Mismatching the first person in Romance

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1. Introduction[*]

This paper looks at mismatching phenomena in Romance languages that appear between verbs and pronouns (or similarly used nouns) when expressing the first person (plural and singular). It is well known that, relative to other pronouns, first person pronouns are more easily subject to meaning shift as well as to replacement by other expressions. This can be attributed to the pivotal function of first person pronouns in referring to the speaker (and included participants). The egocentric use is the basic and underlying function of first person pronouns, but it can also be extended to other functions. Thus, first person pronouns often indicate a speaker's perspective or some other reference anchored to the speaker. On the other hand, indefinite, third person pronouns like English *one*, German *man* or French *on* can also be used to express first person. Pragmatic principles drive meaning shifts of first person pronouns as well as the use of indefinite pronouns for first persons. Both shifts show particular semantic and syntactic properties, which are sometimes in conflict with one another and thus lead to different kinds of mismatches.

In this paper, we examine some data of two types of mismatches and compare them. These arise as: (i) the mismatch between the morphological features of a third person singular indefinite pronoun used to express first person and the features of other constituents that (should) agree with the pronoun, and as (ii) the mismatch between the morphological features of a first person pronoun and its semantic function, more precisely when the value of the respective number feature of the pronoun is singular, while its interpretation is plural. The salient questions we address are: (i) what are the differences between these two types of mismatches, (ii) how can we account for them, and (iii) can we develop a unified account for both types?

The paper is structured as follows: first, we briefly describe in section 2 the two types of mismatch at issue, and then we provide in section 3 a brief summary of the different conditions on the use of different morphological exponents used to express first person, including pragmatic motivation, semantic restrictions and syntactic features. We also discuss the agreement hierarchy as a generalization of the interaction of syntactic features of the pronoun and features of its intended referent. Section 4 presents more data on semantic mismatch and discusses Kayne's (2009) postulation of a "silent 'nous'" in French. Section 5 gives a brief overview of instances of morphological mismatches in French pronouns, i.e. where French *je* is used functionally and syntactically as first person plural. We also provide interesting data in which *je* functions as singular, but shows plural agreement features. In section 6, we summarize the findings, compare the different types of mismatches, and suggest further research directions with respect to a unified analysis.

2. Two types of mismatching: the first person plural

This first type of mismatch, which we call *semantic* mismatch, is quite frequent in the languages of the world. In order to refer to a first person plural entity, indefinite pronouns with third person singular features are often used instead of the first person plural pronoun. We discuss a French example of this type of mismatch in (1):

(1)   (a)   Nous allons à la   plage.
              we   go-1PL to the beach
       (b)   On va   à la   plage.
             on go-3SG to the beach
             'We go to the beach.'

The first person plural pronoun in (1a) refers to a first person plural entity (i.e. the speaker and some other participants). It agrees with the verb in person and number. The indefinite pronoun *on* generally refers not to a particular referent. Now, in (1b), it has the function of first person plural, but agrees morphologically with the third person singular features of the verb. This is a classical instance of a mismatch between the semantics or the function and the syntax or the agreement features of a linguistic element. However, more complex examples, like (2), provide evidence that this is not a question of semantics vs. syntax, but rather a question of the type of agreement. In (2a), the first person plural refers to a first person plural entity and agrees accordingly with the predicate *avons* and the possessive *nos* in person and number. In (2b), the indefinite pronoun *on* functioning as first person plural agrees with the verb *a* in person and number (3rd singular), but not with the possessive *nos*. The possessive shows the morphological person and number features of the intended referent – this is sometimes called "semantic agreement". (2c) provides evidence that in these constructions the possessive cannot agree morphologically with the indefinite pronoun in the function at issue, as the third singular possessive pronoun *ses* can only refer to third person participants, not to the first person plural entity denoted by *on*.

(2)   (a)   Nous$_i$ avons   envoyé nos$_i$ enfants à la   campagne.
             we   have-1PL sent   our children to the countryside
             'We have sent our children to the countryside.'
       (b)   On$_i$ a   envoyé nos$_i$ enfants à la   campagne.
             on have-3SG sent   our children to the countryside
             'We have sent our children to the countryside.'
       (c)   On$_i$ a   envoyé ses$_{*i}$ enfants à la   campagne.
             on have-3SG sent   his/her children to the countryside
             'One has sent one's children to the countryside.'

The second kind of mismatch, which we term *morphological* mismatch, is found in some informal or regional variants of French. The first person singular pronoun *je* is used to refer to a first person plural entity (usually referred to by *nous*) and shows thus plural function and also plural agreement. This particular use of *je* is a characteristic feature of some varieties of Acadian French[1]. It is extensively documented in the famous Acadian literary work *La Sagouine* by Antonine Maillet:

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[1]   Acadian French (*Français acadien*) is a regional dialect of Canadian French, spoken in the Francophone parts of the Canadian Maritime provinces in Eastern Canada (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island) and in some remoted parts of the province Quebec.

