

# The unique nominal syntax of Michif

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## 1 Introduction

Michif, a mixed language, is traditionally described as having two separate grammars or syntaxes: Cree and French (Rhodes 1986, Bakker and Papen 1997, Bakker 1997). The assumption is that lexical items pattern according to their source language. By extension common predictions are that Michif nouns primarily originated from French and therefore the structure of the DP is French while verbs are drawn from Cree and thus the structure of the verb phrase (VP) is Cree, as illustrated example (1) <sup>1</sup>,

- (1) **Ma seur** gee-miw-ew **mii taart**.  
my.F sister 1.PST-eat.-1 my.P pie  
'My sister ate my pies.' (VD 2014)

Recent work by Mathieu and Strader (2015), posits that Michif's underlying syntax is neither French nor Cree. In contrast, Rosen and Gillon (2015), suggest that the syntax in the Michif DP is fundamentally Algonquian. Consequently the syntax is essentially Cree. In this presentation, proposes a unified Michif syntax in the DP.

### Problems

- No adequate explanation of a combined gender system of animacy and masculine/feminine
- The appearance of Cree-derived nominal elements, i.e. demonstratives and quantifiers, etc.

- (2)a. Eekwaana **li** nitaloon nwaer dawayim-ew.  
DEM.LOC.AN DET.M stallion black want.3→3'  
'She wants that black stallion.' (NF 2015)
- b. Ni-maamaa **enn** bel rob kii-kishka-∅.  
1.POSS-mother INDEF.F pretty dress PST-wear.3  
'My Mother wore a pretty dress.' (NF 2015)

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<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations AI - animate intransitive AN - animate CJ - conjunct COMP - complementizer DET - definite article DEM - demonstrative F - feminine FUT - future II - inanimate intransitive IMP - imperative INAN - inanimate IDEF - indefinite article LOC - locative M - masculine NEG - negator OBV - obviative P - plural PREP - preposition PN - pronoun PST - past REL - relative clause marker S - singular TA - transitive animate TI - transitive inanimate 21 - first person 2 - second person 3 - third-person animate 3' - third-person animate obviative 0 - third-person inanimate → - direction of arguments.

- The behaviour of Michif adjectives which pattern differently from their French counterpartssee (3a&b).

- (3)a. Enn      **pchi-t**    ffi.  
 INDEF.F small-F girl  
 ‘The girl is small.’ (NF 2015)
- b. Ma    seur    aen      zhwaal **grii**    nitaweyim-ew.  
 my.F sister INDEF.M horse    gray want.-3→3’  
 ‘My sister wants a gray horse.’ (NF 2015)

## Main Claim

The syntax of the Michif determiner phrase (DP) reflects the syntax of both French and Cree meaning Michif has its own distinct syntax nominal syntax.

## Proposals

- French Gender in Michif is located on *n* (Rosen and Gillon 2015) and that animacy is based on a higher gender head (Gen) (Mathieu and Strader 2015).
- Definiteness is not situated in D (Gillon 2009) but in the number head (Num) (Szabolcsi 1994, Aboh 2004). The derived French plural article, *les*, in Michif lacks definiteness because it is generated under *n* and not Num as posited by Rosen and Gillon (2015).
- Adjective assymetry is the result of not needing to move NPs do not move check for  $\phi$  features.

### 1.1 Roadmap

- Section 1 – Michif origins
- Section 2 – Michif Gender
- Section 3 – Proposal
- Section 4 – Applications with Adjectives

## 2 Background

### Situating Michif

Michif is spoken the by Métis peoples in southern Manitoba and southern Saskatchewan, Canada; and North Dakota, USA.

- The Métis of the Red river area are descended from the intermarriage of French fur traders with and Cree and Ojibwa women.
- The marriages were important for establishing an relationships between the European traders and Indigenous groups of the Great lakes area (Peterson and Brown 1985, Brown 1980:173).

- In the 1800s, Métis developed into a distinct ethnic group at the Red River Settlement, now Winnipeg, in Manitoba where they spoke Cree, Ojibwa and French (Crawford 1985, Bakker 1997).
- Michif is assumed to have become a distinct language by the 1820s initially spoken at the Red river settlement (Bakker 1997).
- Michif was spoken as a home language and not with outsiders (Rhodes 1986:288).
- The Métis developed as a multilingual group whose descendants spoke Cree, English, French, Michif and Ojibwa (Bakker 1997).

Currently,

- Modern speakers are fluent in English but have incomplete knowledge of the Michif's source languages.
- According to the 2011 census, approximately 500 people identify as Michif speakers 2011.

What is in a name?

