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# **Être une/Faire partie de : not a piece of cake\***

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## Abstract

Most of the developments in the part-whole relationship in French are generally based on the predicate *être une partie de* ‘be a part of’ or on the auxiliary *avoir* ‘have’, and their comparison. We will look into a complex French predicate which, unlike the two previous ones, has not been the subject of a precise definition despite its numerous occurrences: *faire partie de*. As is the case of the two previous situations, this predicate establishes a relationship between a part and a whole, but with some interesting specificities. In order to describe them, we will focus on a comparison between two constructions: *NP0 faire partie de NP1* and *NP0 être une partie de NP1*. We will show the existence of a double constraint: the internal plurality of NP1 and the dependent character of NP0 in relation to NP1. We will show that it results in coercion effects as well as variations in profiling. These observations will allow us to turn to idiomatic expressions, such as [NP *faire partie des* {meubles/des murs/du paysage/du décor}] ‘NP is part of the furniture/the walls/ landscape/décor’ or [NP *être la partie* {visible/invisible} de l’iceberg.] ‘NP is the {visible/hidden} part of the iceberg’. We will show that these follow from the semantic properties of the two structures.

\* This article owes much to the editing of Michel Lecolle and Sophie Raineri. We thank them for their advice and comments.

## 1 Introduction

As a rule, the part-whole relation is defined by taking into account, at least to some extent, the expressions which allow it to be expressed. Consequently, depending on the form which various researchers focus upon, the part-whole relation finds itself more or less redefined. For example, Lyons (1977) bases his work on possessive constructions such as *John has a right arm* or *John's right arm*. Winston et al. (1987) focus their attention on the expression *part of* and its variants. Cruse (1986) bases meronymy on the two converse predicates: *be a part of* and *have* and a condition by which meronyms will satisfy both frames interpreted generically:

(1) a. *Une montre a un cadran.*

‘A watch has a dial’

b. *Un cadran est une partie d'une montre.*

a dial is a part of a watch

‘A dial is part of a watch’

In this article, we are going to consider the following two French expressions:

(2) a. *[NP0 être une partie de NP1]*

NP0 be a part of NP1

‘NP0 is part of NP1’

b. *[NP0 faire partie de NP1]*

NP0 do part of NP1

‘NP0 is part of / belongs to NP1’

Most of the existing research focuses on the expression *être une partie de*<sup>1</sup>. Yet, the difference between the two structures has never been examined directly, even if certain authors have

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<sup>1</sup> We must nevertheless note an exception: in his study of the part-whole relation in natural language, (Vieu, 1991) employs almost exclusively examples of *faire partie de*. The expression *être une partie de* is used exclusively to indicate a primitive relationship in the axiom of mereology.

noted its existence. A lot of examples, which take into account the member-collection relation identified by Winston et al. (1987), confirm the difference between the two constructions:

(3) a. *Un juré* {*\*est une partie / est un membre / fait partie*} *d'un jury*.

A juror {*\*is a part / is a member / do part*} of a jury

'A juror is part of a jury'

b. *Un arbre* {*\*est une partie / fait partie*} *d'une forêt*.

A tree {*\*is a part / do part*} of a forest

'A tree is part of a forest'

French is thus quite different from English in marking the member-collection relation with the same expression *being part of*:

(4) a. *A juror is part of a jury.*

b. *A tree is part of a forest.*

In the following sections, we are going to study the distributional constraints associated with these two constructions. We will show that they are of two kinds: the first criterion is the internal plurality of NP1 (Section 2.1), whereas the second is related to the dependent character of NP0 in relation to NP1 (Section 2.2). Once this double constraint is established, we will show that it results in coercion effects (Section 3.1) as well as variations in profiling (Section 3.2). These observations will allow us to turn to idiomatic expressions, such as [NP *faire partie des* {*meubles/des murs/du paysage/du décor*}] 'NP is part of the furniture/the walls/ landscape/décor' or [NP *être la partie* {*visible/invisible*} *de l'iceberg*.] 'NP is the {visible/hidden} part of the iceberg'. We will show that these follow from the semantic properties of the two structures (Section 3.3).