(3)   (a) je portons les capots usés qu' ils   nous avont baillés pour l'   amour
              je wear-1PL the clothes used that they us   have   given for   the love
              de Jésus-Chris   (Antonine Maillet, *La Sagouine* (1971), Montréal 1990, p.13)
              of Jesus Christ
              'We wear the old clothes the gave us for the sake of Jesus Christ.'
     (b) Nous autres, j' avons   pas de quoi   nous   gréyer pour une église
              nous others *je* have-1PL not of something ourselves wear for   a   church
              de dimanche. Ça   fait   que j' y   allons   des fois   sus   la semaine.
              of sunday   This makes that *je* there went-1PL sometimes under the week
              'All of us, we ain't got nothing to wear for a Sunday church. So, sometimes, we go
              on weekdays.'   (Antonine Maillet, *La Sagouine* (1971), Montréal 1990, p.14)

This mismatch between the form of the pronoun and its function and agreement features is far more surprising and less often found in the languages of the world than the semantic mismatch. Typologically seen, it is very rare that the first person singular and the first person plural pronoun have the same form – this is only expected in languages without verbal inflection, which is not the case in these French varieties.

3. Conditions on expressing first person

First person (personal) pronouns are the most prototypical deictic pronouns. Singular first person pronouns refer to the speaker (or writer) and plural ones to the speaker along with some additional discourse participants or other referents associated with the speaker. Even though they belong to the prototypical deictic expressions (like *here, now, this* or *that*), these pronouns allow for surprisingly broad variation from two perspectives: the first person pronouns can be used for other functions, such as generic reference; and secondly, the function of first person can also be expressed by a great variety of other expressions, often indefinite pronouns. In this section, we briefly summarize some pragmatically conditioned uses of other forms for first person reference, we then present the agreement hierarchy as a generalization over the syntactic and semantic features, and we finally discuss an interesting case of first person and apposition.

3.1 The pragmatics of first person

The first person is central in any utterance; it is the speaker or the writer of that utterance or sentence. All languages of the world provide pronouns for the first person. There are generally one lexical form for the first person singular and at least one other for the first person plural. These pronouns refer in their deictic use to the speaker and to the speaker and some other referents, respectively. However, first person pronouns also show other uses, including a variety of non personal or generics. Kitagawa & Lehrer (1990:741) discuss the generic use of first person plural pronouns in example (4):

(4)   Language is like fashion. *We* must make *our* selections carefully and appropriately. Just as *we* would not wear formal clothes at the beach or bathing suits in church, so *we* do not use obscenity or slang for formal public lectures nor pedantic, bookish forms when speaking intimately with *our* sweethearts.

In (4), we could replace *we* by the indefinite pronoun *one* or even by the generically used *you*. Moltmann (2006) provides a semantic analysis of the close relation between first person pronouns and indefinite pronouns in generic use.

    On the other hand, we can also use a variety of pronouns or nouns to express a first person plural (i.e. the speaker and some other referent), as listed in (5):

(5)   Expressing first person plural in English
      (a)   We go to the beach.
      (b)   One goes to the beach.
      (c)   You go to the beach.
      (d)   They go to the beach.

In (5a), we have the prototypical use of the first person plural pronoun with its first person plural morphology and agreement. In (5b), the indefinite pronoun *one* is used to obtain the same function, but with third person singular agreement. In (5c), the second person pronoun is used in this function, and in (5d) the third person plural pronoun. Examples (5b-d) need special contexts to achieve the intended function of expressing the first person plural. The forms are also different with respect to the availability of the first person plural reading even in contexts where this reading is strongly suggested. Following Cabredo Hofherr (2008, 2010), we can distinguish different functions and properties of these different expressions in different contexts:

The second person pronoun in its function of expressing first person plural is restricted to generic contexts and seldom allowed in episodic contexts. Impersonal uses of the second person singular interact with politeness, and the use of third person plural for first person plural seems to exclude speaker and hearer or is at least neutral with respect to the inclusion of speaker and hearer. We could elaborate this list of pragmatic conditions for the use of non-first person pronouns to express first person plural, but for our purposes it suffices to say that second person and third person pronouns can express first person plural, albeit under strong pragmatic conditions (which we admit are not fully understood). In the languages we examine here, third person indefinite pronouns are more dependent on pragmatic conditions in their usages than first person plural, and therefore it is to the semantic and syntactic behavior of these that we shall direct our attention.

3.2 The agreement hierarchy

Example (2a,b), repeated as (6), illustrates the difference between so-called semantic and syntactic agreement. The personal pronoun *nous* in (6a) refers to a first person plural referent and agrees in person and number with the predicate *avons* and the possessive pronoun *nos*. Thus semantic and syntactic agreement go hand in hand. The indefinite pronoun *on* in (6b) refers to a first person plural referent, but shows syntactic agreement in the third person singular with the predicate *a*. However, the possessive pronoun *nos* shows semantic agreement with the intended referent, rather than with the morphological form *on*, which is third person singular.

(6)   (a)   Nous$_i$ avons   envoyé nos$_i$ enfants à la campagne.
            we   have-1PL sent   our children to the countryside
            'We have sent our children to the countryside.'
      (b)   On$_i$ a   envoyé nos$_i$ enfants à la campagne.
            on have-3SG sent   our children to the countryside
            'We have sent our children to the countryside.'