- Michif can be called Métif, Méchif and Métchif
- Michif can also refer to Michif Cree and Michif French (Papen 1984, 1993)
- Michif can represent either the Métis people or their language.

Why mixed language?

- It can be categorised as belonging to both of its parents' language families resulting from the contribution of both languages' to the lexicon, as well as the grammar Bakker (1997). (*structural*)

### 3 Michif Gender

Michif has a four-way gender distinction derived from both Cree and French. Cree classifies nouns as animate or inanimate and French classifies nouns as being masculine or feminine. Michif nouns are classified as masculine animate, masculine inanimate, feminine animate or feminine inanimate (Hogman 1981, Bakker 1997).

#### 3.1 Gender: Masculine/Feminine

- Masculine/feminine gender appears in French-derived determiners, pronominal adjectives and possessive determiners.
- Masculine/Feminine gender is not morphologically marked.
- French-derived definite articles, *li* & *la* indefinite articles *aen* & *en* mark nouns as masculine or feminine

- (4)a. **Li** nitaloon nwaer mishikiti-w.  
 DET.M stallion black be.big.AI-3  
 ‘The big black stallion.’ (NF 2015) *(Definite determiner)*
- b. Ni-miichi-n **la** sup ni-maamaa ka-ooshtaa-t.  
 1-eat.AI-1 DET.F soup 1.POSS-mom REL-make.AI-3.CJ  
 ‘I eat the soup my mother makes.’ (NF 2015) *(Definite determiner)*
- c. **Aen** meeting ki-yashte-w a Winnipeg.  
 INDEF.M meeting PST-be.II-0 PREP Winnipeg  
 ‘There was a meeting in Winnipeg.’ (NF 2015) *(Indefinite determiner)*
- d. Norman **enn** oraanzh kii-mow-eeew.  
 Norman INDEF.F orange PST-eat.TA-3→3  
 ‘Norman ate an orange.’ (NF 2015) *(Indefinite determiner)*
- e. Ni-ki-miieew-aaw **ma** seur enn kaytayn.  
 1-PST-give.TA-3-3’ POSS.F sister INDEF.F doll  
 ‘I gave my sister a doll.’ (NF 2015) *(Possessive determiner)*
- Cree-derived nouns<sup>2</sup> may optionally appear with French-derived (Bakker 1997, Mathieu and Strader 2015, Rosen and Gillon 2015).

- (5) Ma seur (**aen**) *chiishchiikoom* ayaw-ew disseus son dway.  
 ‘1.POSS sister (INDEF.M) wart have.TA-3→3’ PREP 3.POSS finger  
 ‘My sister has a wart on her hand.’ (NF 2015)

- Michif has a partially productive French gender system

### Is this a case of borrowing?

- Creoles and languages in contact with French, have in some cases borrowed the articles with the nouns such as Montagnais and Mauritian Creole (Drapeau 1980, Syea 2013).
- Montagnais, an Algonquian language with heavy French borrowing spoken in Northern Québec has borrowed French nouns along with the definite articles *la, l’, les*,

- |                   |               |                  |
|-------------------|---------------|------------------|
| (6)a. la          | b. l’         | c. les           |
| <b>lam</b> lah    | <b>lasyet</b> | <b>lesigante</b> |
| ‘molasses’        | ‘plate’       | ‘cigarette’      |
| (Drapeau 1980:32) |               | (Montagnais)     |

- Mauritian Creole, a French lexifier creole (FLC), a percentage of nouns have incorporated French determiners (Syea 2013).

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<sup>2</sup>Cree nouns are not productive in Michif Bakker (1997).

(7)a.	la	b. le	c. les	d. $\emptyset$
	<b>latet</b>	<b>ledo</b>	<b>lezwa</b>	*tet
	‘head’	‘back’	‘goose’	*head
	(Syea 2013:52)			(Mauritian Creole)

- In both Montagnais and Mauritian Creole, it appears the articles were borrowed and reanalysed as part of the noun.

### Prediction:

If a Michif noun did incorporate with a determiner, then the determiner, and noun would appear together and a gender marker or plural marker would arise separately..

### What does the data illustrate?

- (8)a. **Enn** oraanzh ni-mow-aaw.  
 INDEF.F orange 1-eat.TA-1→3  
 ‘I ate an orange.’ (NF 2015)
- b. **Lii** oraanzh ni-mow-aawak.  
 DET.P orange 1-eat.TA-1→3.P  
 ‘I am eating oranges.’ (NF 2015)
- c. Ma seur gee-miw-ew seank **mii** taart.  
 1.POSS.F sister PST-eat.-AIT five 1.POSS.P pie

### What about non French derived nouns?

- Cree-derived nouns materialise with the French-derived plural determiner, *lii*, and the Cree-derived plural inflexion *-aw*.
- Cree-derived nouns do not require a determiner in order to be grammatical.
- The usage of an a determiner depends on the speaker.
- Cree-derived and Ojibwe-derived nouns may also occur without plural inflexion.

