5), OLD20 as fixed effect, Participants, Items, Word root and Trial order as random intercepts.

Table 1. *glmer*

	Est.	S.E.	z val.	p
(Intercept)	-1.537	0.112	-13.731	0.000***
Ending_contrast1	-7.068	0.127	-55.689	0.000***
Ending_contrast2	5.114	0.195	26.263	0.000***
Object_contrast1	-1.911	0.128	-14.942	0.000***
Object_contrast2	1.051	0.163	6.454	0.000***
old20_cent	-0.291	0.126	-2.307	0.021*
Ending_contrast1:Object_contrast1	-1.770	0.304	-5.826	0.000***
Ending_contrast2:Object_contrast1	1.990	0.430	4.624	0.000***
Ending_contrast1:Object_contrast2	0.774	0.354	2.187	0.029*
Ending_contrast2:Object_contrast2	-0.321	0.579	-0.554	0.580

Table 2. *lmer*

	Est.	S.E.	t val.	d.f.	p
(Intercept)	6.883	0.047	146.701	35.410	0.000***
Ending_contrast1	-0.025	0.006	-4.435	9451.046	0.000***
Ending_contrast2	0.026	0.006	4.657	9475.359	0.000***
Object_contrast1	-0.009	0.006	-1.506	265.841	0.133
Object_contrast2	0.007	0.006	1.146	265.231	0.253
old20_cent	0.026	0.006	3.967	371.339	0.000***
Ending_contrast1:Object_contrast1	-0.030	0.016	-1.922	9461.215	0.055.
Ending_contrast2:Object_contrast1	0.008	0.016	0.539	9469.598	0.590
Ending_contrast1:Object_contrast2	0.042	0.016	2.686	9463.433	0.007*
Ending_contrast2:Object_contrast2	-0.028	0.016	-1.769	9463.648	0.077.
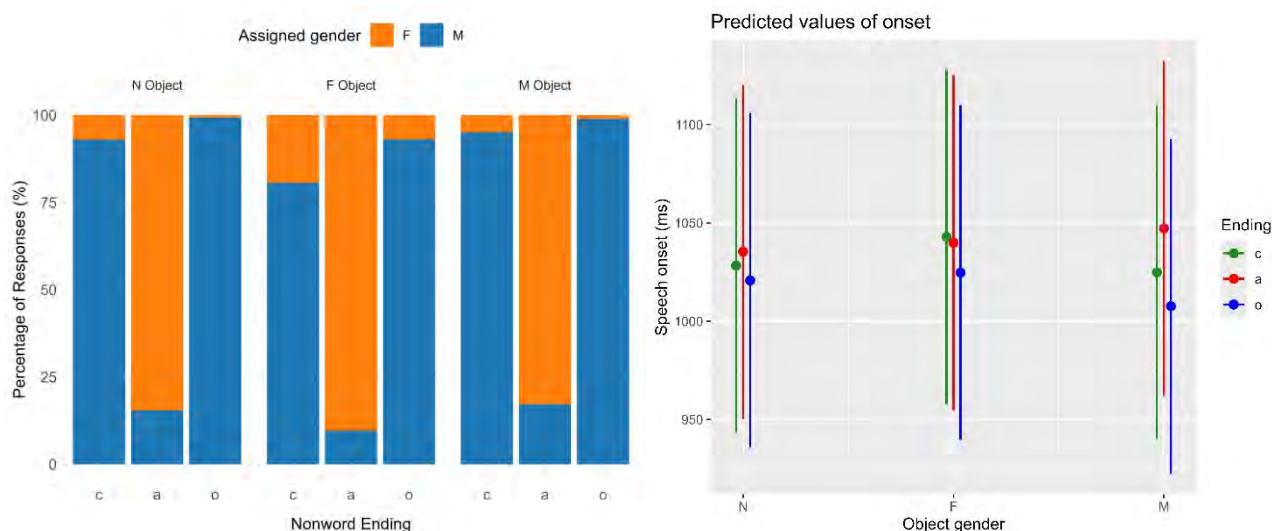
Figure 1. Percentage of masculine and feminine articles produced before novel words.

Figure 2. Interaction plot of Model 2.

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(Non)-Sexist Language and Political Identity in Spanish: Evidence from Parliamentary and Social Media Discourse

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All modern standard Romance languages –except Romanian– feature a binary feminine-masculine gender system (Loporcaro 2017). However, Latin, the progenitor of these Romance languages, had a third grammatical gender, called neuter:

(1) servus (m.), rosa (f.), bellum (n.)

It is well-known that this Latin three-gender system was reshaped into a binary one in most standard Romance languages, with neuter forms disappearing and being reassigned arbitrarily to either the masculine or feminine gender. This evolution is evident in different Romance languages such as French (2), Portuguese (3), or Spanish (4):

(2) vinum (n.) > le vin; folia (n.pl.) > la feuille
(3) vinum (n.) > o vinho; folia (n.pl.) > a folha
(4) vinum (n.) > el vino; folia (n. pl.) > la hoja

Another key feature that characterizes the morphosyntactic category of grammatical gender in Romance languages (with some exceptions in Romanian) is the syntactic unmarkedness of the masculine. In Spanish, for instance, the generic masculine is used to refer to mixed-gender groups (e.g. *amigos* refers to a group of friends, regardless of their gender). However, this usage has come under increasing criticism in Spanish society. The most frequently cited argument in the debate is that the generic masculine maintains the invisibility of women and thus contributes to sexist language.

This debate on linguistic sexism in Spanish revolves around two main perspectives (Escandell-Vidal 2020, 225-226): some argue that the use of the generic masculine (e.g. *los ciudadanos*) contributes to the invisibilization of women and therefore promote non-sexist languages strategies, such as epicenes and collectives (e.g. *la ciudadanía*), double forms (*los ciudadanos y las ciudadanas*) and the generic feminine (e.g. *las ciudadanas*). The opposing view holds that language itself is not inherently sexist and should not be modified to reflect social change.

The present paper investigates the use of (non-)sexist language in Spanish political discourse, focusing on how grammatical gender interacts with ideological positioning and discourse genre. Drawing on data from both parliamentary debates and X posts, the study examines the extent to which Spanish politicians avoid the generic masculine and adopt inclusive alternatives –such as epicenes, collectives, double forms, and the generic feminine (Cuenca 2020; Martínez-Linares 2022).