Our study is based on three corpora that belong to different genres. The first is the national newspaper *Le Monde* (henceforth, LM), which pertains to news discourse. The second comes from Frantext (Frtx), which is an anthology of a great number of classic works of French

literature as well as a fair number of technical works. The third is a collection of definitions from Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé (TLFi), and thus belongs to a meta-linguistic genre that is much different from the other two. With the help of Unitex<sup>2</sup> we have sought the patterns [NP0 être une partie de NP1] (2347 phrases, corpus E) and [NP0 faire partie de NP1] (23573 occurrences, corpus F), in the three corpora. The following table presents the number of occurrences according to the corpus and the construction:

**Table 1.** Frequency table

	TLFi	LM	Frtx	Tot.
[NP0 être une partie(s) de NP1]	1971	261	115	2347
[NP0 faire partie de NP1]	214	21101	2258	23573
Tot.	2185	21362	2373	25920

The occurrences of *être une partie de* in LM and Frtx prove to have a very low frequency (between 2,000 and 2,500 occurrences), when compared to the number of occurrences of *faire partie de* (more than 20,000 occurrences). But this proportion is reversed in the case of TLFi, where the construction [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] is more frequent. This inversion is easily explained. A great number of definitions in the dictionary are based on the construction *être une partie de* (with ellipsis of the copula):<sup>3</sup>

(5) a. *Collet* : *Partie d'un vêtement qui entoure le cou.*

‘Collar: part of an article of clothing which goes around the neck’

b. *Dossier* : *Partie d'un siège sur laquelle on appuie le dos.*

‘Back: part of a seat on which one rests his back’

<sup>2</sup> Unitex is a tool for searching a corpus by local grammar (Silberztein et al., 2001).

<sup>3</sup> We wish to thank one anonymous reviewer, who observes that the defining format/structure [X: part of] is indeed a subtype of the construction [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1]. Each examples from the TLFi has a predicative equivalent:

*Intestin*: *partie du tube digestif qui va de l'estomac à l'anus* ‘Intestine: part of the digestive tract that goes from the stomach to the anus’

→ *L'intestin est une partie du tube digestif qui va de l'estomac à l'anus*

\* → *L'intestin fait partie du tube digestif qui va de l'estomac à l'anus*

The reason is that *partie* is referential with *être* and not referential with *faire*. It should thus be noted that in a dictionary definition *Partie du tube digestif qui...* the relative clause defines *partie* in the same way as with *X est une partie du tube qui...* where the relative clause stands for *partie (du tube)*, but on the contrary, in *X fait partie du tube qui...* the relative clause defines *tube*.

c. *Intestin : Partie du tube digestif qui va de l'estomac à l'anus.*

‘Intestine: part of the digestive tract which goes from the stomach to the anus’

The inversion observed in the frequency of occurrences shows that the two constructions are distinguishable not only by meaning, but also by their discursive context.

## 2 A double constraint

### 2.1 NP1 and the question of plurality

#### 2.1.1 Plural NP1

From the point of view of the frequency of occurrences, the first difference between the two constructions may be related to the plural complement. Actually, plural complements are frequent after *faire partie de*, whereas they almost never occur after *être une partie de*:

(6) a. *L'agriculture fait partie des dossiers abordés aujourd'hui.*

the agriculture do part of+ART.PL subjects tackled today

‘Agriculture is one of the subjects tackled today’

b. *L'Argentine fait partie des pays les plus développés.*

the Argentina do part of+ART.PL countries ART.PL most developed

‘Argentina is one of the most developed countries’

c. *La musique fait partie des moments forts de notre vie.*

the music do part of+ART.PL moments strongs of our life

‘Music is one of the key moments of our life’

If *être une partie de* is substituted for *faire partie de* in the contexts above, then the utterances take on the meaning of a quantification, which is expressed more naturally if we change the predicate (by *représenter*, *occuper* or *constituer*):

(7) *L'agriculture {?est / représente / constitue} une (bonne) partie des dossiers abordés aujourd'hui.*

the agriculture {?is / represents / constitutes} a (good) part of+ART.PL subjects tackled today

‘Agriculture {represents / constitutes} a (good) part of the subjects being tackled today’

A systematic search of the three corpora mentioned above nevertheless allows us to observe a certain number of plural complements after *être une partie*, the following of which are taken from TLFi:

(8) a. *Canon : partie des membres du cheval.*

‘Cannon: part of a horse’

b. *Collier : partie des animaux de boucherie.*

‘Neck: part of butchered animals’

c. *Tige : partie des plantes vasculaires.*

‘Stem: part of vascular plants’

However these examples are very different from those in (6). Indeed, the part-whole relationship has a distributive interpretation between the NP0 and each plural element designated by NP1, which is the same as applying a relation to an individual, and not to a plurality. For example, in (8c) there is a part-whole relationship between the stem and each plant of the plurality designated by *plantes*<sup>4</sup>. Yet, this distributive reading is excluded from *faire partie de*:

(9) a. *\*Le canon fait partie des membres du cheval.*

b. *\*Le collier fait partie des animaux de boucherie.*

c. *\*La tige fait partie des plantes vasculaires.*

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<sup>4</sup> Kupferman (1991) makes a similar observation when he opposes the *le visage de ces gens ne me revient pas* (the face of these people is not coming to me) to the possible distribution in the context of a part-whole relation (*visage-gens* (face-people)) and *\*le chapeau de ces gens ne me revient pas* (\*the hat of those people is not coming to me) where the distribution is no longer permitted. It is then necessary to use the plural: *les chapeaux de ces gens ne me revient pas* (the hats of those people are not coming to me).