- (9)a. Ni-kii-mow-aw tout (**lii**) takwahimian-a dans li sac.  
 1-PST-eat.TA-1→3 all DET.P chokecherry-0.P PREP DET.M bag  
 ‘I ate every chokecherry in the bag.’ (VD 2014)
- b. Ay-papaamohtay-en (**lii**) yamoo ni-kii-wapam-aywak.  
 CJ-walk.about.AI-CJ.1 DET.P bee 1-PST-see.TA-1→3.P  
 ‘I saw bees when I was out walking.’ (NF 2015)

- Determiners and nouns are not reanalysed as single unit because French-derived determiners occur with Cree-derived nouns and, mark plurality and definiteness.

- Definite determiners and possessive determiners seem to be in complementary distribution (Bakker 1997, Strader 2014).
- The occurrence of determiners with Cree-derived nouns substantiates the claim that the French-derived determiners do not incorporate with the noun.

### 3.2 Animacy Gender

Michif nouns agree for animacy whether they are inherited from French or Cree.

- Animacy is derived from Plains Cree
- Animacy is marked by verbal agreement morphology, verb theme sign
- Verbal agreement also marks nouns for number.

- (10)a. Ni-maamaa enn bel **rob** kii-kishkam.  
 1.POSS-mother INDEF.F pretty dress PST-wear.TI-3  
 ‘My Mother wore a pretty dress. (NF 2015)’
- b. Trwaa lii **banaan** ni-kii-mow-aa-wak.  
 three DET.P banana 1-PST-eat.TA-1→3.P  
 ‘I ate three bananas.’ Note: corrected from ‘I ate the three bananas.’ (NF 2015)

In the nominal domain

- Cree-derived demonstratives agree with nouns for animacy and number.
- Demonstratives and determiners co-occur and mark plurality.

- (11)a. **Anihi** lii liivre niya ni-tipayhte-n.  
 DEM.INAN.P DET.M book 1.PN 1-own.TI-1  
 ‘Those are my five books.’ (NF 2015)
- b. Awaana etikwee kaa-kimooti-t loot **ana** lii banaan.  
 who wonder.IPV REL-steal.AI-CJ.3 other DEM.AN.S DET.P banana  
 ‘I wonder who stole that other banana.’ (NF 2015)

- Animate Cree-derived nouns also appear with Cree-derived possessive inflexions

- (12) Ni-kii-mow-aawaak lii freez n-oohkoom kaa-peeykimawisho-t.  
 1-PST-eat.TA-1→3.P DET.P strawberry 1.POSS-grandmother REL-berry.picking.AI-3.CJ  
 ‘I ate the strawberries my grandma picked.’ (NF 2015)

### 3.3 The location of D

#### Theoretical assumptions

- Determiners are assumed to be assigned to the head of the DP (Abney 1987, Longobardi 1994, Lyons 1999)

### 3.4 Definiteness in Michif

Given that Michif determiners are derived from French, *li* & *la* are traditionally assumed to mark definiteness in Michif.

#### What about the plural *lii*?

- The plural determiner, *Lii* also appears in definite and indefinite constructions.
- To get a definite reading for *oraanzh* my consultant put the phrase into the past tense which indicates that definiteness does not arise from the plural determiner but elsewhere (Lyons 1999).

- (13)a. **Lii** oraanzh ni-mow-aawak  
DET.P orange 1-eat.TA-1→3.P  
'I am eating oranges.' not \**I eat the oranges* (NF 2015)
- b. **Lii** oraanzh ni-kii-mow-aawak.  
DET.P orange 1-PST-eat.TA-1→3.P  
'I ate the oranges.' (NF 2015)

#### French definite determiners

- *le*, *la* & *les* do not constantly indicate definiteness of a noun, given that appear with generic and abstract nouns (Rowlett 2007).<sup>3</sup>.

- (14) Tous nos produits alimentaires sont importés : la viande, les légumes, les fruits, le blé, les produits laitiers - enfin tout.  
'All our food products are imported: meat, vegetables, fruit, wheat, dairy products – in fact everything.' (Lyons 1999:66)

#### Michif definite determiners

- *li* & *la* do not always indicate definiteness but the absence of the definite determiner renders the phrase ungrammatical

- (15)a. **La** soup ni-miichi-n.  
DET.F soup 1-eat.AIt-1  
'I eat soup.' (NF 2015)
- b. \***soup** ni-miichi-n.  
soup 1-eat.AIt-1  
\*I eat soup (NF 2015)

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<sup>3</sup>Standard French determiners are postulated to be clitics because they are weak elements (Lyons 1999). However, this assumption is unclear, because these determiners can be stressed.