The analysis reveals a clear ideological divide: right-wing parties and male speakers predominantly use the generic masculine, while left-wing parties and female speakers

more frequently employ alternative strategies. Notably, on X, where direct voter engagement is crucial, language use becomes more strategic and identity-driven. Left-wing actors –especially *Podemos*– leverage the generic feminine and graphic innovations (e.g., *-@, -o/a*) to signal inclusivity and align with feminist values. In contrast, *VOX* consistently favors traditional forms across both genres.

These findings underscore the ideological function of (non-)sexist language in Spanish and highlight how discourse genre mediates linguistic choices. The study contributes to theoretical discussions on grammatical gender by showing how inclusive strategies are not only linguistic innovations but also tools of political self-representation. It further suggests that empirical insights from political discourse can inform inclusive communication policies in Romance-speaking societies and serve as an empirical basis for debates on gender-inclusive language use.

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Deictic and Anaphoric NP Reconstruction in Child Romanian:
The Role of Gender in Visual Contexts

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The acquisition of anaphora presents a critical testing ground for the interaction between syntactic structure, discourse representation, and processing mechanisms. A particularly rich domain for investigation involves nominal anaphora with one, where learners must determine whether the anaphor targets a previously mentioned NP (anaphoric resolution, e.g. only two dogs...[…] a small one and a big one[1]) or an object in the visual context (deictic resolution, e.g., The green one is mine). The literature on anaphoric one has long debated whether young children exhibit adult-like noun phrase reconstruction from early on [2-5], or whether they initially rely more heavily on visual salience and pragmatic cues, leading to more deictic interpretations[6-8] (e.g., where one refers to a bicycle in The elephant washes the red car. The lion washes the blue one). This raises questions about how morphosyntactic features contribute to the developing anaphoric system, in particular, whether gender might influence referential resolution in contexts with visual competitors.

Our study explores the role of morphosyntactic gender in 3-year-olds' anaphora resolution in Romanian, a morphologically rich language where the anaphor is gender-marked—unul for masculine and neuter; una for feminine. We ask whether the presence of visual distractors that share the same gender with the antecedent or differ in gender from the antecedent supports or interferes with children's ability to resolve anaphora in discourse.

We tested 31 Romanian children (Ages: 3–4, Mean: 3;06), and 37 control adults on a picture-based comprehension task, where they heard what an animal wanted and evaluated whether a boy gave it the right object (Table 1), correcting the boy if needed. The task contained 30 picture sets and utterances: 2 warm-ups, 4 controls and 24 test sentences of the type X vrea un N1 Color1. Y vrea unul Color2 'X wants a Color1 N1. Y wants a Color2 one'. We chose to have the antecedent and the anaphora in separate sentences with an intervenor between them (Y), as this format has given rise to both anaphoric and deictic answers in children. [7-8] The animal subjects were assigned a different gender than the anaphoric target. The gender of the anaphor linguistically corresponded to the antecedent; thus, all the sentences participants heard were fully grammatical.

Table 1. Examples of experimental items in two conditions

Condition	Intro	Question
Gender Match (F-F) x Partial Referent Choice	*Acesta este Fluturele și acesta este Melcul.* *Aici avem o frunză, o altă frunză, o floare și o altă floare.* 'Here is the Butterfly and here is the Snail. Here we have a.F.SG leaf.F.SG, another.F.SG leaf.F.SG, a F.SG flower.F.SG, and another.F.SG flower.F.SG.' *Fluturele vrea o frunză galbenă. Melcul vrea una roșie.* Butterfly-the wants a.F.SG leaf.F.SG yellow.F.SG. Snail-the wants one.F.SG red.F.SG 'The Butterfly wants a yellow leaf. The Snail wants a red one'.	*Uite! Mihai i-a dat Fluturelui o frunză galbenă.* 'Look! Mihai gave the Butterfly a.F.SG yellow.F.SG leaf.' *(Amintește-ți: Fluturele vrea o frunză galbenă. Melcul vrea una roșie.)* (Remember: Butterfly-the wants a.F.SG leaf.F.SG yellow.F.SG. Snail-the wants one.F.SG red.F.SG 'The Butterfly wants a yellow leaf. The Snail wants a red one'.) *Mihai vrea să-i dea Melcului asta! Asta vrea Melcul?* *(Dacă da, continuă cu următorul slide. Dacă nu, întreabă: Ce crezi că vrea Melcul?)* 'Mihai wants to give the Snail this! Is this what the Snail wants' *(If yes, continue to the next slide. If not, ask: What do you think the Snail wants?)*

The noun phrases and the modifying color adjectives provided the relevant information for anaphora reconstruction (e.g., *o frunză galbenă* 'a yellow leaf', *una roșie* 'a red one'). Importantly, each trial involved four object referents: two objects of the referential kind N1 mentioned in the first sentence (e.g. two leaves), two of another referential kind N2 (e.g., two flowers).

Importantly, we manipulated the object choice alongside two variables: (i) Gender match— whether the distractor N2 objects in the array matched or mismatched the gender of the N1 objects (the antecedent's noun gender); and (ii) Lexical match — whether the chosen object was of the same noun referent type as the antecedent (anaphoric/ full referent choice: Color2 N1) or of a different noun type (deictic/partial referent: Color2 N2, i.e., the object matched in color but not in referential noun type), as exemplified in Table 2. We predicted that, for children, gender match would favor deictic interpretations, whereas gender mismatch would favor anaphoric resolution.

