

Resultative PPs and the material/product alternation in French and Italian

Cross-linguistic variation within verb-framed languages

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Background & Phenomenon

- Most Romance languages [RL] are considered verb-framed languages (Talmy 1985), as they typically encode the event result within the verb root.
- A few recent studies have addressed the question of whether certain syntactic alternations that involve non-verbal result expressions are restricted in this language type (e.g., Lewandowski 2014).
- This study addresses the material/product (M/P) alternation – as a lesser studied type of argument alternation – in French and Italian.
- In the M/P alternation, the material and the product (result) of a creation event surface as either object DP or PP, cf. (1) and (2-3) for data from this study.

- (1) a. DP V DP_{PRODUCT} PP_{MATERIAL} "effected-object variant"
b. DP V DP_{MATERIAL} PP_{PRODUCT} "resultative-PP variant"
- (2) Fr. a. *La personne a sculpté une poupée avec du bois.*
the person has carved a doll with PART wood
b. *La personne a sculpté le bois en (une) poupée.*
the person has carved the wood in a doll
- (3) It. a. *L'uomo ha intagliato una bambola di legno.*
the man has carved a doll of wood
b. *L'uomo ha intagliato del legno a forma di bambola.*
the man has carved PART wood to form of doll

In previous research, the resultative-PP alternant (cf. the b-examples), has been claimed to be largely unavailable in RL (Folli & Harley 2020), motivating the present focus on this structure.

Questions

- (Under what conditions) does the M/P alternation occur in French and Italian?
- If attested, what are the structural properties and the syntactic status of the resultative PPs?
- (How) do French and Italian differ in this respect?

Method, Material, Participants

- Oral production task • 1540 creation event descriptions (817 Fr., 723 It.) • 96 participants (52 for Hexagonal Fr., 64 for It.) • within-subject design • counter-balancing and pseudo-randomization of material • participant selection via Prolific • data collection via Labvanced • data coding for result lexicalization and make-up of resultative PPs (i.a.)

- (4) verb lexemes (16 Fr./12 It.): *bricoler* 'craft', *ciseler/scolpire* 'chisel', *cuisiner* 'cook', *forger/forgiare* 'forge', *lier* 'tie (up)', *mélanger* 'mix', *modeler/modellare* 'model', *mouler/plasmare* 'mold', *nouer* 'knot', *pétrir/impastare* 'knead', *plier/piegare* 'fold', *rouler/arrotolare* 'roll', *sculpter/intagliare* 'carve', *scier/segare* 'saw', *tisser/tessere* 'weave', *tresser/intrecciare* 'braid'