- In French, it is also possible to use the definite determiner with the preposition *de* where the interpretation is either indefinite or partitive (Rowlett 2007).
- In Michif, in order to receive an indefinite interpretation, quantifier *aatiht* ‘some’.
- In Michif, the preposition *di*, which is derived from the French preposition *de*, appears in fossilised partitive constructions or introduces a nominal complement (Bakker 1997).

- (16)a. Je mange **de la** soupe.  
 1 eat PREP DEF.F soup  
 ‘I eat some soup.’ or ‘I eat some of the soup’ (Standard French)
- b. **Aatiht** la soup ni-miichi-n.  
 some DEF.F soup 1-eat.Ait-1  
 ‘I ate some soup.’ (NF 2015) (Michif)

### French derived-definite articles in French Lexifier Creoles and other languages in Contact with French

In FLCs

- French-derived articles can mark plural, such as in Louisiana Creole (Klingler 1992, 2003). or the plural marker is inherited from a substrate language, as is the case in Mauritian Creole (Syea 2013).
- Montagnais uses a separate plural marker to indicated number.
- In these cases, the articles appear to have lost semantic content and they do not mark for gender or number.

- (17)a. tek^lep  
 crepe.s  
 ‘crepe’
- b. tek^lep-^ait  
 crepe-P  
 ‘crepes’ (Drapeau 1980: 32)  
 (Montagnais)

- Michif retains the ability of French-derived determiners to indicate plural and in some cases, definiteness

### Doubly D filled languages

In the same manner as doubly D filled languages, such as Greek, and FLCs, such as Haitian and Mauritian, determiners and demonstratives co-occur in Michif.



- (18)a. aftos o andras  
 this the man  
 ‘This man’ (Pangiotidis 2000:718) (Greek)
- b. petit sa a  
 child DEM DET  
 ‘This child’ (Déprez 2007:269) (Haitian Creole)
- c. sa loto-la  
 DEM car-DET  
 ‘This car’ (Déprez 2007:267) (Mauritian Creole)

- In Greek, the demonstrative and the determiner are higher in the syntactic structure.
- In the majority of FLCs, the definite marker is postnominal and derives from the French diectic *là*, see Mauritian Creole (Syea 2013), Haitian Creole (DeGraff 2007), Reunion Creole (Chaudenson 2007). It is theorized that the demonstrative is located in a functional head below D Déprez (2007).
- In Michif, rather the determiner is posited to be lower in the nominal structure, possibly under *n* (Rosen 2003, Mathieu and Strader 2015).

## Summary

In sum, gender features do not pattern together in Michif.

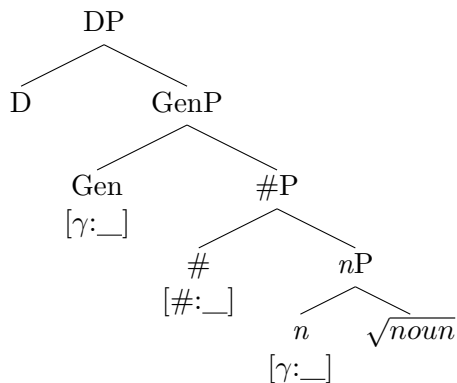
- French-derived agreement occurs within the nominal domain appearing on articles, pronominal adjectives and possessive determiners.
- Animacy agreement surfaces in both the nominal domain, appearing on demonstratives, and the verbal domain, subject object agreement.
- Definiteness is not a feature of the french-derived determiner *lîi*.

## 4 Proposal

### Proposal 1

- I propose that French-based gender is located on *n* (Rosen and Gillon 2015, Mathieu and Strader 2015, Kramer 2015).
- Cree-based gender is situated on a Gender head (Gen), higher in the syntactic structure between D and Num. Thus is not restricted to *n*
- I assume that  $\phi$  features are assigned to different heads within the structure (Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002, Béjar and Rezac 2009, Preminger 2014).

