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Résumé de l'article

Le picard est une langue gallo-romane proche du français. Dans la variété parlée dans le Vimeu, nous trouvons trois pronoms neutres sujets : *a*, *ch'* et une forme nulle. Cet article examine la distribution de ces formes dans des textes contemporains dans le but de déterminer dans quelle mesure ces pronoms se comportent comme les pronoms neutres présents dans d'autres variétés gallo-romanes ou si leur source devrait plutôt être recherchée dans le français familier. Nous soutenons, sur la base de critères phonologiques, syntaxiques et sémantiques, que l'origine française rend mieux compte des ressemblances entre les deux variétés. La distribution syntaxique des trois pronoms nous amène ensuite à poser l'existence de deux pronoms, *a* et *ch'*, et à traiter la variante nulle comme un allomorphe de *a* qui apparaît dans certains contextes phonologiques. Finalement, nous concluons que la distinction entre *a*/Ø et *ch'* est un développement propre au picard.

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Two Neuter Pronouns in Picard

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Abstract

In the Vimeu variety of Picard, a Gallo-Romance closely related to French, three different neuter subject clitic pronouns are found: *a*, *ch'*, and a null form. This paper examines the distribution of these forms in contemporary texts in order to determine the extent to which these pronouns resemble those found in other Gallo-Romance languages or whether their source must be sought in colloquial varieties of French. We argue, based on phonological, syntactic, and semantic criteria, that the French origin better accounts for the similarities between the two varieties. Based on their syntactic distribution, we argue that the three forms represent two different pronouns, *a* and *ch'*, that the null form is an allomorph of *a* in certain phonological contexts, and that the distinction between *a*/Ø and *ch'* constitutes an innovation in Picard.

1. Introduction

Because the cooccurrence of lexical subjects and coreferential subject clitics is variable in contemporary colloquial French, many linguists are hesitant to analyze this construction as subject doubling and view subject clitics as agreement markers. However, this is not the case for Picard, a Gallo-Romance language closely related to French, as virtually all authors present subject doubling as a categorical phenomenon in this language (e.g., Edmont 1897: 10 for Pas-de-Calais; Ledieu 1909: 42, Hrkal 1910: 262, and Debrie 1974: 18 for Amiénois; Cochet 1933: 36 and Dauby 1979: 43 for the Nord *département*; and Vasseur 1996: 61 for Vimeu). A few examples of subject doubling are presented in (1), where lexical and pronominal subjects co-occur with subject clitics that share their grammatical features.

(1) a. <u>*Min   grand-pére* ***il***</u> étoait *coér   in route à   lacher   ses   solès*   (*Chl'autocar* 17)
        my.M[1] grandfather he   was   still   in road to tie.INF his.PL   shoes
        'My grandfather was still in the middle of tying his shoes'
     b. <u>*Ézz   eutes   **i***</u>   *ll'   acoutoait't.*   (*Chl'autocar* 20)
        the.PL others they   him   listen.IMP.3PL
        'The others listened to him'
     c. *D' tous sins   si* <u>*élle* ***al***</u> *prind ch'   car éch   mérquédi*   (*Chl'autocar* 49)
        of   all   ways   if she   she   take   the.M   bus the.M   Wednesday
        'Anyway if she takes the bus Wednesday'

This double expression of the subject, along with other properties that will be summarized below, has led me to argue that in such constructions, the noun phrase/strong pronoun functions as the syntactic subject and that the subject clitic is an agreement marker (Auger 2003a, b). While this analysis predicts that subject clitics should occur in all clauses that contain a tensed verb, careful analysis of Picard uncovers a small, though significant, number of clauses in which no subject clitics are present. Interestingly, clitic absence is not random, as we will see below. More interestingly, still, one group of exceptions opens a window into a rather complex system of neuter clitic pronouns that appears to have developed in Picard.

This paper opens with a brief description of subject doubling in Picard. It then describes the neuter subject clitic system, proposes a hypothesis concerning its origin, compares it with neuter pronouns in French and other Gallo-Romance languages, and determines what governs the choice between forms that share the same grammatical meaning and features but occur in complementary distribution. Given that Picard is spoken in a large territory that includes much of northern France and parts of Belgium, I will limit my discussion to the system that characterizes the variety of Picard spoken in Vimeu, in the western part of the Somme *département* in France.[2] My corpus consists of literary texts in prose written by Picard speakers born in Vimeu or the adjacent town of Abbeville between 1904 and 1959 and published between 1938 and the 21st century; it also includes oral recordings collected during fieldwork in the 1990's.

2. Subject doubling in Picard

In this section, I briefly review aspects of subject doubling that support an analysis in which the lexical phrase or strong pronoun constitutes the syntactic subject and the pronominal clitic functions as a preverbal agreement marker over an analysis in terms of dislocation.

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1. List of abbreviations used in this article:

COMP = complementizer	FUT = future	INT = interrogative	PL = plural
DAT = dative	IMP = IMPERFECTIVE	M = masculine	SG = singular
F = feminine	INF = infinitive	NEG = negative	SUBJ = subjunctive

2. A preliminary examination of other varieties of Picard, even some that are spoken in areas that are geographically very close to Vimeu, reveals that neuter pronouns behave quite differently in those varieties.

2.1 Pronominal clitics as agreement markers

Sentences such as those in (1), in which the subject appears to be expressed twice, raise questions concerning their structure. Given the widely accepted view that verbs can assign nominative case to only one subject, the possibility that both the DP/strong pronoun and the clitic are subjects is ruled out. This leaves the analyst with a choice between two possible structures: either the clitic is the syntactic subject and the DP/strong pronoun is a dislocated phrase that is set apart from the core sentence to achieve some pragmatic effect (e.g., emphasis, contrast, introduction of a new topic; cf. Barnes 1985 and Ashby 1988), or the DP/strong pronoun fulfills the subject function and the pronominal clitic has been reanalyzed as a preverbal agreement marker. While the former analysis is typically adopted for standard French (King & Nadasdi 1997: 269), many researchers have argued that the latter analysis better describes colloquial French (e.g., Roberge 1990, Auger 1994, Zribi-Hertz 1994, and Culbertson 2010; but see King & Nadasdi 1997 for discussion of a variety in which subject clitics have not been reanalyzed as agreement markers and de Cat 2005 for a rejection of this analysis for colloquial French). Those who favor the agreement marking analysis base their position on the fact that in these varieties of French, subject clitics occur in all contexts in which a verb is expected to agree with its subject. For instance, in colloquial Québec French, subject clitics cooccur with bare-quantifier subjects, (2a), a type of subject that is incompatible with a dislocated position (Rizzi 1986), they are repeated on each conjunct in a VP-conjunction structure, (2b), and they occur in subject relative clauses, (2c), as well as in inverted constructions, (2d).