Table 2. Examples of the other experimental conditions (apart from the one in Table 1)

condition	Gender Match (M-M) X Full Referent Choice	Gender Match (N-N) X Partial Referent Choice	Gender Mismatch (F-N) X Full Referent Choice	Gender Mismatch (F-M) X Partial Referent Choice	Gender Mismatch (M-N) X Full Referent Choice
objects	*soare* (sun.M) *& nor* (cloud.M)	*telefon* (phone.N) *& creion* (pencil.N)	*fular* (scarf.N) *& rochie* (dress.F)	*munte* (mountain.M) *& stea* (star.F)	*ou* (egg.N) *& morcov* (carrot.M)

Results

Both adults and children accepted anaphoric (full) referents (Color2 N1), but while adults rejected deictic different-object (N2) choices, children accepted them more (Fig.1). For children, a logistic regression model with Answer as the dependent variable and Gender Congruence, Referent Choice, and their interaction as fixed effects (with random intercepts for participants) revealed that only Referent Choice ($\beta = 3.38$, SE = 0.44, z = 7.66, p < .0001) was significant, indicating children were more likely to accept anaphoric/full referents. Interestingly, regardless of gender, 14 children consistently accepted both anaphoric and deictic referents, 9 consistently rejected deictic referents, and others varied. Notably, 4 children accepted deictic referents only in gender-congruent conditions.

Figure 1: Proportion of yes answers per Group, Gender match and Referent choice

Discussion
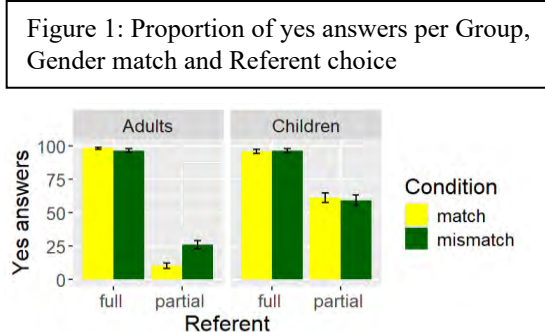
Three-year-olds in our study fell into distinct interpretive profiles: some reliably accepted only anaphoric referents, demonstrating sensitivity to discourse-level structure; others accepted deictic referents, appearing to rely more heavily on visually salient objects in the scene. This split supports the view that reference resolution in early acquisition does not involve homogeneous behavior but rather reflects developmental variation, with some children starting out as deictic. Following [7-8], we assume that adult-like nominal ellipsis involves NP topicalization: the NP moves from its base position to its left periphery in SpecTopP, where it is deleted at PF under identity with its antecedent ([CP$_1$ [Fluturele vrea o frunză galbenă] [:° [:' [CP$_2$ [C° [TP [TP [Melcul] [T' [T° vrea] [FocP [Foc' [TopP [Top' [NP frunză] [Top' [DP [una roșie frunză.]]]]]]]]]]]]]]]. Importantly, the relation between the elided NP and its antecedent is constrained by c-command. For a group of children, another DP (the subject of the second sentence) intervenes in the relation between the elided NP and the antecedent, so that the NP does not move to SpecTopP, and a deictic interpretation arises. Visual information, which is perceptually salient, may thus outcompete abstract morphosyntactic cues such as gender—especially in conditions of processing difficulty or representational overload. While our findings overall disconfirm the prediction that gender match between antecedent and visual distractor increases deictic reference (except for 4 participants), they nonetheless reveal a coherent developmental picture. Children with deictic interpretations appear not to rely on gender at all in reference resolution, while children who reject deictic choices rely on gender in their adult-like anaphoric reconstruction. This suggests that adult-like anaphoric interpretations depend on the joint development of discourse-level and morphosyntactic processing.

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Grammatical resources for gender visibility: coordination of gender-marked determiners in Romance

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Goals

This paper explores nominal structures of the type in (1), (2), (3) in Romance, with coordinated plural Ds (with masculine –M– and feminine –F– gender marking) followed by an animate plural N (examples from Spanish Web 2018, Italian Web 2020, SketchEngine; also attested in Portuguese Web 2023: *os e as estudantes, as e os antifascistas*).

(1) a. Facilitar a **los y las clientes** la disponibilidad de un crédito (cajasur.es)
   make it easier for [lit. the.$_{M.pl}$ and the.$_{F.pl}$ customers.$_{M./F.pl}$] to obtain credit

   b. posicionar a tu salón en la mente de **los y las consumidoras** (beautymarket.es)
   promote your salon in the minds of [lit. the.M.pl and the.F.pl consumers.F.pl]

   c. ...apoya a **los y las investigadores** en la mejora de sus condiciones (ccoo.es)
   supports [lit. the.M.pl and the.F.pl researchers.M.pl] to improve their conditions

(2) a. ...asesorar a **las y los docentes** en materia de convivencia (csif.es)
   advising [lit. the.F.pl and the.M.pl teachers.M./F.pl] on the issue of school coexistence

   b. ...las situaciones (...) que padecen **las y los beneficiarios de este tipo de préstamo** (kutxabank.es)
   the situations suffered by [lit. the.$_{F.pl}$ and the.$_{M.pl}$ beneficiaries.$_{M.pl}$] of this loan

(3) a. ore 9:30 - **i e le frequentanti** della TRIENNALE che hanno già superato la prima parte dell'esame... (uniroma3.it) /
   9:30 a.m. - [lit. the.$_{M.pl}$ and the.$_{F.pl}$ attendants.$_{M./F.pl}$] those attending the TRIENNALE who have already passed the first part of the exam

   b. ... **gli**$_{M.pl}$ **e le.**$_{F.pl}$ adolescenti (www.notedipastoralegiovanile.it), **le**$_{F.pl}$ **e gli**$_{M.pl}$ insegnanti delle Scuole dell'Infanzia (testoniragazzi.it)

These structures are frequent (much more in Spanish than in Italian/Portuguese) in contemporary political/commercial texts, where they are used as a strategy to make masculine/feminine referents visible, although some authors claim that they are formed "completely outside the combinatorial patterns of the language" (Escandell-Vidal 2020: 242, RAE-ASALE 2005 *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*). The NGLE (31.4i), as well as many 'Guides for the use of inclusive language', notes their existence in Spanish, although recommend avoiding their use: repeat full DPs *los turistas y las turistas* instead of *los y las turistas*, specially in cases where N has an explicit masc. or fem. gender exponent (as in (1b, c), (2b) vs. (1a), (2a)). In this context, **this talk aims at**: a) documenting the structure using corpus data, b) describing its grammatical properties and basic meaning, c) proposing a syntactic structure from which (b) derives, d) offering grammatical arguments to defend the idea that these structures constitute another resource for gender visibility, consistent with the grammar of Spanish, and, therefore, their use should not be

discouraged. The abstract focuses on Spanish, although the generalizations and proposal will be extended for Italian and Portuguese.