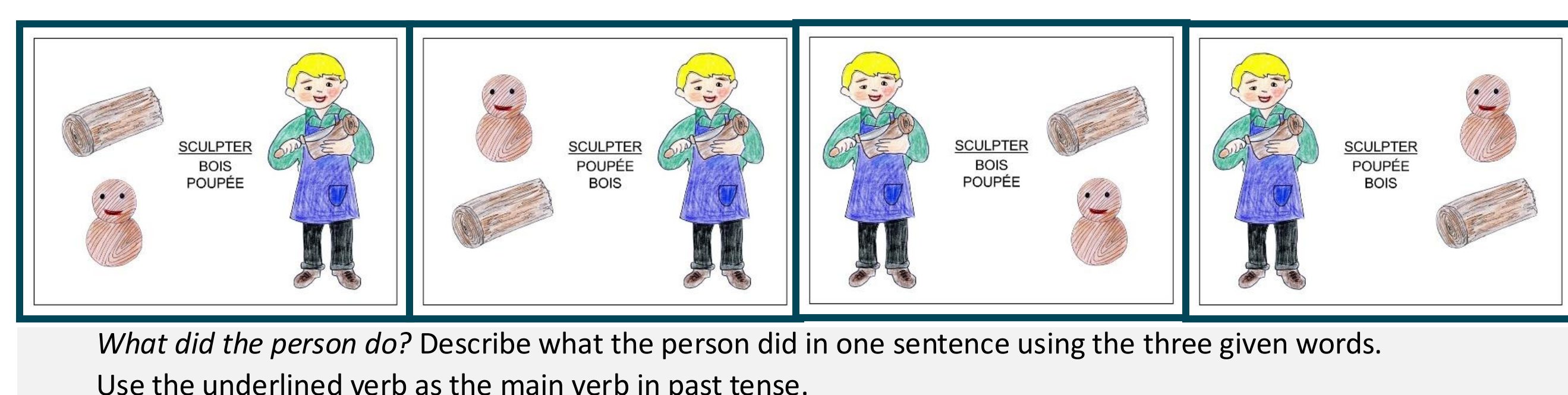


Fig. 1: Example of stimulus, distribution of variants onto for lists for counter-balancing & instruction

Results

- The M/P alternation was attested for > 50 % of the lexemes. Alternating verbs differ in their preference for one or the other variant and the strength of this preference.
- Event descriptions also differ in whether MATERIAL and PRODUCT are expressed within a single VP at all or rather distributed across two VPs, in which case the M/P alternation is ruled out. (Q1)