(2) a. *en campagne, quand quelqu'un **il** dansait...*   (Auger 1994: 97)
        'in the countryside, when someone was dancing…'
     b. *ben il a laissé ça pis **il** a rentré à Northern*   (Auger 1994: 71)
        'well he left that job and went to Northern'
     c. *J'étais pas une personne que **j'**avais beaucoup d'amis*   (Auger 1994: 77)
        'I wasn't a person who had a lot of friends'
     d. *Je me demande où ce qu'**elle** est sa maison*
        'I wonder where his/her house is'

The criteria that support an agreement-marking analysis for colloquial French subject clitics provide support for the same analysis in Picard. In this language, all subjects are doubled, including bare quantifiers, as seen in (3b). Subject clitics are present in subject-verb inversion constructions, (4); they are repeated on each verb in a VP-conjunction, (5); and they occur in subject relative clauses, (6). In subject *wh*-questions, a default third person masculine singular marker is used, as illustrated in (7).

(3) a. *Fonse   **i**   n'*   étoait   *point   lo.*   (*Chl'autocar* 18)
        Alphonse he   NEG   was   not   there
        'Alphonse was not there'
     b. *Parsonne **i**   n'*   *poroait   mie   vnir*   *ll'*   értcheure.   (*Chl'autocar* 40)
        nobody   he   NEG   could   not   come.INF him   get-back.INF
        'Nobody could come and get him'

(4) *j'* édmanne à   *quiqu'un doù   qu'   **i**   réste   Fonse.*   (*Chl'autocar* 35)
     I   ask   to   someone   where   that   he   lives   Fonse
     'I ask someone where Fonse lives'

(5) Lo,   **al**   a   rougi   pi   **al**   a   tornè   s'   téte.   (*Chl'autocar* 50)
     there she has blushed and she has turned her head
     'Then, she blushed and turned away'

(6) i   crioait   quique chose   à   des   gins   qu'   **il**   étoait't
     he yelled   some   thing to of-the.PL people that they were
     din   chés   camps   (*Chl'autocar* 21)
     in   the.PL   fields
     'He yelled something to people who were in the fields'

(7) tchèche qu' **il** éroait   peu   prévoér   tout o ?   (*Chl'autocar* 28)
     who   that he   have.FUT-IMP been-able   foresee.INF all   that
     'Who could have predicted all that?'

While the subject pronouns of Picard function as agreement markers and we might expect them to have been reanalyzed as lexical affixes, Auger (2003a) argues that they still are clitics. She bases her conclusion on the fact that subject clitics are unaffected by phonological rules that apply word-internally and that their combination with other pronominal clitics and their verbal hosts differs from that observed at word boundaries. We can capture the clitic status and agreement-marking properties of Picard subject clitics by generating them under AgrS; this structure allows them to co-occur with overt subjects and to combine with verbs that may bear overt agreement markers of their own, as shown in (8).

(8) a. Nita   **al**   rit [ri]   (*Lettes* 10)
         Nita   she   laugh.3SG
         'Nita laughs'
     b. Chés   piots   **i**   rit'té [ritte]   comme Nita   (*Lettes* 10)
        the. PL   small-ones   they laugh.3PL   like   Nita
        'The children laugh like Nita'

2.2 Apparent exceptions

2.2.1 Subject doubling

While subject doubling is, as we saw above, described as applying categorically in Picard, a careful analysis of written texts that span the 20th century reveals two constructions in which a subject clitic does not cooccur with a lexical subject. The first exception concerns quantified subjects, especially bare quantifiers. For some speakers, most often older ones, subject doubling does not occur with subjects such as *parsonne* 'nobody' and *tout le monne* 'everyone', (9). Given the use of doubled bare quantifiers by younger speakers, (10), we can conclude that the grammaticalization process, which was still incomplete in the middle of the twentieth century, has reached its completion among the latest generation.[3]

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3. Gaston Vasseur, the author of *Lettes*, was born in 1904; his *Lettes* were published from 1938 until 1971. Jean Leclercq, the author of *Chl'autocar*, was born in 1931.

(9) a. *Et pis parsonne __ én' dit   rien,   min fiu*   (*Lettes* 10)
     and   nobody   NEG   say   nothing   my   son
     'And nobody says nothing, my son'
   b. *tout   l'   monne __ édvient aimabe*   (*Lettes* 10)
     all   the.SG people   become   likable
     'Everybody becomes likable'

(10)   *tout   l'   monne **il** aglave éd   souo*   (*Chl'autocar* 21)
       all   the.SG people he   die   of   thirst
       'everyone is very thirsty'

The second type of exception, illustrated in (11), involves constructions in which French would use the neuter clitic *ce*. Evidence that we should analyze such structures as involving a null subject clitic rather than clauses lacking subject doubling is provided by (11b): here, we see a feminine singular subject, *eine ruque*, cooccurring with a masculine predicate adjective. Given that subjects and predicate adjectives normally agree in number and gender, as seen in (11c), an explanation must be sought for this apparent clash.

(11) a. *Tout   o   est bel   et   bieu*   (*Viu temps* 17)
       all   that is   beautiful and   beautiful
       'That's all fine and dandy'
   b. *Eine ruque est gris*   (Lionel D., 1996/06/13)
     a.F   hive   is   gray.M
     'A hive is gray'
   c. *Chom- machine **al** est portant run-mint vieille*   (*Lettes* 39)
     the.F machine she   is   however really   old.F
     'However, the machine is really old'

2.2.2 Clauses with no overt subject

As noted previously, if subject clitics are agreement markers, they should occur with every finite verb. However, there are two constructions in which subject expression appears to be completely absent. The first type, illustrated in (12), is parallel to similar sentences in colloquial French in which expletive *il* can be omitted. The second type, seen in (13), has no parallel in colloquial French; however, quite interestingly, all examples would involve the neuter pronoun, just like the second type of exception to subject doubling described above.