Data. Corpus analysis

To document the structure with naturalistic data, the 'Spanish web 2018' corpus (16 951 839 897 words), preloaded in Sketch Engine, was used. The search strings were (a) [word="los"] [word="y"] [word="las"] and (b) [word="las"] [word="y"] [word="los"]. 56 364 cases were obtained for string (a); 91 764 for (b). 1 000 examples of each sequence were randomly downloaded and manually filtered. After filtering, we obtained 991 valid *los y las N* sequences and 993 valid *las y los N* sequences. Extrapolating the % of valid cases/ 1 000 examples to the total results, a total of 55 877 *los y las N* sequences and a total of 91 122 *las y los N* sequences can be estimated in the corpus.

Grammatical properties

One salient property of the structure is the sensitivity of the D&D coordination to the morphological gender exponent of the animate N. As shown in the table, we found, with a different distribution, Ns without an explicit gender exponent (*invariable nouns:* gender is marked in the determiner: *los.*$_M$ */ las.*$_F$ *E¡estudiantes.*$_{F./M.pl}$); Ns that mark gender with a suffix -o.$_M$/-a.$_F$ (*niño/niña*, for instance); and also other possibilities, such as coordinations of masc. and fem. plural Ns (N.$_M$ y N.$_F$; N.$_F$ y N.$_M$, left aside in this talk).

	los.M y las.F	las.F y los.M
Invariable, gender in D (estudiantes)	512 (53,9%)	744 (76,6%)
Masc suffix (niños)	430 (52,3%)	83 (8,6%)
Fem suffix (niñas)	0	120 (12,4%)
other	8 (0,8%)	23 (2,4%)

In the case of *las.*$_F$ *y los.*$_M$, 76,6% of Ns are gender-invariable > 12,4% of Ns with a feminine suffix > 8,6% of Ns with a masculine suffix. In the case of *los.*$_M$ *y las.*$_F$, Ns with a feminine suffix are non-existent.

Las$_{D.F}$ y los$_{D.M}$: estudiantes > niñas > niños

Los$_{D.M}$ y las$_{D.F}$: estudiantes >/= niños > (*)niñas

Meaning

As a basic property, the structure has an exhaustive interpretation: (4) ("Did *los y las* students bring the book?") is interpreted as "every student", so that the continuation with *Yes, some* is infelicitous. (4) behaves in this sense like (5), with the universal quantifier *todos D N*, and vs. (6) with a regular DP and (7) with a coordination of DPs.

 (4) ¿Trajeron el libro los y las estudiantes? #Sí, algunos / #Sí, algunos y algunas
 (5) ¿Trajeron el libro todos los estudiantes? #Sí algunos.
 (6) ¿Trajeron el libro los estudiantes? Sí, algunos
 (7) ¿Trajeron el libro los estudiantes y las estudiantes? Sí, algunos / Sí, algunos y algunas

Syntax

To account for the properties described, we propose the following structure for the sequence *los y las estudiantes,* with a double DP layer. The null universal quantifier ∀ heads the structure and combines with a coordination of DPs, where D encodes

definiteness (Sanchez Lopez 1995, Lin 2002, Schein 2017). The NPs internal to the coordinated DPs are ATB displaced to the higher DP, in a process akin to Right Node Raising (RNR) (and thus identify the universal quantifier restriction).

```
              DP
          ┌────┴──────┐
          │           NP
      ┌───┴───┐     estudiantes
      D      &P
      ∀    ┌──┴────┐
          DP       │
       ┌──┴──┐     &      DP
       D    NP     y    ┌──┴──┐
      los   M. t        D    NP
                       las   F. t
```

Predictions

The proposal explains: **1.** The presence of different types of adjectives in the structure: Examples like $los._{M.pl}$ $simpáticos._{M.pl}$ t_i y $las._{F.pl}$ $simpáticas._{F.pl}$ t_i $estudiantes._{pl\ i}$ are grammatical since(prenominal) APs remain between the D and NP inside each of the coordinated DPs after the ATB-RNR of the NPs. However, postnominal modifiers cannot remain inside the NPs due to the *Right Edge Condition* on RNR: **Los detenidos y las detenidas docentes*. **2.** The sensitivity of the structure to the gender exponent of N: The sequences with invariable Ns like *students* –(1a), (2a)– are outstanding in number since in that case the N is morphologically compatible with the masc. and fem. gender information it has within each of the DPs (note that *los, las* must syntactically agree in gender with each N). In the second pattern found (*los.*$_{M.pl}$ *y las.*$_{F.pl}$ *niñas* –(1b)–; *las.*$_{F.pl}$ *y los.*$_{M.pl}$ *niños* –(2b)–) the N shows the gender exponent of the linearly adjacent D (as a result of post-yntactic insertion of exponents, Saab 2010). Accordingly, the sequence **las.*$_{F.pl}$ *y los.*$_{M.pl}$ *niñas* is ungrammatical. The sequence (1c) *los.*$_{M.pl}$ *y las.*$_{F.pl}$ *niños,* as well as the difference in % of occurrences of (1c) and (2b), can be explained if the exponent *-o* is understood in Spanish as indicating unmarked morphological gender (Fábregas 2022a,b). **3.** Finally, the presence of the ∀ explains that some determiners cannot appear in this coordinated structure, such as *ambos* 'both' (**ambos y ambas estudiantes)*, or are scarcely documented, like the combinations *unos y unas* N and *unas y unos* N 'indefinites: a, some, any' (only 38 and 18 valid examples in the corpus, respectively) vs., for example, demonstratives (*estas y estos, esas y esos, aquellas y aquellos)*.

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The impact of gender agreement on gender inferences: evidence from French epicene nouns

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Introduction

A growing body of research suggests that grammatical gender is not semantically inert, but contributes gender inferences (e.g., Gygax et al., 2008). We build on Storme & Delaloye Saillen (2024), who showed that epicene nouns in French are overall more likely to be interpreted as referring to a man than to a woman, and, moreover, that this effect is stronger when the noun is masculine (e.g. *un individu* 'an individual') than when it is feminine (e.g. *une personne* 'a person'). We investigate whether this latter effect of grammatical gender is accentuated by the presence of gender agreement markers in the sentence.