In fact, a French speaker systematically interprets these examples as collective. The relationship is established between NP0 and the group of entities designated by NP1, which makes it a relationship of member-collection. For example, the stem in example (9c) would be conceived as a member of the collective group of vascular plants, which is clearly false.

### 2.1.2 N1 is a collective noun

A second striking difference between the two constructions is an over-representation of collective nouns after *faire partie de*. This can be evidenced by drawing the list of the nouns which are distinctive collocates of *faire partie de*, that is to say nouns which are very frequent after *faire partie de* and which simultaneously never or almost never appear after *être partie de*:

**Table 2.** List of distinctive collocates of [NP0 faire partie de NP1]

All corpora included			
num	N1	freq	subfreq
1	groupe ‘group’	916	914
2	famille ‘family’	327	326
3	paysage ‘landscape’	306	305
4	génération ‘generation’	273	272
5	gouvernement ‘government’	207	207
6	délégation ‘delegation’	184	184
7	conseil ‘council’	162	162
8	cercle ‘circle’	157	157
9	série ‘serie’	137	137
10	patrimoine ‘patrimony’	208	206

Let us take *groupe* (line 1) as an example. Of the 916 occurrences of *groupe* (column *freq.*), 914 follow *faire partie de* (column *subfreq.*). This means that there are only two occurrences of *groupe* after *être une partie de* across the three corpora. This imbalance has the effect of moving *groupe* in first position among the nouns that are distinctive collocates of *faire partie de*. As we can see in the rest of the table, the constraint is obvious for animate collectives: *groupe*, *famille*, *génération* are all distinctive collocates of *faire partie de*. But this constraint



is also valid for inanimate collectives (*paysage, série, patrimoine*) as the following examples demonstrate (cf. also ex. (3b)):

(10)a. *Ces produits {\*sont une partie / font partie} de la liste publiée par le gouvernement.*

These products {\*are a part / do.3PL part} of the list published by the government.

‘These products are part of the list published by the government’

b. *Le manuscrit {\*est une partie / fait partie} du lot vendu hier à Londres.*

The manuscript {\*is a part / do part} of+ART.SG lot sold yesterday in London

‘The manuscript is part of lot sold yesterday’

c. *La chance {\*est une partie / fait partie} du vocabulaire de N.F.*

the luck {\*is a part / do part} of+ART.SG vocabulary of N.F.

‘Luck is part of the vocabulary of N.F.’

As was the case in examples (7), replacing *faire partie de* by *être une partie de* in these contexts gives rise to a quantitative reading.

If we take into account these observations as well as those found in the preceding sections, we notice that the construction [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] does not include animate or inanimate collective or plural complements. We can thus make the following generalization: [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] is impossible in the cases where NP1 designates a plurality, whether this plurality takes the form of a group (collective N) or the form of a set (plural N). In the same contexts where N1 designates a group or a set, however, the construction [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] systematically establishes a member-collective relationship between N0 and N1, and this is so even when the general meaning of the utterance is not intended in this way (cf. examples (9)).

### 2.1.3 N1 is a class

There is a third class of distinctive collocates associated with the construction [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] which confirms the constraint that we have just formulated and which also

takes it further away from the English expression *be part of*. Winston et al. (1987: 427) insists on the importance of distinguishing the relationship of inclusion in a category (*The Nile is a river*) from the part-whole relationship (*\*The Nile is part of a river*). Thus, as Riegel (1984) and then Vieu (1991) underline, the expression *faire partie de* expresses easily class inclusion:

(11)a. *Le Nil est un fleuve d'Afrique.*

the Nile is a river of Africa

‘The Nile is a river in Africa’

b. *Le Nil {\*est une partie / fait partie} des fleuves d'Afrique.*

the Nile {\*is a part / do part} of+ART.PL rivers of Africa

‘The Nile is part of rivers in Africa’

In French, these phrases are synonymous, and in this context *être une partie de* is impossible. Moreover, the possibility of expressing membership in a category is confirmed by another quantitative element, that is the fact that taxonomic nouns are distinctive collocates of *faire partie de*:

(12)a. *L'ASMP {\*est une partie / fait partie} de la catégorie des armes nucléaires intermédiaires.*

The mid-range nuclear missile {\*is a part / do part} of the category of+ART.PL arms nuclear.PL intermediary.PL

‘The mid-range nuclear missile is part of the category of intermediary nuclear arms’

b. *Cette plante {\*est une partie / fait partie} du type indica.*

This plant {\*is a part / do part} of+ART.SG species indica

‘This plant is part of the indica species’