(12) a. __ *Feut   dire étou qu' éj y   ai   rpinsè*   (*Chl'autocar* 60)
       is-necessary say.INF too that I it.DAT have thought-again
       'It must be said, too, that I have thought about it again'
   b. __ *N' y   a   point d' Bon Diu!*   (*Crimbillie* 90)
       NEG there has not   of good God
       'There is no God!'

(13) a. *Quant' __ alloait bien*   (*Mémoire* 4)
       when   went   well
       'When it went well'

     b. __ *étoait moins imbêtant qué ch'ti in toèle*   (*Mémoire* 5)
         was   less   annoying   than   that   in   canvas
       'It was less annoying that the one made of canvas'

     c. *In'hui __ est fini*   (*Mémoire* 5)
       today   is   finished
       'Today it is over'

3. Neuter pronouns in Picard

I propose that in (11a), (11b), and (13), a phonologically null neuter subject clitic is present. As is the case with *ce*/ça[4] in French, this clitic imposes default masculine singular features on predicate adjectives and verbs. This analysis explains the apparent clash over gender agreement in (11b), as well as the apparent clash over number agreement in (14).

(14)   *chés machins leu est pu aisè à défoaire*   (*Rinchétte* 28)
       the.PL things   there is   more easy to undo.INF
       'Those things are easier to take apart'

     The null form illustrated so far is not the only form whose meaning and morphosyntactic characteristics correspond to French *ce*/ça. This is also the case for *ch* in (15a) and *a* in (15b).

(15) a. *Chés vissiers **ch'** est pire éq toute !*   (*Janmoais*)
       the   bailiffs   it   is   worse   than   all
       'Bailiffs are the worst of all'

     b. *des piots pingeons à peine pleumès, __ est bièn pu boin*
        of-the.PL small pigeons   barely   plucked   is   much   more good
       *à mingeu qu' édz œus d' glaine. Et pi, **a** n' érvient*
       to eat.INF   than of-the.PL eggs   of   hen   and   it NEG come-back
       ti point meilleur mértcheu?   (*Crimbillie* 19)
       INT not   better   market
       'small pigeons barely plucked taste better than hen's eggs. And aren't they cheaper?'

     Such a variety of forms sharing the same morphosyntactic characteristics is rather surprising. One question we must ask is whether each form is a separate pronoun or whether they are allomorphs of a single morpheme. For instance, Zribi-Hertz (1994: 469) proposes that colloquial French, which she calls *français avancé*, possesses only one neuter pronoun, *ça*, and that *c'* is its reduced version before vowels. The examples in (16), drawn from the Paradis corpus of Chicoutimi-Jonquière (Québec) French, illustrate this pattern.

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  4.   In Colloquial French, *ce* and *ça* can be considered as allomorphs of the same pronoun, with *ce* occurring before vowel-initial forms of *être* and *ça* before consonant-initial forms of *être* and all other verbs. In standard French, *ce* occurs with *être* and *ça* with other verbs.

(16) a. *On a campé pis ah! que **c'**était plaisant!*   (Lucie B.)
          'We camped and oh! it was fun!'[5]
      b. *Hey! dix-huit ans, **ç'**aurait été ben terrible!*   (Lucie B.)
          'Hey! Eighteen years, that would have been really terrible!'
      c. *peut-être que ça sera un petit cadre*   (Lucie B.)
          'maybe that will be a small frame'

In what follows, I will propose that the three forms introduced above, *ch',* *a*[6], and the null form, correspond to two different pronouns, *ch* and *a*, and that the null form is an allomorph of *a*. Furthermore, I will identify the linguistic factors that govern the selection of each form. First, however, I consider the origin of these three forms.

4. Origin of the neuter pronouns in Picard

The connection between French *ce* and Picard *ch'* is obvious, given the regular correspondence between French /s/ and Picard /ʃ/ shown in (17), making a common origin plausible.

(17)   French Picard Gloss
      a. [**s**iʁ]   [ʃir]   'wax'
      b. [ʃa**s**e]   [kaʃe]   'to hunt'

4.1 Comparison with Gallo-Romance languages that possess a neuter pronoun

The origin of *a* and Ø is less clear. Given the existence of neuter pronouns in many Gallo-Romance languages, one must consider the possibility that Picard *a* is cognate with those pronouns. For instance,

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5.   I thank Claude Paradis for giving me access to his corpus.
6.   Neuter *a* can be distinguished from feminine *a* based on the following criteria:

  1. In Vimeu Picard, the *a* form of the feminine singular clitic *al* occurs only before consonant-initial clitics. Before verbs and vowel-initial clitics, its form is *al*. E.g., *al pérle* 'she speaks', *al est* 'she is', *a m'l'o dit* 'she told me'. Neuter *a* never surfaces with an /l/. Thus, we can observe a contrast between the two clitics in (i) and (ii):

     (i) ***al*** *peut coér étnir sin ring*   (*Chl'autocar* 99)
          she can still hold her rank
          'She can still keep her place'
     (ii) ***a*** *peut sanner drole*   (*Chl'autocar* 87)
          it can seem.INF funny
          'It can seem funny'

  2. With feminine *a*, predicate adjectives agree in number and gender with their subject. With neuter *a*, predicate adjectives bear default masculine singular features. For example:

     (iii) *ém borse **a** n' est point bién grosse.*   (*Chl'autocar* 49)
           my.F wallet she NEG is not very big.F
           'My wallet is not very thick'
     (iv) *La djerre **a** n' est mie bieu*
           the.F war it NEG is not beautiful.M
           'War is not beautiful'

Clédat (1883: 346) documents the form *vou* in the Forez/Roannais area, and Vignon (1901: 2) reports the existence of a neuter subject pronoun that is distinct from the masculine subject pronoun in many regions. Likewise, in western France, neuter forms that are phonetically similar to Picard *a* are attested. For instance, Rohlfs (1970: 183) observes *oc/ac* in Gascon, and Doussinet (1971) and Rézeau (1976) document *o/ol* in Poitevin/Saintongeais. (18) illustrates the neuter pronoun in Saintongeais.