Experiment

We constructed 18 sextuplets of sentences referring to a person. In each sextuplet, half contained a masculine epicene noun, the other half a semantically similar feminine one. The sentences further differed in whether they only included a gender marker on the determiner preceding the epicene noun (**baseline**), an additional marker that is purely orthographic (**ortho**; e.g., *souven<u>ue</u>/souvenu* 'remembered$_{fem/masc}$'), or an additional marker that is also pronounced (**ortho+phono**; e.g., *remise* [miz] / *remis* [mi] 'recovered$_{fem/masc}$'). See Table 1 for a sample sextuplet.

Table 1: *Sample stimuli sextuplet. Agreement markers are underlined.*

Gender agreement	Masculine epicene	Feminine epicene
Baseline	<u>Cet</u> individu ne se souvient plus de son nom.	<u>Cette</u> personne ne se souvient plus de son nom.
	'This individual/person does not remember their name.'	
Ortho	<u>Cet</u> individu ne s'est pas souven<u>u</u> de son nom.	<u>Cette</u> personne ne s'est pas souven<u>ue</u> de son nom.
	'This individual/person has not remembered their name.'	
ortho+phono	<u>Cet</u> individu ne s'est pas rem<u>is</u> [ʁəmi] de son amnésie.	<u>Cette</u> personne ne s'est pas rem<u>ise</u> [ʁəmiz] de son amnésie.
	'This individual/person has not recovered from their amnesia.'	

We ran two preregistered on-line experiments, each with 108 French native speakers. In Experience 1, the sentences were presented in written form, while in Experience 2 they were presented auditorily. In both experiments, participants had to guess the gender of

the referent using a 7-point Likert scale (1=male, 7=female, 4=uncertainty). Each participant was presented with one sentence for each sextuplet and an equal number of sentences in each of the six conditions. We expected, firstly, to replicate the gender effect of Storme & Delalaye Saillen (2024) in the baseline condition in both experiments. In Experiment 1 (written stimuli) we crucially expected this effect to be larger in both the ortho and ortho+phono conditions, with possibly the largest effect in the latter given that written forms can activate phonological forms, for instance due to inner speech. In Experiment 2 (auditory stimuli), we expected the gender effect to be larger in the ortho+phono condition compared to baseline, and possibly also larger – but to a lesser extent – in the ortho condition given that spoken forms can activate written forms.

Figure 1 shows the gender inferences as a function of the grammatical gender of the noun and the type of gender agreement.
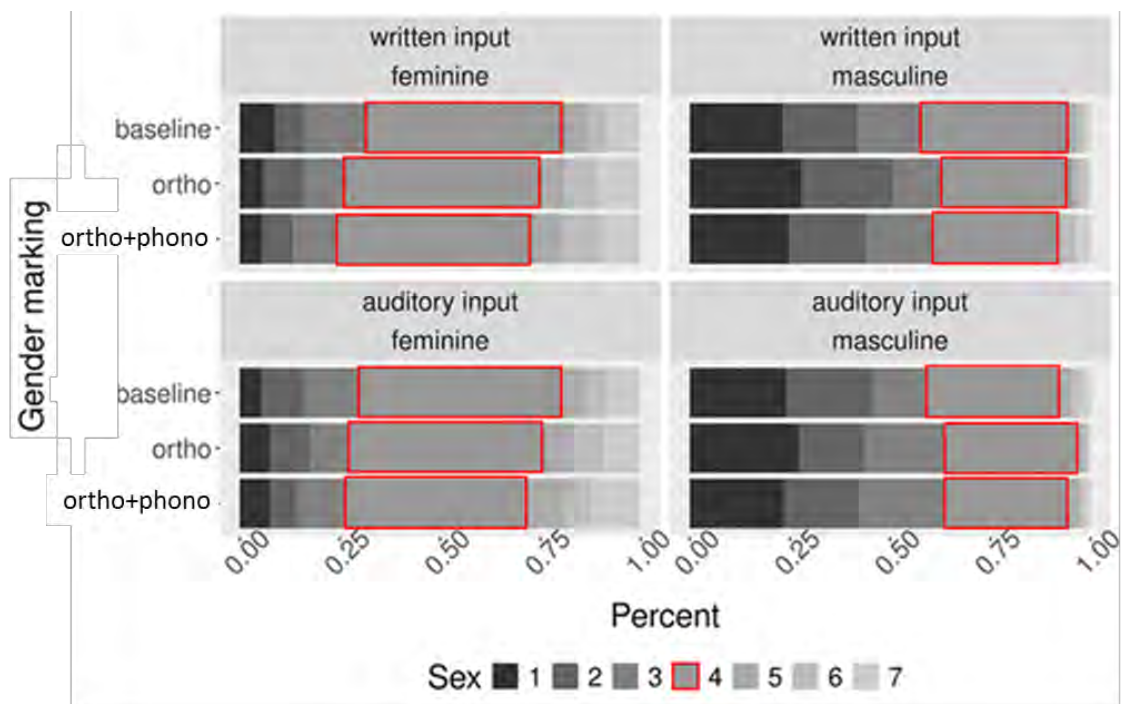
Figure 1: *Gender inferences (1=male, 7=female, 4=uncertainty) as a function of grammatical gender and type of gender agreement. For enhanced readability, inferences corresponding to the midpoint of the Likert scale are highlighted in red.*

We fit Bayesian hierarchical ordinal regressions to the Likert-scale data, using the brms package in R (Bürkner, 2017), with grammatical gender (reference level: feminine), gender agreement (reference level: baseline) and their interaction as fixed effects and by-subject, by-itempair and by-sentence random intercepts. Both experiments showed the gender effect in the baseline condition (β=-0.88 and β=-1.08, respectively; both P($|\beta|$>0)=1), with the grammatical gender of the epicene noun influencing its interpretation as referring to a man or a woman. Specifically, feminine nouns yielded a less male-biased interpretation than masculine ones. In addition, the results support the hypothesis that gender agreement increases the effect, as the difference between feminine and masculine nouns was found to be larger in the presence of additional gender agreement markers in the sentence (Exp. 1: ortho: β=-0.42, P($|\beta|$>0)=1, ortho+phono: β=-0.27, P($|\beta|$>0)=.99; Exp. 2:

ortho: β=-0.23, P(|β|>0)=.97, ortho+phono: β=-0.22, P(|β|>0)=.96). Finally, the results showed no difference between the agreement markers available in one vs two modalities (ortho vs ortho+phono; Exp. 1: β=0.15, P(|β|>0)=.11; Exp. 2: β=0.04, P(|β|>0)=.70). For Experiment 1, this means that we found no evidence for activation of the phonological form during reading. By contrast, for Experiment 2, this suggests that phonological forms do activate written forms.