The interplay between syntactic features of the pronoun and semantic features of the intended referent may lead to agreement conflicts as in (6b), where agreement can be decided according to syntactic features (cf. the predicate *a*) or to semantic features (cf. the possessive *nos*). It seems that the closer an element is to the pronoun the more it tends to agree with its syntactic features. Distance is understood as (i) *positional* distance between the elements in a sentence, but also as (ii) *operational* distance, i.e. as the grade of relatedness of certain operations, such as modification, predication or co-reference. The second notion was

generalized by Corbett (1979, 2006) to the Agreement Hierarchy in (7) (see discussion in Wechsler & Hahm 2010:1), where the different operations are ranked:

(7)   The Agreement Hierarchy (Corbett 1979:204)
      Agreement positions may be ranged in the following hierarchy:
      attributive – predicative – relative pronouns – personal pronouns

The Agreement Hierarchy captures the observation that in cases where an agreement controller (e.g. a subject) differs in its syntactic features from the semantic features of its intended referent, the choice of syntactic or semantic agreement of dependent expressions depends on the type of relation. Attributive modifiers are more likely to show syntactic agreement and personal pronouns are more likely to show semantic agreement. Note that this hierarchy must be extended by further types of pronouns, such as possessive pronouns or intensive pronouns (see section 4.1). Corbett (2006) combines the Agreement Hierarchy with the Predicate Hierarchy in (8) to obtain the Agreement and Predicate Hierarchy in (9):

(8)   The Predicate Hierarchy
      verb > participle > adjective > noun

(9)   The Agreement and Predicate Hierarchy (Corbett 2006,233)
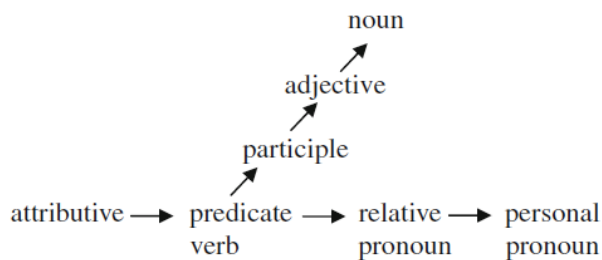
French polite pronouns are an excellent example for this: They show syntactic agreement with the predicate but semantic agreement with the adjective:

(10) (a) Vous   êtes   loyal.
           you-PL be-2PL loyal-M.SG
           'You (one formal male addressee) are loyal.'
      (b) Vous   êtes   loyaux.
           you-PL be-2PL loyal-PL
           'You (multiple addressees) are loyal.'

Languages may differ in the way they prefer syntactic or semantic agreement, but all languages have to follow the hierarchy, i.e. they must use the same strategy in a continuous segment of the hierarchy. If a language uses exclusively syntactic agreement with one position, it has to use it also with all other positions left of it. Corbett (1979:215) provides a comparison between Spanish, English, Latin and French, as in table (1):

Table (1): Comparison between different agreement strategies (Corbett 1979:215)

	attributive	predicate	relative pronoun	personal pronoun
Spanish	n.a.	±	±	–
English	n.a.	+	±	–
Latin	n.a.	+	+	–
French	n.a.	+	+	±

+ indicates 'agrees when possible'

The table summarizes observations from several languages: No language has constructions that would allow an attributive expression to agree in person (therefore this category is *not applicable). In French, a personal pronoun (see the possessive in (2b)) can syntactically agree even though the semantic features are different. Latin is more flexible as it has semantic agreement with pronouns. English blocks personal agreement from being carried into the predicate of a relative clause, as in (11):

(11) It's me who speaks French.

Spanish is the most "semantically" oriented language: It even allows semantic agreement between subject noun and predicate. Interestingly, this sometimes leads to misunderstandings. A nice example of this kind is the message written on a little piece of paper by the trapped mine workers in Chile in 2010 that was found when they were first discovered by their rescuers:

(12) Estamos bien en el   refugio los 33.
      are.1PL   well in the refuge   the 33
      'All 33 are fine in the refuge.'

This sentence was wrongly translated many times.[2] Since the noun phrase *los 33* does not agree with the verb, the translators did not recognize that this noun phrase is indeed the subject of the clause.

Other languages, like Portuguese, also allow semantic agreement in cases where a plural subject noun phrase occurs with a verb form containing the agreement markers for the first person plural. Note, however, that in this language the noun phrase generally has to be accompanied by a first person plural pronoun, as shown in (13):

(13) Nós estudantes temos   os nossos direitos de defender.   (Raposo 1998:73)
      we students   have-1pl the our   rights   to defend
      'We students have to defend our rights.'

Thus, the presence of the pronoun which agrees with the verb enables the hearer to recognize the noun *estudantes* as the subject of the clause.