(18) a. ***o*** *fait   fret*   (Doussinet 1971: 117)
　　　 it make cold
　　　 'It is cold'
　　b. *Thieu,* ***ol*** *é   pu   fort   que de l'   ail*   (Doussinet 1971: 124)
　　　 that   it   is more strong than of   the.SG garlic
　　　 'That, that's too much'
　　c. *Qu'* ***o*** *repounit la   Quiémence*   (Doussinet 1971: 121)
　　　 that it answered the.FSG Clémence
　　　 'Answered Clémence'

　　　Even though a common origin to all these neuter pronouns is plausible, a few facts argue against it. For one thing, while Poitevin and Charentais possess both subject and object clitic forms of the neuter pronoun, as we can see in (19), Picard lacks a neuter object clitic. Indeed, in Picard, a neuter object must be expressed through a strong pronoun that can be separated from the verb by a preposition and a negative element, as shown in (20). Furthermore, the distribution of Picard *a* is much more restricted than that of the corresponding pronouns in Saintongeais and Poitevin. While the latter can be used in contexts in which standard and colloquial French use an expletive *il*, as illustrated in (18a), Picard patterns like French and resorts to expletive *il* in such examples, as shown in (21). Similarly, while Saintongeais uses the neuter pronoun in subject-verb inversion constructions, as shown in (18c), Picard uses gendered pronouns, as can be seen in (22).

(19) a. ***u*** *depɑ̃dɛt*   (Poitevin; Léonard 1995: 9)
　　　 it depended
　　　 It depended'
　　b. *vuz*   ***uz*** *ave   ɑ̃tɑ̃dy dir?*   (Poitevin; Léonard 1995: 13)
　　　 you.PL it   have.2PL heard say.INF
　　　 'Have you heard it?'

(20) a. *colle* ***o*** *à   t'   manche!*   (*Lettes* 19)
　　　 glue it   to your.SG sleeve
　　　 'stick this to your sleeve!'
　　b. *Misére, qui   n'   s'   attindouot   point à   **o***   (*Viu temps* 8)
　　　 Misère, who   NEG 3SG.self expected   not   to that
　　　 Misère, who didn't expect that'

(21) a. ***I*** *feut   qu' oz inséyonche   éd l' attraper.*   (*Chl'autocar* 17)
　　　 it is-necessary that we try.1PL.SUBJ of it catch.INF
　　　 'It is necessary that we try to catch it'

b. ***i*** *pleut   Adville…*   (*Chl'autocar* 21)
    it   rains   Abbeville
    'It's raining in Abbeville'

(22) *qu'* ***al*** *a   criè   inne pieute   voè*   (*Chl'autocar* 20)
    that she   has yelled a.ꜰ   small.ꜰ   voice
    'yelled a small voice'

4.2 Comparison between Picard and French

The differences between the neuter clitic *a* in Picard and its counterparts in other Gallo-Romance languages make it unlikely that they share a common origin. In this section, I provide additional evidence against this analysis by showing that the distribution of the Picard pronominal forms closely mirrors that of *ce/ça* in French, thus raising the possibility that these similarities can be attributed to a common origin.

First, neuter subject pronouns are realized as clitics, while object pronouns are strong pronouns that occur in postverbal position in both varieties.[7] In both colloquial French and Picard, the subject form can only occur in preverbal position, can be separated from the verb only by other clitics, and cannot be stressed (cf. Morin 1979 and Zribi-Hertz 1994), while object pronouns can be separated from the verb and even stressed. This parallel is illustrated in (23) with Picard sentences and their French counterparts.

(23) a. *La Tunisie,* ***ch'*** *est   l' poéyis d'chés   Arabes*   (*Lettes* 1)
       La Tunisie, ***c'*** *est   le   pays   des   Arabes*
       'Tunisia is the country of the Arabs'
   b. *Oui, oui, j' comprinds   bien   tout* ***o***   (*Lettes* 4)
       Oui oui, je   comprends   bien   tout ça
       'Yes, yes, I quite understand all that'
   c. *Éj   pinsouos à   tout* ***o***, *l'eute   jour*   (*Lettes* 39)
       Je   pensais   à   tout ça, *l'autre   jour*
       'I was thinking of that the other day'

Second, like French, and unlike Poitevin and Saintongeais, Picard uses the third person singular masculine subject clitic in constructions in which the subject is expletive, as we saw in (21).

While the Picard contrast between *a/Ø* and *ch'* that we will see below has no parallel in French, a comparison of the combined morphemes with French *ce/*ça reveals striking similarities. A complete comparison of these parallels and the identification of possible differences exceeds the scope of this paper. However, we will see that the complex factors that govern the choice between *il(s)/elle(s)* 'he/she/they' and *ce/ça* in French play a very similar role in Picard.

One crucial factor in pronoun choice in French involves subject type. While it would be inaccurate to say that clitic *ce/ça* can only refer to inanimate referents, it is a fact that the conditions that allow animate references are very restricted. In sentences in which the subject refers to an individual human

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7. Cf. Vinet 2001 for a discussion of Vaud French, a variety in which object ça is a preverbal clitic.

being, for instance, *ce/ça* is found with DP predicates but not with adjectival or verbal predicates, as illustrated in (24).[8] In addition, the use of *ce/ça* is possible when a generic interpretation is involved, as the contrast in (25) shows. Finally, while DP predicates are compatible with *ce/*ça, this is not the case with bare noun predicates, as can be seen in (26).

(24) a. *Pierre **c**'est mon meilleur ami*
      'Pierre is my best friend'
   b. **Pierre **c**'est intelligent*
      'Pierre is intelligent'
   c. **Pierre ça travaille très fort*
      'Pierre works very hard'

(25) a. *Un homme ça parle tout le temps*
      'A man talks all the time'
   b. **Un homme ça parlait à Marie hier*[9]
      'A man was talking to Marie yesterday'

(26) a. *Pierre **c**'est un des meilleurs vendeurs du magasin*
      'Pierre is one of the store's best salespersons'
   b. *Pierre (il) est vendeur chez Eaton*
      'Pierre is a salesperson at Eaton's'
   c. **Pierre **c**'est vendeur chez Eaton*

Similarly, use of clitic *ce/*ça in reference to other non-human animate or inanimate referents also depends on the interpretation of the subject and the sentence. As can be seen in (27), a generic reading allows the use of *ce/ça,* but not a specific reading.[10]

(27) a. *Un éléphant ça n'oublie jamais*
      'An elephant never forgets'
   b. **Un éléphant ça s'est blessé hier*
      'An elephant got hurt yesterday'

A full analysis of all uses of the subject neuter clitics in Picard remains to be conducted. However, a preliminary examination of the data reveals that their distribution closely mirrors that observed in French. For instance, while neuter pronouns can refer to specific human referents, they can only do so when the predicate is a DP. This is shown in (28), where we observe the use of *ch'* with the DP predicate *un wépe* and the use of *il* with adjectival and verbal predicates (*est connu, connouot*). Furthermore, Picard exhibits the same contrast between DP and bare noun predicates as French: while the former require neuter clitics, the latter require gender-marked pronouns, as seen in (29).