Conclusion

To conclude, we provide 1/ converging evidence of the gender effect previously observed in Storme & Delaloye Saillen (2024), 2/ evidence that additional agreement markers enhance this effect, and 3/ evidence that gender inferences are influenced by grammatical gender not only in written but also in spoken language processing. We will discuss consequences of these findings for recommendations concerning the use of epicene nouns.

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Do *los jardineros* Include Everyone? Age and Sex Related Patterns in the Interpretation of Masculine Plurals in Spanish

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The interpretation (generic or specific) of masculine plural nouns in Spanish has been the subject of considerable debate, particularly in light of the emergence of inclusive language (Furtado, 2013; Aliaga, 2018; Castillo Sánchez & Mayo, 2019). In Spanish and other Romance languages, the generic use of the masculine is a central issue in both educational and legislative contexts. Indeed, it is one of the few linguistic topics that frequently makes headlines in the general press (e.g., "La UB adopta el masculino como genérico y argumenta que no es excluyente," La Vanguardia, 20/10/2023).

Previous research indicates that language users tend to interpret masculine plural role nouns specifically, rather than generically, from a very early age (Gygax, Schoenhals *et al.*, 2019). The most studied factors influencing this interpretation are participant sex, noun stereotypicality, and attitudes toward inclusive language (Herrera Guevara & Reig Alamillo, 2020; Anaya Ramírez *et al.*, 2022; López Cortés, 2024). However, there is a lack of research focusing on Spanish-speaking children. Moreover, studies involving children in other languages rarely consider developmental trajectories, as there are few longitudinal or cross- sectional studies across different ages.

In this poster, we examine the interpretation of the so-called generic masculine in children at three distinct age stages. Our main objective is to determine whether there are differences in interpretation across educational levels. Comparing our findings with other language acquisition processes will help clarify whether this phenomenon is grammatical or lexical in nature (Mendívil, 2020). Specifically, we address the following research questions:

- Do masculine plural nouns receive a generic or specific interpretation?
- Does the interpretation of masculine plural nouns vary according to age and educational stage?
- Does the interpretation of masculine plural nouns vary according to participants' sex?

To answer these questions, we designed an experiment involving participants from three age groups (4–6, 7–8, and 10–11 years), who completed a semantic interpretation task. The items consisted of sentences containing masculine plural role nouns, all structured as subject + verb, with the target noun as the subject. The role nouns belonged to four morphological classes: nouns with morphological gender -o/-a (e.g., *farmacéutico/a*), nouns with morphological gender -0/-a (e.g., *profesor/a*), and common gender nouns (e.g., *cantantes*). Stereotypicality of the role name was also controlled. Participants were presented with an interpretation task in which they selected the picture that best matched the sentence. For the oral stimulus *Los jardineros están riendo* "Gardeners are laughing,"

four images were shown: (1) two male gardeners laughing (specific interpretation), (2) one male and one female gardener laughing (generic interpretation), (3) two male firefighters laughing (distractor 1), and (4) one male and one female gardener crying (distractor 2). The experiment included 18 experimental items and 12 fillers to divert attention from the research question.

Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to assess whether age and sex influenced the interpretation (generic or specific). The results indicate that age modulates the interpretation of masculine plural nouns in Spanish, with a preference for the specific interpretation at younger ages. However, participants' sex does not appear to affect interpretation. These findings will be discussed in relation to previous research in other Romance languages, and implications and future research directions will be outlined.

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Minimal Morphosyntactic Variation, Maximal Professional Impact? Cognitive and Organizational Effects of Inclusive Writing in French

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This contribution investigates the effects of two common strategies for gender-inclusive writing in contemporary French - median point forms (e.g., étudiant·es) and coordinated alphabetical doublets (e.g., les étudiantes et les étudiants) - on how language shapes not only gendered mental representations, but also institutional mechanisms related to personal skills, anticipated belonging and job appeal. While inclusive writing has been widely studied in recent years (Abbou, 2023), its impact on readers' projection into professional contexts, especially through formal experimental methods grounded in Romance morphosyntax, remains underexplored. Situated at the intersection of theoretical linguistics, experimental psycholinguistics, and institutional language policy, this study also examines how gendered forms operate within organizational discourse, specifically in job advertisements, and in light of the grammatical gender asymmetry characteristic of Romance languages.

Building on prior research on gendered mental representations (e.g.,Gygax and al., 2008), and in particular the work of Gaucher and al. (2011) on language and professional contexts, we conducted two controlled experiments (N = 183, gender-balanced) in which participants read job advertisements written using either masculine generics, median-point forms, or coordinated doublets. A Latin square design controlled for ordering effects, and linear mixed-effects models were used to analyze five key variables: (1) estimated proportion of women in the company, (2) estimated proportion of women in the position, (3) self-perceived personal skills, (4) anticipated belongingness, (5) job appeal.

Our main findings are as follows:

(1) Both inclusive forms significantly increased the perceived proportion of women in comparison with the masculine generic, replicating effects reported in recent studies (Tibblin and al., 2023; Xiao and al., 2023).

(2) The median point had a broader impact: in addition to affecting gender representation, it also significantly increased participants' perception of personal skills, belonging, and appeal to the job.

(3) Doublets, though institutionally preferred (e.g., French government circulars since 2017), primarily affected gender ratio and belongingness, but had no measurable effect on self-perception of skills.

(4) Effects were consistent across participant gender, suggesting that inclusive language benefits both men and women, in contrast with prior assumptions (cf. Stout & Dasgupta, 2011).