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[2] See, for example, the following English and German translations, found in the Internet:
    (i) (a) We are well. We are in the shelter. We are 33.
                              (http://beta.mnet.co.za/carteblanche/Article.aspx?Id=4161&ShowId=1)
         (b) Wir sind 33 und wohlauf im Schutzraum
            'We are 33 and we are well in the shelter.'
                              (http://www.sappalapapp.de/miscellaneous/die-33-kumpel-aus-chile-
                              kaempfen-mit-problemen-nach-ihrer-rettung/2010/10/23/)

4. Semantic mismatches: indefinite pronouns for first person

4.1 Some data

As already illustrated in (1), repeated here as (14), it is quite usual in informal French – and for some speakers even obligatory (Kayne 2009:276) – to use the subject pronoun *on* instead of *nous* in order to express the first person plural:

(14) (a) Nous allons   à la   plage.
          we   go-1PL   to the beach
     (b) On va   à la   plage.
          on go-3SG to the beach
          'We go to the beach.'

A similar situation is found in informal (Brazilian and European) Portuguese. Here instead of *nós* speakers may say *a gente*, which literally means 'the people'.

(15) (a) Nós vamos à   praia.
          we   go-3PL to-the beach
     (b) A gente vai   à   praia.
          a gente go-3SG to-the beach
          'We go to the beach.'

What is common in both cases is that a first person plural pronoun is replaced by a pronoun which originally only functions as an indefinite pronoun. In both languages, this pronoun shows a mismatch between its semantic and syntactic behavior. Semantically, it functions as a first person plural, whereas syntactically it keeps its original behavior as a third person singular pronoun since the verb shows third person singular agreement. In other words, while the pronoun morphologically behaves according to the respective morphological restrictions, this is not the case with respect to its semantics. Hence, we are dealing here with cases of *semantic mismatching*.

   Interestingly, this semantic mismatching can also be observed in the context of reflexive pronouns. As illustrated in (16)-(17), the reflexive pronoun agrees morphologically with the 3rd person subject pronoun *on* or *a gente*, which semantically expresses a first person plural reading, as glossed:

(16) On s'   est   vu   à la   plage.
      on REF.3SG AUX.3SG seen at the beach
      'We met at the beach.'

(17) A gente se   viu   na   praia.
      a gente REF.3SG see-PAST.3SG in-the beach
      'We met at the beach.'

Note that this kind of mismatching is found not only in French and Portuguese. It occurs in many other languages, although it is less common and often restricted to very specific contexts.

   In German, for instance, the impersonal pronoun *man* may be used in certain contexts as a first person plural pronoun, as shown in (18), where *man* triggers third person singular agreement, but clearly means *wir* 'we', since it refers to first person plural.[3] Moreover,

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[3]   There are, of course, many other usages for *man* as well as for *on* and for *a gente*, but note that for our

example (18) illustrates that the German indefinite pronoun *man* shows the same morphosyntactic behavior as *on* or *a gente* when it combines with a reflexive pronoun since it also triggers the choice of the 3rd person form of the reflexive pronoun.

(18) Es ist eine Ewigkeit her, dass *man sich* gesehen hat. (K. Mann, *Mephisto*, p.52)
it   is an   eternity ago   that *man* REF   seen   has
'It is an eternity ago that we saw each other.'   (quoted from Zifonun 2000:241)

This morphological agreement between an indefinite pronoun form expressing first person plural and the reflexive pronoun is particularly unusual. As noted by Creissels (2010:6) for the use of French *on*, in all other respects the indefinite pronoun does *not* trigger morphological agreement with a semantically corresponding pronoun, but rather triggers the choice of unambiguous first person *plural* forms:

> Morphosyntactically, like all other varieties of *on*, 1st person plural *on* combines with verbs in the 3rd person singular and triggers the choice of the 3rd person form of the reflexive clitic *se*. But in all other respects, it triggers the choice of unambiguous 1st person plural forms: the corresponding possessive is 1st person plural *notre*, and the corresponding form of the intensive pronoun is 1st person plural *nous-mêmes*.

This is illustrated in (2), repeated here as (19), where the corresponding possessive pronoun is the 1st person plural form *nos* instead of the 3rd person singular form *ses*. The use of the latter form obligatorily excludes coreference with *on* and only allows the interpretation of the possessive pronoun as referring to somebody other than *on* (Creissels 2010:6):

(19) (a) Nous$_i$ avons   envoyé nos$_i$ enfants à la   campagne.
       we   have-1PL sent   our children to the countryside
       'We have sent our children to the countryside.'
   (b) On$_i$ a   envoyé nos$_i$ enfants à la   campagne.
       on have-3SG sent   our children to the countryside
       'We have sent our children to the countryside.'
   (c) On$_i$ a   envoyé ses$_{*i}$ enfants à la   campagne.
       on have-3SG sent   his/her children to the countryside
       'One has sent one's children to the countryside.'

The same observation can be made when an intensive pronoun is used. If the first person is meant, *nous-mêmes*, i.e. the first person plural, the strong reflexive pronoun has to be employed, while *soi-même* is used when *on* functions as indefinite pronoun (Creissels 2010:6).