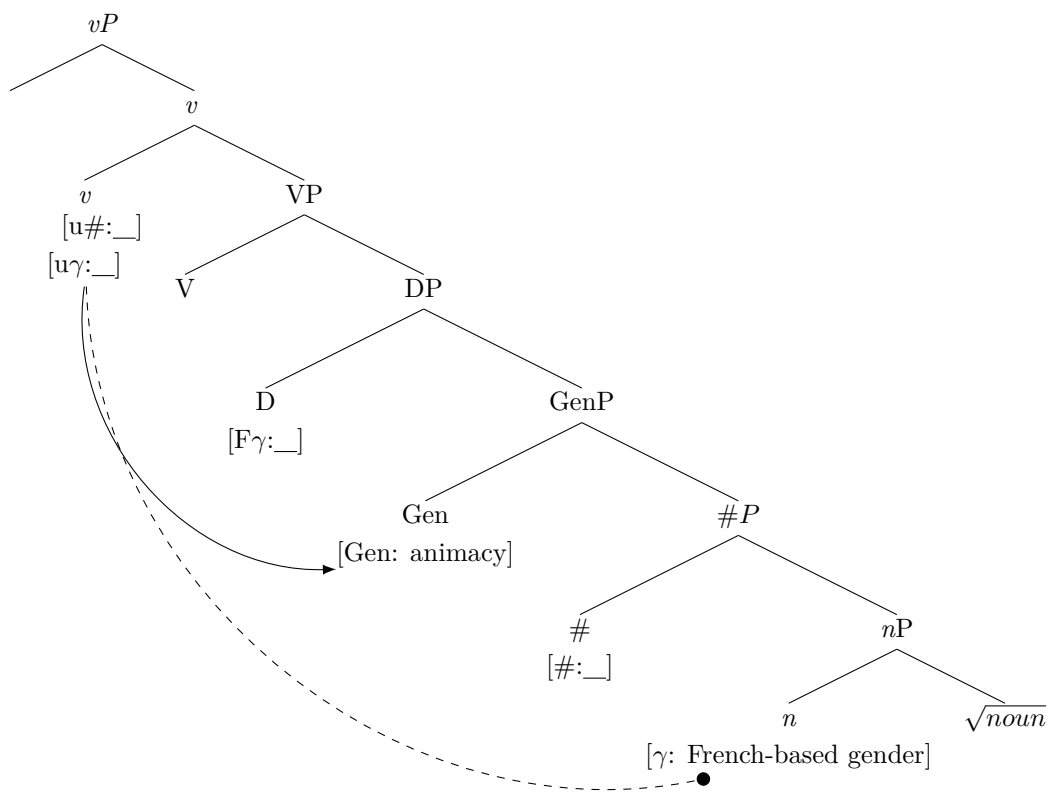
(19)



### Interaction of masculine/feminine gender and animacy within the DP and VP

- An unvalued gender ( $\gamma$ ) feature is located on  $v$ .
- D and Gen provide the value for the  $\gamma$ . This assumption of an interpretable feature is supported by the fact that demonstratives mark nouns for animacy
- Verbs agree only with animacy  $\gamma$  as a result intervention effects the verbs cannot be valued by the masculine/feminine  $\gamma$  on  $n$ .

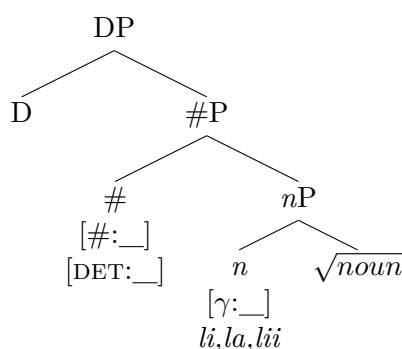
(20)



## Proposal 2

- Definite articles *li* & *la* mark definiteness however, they are not located in D. Similar to Gillon’s Gillon (2009) proposal where the definiteness feature is separated from the determiner.
- Definiteness remains in D.
- Unlike Gillon’s (2009), definiteness (DET) is a feature of Num not D which is similar to proposals by Szabolcsi (1994) and Aboh (2004).
- *Li*, *la* & *lii* are generated in *n* when *li*, *la* & *lii* are interpreted as definite they raise to Num.
- If *li*, *la* & *lii* are always understood as definite then they would be base generated in Num.

(21)



## Proposal 3

- the article *lii* in Michif lacks definiteness because it is generated under *n* and not Num.
- *Lii* appears in both definite and indefinite constructions, see (22a&b) respectively, therefore definiteness is not feature of the plural determiner in Michif.

(22)a. **Lii** oranzh ni-kii-mow-aawak.  
 DET.P orange 1-PST-eat.TA-1→3.P  
 ‘I ate the oranges.’ (NF 2015)

b. **Lii** oraanzh miiyowshiw-ak poor kaakiyow.  
 DET.P orange be.good.AI-3.P PREP everyone  
 ‘Oranges are good for everyone.’ (NF 2015)

In sum, animacy resides above *n* permitting it to manifest in the verbal and nominal domains. Masculine and Feminine gender is located in *n*. Only one syntax is at work in the Michif DP.