The conceptual proximity between part-whole relationships and taxonomies, which a certain number of studies are attempting to update (Cruse, 1986, Joosten, 2010, Lyons, 1977,

Tversky, 1990), is a concrete reality in French and confirms our general hypothesis concerning the constraint applied to NP1. According to Winston et al. (1987), the difference between the relationship member-category and member-set depends on the nature of the principle determining the grouping of the members. This principle is extrinsic and circumstantial in the case of collectives, while taxonomic classes are based on an intrinsic (definitive) property shared by all the members. In both cases, the construction [NP1 faire partie de NP0] neutralizes this opposition. Consequently, the circumstantial or definitive nature of the grouping is not a discriminatory criterion for *faire partie de*. On the other hand, both relationships imply individuals' membership in a larger set. This value of common plurality to collectives and categories, but also to plural NP1 in Section 2.1.1, constitutes a discriminatory criterion that allows us to clearly differentiate *faire partie de* from *être une partie de*.

## **2.2 The dependent relationship between NP0 and NP1**

### **2.2.1 The homogeneity – heterogeneity opposition**

As we have just seen, the plural nature of NP1 plays a central role in the distribution of the two constructions. Yet, that has an indirect effect on NP0 in that it brings into play another criterion: the homogeneity-heterogeneity opposition. Actually, plurals (Section 2.1.1), collective nouns (2.1.2), and categories (2.1.3) all designate a plurality of similar individuals. Thus, they exhibit internal homogeneity. Let us specify that the homogeneity that we are dealing with here is not identical to the characteristic of homeomere which (Winston et al., 1987) use to establish their own classification. Homeomerity implies not only homogeneity among the parts, but also homogeneity of the parts to the whole. Yet, if that is indeed the case in the portion-mass relationship (slice-pie) or the place-area relationship (oasis-desert), it is not necessarily the case of NP plurals and collectives: as many others have already pointed out, a slice of cake is cake, but a juror is not a jury.

In these conditions, nothing keeps us from thinking that the opposition of homogeneity and heterogeneity also constitutes a criterion allowing us to oppose the two constructions. This new hypothesis would be formulated in the following way: NP1 exhibits an internal homogeneous structure in [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] and an internal heterogeneous structure in [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1]. This is the explanation that Kleiber (1997: 329) proposes for the second construction when he tries to account for the reluctance of certain countable nouns with an internal homogeneous structure, such as *mer, forêt, flaque, tache, mètre, moment, minute, heure, etc.* (sea, forest, puddle, spot, metre, moment, minute, hour, etc.), to appear after *être une partie de*:

(13)a. ?*L'eau salée est une partie d'une {mer / flaque}*.

?the water salt.ADJ is a part of a {sea / puddle}

b. ?*La couleur rouge est une partie de la tache.*

?The color red is a part of the spot

c. ?*Un centimètre est une partie d'un mètre.*

?A centimetre is a part of a metre

d. \**Le temps est une partie d'un {moment/instant/heure}*.

\*The time is a part of a {moment/instant/hour}

Nevertheless, such judgments are debatable. Factually, the corpora on which we are basing our study provide a few examples in which a homogeneous NP1 follows *être une partie de*. This type of configuration is frequently found in TLFi with concrete nouns:

(14)a. *Réserve : Partie d'une forêt qu'on laisse en futaie.*

'Reserve: part of a forest that is left to mature'

b. *Noyau : Partie lumineuse d'une tache du soleil.*

'Nucleus: bright part of a sun spot'

c. *Hypolimnion : Partie inférieure d'un lac.*

‘Hypolimnion: the lower part of a lake’

d. *Pic* : *Partie d'une courbe*.

‘Peak: part of a curve’

The part of a forest that is left to mature is still part of the forest. The bright part of a sun spot is still a spot. The bottom part of a lake is still part of the lake. Finally, the highest part of a curve is also a curve. In these examples the homeomere character is respected, and so is, a fortiori, the homogeneous character. This configuration is also frequent in nouns indicating measure or quantity, which is not surprising since the very function of units of measure is to partition homogeneous entities (Flaux et al., 2000: 19):

(15)a. *Tierce* : *Soixantième partie de la seconde*.

Tierce: sixtieth part of the second :

‘Tierce: one sixtieth of a second’

b. *Centimètre* : *Centième partie du mètre*.