(20) (a) Nous nous   défendrons   (nous-mêmes).
       we   REFL.1PL defend.FUT.1PL ourselves
       'We will defend ourselves.'
   (b) On se   défendra   (nous-mêmes).
       on REFL.3   defend.FUT.3SG ourselves
       'We will defend ourselves.'
   (c) On se   défendra   (soi-même).
       on REFL.1   defend.FUT.3SG oneself
       'One will defend oneself.'

purposes, we will confine ourselves to the use of these pronouns as first person plural pronouns ("inclusive *on*", "egocentric *on*").

4.2 A syntactic approach: silent 'NOUS' (Kayne 2009)

Kayne's approach is based on some crucial observations concerning the distribution of *on*, replacing *nous*. First, he notes that *on* may also behave as a generic pronoun and may thus appear in generic sentences. In addition, it may also appear in cases where English would normally have *they*. Compare (21a) vs. (21b) and (21c):

(21) (a) On a   ri.
           on have-3SG laughed
           'We have laughed'
      (b) En France, on boit   beaucoup   de vin.
           in   France, *on* drink-3SG a-great-deal of wine
           'In France, we drink a great deal of wine.'
      (c) Jean est allé à la   poste. On lui a   dit de revenir plus tard.
           Jean is   gone to the post.   *on* him have-3SG said to return   more late
           'John went to the post office. They told him to come back later.'

Kayne's main assumption is that *on* in (21a) is syntactically different from *on* in (21b) and (21c). As a crucial difference he notes that in (21a), where *on* functions as a referential personal pronoun, it is allowed to add a floating universal quantifier like *tous*, as illustrated in (22a). In the context of a generic pronoun *on*, however, the use of a quantifier is excluded. Hence, the insertion of *tous* in a sentence like (21b) is only possible with the interpretation of *on* as a first person plural pronoun, as shown in (22b):

(22) (a) On a   *tous* ri.
           on have-3SG all   laughed
           'We all laughed.'
      (b) En France, on boit   *tous* beaucoup   de vin.
           in   France, *on* drink-3SG all   a-great-deal of wine
           'In France, we all drink a great deal of wine.'

According to Kayne, the acceptability of plural *tous* in (22a) is "striking in that *on* in such examples (and everywhere else) requires third person singular agreement on the finite verb" (Kayne 2009:178). Notice that despite the plural interpretation, the plural marking of the verb is completely excluded, since neither a third person plural verb (*ont*) (cf. (23a)) nor a first person plural verb (*avons*) (cf. (23b)) is at all possible:

(23) (a) *On ont   tous ri.
                on have-3PL all   laughed
      (b) *On avons   tous ri.
                on have-1PL all   laughed

However, Kayne notes that the acceptability of plural *tous* in contexts like (22) "becomes less surprising" when one considers clauses like (24). In both of these examples, the presence of the plural element *tous* is easily explained by the occurrence of *nous* since both elements agree with each other.

(24) (a) Nous, on a   tous ri.
           we   we have-3SG all   laughed
           'We, we have all laughed'

(b) Nous avons   tous ri.
we   have-1PL all   laughed
'We have all laughed'

Kayne's "obvious proposal" is that the presence of *tous* in these cases is "licensed as a function of the presence of plural *nous*" (Kayne 2009:278). As a consequence, he concludes that in clauses where first person plural occurs without *nous*, like in (21a), there is a "silent" NOUS, located in a left-dislocated position – like its phonological counterpart in (24a) –, which licenses the occurrence of *tous* in this context.

(25) NOUS   on a   *tous* ri.
we-"silent" *on* has all   laughed
'We have all laughed.'

Additional evidence for this account is provided by Kayne via observations concerning the behavior of *nous* and the first person plural *on* in the context of imperatives and of reflexive pronouns.

As for imperatives, Kayne notes the following difference: while in constructions with finite verbs, the subject clitic requires the presence of a matching agreement suffix, this is not so in imperatives, where the subject is dropped, as shown by the difference between (26a) and (26b):

(26) (a) Nous partons.
we   leave-1PL
'We leave.'
(b) Partons!
leave-1PL
'(Let's) leave.'

However, although the personal pronoun in (26) may be replaced by *on*, as shown in (27a), an imperative with the third person singular verb form is never allowed in French, as in (27b):

(27) (a) On part.
on leave-3SG
'We leave.'
(b) *Part!
leave-3SG
'(Let's) leave.'

According to Kayne, this difference suggests – again – that there is a silent NOUS in imperatives like (26b), which has "the presence of [the suffix] -*ons* as a necessary condition" (Kayne 2006:281). Note that the presence of (the suffix) -*ons* is only restricted to cases where *on* is not present. When *on* is present or intervenes, the third person singular form is required. Thus, clauses like (28) are ungrammatical:

(28) (a) *On partons.
on leave-1PL
'We leave.'
(b) *Nous, on partons.
we   *on* leave-1PL
'(Let's) leave.'