These results support the growing body of work arguing that grammatical gender is not cognitively neutral (Gygax and al., 2008; Richy & Burnett, 2019), and that linguistic forms

directly influence how speakers mentally represent social categories. More broadly, they show how minimal morphosyntactic variation (e.g., abbreviated vs. coordinated gender marking) can yield distinct cognitive and performative effects—a key concern for formal linguistic theory.

While both the median point and coordinated doublets aim to make gender visible, their impact on the above-mentioned institutional mechanisms is quite different. In line with performative perspectives on language (Butler, 1988, 1990; Alpheratz, 2018), we argue that the median point, far from being a mere typographic variant, functions as a salient linguistic cue that not only enhances gender visibility but also influences key institutional factors such as self-perception, anticipated belonging, and job appeal. These dimensions, often overlooked in linguistic research, play a crucial role in shaping individuals' access to employment and their projection into professional environments (Gaucher and al., 2011). Its graphic and structural departure from canonical forms appears to make it function as a more potent performative device. This study contributes to Romance linguistics by showing how fine-grained morphosyntactic variation in gender marking can affect not only grammatical interpretation, but also cognitive-affective responses relevant to professional contexts. By grounding formal linguistic analysis in real-world recruitment discourse, this study offers a concrete framework for understanding how grammatical form contributes to mechanisms of workplace inclusion—and, conversely, exclusion.

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Brain potential evidence for consolidation of gender agreement ages 4 through 25 in native French speakers

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Introduction and aims

Recent psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic research has shown that grammars might consolidate at the end of grade-school or even up to young adulthood. Some aspects of language processing and grammar consolidation appear to be impacted by morphological regularity or salience (Cantiani et al., 2013; Dube et al., 2018), and thus show delays during early and late teenage years. ERP patterns elicited in children who are still acquiring their first language (L1) can resemble that of second-language (L2) learners, for example eliciting lexically-based N400s instead of adult-like grammatical processing LANs and P600s for grammatical errors (e.g., Dube et al., 2018). To illustrate neurocognitive variation, we present ERP studies investigating adjective agreement processing in French children, (pre-)teens, and adults. Colour adjective-agreement processing in French has been argued to be lexically-based due to idiosyncratic consonant final marking (Royle, 2011). Behavioural data shows that acquisition of adjective agreement is ongoing on colour and size adjectives compared to determiners up to age 8 (Royle & Trudeau, 2024). If this is the case, ERPs should reveal agreement processing differences between younger and older speakers for adjective-agreement errors, possibly parallel to what has been found for L2 speakers, i.e., a transition from N400s to feature-based grammatical processing (LAN-P600s, Steinhauer, 2014).

Methods

Participants. All participants were native French-speakers living in Montreal, primarily using French in school or at work. All signed written consents or gave verbal consent (in the case of children) to participate in the study. 29 adults (18–39), 26 (pre-)teens (10–16) and 34 children (aged 4;05–8;08) participated in the study.

Materials. We used audio-visual picture-sentence-matching ERP paradigms to elicit gender-agreement processing on adjectives. Sentences were grammatically correct (1a), had gender errors on determiners (1b), or on adjectives, which have irregular agreement patterns in French i.e. presence or absence of a "floating" consonant (1c).

(1) a. *Je vois la clef grise* [gʁiz] *sur la* table 'I see the_F grey_F key_F on the table'
   b. ...*le clef grise* ... 'the_M grey_F key_F'
   c. ... *la clef *gris* [gʁi] ... 'the_F grey_M key_F'

Each trial started with the visual presentation of a stimulus, followed by the auditory sentence. All sentences, grammatical and ungrammatical, were spliced to avoid auditory cues within stimuli. Analyses were run on target items at the point where the sentence became ungrammatical (determiner or adjective). Analysis windows were established using cluster permutations. Averaged data by condition were fitted into mixed-linear effects models involving factors such as anteriority, hemisphere, and laterality, and other factors where relevant (for example, effects of age or proficiency). Effects involving condition (correct versus incorrect) and interactions of factors with condition were decomposed to better understand effects.

Results

We observe changing patterns for error processing in children, teens and adults based on morpho-phonological regularity (determiners versus adjectives) and salience (omission vs. commission errors). The results were also impacted by age and proficiency. LMER models were used for analyses.

Regularity.

Determiner agreement: For determiner errors, both teens and adults elicit anterior negativities followed by P600s while children elicit late widely distributed positivities (P600).

Adjective agreement: In adults, adjective agreement errors elicit lateralized and central negativities followed by P600s (LAN + N400 + P600). In (pre-)teenagers, N400-P600 patterns are found, while in children broadly-distributed negativities followed by small frontal and posterior positivities (N400 + P600) are found. However, these patterns are dependent both on age and proficiency, as well as salience.

Age, proficiency and interactions with salience effects on adjective agreement.

Age effects on adjective agreement in teens versus adults: Preliminary analyses revealed that the N400 observed in adolescents progressively shifts with age into the broadly-distributed N400+LAN exhibited by adults. No differences are observed on the P600 based on age.

Children's age and proficiency effects on adjective agreement: Because of collinearity between age and proficiency, we used proficiency scores and residual age as factors in the models. Children with a higher proficiency show larger N400 effects than children with lower proficiency, who exhibit an early positivity. Disentangling the effects of proficiency and residual age, the negativity for high proficiency children extends into late time-windows (730–900 ms, 900–1200 ms), however, as children get older, they begin showing P600 effects in this time-window.

Salience: omission versus commission in adjective agreement.

In teens and adults, comparison of omission vs. commission errors reveals that all participants are more sensitive to commissions (2a) than the opposite (1c).

(2) a. … *le chapeau grise* [gʁiz] … 'the_M grey_F hat_M'

Commissions elicit LAN+N400+P600 patterns in adults and an N400+P600 pattern in teens. Omissions elicit a lateralized negativity and a P600 in adults and an N400+P600 pattern in teens. Timing differences are found. In the N400 time-window, the negativity for omission and commission becomes weaker at midline and medial electrode sites with age but is more pronounced in the omission condition. In the P600 time-windows in adults, the P600 lasted approximately 500 ms for both types of mismatches, with the omission component emerging about 100 ms earlier than the commission one. P600s in teens appeared approximately 300 ms later than those of adults.