Centimetre: hundredth part of+ART.SG metre

‘Centimetre: one hundredth of a metre’

c. *Le nanomètre est la millième partie du mètre*. (LM)

The nanometre is the thousandth part of+ART.SG metre

‘The nanometre is a thousandth of a metre’

d. *Le centimètre est la centième partie du mètre* (Frtx)

The centimetre is the hundredth part of+ART.SG metre

‘The centimetre is a hundredth of a metre’

All of these examples are meta-linguistic; they serve to define a word. But all the same, the expression itself, that is to say the use of a homogeneous noun preceded by *être une partie de*, is not problematic. On the other hand, the expression [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] shows restrictions with certain homogeneous nouns:

(16)a. \**Le {nanomètre / centimètre} fait partie du mètre.*

\*The {nanometre / centimetre} do part of+ART.SG metre

b. \**La {seconde / minute} fait partie de l'heure.*

\*The {second / minute} do part of the hour

This result is surprising. In so far as *faire partie de* privileges nouns having an internal homogenous structure (plurals, collectives, categories), one could expect that it would be the same for nouns of measure. Examples (16) clearly challenge the validity of the homogeneity-heterogeneity opposition. Finally, a last class of nouns allows us to rule definitively in favour of plurality over “geneity” of N1 (hetero- vs. homo-) (Langacker, 2008: 153). This class is that of mass collectives which refer to something heterogeneous such as *lingerie, argenterie, mobilier, matériel, faune, flore* (lingerie, silver, furniture, material, fauna, flora) denoting groups of dissimilar individuals (Wiederspiel, 1992). The corpora leave in fact very little doubt regarding the distributions: as N1, the heterogeneous collective mass nouns are distinctive collocates of *faire partie de* and do not appear after *être une partie de*:

**Table 3.** List of mass collective N1 in [NP0 faire partie de NP1]

All corpora included			
num	N1	freq	subfreq
1	mobilier ‘furniture’	9	9
2	matériel ‘material/gear’	6	6
3	faune ‘fauna’	6	6
4	mobilier urbain ‘street furniture’	5	5
5	mobilier funéraire ‘tombstones,etc.’	1	1
6	flore spontanée ‘natural flora’	1	1
7	armement ‘arms’	1	1
8	argenterie ‘silver’	1	1
9	ameublement ‘furnishing’	1	1
10	alimentation ‘food’	1	1

The following examples illustrate the first three lines of the table:

(17)a. *L'armoire-bibliothèque fait partie du mobilier scolaire obligatoire.*

the bookcase do part of+ART.SG furniture school required

‘A bookcase is part of required school furniture’

b. *Bière et vodka font partie du matériel de plage.*

Beer and vodka do+3PL part of+ART.SG gear of beach

‘Beer and vodka are part of beach gear’

c. *L'éponge de mer fait partie de la faune marine.*

the sponge of sea do part of the fauna marine

‘The sea sponge is part of marine fauna’

In these contexts, *être une partie de* is excluded or takes on a quantitative interpretation, as is the case for all N1 manifesting internal plurality.

To summarize, the construction [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] is thus likely to take homogeneous (plural, collective, class) or heterogeneous (mass collectives) N1. It is the same for the alternative expression [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] which accepts N1 designating heterogeneous entities (cf. the watch in example (1)) or homogeneous (nouns of measure) ones. Consequently, the homogeneous or heterogeneous character of N1 does not factor in and does not constitute a discriminatory criterion.

### 2.2.2 The contingent – necessity opposition

At this stage in our reasoning, the problem of units of measure raised by examples (16) remains unexplained. One way to resolve this problem would consist in using the  $\pm$ separable characteristic established by Winston et al. (1987). In fact, in most of the examples that we have studied up to this point the expression [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] puts an element (N0) in a relationship which proves separable from the plurality expressed by N1. The member-collection relation is a good example of this. Inversely, nouns of measure or of quantity such as *centimètre* ‘centimetre’ or *fraction* ‘fraction’ seem difficult to separate from the entity

designated by N1 (*mètre* ‘metre’ and *ensemble* ‘group’). Based on this statement, we could thus form a new hypothesis according to which in the construction [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1], N0 is separable from N1, which is not the case in [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1]. However in the terms defined by Winston et al. (1987), the characteristic of being separable does not allow us to explain the distributions that we have observed. Remember that this characteristic opposes two taxonomic groups: on the one hand there are relationships of component-integral object, member-collection, and portion-mass which are separable, and on the other hand, relationships of stuff-object, feature-activity and place-area which are inseparable. Nonetheless, *faire partie de* freely expresses relationships where NP0 is inseparable in the sense of Winston et al. (1987):

(18)a. *La traversée du Rio Grande fait partie du voyage* (feature-activity).

the crossing of+ART.SG Rio Grande do part of+ART.SG trip

‘The crossing of the Rio Grande is part of the trip.’

b. *Le mont saint-michel fait partie de la Normandie* (place-area).

the Mont saint-Michel do part of the Normandy

‘The Mont St-Michel is part of Normandy’