In sum, Kayne's approach provides an interesting explanation for both the verb agreement patterns and the use of the floating quantifier *tous*. However, there are still some complications with this analysis. One complication is that there is some evidence for the existence of cases like (28) in some varieties of French. According to Hausmann (1979:437), such cases occur both in earlier texts of French and in modern varieties of (northern) French. Example (29a), taken from the French movie *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*, illustrates the occurrence of such cases in Picard French. Similar cases are found in varieties of Canadian French, such as in Acadian French varieties spoken in Newfoundland and New Brunswick, as shown in (29b) and (29c):

(29) (a) On voudrons …   (*Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*)
           on   want-FUT.1PL
           'We will …'
       (b) on n'   avons   pas beaucoup de ça   asteure.   (Brasseur 1996: 301)
           on NEG have-1PL not much   of that at this moment
           'At this moment, we don't have much of that.'
       (c) on   pensions ...
           on   think-PAST.1PL
           'We thought ...'
                   (R. Brun, *La Mariecomo*, Montréal 1974, p.36, quoted from Rottet 2006:186)

Interestingly, similar cases are found in informal Brazilian Portuguese, as shown by Taylor (2009:10f):

(30) (a) A gente vamos   à   praia.
           a gente go-1PL to-the beach
           'We go to the beach.'
       (b) A gente   estamos com fome.
           a gente are-1PL with hunger
           'We are hungry.'

Hence, these data show that Kayne's analysis of "silent" *nous* in cases of semantic mismatching does not seem to be able to account for all varieties of French nor does it seem to be easily transferrable in order to account for semantic mismatching in Portuguese.

5. Morphological mismatching: The case of French *je*

5.1 Some data

As already mentioned above and illustrated by the examples in (3), there is another type of mismatching in combination with the marking of the first person. It is the case of French *je* functioning as first person *plural* pronoun. In contrast to cases of semantic mismatching, where an indefinite singular pronoun expresses first person plural and morphologically agrees with the finite verb (as well as with the reflexive pronoun), the pronoun here is a first person *singular referential* pronoun which morphologically does not agree in number neither with the verb nor with the reflexive pronoun. So, in cases like (31), the referentially correct number features of the personal pronoun are formally expressed by the agreement markers on the verb, which are that of the first person plural. Interestingly, as shown in (31a), this use of *je* may alternate with the use of *on* functioning as first person plural pronoun by the same speaker and within the very same utterance. (31b) illustrates the lack of agreement between *je* and the reflexive pronoun.

(31) (a) Nous   autres on avait pas besoin   d' acheter du lait   parce que
            we   others on has   not necessary to buy   DET milk because
            j' avions   des vaches.
            je have. PAST-1PL   DET cows
            'We didn't have to buy milk since we had cows.'   (Rottet 2006:179)
      (b) Je nous   baignions.   Ça   c' était quand j' étions   jeunes.
            je REF.1PL bathe.PAST-1PL This it was   when je be-PAST.1pl young
            'We went swimming. This was when we were young.'
                                                                   (Flikeid & Péronnet 1989:221)

We already pointed out that this kind of mismatching is quite rare and often considered to be
a typical feature of Acadian French. More precisely, as shown by King (2005:207), its use in
Acadian French is today restricted to "the most conservative Atlantic Canada Acadian
varieties". Table (2) provides the verb agreement patterns for some varieties of French and
documents the existence of morphological mismatching with *je* functioning as first person
plural pronoun in the Acadian French variety of Newfoundland. It also shows that this kind of
morphological mismatching is unknown to (informal) Quebec French. To our knowledge, this
also holds for the Acadian French varieties spoken in the province of Quebec:

Table (2): Verb paradigms of some varieties of French (Beaulieu & Balcom 1998:5)

Personne et nombre	Français normatif (FN)		Français acadien de Terre-Neuve (FTN)		Français informel québécois (FIQ)	
		Flexion		*Flexion*		*Flexion*
1 sing.	j'arrive	ø	j'arrive	ø	j'arrive	ø
2 sing.	tu arrives	ø	t'arrives	ø	t'arrives	ø
3 sing. masc.	il arrive	ø	il arrive	ø	/j/ arrive	ø
3 sing. fém.	elle arrive	ø	al arrive	ø	al ≈ a arrive	ø
1 plur.	nous arrivons	/ɔ̃/	j'arrivons	/ɔ̃/	on arrive	ø
2 plur.	vous arrivez	/e/	vous arrivez	/e/	vous arrivez	/e/
3 plur. masc.	/ilz/ arrivent	ø	il arrivont	/ɔ̃/	/j/ arrivent	ø
3 plur. fém.	/ɛlz/ arrivent	ø	il arrivont	/ɔ̃/	/j/ arrivent	ø

[ø = morphème zéro]

Notice, however, that morphological mismatching is not restricted to Acadian French
varieties. It is also found in European French. In particular, it is well documented in earlier
stages of French, especially in (literary) texts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
(Hausmann 1979:439). The following example taken from Molière's comedy *Dom Juan*
illustrates this kind of mismatching both with the finite verb and the reflexive pronoun:

(32) Enfin donc, j' estions   sur le   bord de la mar, moy et le gros
      finally well *je* be.PAST-1SG on the border of the sea I   and the big
      Lucas, et je nous   amusions   à batifoler   avec des mottes de tarre
      Lucas and *je* REF-1PL amuse.PAST-1PL to lark about with DET clods of earth
      que   je nous   jesquions   à la   teste ;
      which *je* REF-1PL throw-PAST.1PL at the head

                                                   (Molière, *Dom Juan* (1664), Paris 1998, acte II, scène 1)

Brunot (1947:335) notes by quoting J. Palsgrave (*L'Esclarissement de la Langue françoyse*,
Paris 1852, p. 331) that in the sixteenth century the use of the forms of morphological
mismatching was quite popular "in commune speche". He also points out that in the same
century these forms start to disappear in French by replacing *je* with *nous* (or *on*). In literary

texts from later centuries they are found especially in cases where the author wants to characterize ordinary people like farmers or persons coming from rural regions (Vernois 1963:36, Hausmann 1979:440).