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  8.   Some varieties of Québec and Acadian French allow sentences like (24b, c) in restricted contexts.
  9.   Doubling of indefinite subjects is possible with *il* for many speakers (Zribi-Hertz 1994); e.g., *Un homme il parlait à Marie hier*. This makes it clear that what is ungrammatical in (25b) is the use of *ça*, not the doubling structure.
10.   The different uses/interpretations of *ce/ça* briefly reviewed here are not meant to be exhaustive. See Auger (1994) and Reed (1997) for more complete discussions.

(28) a. *L'   Docteur Lomieu, li, **il** est connu comme él   loup blanc*
       the.M doctor Lomieu, him he is   known like   the.M wolf white
       et pi,   malgré sn   âge, i n'   vieillit poé du tout. Min camarade
       and then, despite his age he NEG ages   not at all   my   comrade
       *Gaston Vasseur   d'   Boégny, li, **ch'** est un wépe,   **i** connouot*
       Gaston Vasseur, from Buigny him it   is a   strange-one he knows
       tous chés   métieus   (*Lettes* 12)
       all   the.PL occupations
       'Docteur Lomieu, he is very famous, and, in spite of his age, he's not getting old at all.
       My friend Gaston Vasseur, from Buigny, he is a character, he knows all the occupations'

   b. **L'Docteur Lomieu, li, **ch'**est connu comme él loup blanc*
   c. **Gaston Vasseur, **a** connouot tous chés métieus d'par ichi*

(29) a. *Blandine al est vindeuse   din ène boutique éd cœuchures*   (*Blandine*)
       Blandine she is saleswoman in a.F shop   of shoes
       'Blandine is a sales assistant in a shoe shop'

   b. **Blandine **ch'**est vindeuse din* ène *boutique*

    As in French, no such restriction exists concerning the category of the predicate if the subject receives a generic interpretation. As we can see in (30), when *des piots* is interpreted as referring to children in general, neuter subject clitics can combine with nominal (*dz'étrangeus, édz horzins*), verbal (*surprind*), and even partitive predicates (*du souci, du plaisi*).

(30)   *Pasqué des   piots   **a** n'   est pétète janmoais dz'*
       because of-the.PL small-ones it NEG is   maybe never   of-the.PL
       *étrangeus, mais **ch'** est toujours quand meume édz   horzins,*
       foreigners but it is   always   anyway   of-the.PL strangers
       ***a** vo   surprind tous les   jours; **ch'** est du   souci,*
       it you.PL surprises all   the.PL days it   is   of-the.MSG worry
       *mais **ch'** est du   plaisi   tou.*[11]   (*Clonneries*)
       but it is of-the.MSG pleasure too
       'Because children may never be foreigners, but they are still strangers,
       they surprise you every day; they're a source of worry, but of pleasure, too.'

    Another way in which French and Picard neuter pronouns behave similarly involves the lack of agreement observed between predicates and their subjects: in both languages, verbal and adjectival predicates bear default masculine singular features. As we have seen in (14) and (15), plural subjects combine with singular verbs. Similarly, (11b) shows that with a neuter subject clitic, adjectival predicates referring to feminine subjects fail to agree with their subjects.

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11.   The corresponding French sentence with neuter subject pronouns is perfectly grammatical: *Parce que des enfants **cel ça** n'est peut-être jamais des étrangers mais **c'**est quand même toujours des inconnus, **ça** vous surprend tous les jours; **c'**est du souci, mais **c'**est du plaisir aussi.*

The coexistence of neuter pronouns and their masculine and feminine counterparts allows both languages to use one or the other in order to convey semantic differences. In (31), the author discusses how Picard cartoons that have been published are original and appreciated by their readers and uses the plural pronoun *i*. This sentence discusses specific cartoons. On the other hand, (32), which contains the neuter pronoun *ch'*, is a generic statement about the fact that cartoons in general are never taken seriously.[12]

(31) *cmint qu' chés   bindes à déssins in picard **i**   sont   drues,*
      How   that the.PL comic stips   in Picard they are   numerous
      rédeuses et pi bién atcheuillèes pèr chés   liseus.   (*Astérix*)
      original and   well welcomed   by   the.PL readers
      'how Picard comic strips are numerous, original and appreciated by the readers'

(32) *Des   bindes à déssins **ch**' est janmoais gramint sérieux*[13]   (*Astérix*)
      Of-the.PL comic strips   it   is   never   very   serious
      'Comic strips are never really taken seriously'

4.3 Phonological and dialectal evidence in favor of the French connection

The syntactic and semantic factors discussed above support the hypothesis that French *ce/ça* and Picard *ch'/a/Ø* share a common origin. Phonological evidence in support of this hypothesis is provided by neighboring varieties of Picard, historical evidence for an intermediate form, and vowel epenthesis, a phenomenon that is observed within consonant sequences.

If the connection between *ce* and *ch'* poses no particular challenge, given the correspondence between French /s/ and Picard /ʃ/ seen in (17), the phonological connection between *a/Ø* and French *ça/ce* is less straightforward. In this case, the missing link is provided by Ledieu (1909: 60–61), who documents an aspirated pronunciation for the neuter pronoun in Démuin Picard (Amiénois): "Au commencement d'une phrase, *che*, placé devant *est*, se remplace par une forte aspiration; on dit, en effet: *Est vrai, est embétant*, pour *ch'est vrai, ch'est embétant*; mais, en articulant *est* les paysans font entendre une forte aspiration comme si l'on devait écrire: *H'est vrai* ».[14] Historical evidence that such aspiration took place in the Picard spoken in the Ponthieu/Vimeu region is found in a text dating from 1834 and in which the strong form of the neuter pronoun is spelled *ho*.