Similarly, *être une partie de* has no problem accepting entities conceived as separable by these authors:

(19)a. *Un cadran est une partie d’une montre* (component-integral object).

a dial is a part of a watch

‘A dial is part of a watch.’

b. *Une tranche est une partie d’un gâteau* (portion-mass).

a slice is a part of a cake

‘A slice is part of a cake’



Moreover, we believe that the function of the  $\pm$  separable trait is debatable. As Vieu (1991: 165–166) underlines, it is the only characteristic which allows us to distinguish the component-integral object relation and the feature-activity relation. Its true function, therefore, is to distinguish spatial entities (integral objects) from temporal entities (activities). Arguably, the characteristic of being separable does not seem to constitute the most relevant criterion for that distinction.

To explain such distributions, we could turn to a distinction that Lyons (1977: 314) established between what he calls contingent meronymies (door-house) and necessary meronymies (minute-hour). As the author underlines, “There are numerous lexemes in the vocabularies of languages whose meaning cannot be specified independently of some part-whole relation of sense. [...] It is in principle impossible to explain the meaning of ‘second’, ‘minute’ and ‘hour’ without specifying the part-whole relations holding within the set”. The fact is that these examples cited by Lyons are in fact those which do not enter into the construction [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] (ex. (16)). The type of necessity on which Lyons bases his argument is that of a convention, specifically, the definition of the word. This point of view is thus consistent with the tradition of logical empiricism, by which “a statement is analytic if it is true by virtue of meanings and independent of fact” (Quine, 1951). In general, philosophical tradition considers at least two classes of utterances as analytical: (i) tautology: “A is A”, which is true by virtue of its structure, no matter what interpretation we give to A; and (ii) a proposition of the type: “No bachelors are married” which is true by virtue of the meaning of *bachelor*. Lyons’ examples thus fall into the second category: *la minute est la soixantième partie d’une heure* ‘a minute is one 60th of an hour’ is an analytic utterance by virtue of the meanings of *minute* and of *heure* (hour). Furthermore, Cruse (1986) also insists on the importance of verifying the analytical value of meronymies according to the generic criterion. Actually, as Tamba-Mecz (1994: 67) underlines, “le trait relatif *être une partie de* ne

peut être donné comme appartenant par définition à une unité lexicale qu'en passant par une proposition analytique qui requiert donc un sujet générique et un prédicat nécessairement valide" [the relative character *être une partie de* cannot be given by definition as a member of a lexical group except by using an analytic proposition which therefore requires a generic subject and a necessarily valid predicate]. In the same spirit, Kleiber (1981, 1999, 2001) establishes a more general distinction than that of Lyons between two substantive categories by using a traditional grammatical distinction: categorematic substantives and syncategorematic substantives. Categorematic substantives are characterised by their referential autonomy: their occurrence does not imply the occurrence of another entity. For example, a refrigerator can exist without necessitating the presence of another entity, for example, a kitchen. Syncategorematic substantives, however, are characterized by their ontological dependency. This is the case, for example, for *anse* 'handle' which denotes an entity requiring some sort of support (a cup) (Kleiber, 2001: 283).

We can see, even if it is formulated differently by various authors, that the type of necessity that establishes itself between N0 and N1 is based on an a priori relationship. In the context of this article, we will use a relatively general terminology, merely keeping the opposition "dependent-autonomous". Without seeking to define in greater detail this opposition for the time being, the construction [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] remains somewhat resistant toward dependent N0s. That is, in any event, what the following examples involving units of measure show (as did those in examples (16)):

(20)a. *Une semaine {est une partie / \*fait partie} d'un mois.*

a week {is a part / \*do part} of a month

'week is part of a month'

b. *Une heure* {*\*fait partie / est la douzième partie*} *d'un jour*.

an hour {*\*do part / is the twelfth part*} of a day

'hour is a twelfth of a day'

But this is also the case of quantifying NPs:

(21)a. *La moitié de mon orange* {*\*fait partie / est une partie*} *de mon orange*. (Vieu, 1991: 169)

the half of my orange {*\*do part / is a part*} of my orange

'Half of my orange is part of my orange'

b. *Une fraction* {*\*fait partie / est une partie*} *d'un ensemble*.

a fraction {*\*do part / is a part*} of a whole

'A fraction is part of a whole'

Nouns of internal localisation also seem to be resistant, although it does not show as clearly<sup>5</sup>:

(22) *Le coin de la table* {*\*fait partie / est une partie*} *de la table*. (Lecolle, 1998)

the corner of the table {*\*do part / is a part*} of the table

'The corner of the table is part of the table'