Interestingly however, morphological mismatching has not yet completely disappeared in Modern European French. It still exists at least in some varieties of European French, as in Jèrriais, the French dialect spoken on the Jersey Island, or in the French (or Franco-Provençal) dialect Lyonais, which is spoken in the city of Lyon and its surrounding area. According to the – very few – sources, in both dialects *je* is regularly used as first person plural pronoun in combination with the first person plural verb form:

Table (3): Verb paradigms of Jèrrias and Lyonais

Person and number	Jèrriais (http://members.societe-jersiaise.org/geraint/jerriais.html)	Lyonais (Martin & Vurpas 2006:15 and 25)
Infinitive form	aimer 'to love'	chantâr 'to sing'
1SG	j'aime	je chanto
2SG	tu'aimes	te chantes
3SG	il / oulle aime	a / (e)le chante
1PL	j'aimons	je chantons
2PL	ous aimez	vos chantâs
3PL	il'aiment	ils / (e)les chantont

The following example, found in a contemporary novel by Annie Ernaux, supports this observation. In this dialogue, the author reports that she sometimes corrects her father, who originates from a little town in Normandy, when he uses forms like *j'avions* or *j'étions*:[4]

(33) "Mon père dit souvent « j'avions » ou « j'étions », lorsque je le reprends, il prononce « nous avions » avec affection, en détachant les syllabes, ajoutant sur un ton habituel, « si tu veux », signifiant par cette concession le peu d'importance qu'a le beau parler pour lui."   (A. Ernaux, *La Honte,* Paris 1997, p.54f)
'My father often says "j'avions" or "j'étions", and when I correct him, he pronounces "nous avions" with affection, separating the syllables, adding with an indifferent tone, "if you want", expressing with this concession the little importance that has the elaborate speech has for him.'

This example provides clear evidence not only for the existence of morphological mismatching in some (remote) French dialects, but also for the fact that it is highly stigmatized in Modern (European) French.

To conclude these observations on French *je* functioning as first person plural pronoun, we can state that this was a quite common feature in earlier stages of French. Its use became rarer from the seventeenth century on and it is today reduced to some regional varieties of French and to very informal speech. The question now is why *je* has lost this use as first person plural pronoun. We will address this question in the following section.

5.2 Some reflections on morphological mismatching in French

One crucial feature in the history of French is the erosion of the morphological marking of the inflection endings in the verb paradigm. This development is illustrated in table (4):

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[4]   This quote has kindly been pointed out to us by Nathalie Wörz.

Table (4): The development of the verb paradigm in French (cf. Kaiser 2002:97)

Person/ number	Old French			Middle French			Modern French		
	pro- noun	verb	inflection	pro- noun	verb	inflection	pro- noun	verb	inflection
1SG	je, jo, jou, gié	chant	[-]	je	chant	[ə]	je	chant	[-]
2SG	tu	chant	es	tu	chant	[ə]	tu	chant	[-]
3SG	il/ele	chant	e(t)	il/elle	chant	[ə]	il/elle	chant	[-]
1PL	nos	chant	ons	nous	chant	[õ]	nous	chant	[õ]
							on	chant	[-]
2PL	vos	chant	ez	vous	chant	[e]	vous	chant	[e]
3PL	il/ eles	chant	ent	ils/ elles	chant	[ə]	ils/ elles	chant	[-]

While Old French exhibits a full paradigm of verb endings, Middle French already has a reduced set where the verb inflection is mostly expressed by a schwa, except for the first and second person plural. In spoken Modern French, the schwa is no longer expressed, and since *nous* is generally replaced by *on* in informal speech, as we have seen, little remains but the suffix *-ez* ([e]) to mark the second person plural in the verbal paradigm of the indicative in the most common conjugation class (infinitival forms in *-er*).

In addition to the erosion at issue, French stands out among Romance languages due to the emergence of a full paradigm of subject clitic pronouns and by their increasing use even in contexts with subject nouns. There is a long and controversial debate in French linguistics whether these clitic pronouns have become (obligatory) prefixes on the verb and whether, as a consequence, informal Modern French has to be considered a null subject language (see Meisenburg 2000, Kaiser 2008 or Culbertson 2010 for a critical discussion of this debate). Although there are a number of problems with respect to this "prefix hypothesis", it is uncontroversial that French exhibits a general tendency to predetermine rather than to postdetermine (Jacob 1990). Under this perspective, it becomes clear(er) why the mismatch constructions illustrated in 5.1 have become very rare in Modern French: in such a system where the verbal endings are getting lost and where the preverbal clitic pronouns have become the relevant and almost sole indicators for number and person marking, a mismatch construction where the suffix is pertinent for number marking is no longer maintainable. Since postverbal markers have ceased to be the crucial factor for number and person marking the suffix *-ons* has lost its power to overwrite the number information provided by *je*. Thus, the mismatch construction at issue is no longer interpretable as a first person *plural* construction and would evoke a misunderstanding. As a consequence, the construction is getting lost at least in those varieties of French where such a systematic change in the inflectional system has taken place (see also Hausmann 1979:444, fn.39).

