

Phonology and morphology in the pronouns of Saint-Pierre-le-Bost

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SPLB is an unnamed language spoken by very few people in the center of France, in the village of Saint-Pierre-le-Bost in the north of the *croissant linguistique*, traditionally a contact area between the occitan and oil language groups (Guérin 2022). This talk targets three unrelated issues raised by its pronominal system, presented in (1) (the source is the author's fieldwork), providing an account in Strict CV (Lowenstamm 1996, Scheer 2004)

The first issue is the form of accented pronouns. Other Romance varieties, such as French or Italian, use the same pronoun in the dative and accented version (*lui* in French); but SPLB uses the [sø] form, which is general in the reflexive 3P. At the same time, unlike in the reflexive paradigm, [sø] is *not* generalized to all 3P forms. Instead, one finds two surprising forms. For the 3FSG, a form [jɛl], distinct from the NOM [al], is attested; and for the 3PL, [jyzot] and [jelzot] exhibit the diachronic generalization of [zot] from 1PL and 2PL to 3PL. These three forms share an initial glide followed by a vowel [ɛ] or [y] that is not attested elsewhere for this person.

The second issue concerns inconsistencies in the 1PL and 2PL forms. Neither the vowel /u/ nor the liaison consonant [z] are ever present in 1PL NOM, but regularly surface in the 2PL. In the non-NOM unaccented 1PL forms, /u/ and /z/ are in complementary distribution: either [u] or [z] surface, never both.

The third issue concerns possessive pronouns. Unlike French, SPLB distinguishes between M and F in plural pronominal suffixes (and articles – in yellow). However, that distinction is lost in possessives with plural possessor (magenta blue). If the possessed is singular, that gender distinction goes entirely unexponed; and if the possessed is plural, a suffix [e] expones both genders. (superscript = appears before vowel; subscript=absent before vowel).

(1)

		unaccented				accented	possessed				def		dem	
		nom	acc	dat	ref		msg	fmsg	mpl	fmpl				
sg	1	e ^j	m	m	m	mø	m _ø ^{un}	m _a ^{un}	m-o ^z	m-a ^z				
	2	t	t	t	t	tø	t _ø ^{un}	t _a ^{un}	t-o ^z	t-a ^z				
	3	<i>m</i>	o ^l	l	j _i	s	sø	s _ø ^{un}	s _a ^{un}	s-o ^z	s-a ^z	l	ko	
	<i>f</i>	al	l _a	j _i	s	j-ɛl	s _ø ^{un}	s _a ^{un}	s-o ^z	s-a ^z	l _a	kœl		
pl	1	n	nu/_C ; nz/_V	nzot		nut	nut	nut-e ^z	nut-e ^z					
	2	v _u ^z	v _u /_C ; v _{uz} /_V	vuzot		vut	vut	vut-e ^z	vut-e ^z					
	3	<i>m</i>	e ^z	lo ^z	j _i	s	j-yzot	lu _z	lu _z	lu _z -e ^z	lu _z -e ^z	lo ^z	ke ^z	
	<i>f</i>	al ^z	l _a ^z	j _i	s	j-ɛlzot	lu _z	lu _z	lu _z -e ^z	lu _z -e ^z	l _a ^z	ke ^z		

The analysis of the first two problems illustrates the power of abstract, defective phonological representations. I begin with the form of accented pronouns. To explain the accented form in light blue, I assume that the exponent /j_i/ in (2) expresses 3P in general. This exponent, however, cannot stand on its own. In the 3MSG, it is therefore replaced by /sø/. However, in the 3FSG (3) and 3MPL (4), it is combined with /al/ and /uzot/ respectively, thereby deriving the fused [jɛl] and [jyzot] (/i+a/ => [ɛ]; /i+u/=>[y]). The shaded VC parts of the skeleton are deleted through VC Reduction, Gussmann & Kaye (1993).