This series of examples shows that dependent nouns do not enter naturally into [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] whereas [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] is not problematic. There is undoubtedly a mutual relationship between this parameter and that of plurality, which we highlighted in Section 2.1. Actually, it appears as if the degree of autonomy of (N0) depends on the individual or plural nature of each (N1). A part is thus all the more autonomous if it belongs to a plurality, and inversely, it is all the more dependent if it belongs to a composite whole. Regardless, the construction [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] seems to reflect conventional, preconstructed, and analytical relationships, especially when it is used in a

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<sup>5</sup> Vieu (1991: 165), on the other hand, accepts the following expression: *le haut de l'armoire fait partie de l'armoire* 'the top of the cupboard is part of the cupboard'.

generic reading. Still, we shall see in the following section that an a priori necessary part-whole relation is not the best way to recognize the specific relationship which is established between N0 and N1 in [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1].

### **3 Coercion, profiling, idiomatic phrases**

#### **3.1 Coercion phenomena**

Firstly, let us recall the double criteria which allow us to oppose the two expressions: (i) the plural or non-plural nature of N1, knowing that this plurality can take various forms (morphological plurals, group, class); (ii) the dependent or non-dependent nature of N0 in relation to N1, a dependency which is based firstly on an a priori necessary (conventional) relationship. In fact, this double constraint is shown by the strong tendencies that the preceding sections allowed us to measure in terms of frequencies and collocates. For example, regardless of the corpus studied, a large proportion of the occurrences of *faire partie de* establish a relationship between a group (N1) and one of its members (N0). Among the meronymic relationships, the member-collection relation is in fact one of those which best correspond to the requirements of [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1], that is, the autonomy of N0 and plurality of N1. Inversely, most occurrences of *être une partie de* imply a non-autonomous relationship between (N0) and a composite individual (N1). This construction thus frequently expresses the component-integral object relationship which best satisfies its constraints. But it is important to note that other relationships, which Winston et al. (1987) do not treat, are likely to be expressed by one of the two constructions. Thus, the metrological relation will be expressed by [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] due to the dependent character of N0 (ex. (15)), while [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] is preferred to express the member-class relation due to the plurality associated with N1 (ex. (11)). Consequently, the constraints that we are putting forward are more general than the taxonomy proposed by Winston et al. (1987) and their fields of application go beyond relationships which are habitually considered part-whole.

In the context of Construction Grammar, a construction is considered an autonomous entity which imposes certain constraints on its constitutive parts. This occurs by effects of coercion on the elements that are part of the construction. The case which we are considering here is no exception to the rule. To show this, we are going to study a first type of polysemic noun which designates both a concrete composite entity and a collective aspect (Croft et al., 2004), that is, nouns indicating places such as *maison*, *église*, *bibliothèque* ‘house, church, library’, etc. When they are the complement in [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1], they take on primarily the meaning of a whole and become synonyms for *bâtiment* ‘building’:

(23)a. *Le cloître est une partie d'une maison religieuse séparée par une clôture du reste du bâtiment et qui est interdite aux laïcs.*

‘The cloister is a part of a house of religion separated by a wall from the rest of the building and which is forbidden to laymen’

b. *La nef est une partie d'une église comprise entre le portail et le transept.*

‘The nave is a part of a church between the portal and the transept’

Conversely, in [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] N1 has primarily a collective value:

(24)a. *La suite est un groupe de personnes qui suivent un haut personnage, qui constituent son escorte et qui font partie de sa maison.*

‘The retenue is a group of people who accompany an important person, who escort him and are part of his house’

b. *Pierre fait partie de l'église anglicane.*

‘Peter is part of the Anglican church’

The two constructions thus activate the aspect of N1 which answers best to their respective constraints. The case of *corps* ‘body’ exhibits the same sort of variation in meaning depending on which construction it is found in. Most occurrences of *être une partie du corps* ‘to be a part of the body’ correspond to a human body, whereas occurrences of *faire partie du corps* ‘do

part of the body' usually indicate a group: one speaks of *un corps expéditionnaire* 'an expeditionary group', *un corps franc* 'an irregular force', *un corps diplomatique* 'the Foreign Service', *un corps enseignant* 'the teaching staff or profession', etc. The same observation can be made about *composition* 'composition', the polysemy of which allows similar effects. In [NP0 être une partie de NP1], *composition* designates a whole. In the studied corpus, the occurrences were all related to music. In (25a), *solo* has a dependent nature: every solo implies a musical composition. Conversely, in the construction [NP0 faire partie de NP1], the internal plurality of NP1 and the referential autonomy of NP0 is highlighted. In (25b), *composition* takes on a collective meaning and designates a combination of several distinct (autonomous) elements:

(25)a. *Le solo est une partie d'une composition musicale vocale ou instrumentale.*

'A solo is a part of a vocal or instrumental musical composition'

b. *Cette substance {fait partie / \*est une partie} de la composition du médicament.*

