

On le même 'the same' in French

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The goal of this paper is to propose a semantic analysis of French *le même* 'the same' in its sentence-internal use (cf. (1)-(2), as opposed to sentence-external readings (anaphoric or deictic) in (3) and comparative constructions in (4))

(1) Luc et Flore ont lu le même livre. 'Luc and Flore read the same book.'

(2) Tous les enfants ont lu le même livre. 'All the children/every child read the same book.'

(3) Luc possède une Citroën Xsara./Regarde là ! Je crois que je vais acheter la même voiture.

'Luc owns a Citroën Xsara./ Look at that! I think I am going to buy the same car.'

(4) J'ai lu le même livre que toi/l'année dernière/celui que tu as emprunté à la bibliothèque.

'I read the same book as you/last year/the one you borrowed at the library.'

As noted for *same* in English (cf. Carlson 1987, Moltmann 1992, Barker 2007), French *même* raises two main issues: a- the definiteness puzzle: though combining with a definite determiner, DPs involving *même* do not behave the way typical definite descriptions do; b- the problem of compositionality: the elements that need to be combined for the interpretation of *même* do not form a syntactic constituent (e.g. in (1) *Luc et Flore/le même livre*).

Concerning the first issue, definite DPs with *même* indeed differ from standard definite DPs.

- They can occur in existential constructions:

(5) Il existe le même type de lentilles chez tous les opticiens.

'There exists the same type of contact lenses at all the opticians.'

- They do not need to be mentioned in the previous context:

(6) C'est drôle: hier, ces enfants ont lu le même livre sans s'être concertés.

'It is funny: yesterday, these children read the same book without consulting each other.'

- They do not yield presupposition of unique existence: as observed by Barker, whether or not there is a unique book read by Flore and Luc is precisely what is at issue in (7).

(7) Est-ce que Luc et Flore ont lu le même livre ? 'Did Luc and Flore read the same book?'

Furthermore, they also differ from indefinites in that they yield an existence presupposition: in (7), it is presupposed that Luc and Flore read a book. However, uniqueness is asserted: (1) asserts that the book read by Luc and Flore is unique. Therefore, *le même* exhibits mixed properties with respect to definiteness (presupposition of existence; assertion of uniqueness (that will be here represented by a choice function (like Barker))).

Besides, note that unlike English, French also licenses the indefinite determiner with *même*. In this case, there is no presupposition of existence: (8) is felicitous (as opposed to the same sentence with a definite determiner) even if Luc and Flore did not live in a house (but in a studio for example), whether it was unique or not.

(8) Est-ce que Luc et Flore habitaient dans une même maison?

'Did Luc and Flore live in a same house?'

Moreover, *même* does not behave like a standard adjective: it cannot be used predicatively (9), it cannot combine with determiners other than the definite or the indefinite (10), it cannot be modified by adverbs (11), it cannot coordinate with any adjective (12).

(9) *Ces livres sont mêmes. vs. Ces livres sont les mêmes.

(10) a. Ils ont lu *quelques/*divers/*certains/*plusieurs/*trois/*des/les mêmes livres.

'They read *some/*various/*certain/*several/*three/*ø/the same books.'

b. Ils ont lu ?un/*leur/#ce/le même livre. 'They read *a/*their/#this/the same book.'

(11) Luc et Flore ont lu le (*vraiment/*très/*presque/*tout) même livre.

'Luc and Flore read the (really/very/almost/very) same book.'

(12) Luc et Flore ont acheté le (*petit et/*premier et/*seul et) même livre.

'Luc and Flore bought the (*small and/*first and/*only and) same book.'

That's why I propose that *le même* is a complex determiner (cf. Romanian *același*), which has mixed properties with respect to definiteness.

Concerning the second problem, I argue first (like Barker; unlike Moltmann) that the syntactic relation between the DP with *même* and its licenser is the same as the one between a quantifier and another scope-taking element. It does not obey c-command (13) and exhibits sensitivity to islands (among others: Adjunct constraint (14) and Coordinate Structure Constraint (15)).

(13) Le même serveur a servi toutes les tables. 'The same waiter served every table.'

(14) # Luc et Flore sont en colère parce que la même personne a été élue.

'Luc and Flore are angry because the same person got elected.'

(15) # Anne et Flore ont rencontré Luc et la même femme.

'Anne and Flore met Luc and the same woman.'

Note that the hypothesis of *le même* as a complex determiner (vs. an adjective) avoids the problem of violating syntactic constraints in QR (unlike Barker): it is not *même* itself that undergoes QR but the whole DP pied-piped by *le même*.

Furthermore, based on data not mentioned yet in the literature (cf. 16-20), I propose that *même* takes a plural event as an argument (unlike Barker; like Moltmann and Carlson based on other examples involving conjoined VPs, PPs...etc). Indeed, all these examples involve several aspectual notions (frequentativity, iterativity, habituativity, continuativity, durativity) expressed by various categories (adverbs, nouns, adjectives...etc); they therefore have in common to contain a plural event, which thus appears to be the licensing condition for *même*.

(16) Lucie commet souvent la même erreur. 'Lucy often makes the same mistake.'

(17) La répétition de la même erreur n'est pas acceptable. 'The repetition of the same mistake is not acceptable.'

(18) Il avait coutume/l'habitude d'inviter les mêmes personnes chez lui. 'He used to invite the same people at his place.'

(19) Il a un désir constant/continu du même objet. 'He has a constant/continuous desire of the same object.'

(20) Cela fait longtemps que Marc habite au même endroit. 'Marc has been living at the same place for a long time.'

Furthermore, given that a plural event can be partitioned along different dimensions (participants, times), the licensing condition for *même* (plural event) also holds in the first examples (cf. 1-2); in this case, the participants only need to be distributable (to obtain multiple subevents); that's why collective nouns for example (21) do not license *même*.

(21) # La classe a lu le même livre. 'The class read the same book.'

So, I propose that *le même* is an existential complex determiner that quantifies over parts of events and raises above the event variable to get interpreted (<: part relation; f: choice

function): $\llbracket \text{le même} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle et \rangle} . \lambda Q_{\langle e, vt \rangle} . \forall e' . e' <_{\langle et, v \rangle} (e' \neq e) , \exists f_{\langle et, e \rangle}$ such that $Q(f(P))(e) = 1$ and $Q(f(P))(e') = 1$

Presupposition: $\exists x_{\langle e \rangle}$ such that $P(x) = 1$ and $Q(x)(e) = 1$

This yields the following meaning for (1): *Presupposition*: Luc and Flore read a book; *Assertion*: there exists a unique way of choosing a book such that the chosen book was read by Flore and it was read by Luc.

Finally, note that interestingly, *le même* is licensed in the very same context as the one marked by pluractional morphology in certain languages like Chechen (Yu 2003): pluractional markers indicate a multiplicity of actions, whether involving multiple participants (distributive reading) or multiple times (frequentative/durative readings). This means that *même* reveals the relevance of pluractionality in languages lacking pluractional morphology.

References: **Barker, C., 2007:** "Parasitic Scope". In *Linguistic and Philosophy* 30, 407-444; **Carlson, G., 1987:** "Same and Different: some Consequences for Syntax and Semantics". In *Linguistics and Philosophy* 10; **Moltmann, F., 1992:** "Reciprocals and Same/Different: towards a Semantic Analysis". In *Linguistics and Philosophy* 15, 411-462; **Yu, A., 2003:** "Pluractionality in Chechen". In *Natural Language Semantics* 11, 289-321.