(33) *après **ho** j' ai   intré   par   ane porte*   (*Pièce*)
      after that I   have entered through a.F door
      'After that, I entered through a door'

Even though no /h/ is heard in contemporary Vimeu Picard, two factors suggest that *o* is an *h-aspiré* word. First, no liaison is possible in an expression like *tout o* 'all that', contrary to what we

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12. These interpretations have been provided by the author of the sentences, Jean-Luc Vigneux.
13. The alternation between gendered and neuter clitics carries the same interpretation in French:
    (i) à *quel point les bandes dessinées en picard elles sont nombreuses, originales et bien accueillies par le public*
    (ii) *Des bandes dessinées, ce/ça n'est jamais vraiment sérieux*
14. 'At the beginning of a sentence, *che*, placed before *est*, is replaced by a strong aspiration; but, when articulating *est*, peasants produce a strong aspiration as if we should write *H'est vrai* 'It is true'.

observe with other vowel-initial words. Second, epenthetic [e] often occurs before this pronoun. Auger (2000, 2001) shows that vowel epenthesis in *d* 'of/from' or at the end of a verb like *appéll't* 'call.3PL' is triggered by the need to syllabify sequences of three or more consonants that exceed the syllable structure of this language. Thus, the presence of epenthetic [e] in (34a), which is similar to that observed before *heut*, an *h-aspiré* word in (34b), suggests that *o* is an *h-aspiré* word. Similarly, the presence of an epenthetic [e] before *o* in (35a) is unexpected given the absence of epenthesis in (35c); however, if *o* behaves like an *h-aspiré* word, we understand better why it behaves like *ch Gogneu* 'the one-eyed guy', in (35b). Finally, variation between *cha* and *a,* as seen in (36), shows that both forms exist in local varieties of Picard, thus making the hypothesis that *cho/cha* may have evolved into *o/a* and that *ch'* may have produced the null neuter clitic a plausible one.[15]

(34) a. *O   n'   intind pu   pérler   qu'   éd   **o** [ked.o]*   (*Ch'Dur4* 528)
        one   NEG hear   anymore speak.INF COMP of   that
        'that's all we hear about anymore'
     b. *douze   chints   métes   éd   **heut** [me.ted.ø]*   (*Ach Gott*)
        twelve hundred meters   of   high
        'twelve hundred meters high'

(35) a. *Chés   giyets ganes,   qu'   il   appél'té   o.* [i.za.pel.te.o]   (*Ch'dur*, 2018/11/18)
         the.PL vests   yellow.PL that they call.3PL   it
     b. *I   m'   appéll't «**éch** Gogneu»*[16] [i.ma.pél.teʃ.go.ɲø]   (*Rinchétte* 116)
        they me   call   "the one-eyed"
        'They call me "the one-eyed guy"'
     c. *ch'   qu'   il   appéll't **un** « tablier »* [ʃ.ki.la.pél.tɑ̃.ta.bli.e]   (*Rinchétte* 176)
        that that they call   an "apron"
        'What they call an apron'

(36) a. *Mettons […]   qu'   **cha** fuche   in   pinchèr*   (*Réderies* 16)
        let's.put […] that it   be.SUBJ a.M   nightingale
        'Let's say […] that it is a nightingale'
     b. *Est   bien   trop piot   pour qu'   **a** fuche   in-ne   cornaille*   (*Réderies* 15)
        is   much   too   small for   that it   be.SUBJ a.F   crow'
        'It's much too small to be a crow'

On the basis of the semantic and syntactic parallels observed between French *ce*/ça and Picard *ch/a*/Ø, the differences in the distribution of Picard neuter pronouns and their equivalents in other Gallo-Romance languages, and the existence of a plausible phonological explanation that connects *a*/Ø to French ça/*ce,* I conclude that the hypothesis of a common origin for *a* and ça, as well as *ch'*/Ø and *ce,* is the more plausible account of the origin of Picard's neuter pronouns.

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15. Brian José points out that if *a*, the null neuter subject clitic *a*, and the strong pronoun *o* all both result from aspiration and deletion, we must wonder why the strong pronoun is the only one that variably behaves like an *h-aspiré* word. I must leave this question for further research, but I suspect that prosodic structure and stress patterns play an important role.

16. *Éch Gogneu* is a nickname in this example.

5. How many neuter pronouns in Picard?

Even though three different forms of the neuter pronoun are observed in Vimeu Picard, we can wonder whether these truly correspond to different pronouns or whether some or all of them may be allomorphs of the same pronoun. We have already seen that Zribi-Hertz (1994: 469) proposes that *français avancé* possesses only one neuter pronoun, *ça*, and that *c'* is the reduced version of this pronoun before vowel. In this section, we will see that the three neuter pronouns share many characteristics, but that they also differ from each other in important ways. Specifically, I will show that whereas *a* and the null form must be analyzed as allomorphs of the same clitic, *ch'* is a separate pronoun that occurs in a complementary set of syntactic constructions.

5.1 Similarities

As we saw in section 3, a characteristic of all three neuter pronouns is that, unlike their masculine and feminine counterparts, they impose default masculine singular features on the verbal and adjectival predicates with which they combine. This is illustrated in (37), where singular *ch'est* and *a soupe* combine with plural subjects and where a feminine subject cooccurs with a masculine predicate adjective.

(37) a. *Tous chés   candidats **ch**' est des   wépes*   (*Lettes* 110)
      all   the.PL candidates it   is of-the.PL out-of-the-ordinary-people
      'All the candidates are interesting people'

    b. *Pi   des   vius, **a** soupe   éd boéne heure*   (*Chl'autocar* 38)
      and of-the.PL old.PL it eat-dinner of good   hour
      'And elderly people eat dinner early'

    c. *Eine ruque __ est gris*   (Lionel D., 1996/06/13)
      a.F   hive   is gray.M
      'A hive is gray'

In addition to imposing default masculine singular agreement, all three pronouns share the same strong pronoun, *o*, as can be seen in (38):

(38) a. *Tout o   **ch**' est à   nous*   (*Lettes* 4)
      all   that it   is   to us
      'All that belongs to us'

    b. *tout o   **a**   n'   est point facile!*   (*Lettes* 735)
      all   that it NEG is   not   easy
      'all that is not easy'

    c. *tout o   __ est fin   bieu.*   (*Lettes* 747)
      all   that   is very beautiful
      'all that is very beautiful'

Another important characteristic shared by all three pronouns is the fact that they encode similar semantic interpretations that differ from those expressed by masculine and feminine pronouns. For example, in (39), the presence of a neuter pronoun imposes a generic interpretation. Furthermore, while the use of neuter pronouns in reference to human referents is typically restricted to nominal

predicates, as we saw in (28), all three pronouns are possible if the sentence is interpreted as a generic, as shown in (30) for *ch* and *a*.