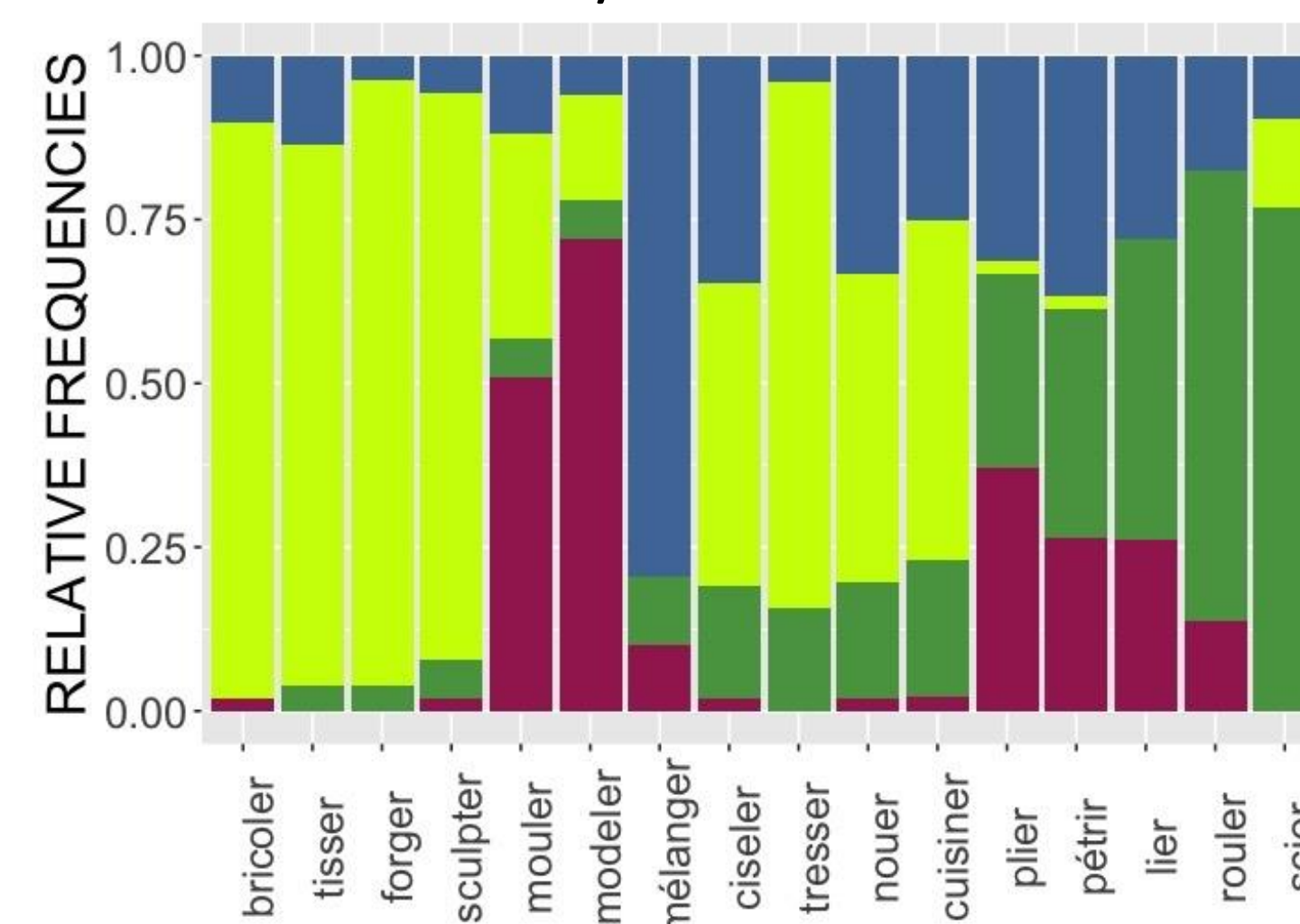


Fig. 2: French per verb

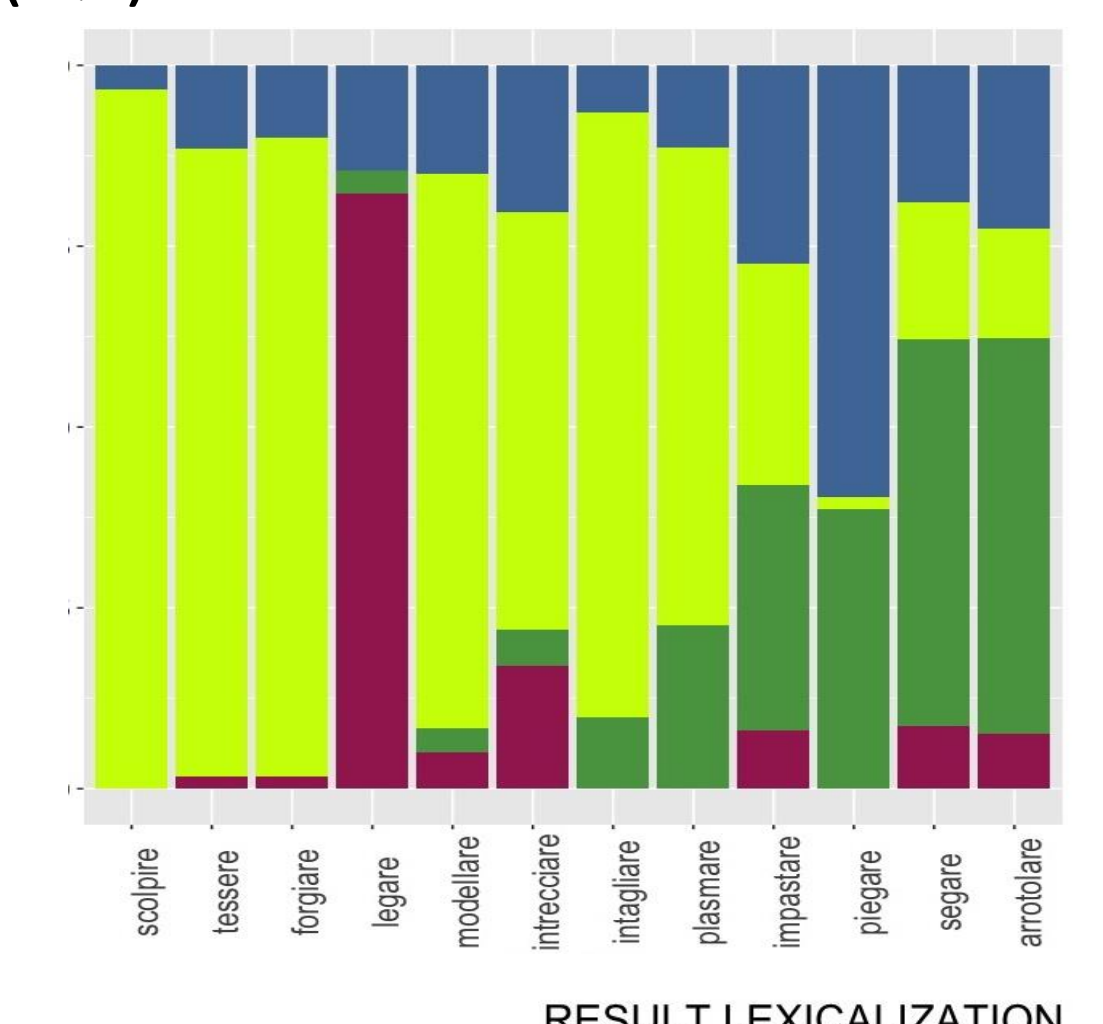


Fig. 3: Italian per verb

Differences between the languages are related to structural properties of the resultative PP and prepositional inventories. (Q2 and Q3)

- (5) Fr. *La personne a pétri la pâte en boule.*
The person has kneaded the dough in ball
- (6) It. *La donna ha impastato la pasta a forma di palla.*
The woman has kneaded the dough to form of ball

- While French *en* 'in' (contrasting with French *dans* 'in') yields unambiguous resultative interpretations with the attested PPs, Italian *in*-headed PPs are often ambiguous between locative, directional and resultative readings.