## 5 Michif Adjectives

If elements should pattern the same as their source language, in this case the French-derived adjectives should agree in pre and post nominal positions. My proposal places the source of French-based gender in *n*; this proposal predicts that only prenominal adjectives mark gender agreement on the noun.

## The state of adjectives

There are two main cross-linguistic accounts for the positions of adjectives: an adjunction approach (Lamarche 1991, Valois 1991, Bouchard 1998) and a specifier approach (Cinque 1994, 2010, Knittel 2005, Laenzlinger 2005). Both the specifier and the adjunction accounts apply movement. However, adjunction style analyses are permissive and cannot consider ordering and placement restrictions of adjectives. I adopt a specifier account for analyses of French adjectives. I assume Cinque's (2010) cross-linguistic explanation of adjectives.

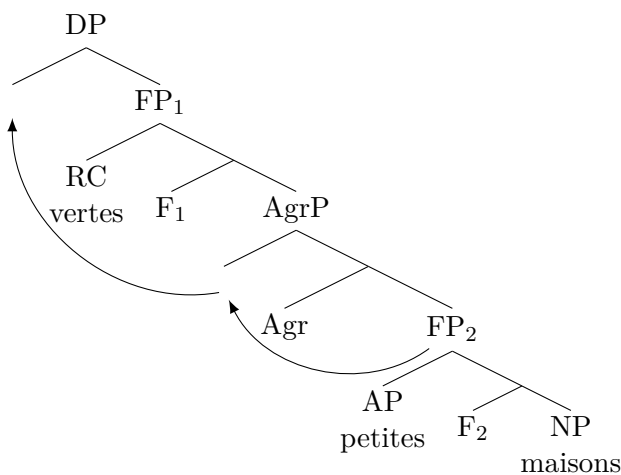
- Adjective position arises from phrasal movement.
- The NP moves through the structure via the spec, AgrP and pied pipes the AP it dominates.

(23) NP specifier account following Cinque (2010)

- a. les    petit-es    maison-s    vert-es  
 DET.P   little-F.P   house-P    green-F.P  
 'the little green houses'

(French)

b.



### Why Cinque?

- The analysis provides for two adjective sources within the DP: APs and relative clauses.
- It assumes phrasal movement. The postnominal predicative adjectives are treated as reduced reduced clauses which have interpretable  $\phi$  features.

In my analysis of Michif adjectives, I assume that adjectives are generated in two places and that Michif adjectives are phrasal. I propose that Michif NPs do not move whereas French NPs move.

### 5.1 The Data

- Michif adjectives are French-derived
- Masculine/feminine gender agreement on adjectives is position dependent. Prenominal adjectives agree for gender and postnominal adjectives do not.

(24)

- a.    *lii*     **pchi**    *shaa*  
 DET.P little.M cat  
 ‘small cats’ or ‘kittens’ (NF 2015)
- b.    *enn*     **pchi-t** *fii*  
 INDEF.F small.F girl  
 ‘little girl’ (NF 2015)

- a.    *Ma*    *seur* *aen*     *zhwaal* **grii-∅** *nitaweyim-ew.*  
 POSS.1 sister INDEF.M horse gray want.TA-3→3’  
 ‘My sister wants a gray horse.’ (NF 2015)
- b.    \**Ma*    *seur* *enn*     *zhoomaan* **grii-s** *nitaweuim-ew*  
 POSS.1 sister INDEF.F mare gray-F want.TA-3→3’  
 \*My sister wants a gray mare

- The set of adjectives that occur prenominal in French, such as *beau*, *grand*, *vieil*, etc. only appear prenominal in Michif. Their occurrence in a postnominal position is ungrammatical.
- Postnominal adjectives appearing in prenominal positions are also ungrammatical

- (25)a. \**enn*     *fee* **pchi-t**  
 INDEF.F girl big-F  
 \*a small girl (NF 2015)
- b. \**la*     **vayr** *fee*  
 DET.F green girl  
 \*a green girl (Rosen 2003:47)

- There are counter-examples of prenominal gender agreement Strader (2014).
- There are only a small number of prenominal adjectives of which only the adjectives *bel* ‘pretty’, *gawn* ‘big/tall’ and *gros*<sup>4</sup> ‘big’ do not inflect for gender.