(39) a. *Ene éstring,* __*ch'*__ *est éne sorte éd tchulotte pour chés   fémes*   (*Ch'dur2*)
       a.F   G-string   it   is   a.F   sort   of   panty   for   the.PL   women
       'A G-string is a sort of panties for women'
    b. __ *Est fin pratique, des   portabes*   (*Ch'dur2*)
       is   very   practical,   of-the.PL   laptop-computers
       'Laptop computers are very practical'
    c. ***A** n'   pousse mie conme o,   dz'   usines.*   (*Ch'dur2*)
       it   NEG   grow   not   like   that,   of-the.PL   factories
       'Factories don't grow just like that'

5.2 Differences

Beyond these similarities, data collected in written texts and oral interviews reveal a complementary distribution between the three pronouns that is conditioned by both syntactic and phonological constraints.

First, while *a* and Ø occur in the same syntactic constructions, *ch'* is excluded from those contexts. Specifically, *a* and Ø occur before adjectival, verbal, and adverbial predicates, as can be seen in (40)-(42). For its part, *ch'* is required with nominal, prepositional, quantified, and clausal predicates, as well as in cleft constructions, as illustrated in (43).

(40) a. __ *Étoait tchér*   (*Réderies* 151)
       was   expensive
       'It was expensive'
    b. ***A** n'   est point tchèr!*   (*Réderies* 64)
       it   NEG   is   not   expensive
       'It's not expensive!'
    c. __ *est bièn pu   boin à mingeu*   (*Crimbillie* 19)
       is   much   more   good   to   eat.INF
       'it's much better food'
    d. *t'   as   sintu qu' **a** srouot   boin*   (*Crimbillie* 21)
       you   have   felt   that   it   be.FUT-IMP   good
       'you have sensed that it would be good'

(41) a. __ *Alloait sans   doute trop vite pour élle*   (*Chl'autocar* 51)
       went   without   doubt   too   fast   for   her
       'It was probably going too fast for her'
    b. ***A** iro   d' pire in pire*   (*Lette* 29/1/39)
       it   go.FUT   of   worse   in   worse
       'It will get worse'
    c. *Comme __   arrivouot coére à msure*   (*Viu temps* 17)
       as   arrive.IMP   still   to   measure
       'As it still happened on occasion'

    d. *Mais **a** m' arrive*   (Lionel D., 1996/06/13)
       but   it me happen
       'But it happens to me'

(42) a. __ *Est bien,* __ *est fin bien*   (*Lettes* 532)
          is   good   is   really good
       'It's good, it's really good'
    b. ***A** sra fin bien conme eu*   (*Rinchétte* 43)
       it   be.FUT really good like   that
       'It will be very good like that'

(43) a. *sin père **ch'** étouot un gros férmieu*   (*Viu temps* 25)
         her.M father it   was   a.M big.M farmer
       'her father was an important farmer'
    b. *pi cho't topète lo **ch'** est pour ti !*   (*Chl'autocar* 21)
       and the.F flask there it   is   for   you
       'and this flask it's for you'
    c. ***Ch'** est conme eu, pi point eutrémint*   (*Rinchétte* 152)
       it   is like   that and not   otherwise
       'That's the way it is, and not otherwise'
    d. ***Ch'** est rièn*   (*Rinchétte* 79)
       it   is   nothing
       'It is nothing'
    e. ***Ch'** est-i quo vos mouqueu d' mi?*   (*Gronnée* 6)
       it   is-INT that-you.PL you.PL mock   of me
       'Is it the case that you are making fun of me?'
    f. ***ch'** est à l' maison d' Ugène éq j' alloais*   (*Réderies* 136)
       it   is to the.SG house of Eugene that I go.IMP
       'it's Eugene's house that I was going to'

    The choice between the allomorphs *a* and Ø is governed by phonological considerations. As we can see in (40)-(42), *a* occurs before consonants and high vowels, the most consonant-like vowels, while the null allomorph occurs before mid and low vowels due to a prohibition against similar vowels in hiatus. This deletion/merger process also affects place names that start with a low vowel when they follow the preposition *à* 'at/to': the preposition, which is normally overt before a consonant-initial place name, see (44a), is deleted before [a] and [ɑ̃] (Dawson & Smirnova 2020: 23), cf. (44b).[17]

(44) a. *Pi s' valise al étoait à Boégny.*   (*Chl'autocar* 40)
       and his.SG suitcase she was   at   Buigny
       'And his suitcase was in Buigny.'

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17.   The parallel between *à* and *a* is only partial, however. Indeed, according to native speakers of Picard, *à* is overtly realized before mid vowels: à *Ercourt* [aerkur] and à *Hautebut* [aotby]. However, given that pronominal clitics and verbs constitute a prosodic domain distinct from prepositional phrases (Auger 2003a), it is reasonable to think that constraints against vowel hiatus affect more vowels in clitic groups than in larger prosodic domains.

b. *j' étoais djo   Anmièn*   (*Canteraine*)
   I   was   already Amiens
   'I was already in Amiens'

Table 1: Neuter *a/Ø* vs. *ch'* in Picard

a/Ø		*ch'*
+ adjectival predicate + verbal predicate + adverbial predicate		+ nominal predicate + prepositional predicate + quantifier (*rien, toute*) + clausal predicate in cleft constructions
a	*Ø*	
before consonants before high vowels	before mid vowels before low vowels	

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of the three neuter clitics. The choice between *a/Ø* and *ch'* is conditioned by the nature of the predicate with which it occurs. The distribution of *a*'s allomorphs is, for its part, conditioned by the following phonological segment.

This pattern raises two questions: why does Picard have two neuter pronouns, and why is their distribution governed by the type of predicate they combine with? As far as I know, this pattern is unique among Gallo-Romance varieties. Even though the Poitevin dialect spoken on the island of Noirmoutier also allows both *ol* and *che* as neuter pronouns, variation between the two pronouns is allowed in many syntactic constructions (Léonard 1995), which differs from the Picard pattern.