Interestingly enough, French exhibits another type of morphological mismatching, which is often confounded with the mismatch just described. Both constructions are almost identical, since they contain both the personal pronoun *je* and a first person plural verb form *-ons*. Crucially, however, in the second kind of these constructions, the speaker does *not* refer to the first person plural, but rather refers to the first person *singular* being morphologically expressed by the personal pronoun *je*. Although examples for these cases are quite rare, there are French varieties, in particular modern varieties, spoken both in Europe and in Canada, as shown in (34) and (35), respectively, where constructions occur in which *je* plus plural verb form undoubtedly expresses a *singular* reference:

(34) (a) Et   moi je l'   aimerons   (J. Brel, *S'il vous plaît*)
           and me *je* her love.FUT-1PL
           'And me I'll love her.'
      (b) Une fois que j' m'   y   trouvons sus   steu plateforme …
           a   time that *je* REF.1SG there find-1PL under this platform
           'Once I found myself under this platform ...'
                                               (R. Queneau, *Exercices de style*, Paris 1947*, Paysan*)

(35) (a) Moi, j' avons venue au   monde ...
           me   *je* have-1.PL come to-the world
                                     (P. Gérin & P.M. Gérin, *Marichette*, Sherbrooke 1982, p.86,
                                                     quoted from Rottet 2006:185)
      (b) Asteure   j' lisons et   j'   apprends   à épeler mieux …
           at this moment *je* read-1.PL and I   learn.1.SG   to spell   better
                                     (P. Gérin & P.M. Gérin, *Marichette*, Sherbrooke 1982, p.86,
                                                     quoted from Rottet 2006:185)

Note that since these two mismatch constructions with singular and plural *je* are identical in formal terms, it is very difficult to distinguish them from each other. Unless there are linguistic cues such as a strong or reflexive pronoun, the identification of the intended reference is only possible on the basis of the non-linguistic context (Rottet 2006). Some authors assume that there is a hesitation between usage and the interpretation of these types of mismatch constructions (Hull 1988, Rottet 2006:183). Unfortunately, there are very few studies comparing these two types of construction and, in particular, very little information is given concerning their frequency. While authors like Brunot (1947) or Hausmann (1979) report a decrease in constructions with plural *je*, we did not find information about the occurrence and the frequency of mismatch constructions with singular *je* plus plural verb morphology.

Still, there are some reasons to believe that mismatch constructions with singular *je* are more productive and more resistant to change than constructions with plural *je*. First, Rottet (2006) observes that in Louisiana French, the latter construction type has been lost in favor of constructions with singular *je*. Second, as shown by Hausmann (1979), constructions with plural *je* have been largely replaced by constructions with *on* in European French in the twentieth century. King, Nadasdi & Butler (2004) observe a similar process in modern Acadian varieties where speakers make less frequent use of constructions with plural *je* and, consequently, use *on* to a greater extent. In fact, these observations may again be correlated with the general tendency towards predetermination in French. In this perspective, singular *je* and plural *on* assume the preverbal marking of the number feature while the postverbal endings are either lacking, as in the case of *on*, or of no relevance, as in the case of singular *je*.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have presented some mismatching phenomena that can be observed in Romance languages in the context of the expression of the first person. Even though the different types of mismatches always involve first person pronouns, their characteristics are quite different. We started with some general observations about the pivotal position of first person pronouns and first person functions in the languages of the world. We then briefly presented the Agreement Hierarchy, which provides an interesting generalization on the different types or domains of agreement. If an expression is used for first person, but does not have first person morphological features, other elements that agree with this expression can agree according to their morphological features (syntactic agreement) or to their semantic

features. In which direction this type of mismatch is resolved is a property of a particular language. In this connection, we compared constructions which exhibit a *semantic* mismatch, containing an indefinite pronoun expressing first person plural, with constructions exhibiting what we called a *morphological* mismatch: In such cases, the pronoun of the first person singular is either used semantically as a plural or as a singular in combination with a finite verb containing a first person plural suffix. Both cases are quite rare phenomena in the languages of the world. An account for this kind of mismatch cannot be given by extra covert pronouns – as in the case of a semantic mismatch – rather, it must inspect the paradigm for personal pronouns together with the inflection of the predicate in more detail. What we have learnt from these different kinds of mismatches is that different grammatical levels can conflict with each other and that languages provide a surprising rich inventory of strategies to resolve such conflicts. The way languages repair such mismatches gives access to the interfaces between different grammatical levels.

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