

Allomorphy between morphology, phonology, and the lexicon: the definite article in Romance

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INTRODUCTION

The definite article appears in Romance (and in other languages as well) in many different shapes. Here, we are interested in allomorphic variation.

Phonetic variants:- Derivable from phonological processes.
 - Not derivable: different underlying forms: **ALLOMORPHY**.

Questions: **A.** What determines the **SELECTION** of one specific allomorph?
B. What specific **MECHANISMS** determine the selection?
C. What are the **CONSEQUENCES** for the architecture of grammar?

1. LEXICAL (AND SEMANTIC) SELECTION

Allomorph X appears before/after a specific set of lexical items.

Definite article in Balearic Catalan, with two systems:

	(a) Literary article		(b) Elsewhere	
	masc	fem	masc	fem
sg	el	la	es	sa
pl	els	les	es	ses

➤ (a) is chosen with **some lexical items** that have unique reference and in some idioms; (b) is chosen **elsewhere** (some also unique).

Ex.: (a) el rei 'the king', la vida 'life', les dotze '12 o'clock', la Mola (place name)
 (b) es degà 'the dean', sa gent 'the people', sa Pobra (place name)

2. MORPHOLOGICAL SELECTION

Allomorph X appears in the context of a specific set of morphological features.

Definite article in Southern Valencian Catalan (Alacant):

	General Valencian		Alacant	
	masc	Fem	masc	fem
sg	el	la	el	la
pl	els	les	es	

➤ The definite article **lacks /l/ in the plural**.

Ex.: Gen. Val.: el llibre 'the book'; la dona 'the woman'; els llibres (pl), les dones (pl)
 Alacant: el llibre 'the book'; la dona 'the woman'; es llibres (pl), es dones (pl)

3. PHONOLOGICAL SELECTION

Allomorph X appears if the string in which it has been inserted meets certain phonological conditions.

Personal article in Central Catalan (here only masc):

en / ___ C Ex.: en Jackendoff
 l / ___ V Ex.: l'Aronoff; also l'[e]Steve

➤ Lexical entry: PERS.ARTICLE → {en, l}; OT analysis in terms of TETU

{en, l}	SONSEQ	ONSET	DEP	MAX
en Jackendoff		*		
l Jackendoff	*!			
[e] Jackendoff		*	*!	
l'Aronoff				
en Aronoff		*!		
n'Aronoff				*!

➤ **IMPORTANT CONSEQUENCE:** /[e]Steve shows that the personal article allomorph must be selected **AFTER** epenthesis on Steve has taken place.

4. MIXED CASES (I): LEXICAL/PHONOLOGICAL

Majorcan Catalan masculine definite article:

[ə]s / ___ C Ex.: [ə]s cotxo 'the car'
 s / ___ V Ex.: s'auto 'the car'

BUT after the preposition *amb* 'with' *so* appears instead: amb **so** cotxo 'with the car'
 Cf. en **es** cotxo 'in the car'

➤ Therefore, lexical sensitivity to the preceding preposition AND phonological sensitivity to the following word.

➤ Lexical entries: DEF.ARTICLE → {s, so} / *amb* ___

{s, so}	SONSEQ	DEP	ONSET
amb so cotxo			
amb [ə]s cotxo		*!	
amb s cotxo	*!		
amb s'auto			
amb [ə]s auto		*!	
amb so auto			*!

4. MIXED CASES (II): PHONOLOGICAL/MORPHOLOGICAL

Aranese Gascon Occitan definite article:

	masc	fem
sg	eC ~ er	era
pl	es	

Contexts of allomorphic choice (for the sg):
 eC₁ / ___ C₂; er / ___ V
 where C₁ = C₂ except for [±cont]

Ex.: eC / [-cont]: en nebút 'the nephew'; eg gwéw 'the egg'
 eC / [+cont]: ed₃ éw 'the ice'; es ánt 'the saint'
 er / ___ V: er úrde 'the order'; era bál 'the valley'

➤ Lexical entries: DEF.ARTICLE → e / [plural]
 → {eC, er}
 [-cont]

{eC ₁ , er ₂ }	DEP-Place	IDENT-Manner	IDENT-[±cont]	AGREE-C(F)
[-cont]				
er ₂ úrde				
et ₁ úrde	*!			
er ₁ úrde	*!		*	
en ₁ nebút				
er ₂ nebút				*!
ed ₁ nebút				*!
en ₂ nebút		*!	*	
ed ₃ éw				*
er ₂ éw				*!
e ₃ éw			*!	
e ₃ éw		*!		

4. MIXED CASES (III): PHONOLOGICAL/MORPHOSYNTACTIC

Spanish feminine definite article:

Usually **la**. Ex.: la casa 'the house'; la universidad 'the university'
 Before common **nouns beginning with [á], el**. Ex.:

Nouns in ## V ≠ [á]	Nouns in ## [á]	Distressed nouns in ## [a]
la [a]legría 'the happiness'	el/*la [á]mbre 'the hunger'	la/*el [a]mbruna 'the famine'
la [ó]stra 'the oyster'	el/*la [á]rma 'the weapon'	la/*el [a]rmería 'the armoury'

➤ With categories other than common N, the regular *la* form appears systematically:
 Ex.: la Ágata (proper name, fem); la ágil maniobra 'the nimble manoeuvring'

➤ This case shows: (a) like the personal article in Central Catalan (§3), sensitivity to a derived phonological property, here stress;
 (b) sensitivity to syntactic category (only common nouns).

ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS

A. SELECTION: Totally idiosyncratic (§1); idiosyncratic but determined by grammatical features (§2); totally determined by grammar (phonology) (§3). In some cases, the selection is **mixed** (i.e. determined by two or more of the above) (§4).

B. MECHANISMS: Subcategorization to be satisfied at lexical insertion (§1, §2, §4); grammar (in OT, best satisfaction in evaluation) (§3, §4), contra Paster (2006), Bye (2007).

C. CONSEQUENCES: At least some phonological interpretation must take place before allomorph selection (§3).

FURTHER CASES TO STUDY

➤ **Italian definite article**, especially in the masculine: [masc, pl]: {l, li}; [masc]: {il, lo}. It involves different conditioning (phonological, morphological, lexical) with intricate interactions. Ex.: i flagelli 'the whips', gli specchi 'the mirrors', gli amici 'the friends'; l'amico 'the friend', il flagello 'the whip', lo specchio 'the mirror'

➤ **Galician definite article:** Alternation *l* ~ Ø (plus gender and number markers) with phonological, morphological, and lexical conditioning determined by material before and after the article. Ex.: os omes 'the men'; todo los omes 'all the men'

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