- (26)a. *Ni-maamaa*   *enn*     **bel**    *faem.*  
 1.POSS-mother INDEF.F pretty woman  
 ‘My mother is pretty.’ (NF 2015)
- b.    *Ni-paapaa*   *aen*     **bel**    *hom.*  
 1.POSS-father INDEF.M pretty man  
 ‘My father is handsome.’ (NF 2015)
- c.    *enn*     **gros** *baarb*  
 INDEF.F big beard  
 ‘a big beard’ (NF 2015)
- d.    *aen*     **gros** *oor*  
 INDEF.M big bear  
 ‘a big bear’ (NF 2015)

- Cree-derived adjectives appear prenominal in Michif and do not agree for masculine/feminine gender.
- These adjectives originate from Cree preverbal particles

<sup>4</sup>In her 2003:43 paper, Rosen has an examples with *gros* ‘fat’ showing gender agreement. However, I was not able to replicate *gro/gros* gender agreement in my data

- (27)a. Aen      **cheepou**      vizaezh ayo-w.  
 INDEF.M pointed.PV face      have.AI-3  
 ‘He has a triangular face.’ (Laverdure and Allard 1983:339)
- b. **Cheepouh**kway-w.  
 have.pointed.face.AI-3  
 ‘He has a triangular face.’ (Laverdure and Allard 1983:339)

- Michif also employs Cree-derived intransitive verbs in copula constructions to denote attributive concepts.

- (28) La      moontaayng misho-w.  
 DET.F mountain      be.big.II-3  
 ‘It is a big mountain.’ (NF 2015)

- Cree modifies nouns using prenouns or preverbal particles. These have no gender agreement.
- Cree intransitive verbs, such as *misikiti-* ‘be big’, indicate attributive concepts Wolfart (1996).

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>(29)a. mihkosi-w<br/>         be.red.AI-3<br/>         ‘he is red’ (Wolfart<br/>         1973:39)</p> | <p>b. misî-htâ-w<br/>         big-make.AI-3<br/>         ‘he makes it big’<br/>         (Wolfart 1973:79)</p> | <p>c. mis-t-asiny<br/>         big-t-stone<br/>         ‘big stone’<br/>         (Wolfart 1973:79)<br/>         (Plains Cree)</p> |
|--|---|---|

- Michif adjectives do not seem to have number agreement ?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(30)a. <b>lii</b>      <u>pchi</u>      minoosh<br/>         DET.P pchi.M kitten<br/>         ‘little kittens’ (NF 2015)</p> | <p>b. <b>lii</b>      <b>kilot</b> grii<br/>         DET.P pant gray<br/>         ‘gray pants’ (NF 2015)</p> |
|---|--|

- Establishing French plural agreement becomes problematic with prenominal adjectives.
- Plurality can be ascertained through liaison, but it is a fossilised process and is unreliable in Michif (Bakker and Papen 1997).
- ‘a brown bear’ can materialise either as *aen noor brun* or *aen loor brun* where the consonant from the preceding article does not determine the consonant of the following noun.

### French Adjectives

- French pre and postnominal adjectives agree for gender and number

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(31)a. <b>la</b>      maison verte<br/>         DET.F house green.F<br/>         ‘the green house’</p> | <p>b. <b>la</b>      petite maison<br/>         DET.F small.F house<br/>         ‘the small house’</p> |
|---|--|

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>c. <b>les</b> vieilles assiettes<br/> DET.P old.F.P plate.P<br/> ‘the old plates’</p> | <p>e. <b>le</b> petit garçon<br/> DET.M little.M boy<br/> ‘the little boy’</p>                            |
| <p>d. <b>le</b> garçon vert<br/> DET.M boy green.M<br/> ‘the green boy’</p>              | <p>f. <b>les</b> petits oiseaux<br/> DET.P little.P birds.P<br/> ‘the little birds’ (Standard French)</p> |

- French attributive adjectives can appear in pre and postnominal positions; however, their distribution is not transparent.
- Attributive adjectives meaning changes is dependon on position with respect to the noun which links them to different locations within the syntax (Bouchard 1998, Laenzlinger 2005).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(32)a. une <b>pauvre</b> fille<br/> INDEF.F poor.F girl<br/> ‘a poor girl’ (unfortunate girl)</p> | <p>b. une fille <b>pauvre</b><br/> INDEF.F girl poor.F<br/> ‘a girl who is poor’ (without funds)<br/> (Standard French)</p> |
|--|---|

- The agreement pattern of Michif adjectives is similar to that of Acadian French.
- In Acadian French, postnominal adjectives do not agree for gender with the noun.
- These postnominal adjectives do not appear prenominally.
- Acadian French does have pre- and postnominal adjectives that do agree

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>(33)a. <b>la</b> porte vert-∅<br/> DET.F door green<br/> ‘The green door’ (J-C LeClerc 2015)</p> | <p>c. *la vert -e porte (J-C LeClerc 2015)</p> |
| <p>b. <b>la</b> porte vert-e<br/> DET.F door green-F<br/> ‘the green door’ (J-C LeClerc 2015)</p>   | <p>d. *la vert -∅ porte (J-C LeClerc 2015)</p> |
- (Acadian French)