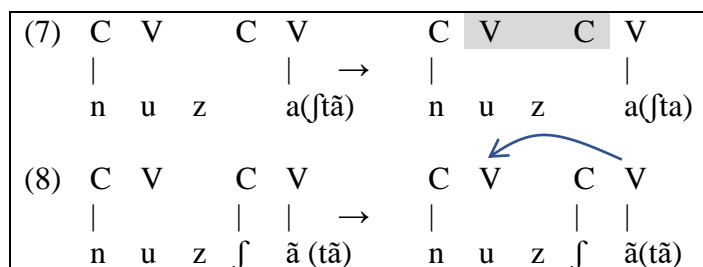
(2) C V	(3) C V C V C V	(4) C V C V C V C V
j i	j i a l	j i u z o t

As for the differences between 1PL and 2PL, first, I assume that the plurality in these forms is marked underlyingly as in (5,6): a floating /^u/ with a position V, and a floating /^z/ with no position (in other words, minimally different from French, where /u/ is associated).

(5) C V	(6) C V
n/v u z	v u z

The vowel is always associated in the 2PL because it coalesces with the preceding labial onset, as in (6) (e.g. Bucci 2013).

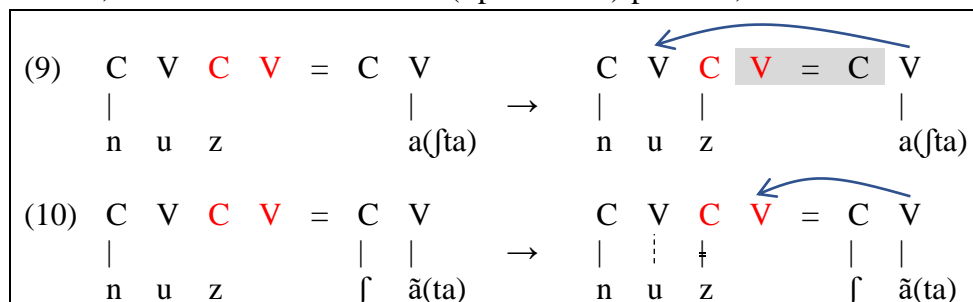
On to the NOM 1PL in context, the disappearance of the entire plural exponent /uz/ before V-



initial verbs then follows from VC Reduction, as in (7) ‘we buy’. In (8) ‘we sing’, before a C- initial verb, /uz/ also disappears, since the position of the floating /u/ is governed (as indicated by the blue arrow), and the /z/ has no position.

Assuming that VC-reduction applies

only once, the 1PL non-nominative clitics ([nu]/_C ; [nz]/_V) can be derived in the following way from the same basic representation as in (5). Suppose that clitics are separated from their host by one CV unit (the unit in red in 9,10). In (9) ‘to buy for us’, after the shaded VC is deleted, the /z/ still has a licensed (=prevoicalic) position, whereas the /u/ is governed and thus



syncopated.

Before a C-

initial verb in

(10) ‘to sing for

us’, there can be

no VC-deletion.

The /z/ does not

associate

because the

available position is not licensed, whereas that of the /u/ is ungoverned, and so /u/ is realized.

To summarize, it seems that the difference between subject and object markers can be attributed to a greater level of cohesion of the subject markers to their host (the lack of the additional CV).

Finally, I discuss the realization of the gender and number of the possessed on possessive pronouns. The correct generalization seems to be the following. A gender distinction is compatible with singular possessor ([mõ, ma] vs [mo, ma]), but there is an incompatibility between a plural possessor and a gender distinction in the possessed.¹ For this reason, one does not find *[nut-o, nut-a] (cf. Spanish *nuestros, nuestras*). However, the *number* of the possessed can still be expressed by recruiting the same exponent [-e] used in the demonstrative paradigm (bright green), which also neutralizes the gender distinction. Comparing this state-of-affairs to French *notre cheval, nos chevaux*, one may suggest that a plural *suffix* is required in SPLB because the base is identical for both singular and plural possessors (e.g. [nut, nut]).

References

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¹ This incompatibility can be formalized as impoverishment (Halle 1997): the gender feature is deleted in the context of plural possessors, however defined.