Discussion

Our data reveal a pattern of grammar maturation from age 4 to 25, beyond ages where L1 speakers are expected to have mastered gender agreement. Cognitive linguistic ERP components are impacted by morphophonological regularity and salience, age and proficiency, and provide an intricate picture of language acquisition in L1 that has parallels with ERP patterns previously observed for adult L2 learning. We will discuss a basis for shared ERP patters in L1 and L2 acquisition as a function of age, proficiency, morphological regularity and salience.

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Inclusive gender and slur reappropriation as ways of subverting social taxonomies

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Introduction

This talk discusses the linguistic (essentially, semantic and pragmatic) and non-linguistic implications of the inclusive gender strategy in Spanish and compares it with another strategy of linguistic intervention, namely, slur reappropriation, i.e., the use of slur words by members of the target of derogation. As I will discuss in detail, the two strategies contrast in several respects. For instance, whereas the inclusive strategy manipulates presuppositions to restrict the masculine form to less contexts of use, reclamation manipulates use-conditional meanings (or, alternatively, presuppositions in some non-multidimensional views) to give the slur word more, not less, contexts of use.

Manipulating anti-presuppositions in the Spanish gender system

At first sight, Spanish has a marked gender system. Expressed in binary terms, the system has only one grammatical gender dimension specified as [+/- feminine]. Semantically, [+feminine] triggers a [female] presupposition, modeled as a partial identity function, whereas [-feminine] is semantically vacuous (although I will also discuss analyses in which gender is asserted, not presupposed). Among other facts, this explains why masculine in Spanish can be used to denote mixed sets of male and female individuals (e.g., *los chicos*[masculine, plural] 'the kids' can denote mixed gender groups) or why semantically generic DPs use the masculine form even in the singular (e.g., *cuando el niño no se alimenta*... 'the kid[masculine] is not fed...'). Cases in which the male meaning is forced in certain contexts of use is the byproduct of usual anti-presuppositional inferences (derived from *Maximize presupposition!*; Sauerland 2008). Although this formal characterization of the gender system is correct in many respects, closer inspection to the distribution and interpretation of gender in singular and plurals and in lexical DPs and pronouns clearly show that there morphosyntactic environments in which the system grammatically encodes a [male] feature (Percus 2006, 2011). I will discuss those environments in detail in order to offer a proper characterization of the gender system in Spanish. At any rate, the conclusion is that the masculine is still less marked than the feminine and, consequently, used in more contexts than the feminine form, giving rise to the well-known sociological reaction that, at least for some, the system reproduces patriarchal attitudes.

The so-called *inclusive strategy* intervenes the gender system by adding a new inclusive morpheme (the *-e* vowel). The new system consists, then, of a tripartite division in which, now, both feminine and masculine are semantically marked, with the "inclusive" being unmarked.

   (1) <u>human nouns</u>:

       a. niño 'child.M.SG'   b. niña 'child.F.SG'   **c. niñe 'ART.INCLUSIVE.SG'**
       d. niños 'child.M.PL' e. niñas 'child.F.PL'   **f. niñes 'child.INCLUSIVE.PL'**

(2) <u>definite articles:</u>
    a. el 'ART.M.SG'   b. la 'ART.F.SG'   **c. le 'ART.INCLUSIVE.SG'**
    d. los 'ART.M.PL'   e. las 'ART.F.PL'   **d. les 'ART.INCLUSIVE.PL'**

(3) <u>personal pronouns</u>
    a. él   'he'   b. ella 'she'   **c. elle 'PR.INCLUSIVE.SG'**
    d. ellos 'they.M.PL'   e. ellas 'they.M.PL'   **f. elles 'PR.INCLUSIVE.PL'**

(4) a.   <u>Les   niñes   llegaron   tarde.</u>
            ART.INCL.PL   child.INCL.PL   arrived   late
            'The children (no gender) arrived late.'
    b.   *Elles*   llegaron   tarde.
            they.INCL.PL   arrived   late
            'They arrived late.'

(5) <u>Usualmente, le   niñe   habla sole</u>
    usually   ART.INCL.PL   child.INCL.PL speaks   alone.INCL.PL
    'Usually, the child speaks alone/to themself.'

I contend that the inclusive strategy is a form of linguistic intervention that looks for an impact on the semantic representation of heteronormative taxonomies. This is stated as follows:

Thesis #1: Inclusive language is a concrete instance of expressive manipulation in Corver's (2016) sense (i.e., deviation from rules of grammar). Yet, unlike Corver's expectations, by marking both [male] and [female] features, *grammatical deviation in this case impacts on representation* (connected to propositional/thought systems), not only on the appraisal system (connected to emotional valences).

The inclusive strategy, then, looks for a change in social taxonomy by subverting the rules of the synchronic gender system.

Enlarging contexts of use in slur reappropriation

Such a radical way of linguistic intervention contrasts with slur reappropriation. As for this strategy, I claim that thesis #2 holds:

Thesis #2: Reappropriation looks for an impact on use-conditions (Potts 2005, Gutzmann 2015 and McCready 2010, among many others). It is also a form of linguistic manipulation, but a purely semantic-pragmatic one. Essentially, it consists of the explicit intention of enlarging contexts of felicitous use for conventionally implicated meanings. In this sense, it is the perfect opposite to inclusive language, which, according to *Thesis#1*, marks masculine with the aim of reducing its contexts of use.

Compared to the inclusive strategy, reappropriation is simpler and more efficient in many respects:

A. Since it primarily consists of a pragmatic intervention with the aim of altering/impacting on conditions of use, there is no expressive grammar involved in Corver's sense, which *prima facie* looks more effective (for many reasons).

B. Unlike the inclusive strategy, it is a proposal for enlarging contexts of use. Consequently, if successful, it has an obvious anti-bias or re-bias effect. Put differently,

it disputes felicity conditions by merely manipulating the expressive meaning of slur words.

C. Again, unlike inclusive proposals, it does not change social taxonomies by imposing new ones; quite the opposite, it puts under question its existence and social utility. In a sense, it makes visible the irrational character of social taxonomies, by unveiling a crucial representational failure (see Losada 2021).

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