If the three neuter forms are connected with French *ce/ça*, the fact that Picard uses *ch'* and the null allomorph with vowel-initial forms of *éte*, and *a* before verbal predicates is unsurprising given that it parallels the distribution of *ce* and *ça* in many varieties of colloquial French (e.g., *c'était* 'it was' vs. *ça arrive* 'it happens'). Furthermore, the tendency to use *ça* rather than *ce* before consonant-initial forms of *être* in many varieties of French, including that spoken in the Vimeu area (Jean-Luc Vigneux, personal communication, 7/27/09), can explain the use of *a* before consonant-initial forms of *éte* 'be', as seen in (40) and (42). Thus, it is possible to attribute *a* and its null allomorph to a historical aspiration of /ʃ/ and its subsequent deletion and to connect the contrast between *a* and *ch/Ø* to that observed between *ça* and *ce* in colloquial French.

What this hypothesis cannot explain, however, is the coexistence of *ch* and the null allomorph. As we have seen, the two forms are not variants of the same variable. Rather, they occur in complementary distribution, and the type of predicate determines which neuter clitic is used. That is, contrary to what is observed in colloquial French where the choice between *ce* and *ça* is, for many speakers, determined by the phonological form of *être,* both Picard clitics can occur before a vowel, as shown in (46). Similarly, before consonant, the *a* allomorph contrasts with *ch*, as illustrated in (47) and (48).

(46) a. **Ch'** *est* *coére* *li*   (*Lettes* 3)
         it   is   again   him
         'It is him again'
     b. *Est* *bieu*   *pour* *li*   (*Lettes* 20)
         is   beautiful for   him
         'It's good for him'

(47) a. **ch** n'   est   mie   la   mer   à   boére   d'   éte   précepteur   (*Lettes* 157)
          it   NEG   is   not   the   sea   to   drink.INF   of   be.INF   tax-collector
          'Being a tax collector is no big deal'

    b. **a**   n'   est   point   djai.   (*Lettes* 15)
          it   NEG   is   not   gay
          'it is not joyous'

(48) a. **ché**[18] srouot   un   malheur   pour   la   France   (*Lettes* 802)
          it   be.FUT-IMP   a.M   misfortune   for   the.F   France
          'It would be a misfortune for France

    b. si   jamoais   **a**   srouot   vrai   (*Lettes* 382)
          if   ever   it   be.FUT-IMP   true
          'what if it were true'

6. Neuter pronouns and predication

Research by Heggie (1988), Carnie (1997), DeGraff (1998), Pereltsvaig (2001), Roy (2006), and many others has revealed striking regularities in the ways in which languages distinguish different types of predicates. Whether the difference involves different copulas as in Irish (49), Éwé (50), and Jamaican Creole, an alternation between an overt and a null copula as in Haitian Creole (51), African-American English, and many English-based creoles, or a choice between gendered and neuter subject clitics as in French (52), DP predicates often behave differently than other predicates. Whether this difference is due to different copulas or different constructions remains an unresolved issue (see Roy 2006: 13–16 for a summary). Future research into this newly-identified distinction in Picard, which in addition to a difference between gendered and neuter pronouns very similar to that observed in French, also involves two different neuter pronouns, will no doubt shed valuable light on this debate.

(49) a. *Tá*   Seán {cliste   / go maith / inDoire   / ag rith}   (Irish; DeGraff 1998: 120)
          be-PRES   John {clever   / well   / in Derry / running}
          'John is clever/well/in Derry/running'

    b. *Is*   é   Seán   an   dochtúir
          COMP   3SG   John   the.sg   doctor
          'John is the doctor'

(50) a. *É- lè   nyufe*   (Éwé; Westermann 1930: 91, cited in DeGraff 1998: 115)
          3SG-be   well
          'He is well'

    b. *É- lè   zo   me*
          3SG-be   house   in
          'He is in the house'

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18.   The [e] in this form is an epenthetic vowel.

    c. *Ló   é-nye   tomelã*
       crocodile 3sg-be aquatic-animal
       'The crocodile is an animal that lives in water'

(51) a. *Bouki (*se) malad*   (Haitian Creole; DeGraff 1992: 103)
       Bouki is   sick
       'Bouki is sick'
    b. *Bouki (??se) doctè*
       Bouki is   doctor
       'Bouki is a doctor'
    c. *Bouki *(se) yon doktè / doctè a / Lafontant*
       Bouki is   a   doctor / doctor the / Lafontant
       'Bouki is a doctor / the doctor / Lafontant'

(52) a. *Marie, **elle** est intelligente*   (French)
       Mary   she is   intelligent
       'As for Mary, she is intelligent'
    b. *Marie, **elle** est à Paris*
       Mary   she is in Paris
       'As for Mary, she is in Paris'
    c. *Marie, **c'** est mon amie*
       Mary it is my   friend
       'As for Mary, she is my friend'

7. Concluding remarks

Paris (1894: 166–167) and Kristol (1990: 493) both note that the opposition between masculine and neuter pronouns most likely disappeared very early in northern Gallo-Romance varieties. The fact that French and Picard both use masculine *il* as their expletive pronoun supports this idea. However, we have seen in this paper that Picard has not only reanalyzed the demonstrative pronoun as a neuter subject clitic like French has, but that it has also used different allomorphic forms of the neuter pronoun to create a new contrast between two neuter pronouns. The fact that this contrast does not parallel that observed between *ce* and *ça* in (colloquial) French but rather mirrors the distinction made by many languages between DP predicates and other types of predicates constitutes a morphosyntactic innovation that distinguishes the grammar of Picard from that of standard French, as well as any colloquial variety of French that I am familiar with.

    The neuter subject pronouns that appear to have developed in the Vimeu variety of Picard offer a unique window into a system in which two different pronouns share the same morphological features but differ in terms of the types of predicates with which they combine. While the pattern described here characterizes the written production of authors from the Vimeu region, oral data from the same speakers and both oral and written data from speakers from the neighboring Ponthieu and Amiénois regions reveal systems in which the distinction between different predicate types plays a less categorical role than in written Vimeu Picard. The system analyzed in this paper is restricted to a small geographical area. Given the uncertain future that Picard faces as a living language and the possibility

that contact with French and neighboring varieties of Picard might transform or eliminate the system described here, there is a real sense of urgency to investigate the neuter subject system in more detail and to determine what it tells us about Picard morphosyntactic structure, how these elements differ from and complement feminine and masculine subject pronouns, which semantic and pragmatic factors condition their use, and what the opposition between *a*/Ø and *ch* reveals about copular sentences in Picard in particular and in human language in general.

> *tours est ti pi ch'est point eutrémint*
> *ch'est conme o et pi a n'cange point*[19]
> (Canchon)

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19.   'So be it and it's not otherwise,
        that's the way it is and it doesn't change

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