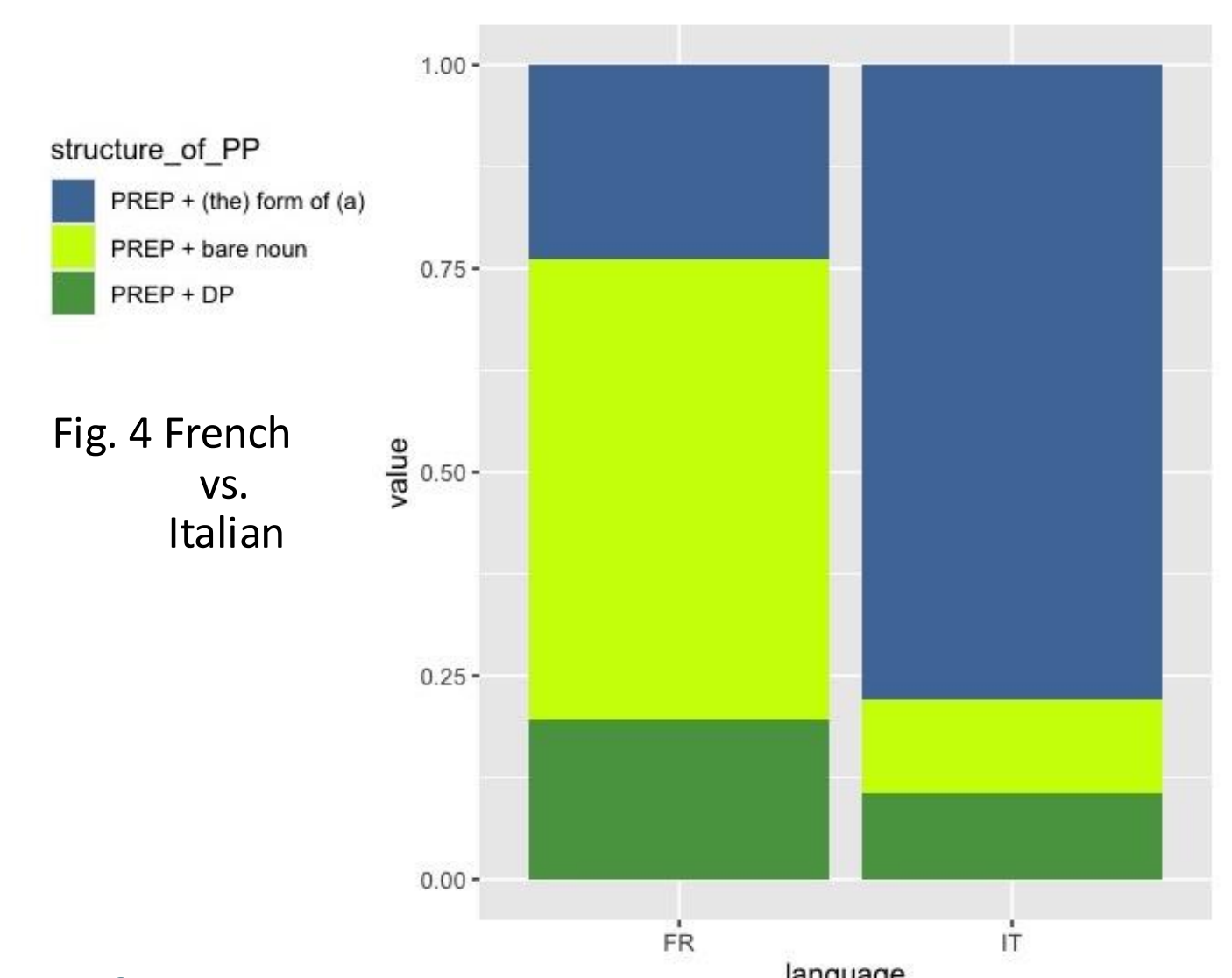


Fig. 4: French vs. Italian

- (7) It. *La ragazza ha intrecciato dei fiori in una corona.*
a. 'The girl braided flowers into a wreath.' (created result)
b. 'The girl braided flowers into an [existing] wreath.' (spatial goal)

The challenge for further analysis:

Resultative PPs and the argument-adjunct distinction

- A formal model of the alternative mappings observed in the M/P alternation presupposes a clearer understanding of the involved PPs.
- Certain phrases are known to resist an unequivocal classification as either arguments or adjuncts. Several diagnostics have been proposed to distinguish between the two (e.g., Toivonen 2021), cf. table 1 for a subset of criteria.

Distributional behavior of the resultative PPs attested in this study

syntactic obligatoriness	never obligatory	⇒ adjunct-like
status as core participant	lexeme-dependent	not uniformly assessable
VP substitution test, cf. (8) for Fr.		⇒ argument-like

Table 1: Subset of argumenthood tests and their application to resultative PPs

- (8) Fr. a. *La fille a plié le papier en bateau.*
'The girl folded the paper into a boat.'
b. **La fille a plié le papier en bateau et le garçon a fait de même en avion.*
≈ 'The girl folded the paper into a boat and the boy did so into a plane.'
(for the applicability of the *do-so* test in Fr. cf., e.g., Bonami 1999)

Conclusion and Outlook

- The M/P alternation is attested in both languages.
- French and Italian differ in the composition of the resultative-PP variant.
- In both, the observed resultative PPs seem to fall between argument and adjunct status, which must be accounted for in modeling the alternation.

References: BONAMI, O. 1999. Les constructions du verbe : le cas des groupes prépositionnels argumentaux. Paris: Paris VII / Thèse de doctorat. • FOLLI, R. & H. HARLEY. 2020. A head movement approach to Talmy's typology. *Linguistic Inquiry* 51(3). 425–470. • LEWANDOWSKI, W. 2014. The locative alternation in verb-framed vs. satellite-framed languages: A corpus study of Spanish and Polish. *Studies in Language* 38(4). 864–895. • TALMY, L. 1985. Lexicalisation patterns: semantic structure in lexical forms. In T. Shopen (ed.), *Language typology and syntactic description: Grammatical categories and the lexicon*, vol. 3, *Language typology and syntactic description*. Cambridge: CUP. • TOIVONEN, I. 2021. Arguments and adjuncts across levels. In M. Butt, J. Findlay & I. Toivonen (eds.), *Proceedings of the LFG21 Conference*, 306–331. Stanford: Proceedings of the LFG21 Conference.