- Prenominal adjectives cannot accept complements but can be modified by another adjective, such as *ptsi* ‘little’, or adverb, such as *pleu* ‘more’ (Bakker 1997).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>(34)a. lee <b>pleu</b> ptsi gaezh<br/> DET.P most small.M wage<br/> ‘minimum wage’ (Laverdure and Allard 1983:3)</p> | <p>b. En zheup di rob <u>plaen lee plee’d akorjiyoon</u> ayo-w.<br/> INDEF.F skirt of dress full DET.P pleats.of accordion have.TI-3<br/> ‘She has an accordion-pleated skirt.’ (Laverdure and Allard 1983:3)</p> |
|---|---|

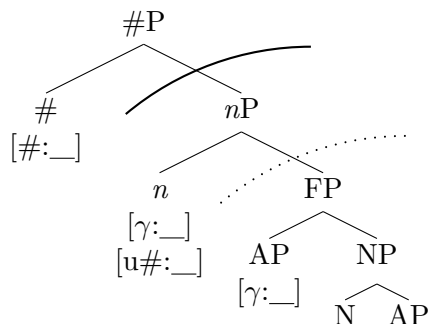
- Postnominal adjectives take complements; however, no constituent can be extracted from the AP.
- Nothing can intervene between the NP and the AP.

- (35)a. En zheup di rob plaen lee plee'd akorjiyoon ayo-w  
 INDEF.F skirt of dress full DET.P pleats.of accordion have.TI-3  
 'She has an accordion-pleated skirt.' (Laverdure and Allard 1983:3)
- b. \*En zheup di rob lee plee'd akkorjiyoon plaen (NF 2015)
- c. \*En Zheup di rob lee plee plean d'akkorjiyoon (NF 2015)

## 5.2 Adjective solution

- Michif generates adjectives in two locations: pronominal adjectives are generated in a Functional projection between the *nP* and the DP either similar to Cinque (2010).
- Postnominal adjectives are generated following the NP.
- The noun is not specified for gender, it receives its specification for gender and number from *n*.
- Adjectives are positioned in an independent projection and specified for gender.
- Adjectives and *n* are in a c-command relationship, therefore gender on the adjectives agrees with the *n*.
- Assuming that a phase boundary exists at *nP*, proposed by Newell (2008) for Ojibwe, then due to the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC), number only interacts with *n* (Chomsky 2000, 2001).

### (36) Proposal

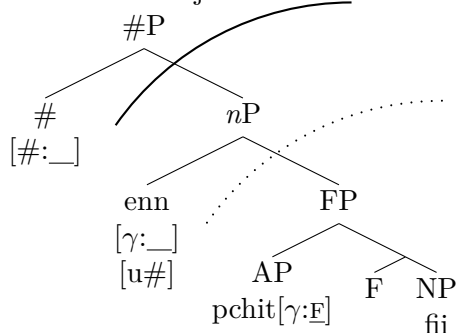


- Only *n* is specified for number within the *nP* domain whereas NP and AP are not.
- If the AP moves, then it would wrongly specify for number.



(37)a. enn pchit fi  
 INDEF.F small.F girl  
 ‘the girl is small’ (NF 2015)

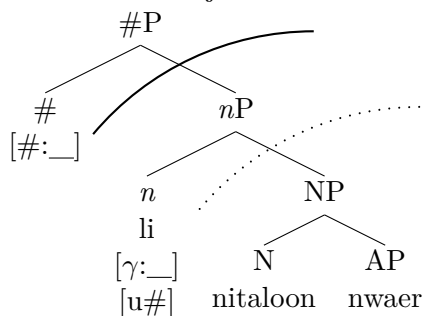
b. Prenominal adjective structure



- Michif postnominal adjectives are generated in a position below the NP
- The AP is in its own domain; no intervening nominal constituent occurs between the NP and the AP.

(38)a. li nitaloon nwaer mishikiti-w  
 DET.M stallion black be.big.AI-3  
 ‘The black stallion’ (NF, 3015)

b. Postnominal adjective



## 6 Conclusion

The asymmetry of gender agreement and appearance of Cree-derived elements illustrate that Michif DP is not underlyingly French, Bakker (1997), Bakker and Papen (1997), or Cree, as posited by Rosen and Gillon (2015). Instead I argue, Michif DP has its own unique syntax which reflects the syntax of French and Cree but is not split between both syntaxes nor sourced solely to one syntax.

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