'This substance is part of the composition of the medication'

We find a similar mechanism when we consider a collective such as *armée* 'army'. Once again, the choice of one of the two constructions determines which of the two aspects is activated:

(26)a. *L'avant-garde est une partie de l'armée.*

'The vanguard is a part of the army'

b. *Pierre fait partie de l'armée.*

'Pierre is part of the army'

In example (26a), the army is conceptualized as a totality made up of heterogeneous parts: the vanguard, the rearguard, the front, etc. In this particular case, we are looking at a subset-set relationship in which the subset indicated by N0 is not autonomous from N1. In fact, most dictionaries define the vanguard as part of the army. By contrast, in (26b), *armée* 'army'

designates a group made up of individuals (soldiers) and thus easily integrates the construction *faire partie de*. In this case, we are dealing with a member-collection relationship: N1 (*armée*) is a plurality and N0 (*Pierre*) is autonomous.

We can find many examples of this type. We will limit ourselves in this non-exhaustive inventory to the noun *espace* ‘space; area’. In the expression *NP0 être une partie de l’espace*, NP0 designates a dependent content and *espace* retains its infinite and continuous size, devoid of any internal plurality:

(27) *Un endroit est une partie déterminée de l’espace.*

‘A place is a specific part of space’

However, when *espace* follows *faire partie de*, then it frequently takes on a collective meaning. In our corpus, it could be an economic area, the Schengen area, a linguistic area, a cultural or historical area, etc. In these contexts, N0 thus designates an autonomous entity (for example, a country), which can occur independently of the area in question:

(28)a. *La Norvège fait partie de l’espace de Schengen.*

‘Norway is part of the Schengen area’

b. *Le Zaïre fait partie de l’espace linguistique francophone.*

‘Zaire is part of the French-speaking countries’

Coercion can also go so far as to serve for more elaborate processes, such as metaphors. For example, the noun *humanité* ‘humankind’ is a collective. But consider this example from a text by Musset, *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle*:

(29) *La femme est la partie nerveuse de l’humanité, et l’homme la partie musculaire.*

‘Woman is the sensitive part of humankind, and man the muscular part’

In this context, humankind is not considered a collective, but rather a composite group (a body). *Humanité* can thus be integrated into the construction to the extent that the individual

limitations of *être une partie de* are respected: non-autonomy of N0 and insertion into an individual totality, in this case a metaphorical equivalent to the human body.

### 3.2 Profiling variation

Even if coercion phenomena are numerous, they do not exhaust all the possible configurations. We may observe another type of change in meaning which is not based on the polysemy of the units but on the difference of profiling. As an illustration, let us consider the case of the relationship which exists between a chapter and a book, which Winston et al. (1987: 421) classify as a component-integral object relationship:

(30)a. *Le chapitre est une partie du livre.*

b. *Le chapitre fait partie du livre.*

‘The chapter is a part of the book’

The double constraint applies here in the same manner as it does in the case of coercion, but without causing changes in facets as we observed in the preceding section. In (30a), chapter is conceived of as being devoid of autonomy and the book is considered a whole. In contrast, in (30b), the chapter is characterized by its autonomy. In the latter case, we have the feeling that this chapter is self-sufficient and was added to the work, which is more of a collection. In this context, the chapter is no longer a definitive element of the book, but a contingent addition. In cognitive grammatical terms (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008), one would say that the two sentences have a common conceptual base, but that the choice of one construction rather than the other profiles this base in a specific fashion.

The study of our corpus also led us to examine another type of relationship that is very frequent although altogether different. It is the relationship between a discipline and a sub-discipline which occurs more frequently with [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] in the sub-corpus of TLFi. The dictionary, in fact, treats this relationship exclusively with *être une partie de* and generally indicates the existence of a qualitative discrimination by means of a relative clause



(ex. 31a). All the same, nothing seems to prevent the use of the alternative construction *faire partie de* (ex. 31b).

(31)a. *Neurologie : Partie de la médecine qui traite des maladies du système nerveux.*

‘Neurology: part of the medical field which treats illnesses of the nervous system’

b. *La neurologie fait partie de la médecine.*

‘Neurology is part of the medical’

Following our reasoning, we can say that the choice of the constructions profiles the sub-discipline as independent (31b) or dependent (31a) depending on whether the discipline is considered as a whole (31a) or a plurality (31b). Consequently, the dependent or independent nature of the sub-discipline in relation to the discipline is not linked to an objective factor. It is relative to the choice, privileged by the TLFi, of one construction rather than another. This way of looking at the problem, which poses the relative nature of dependency or independency of sub-disciplines towards disciplines, is preferable to a taxonomic account such as that of Winston et al. (1987) in that it avoids asking embarrassing and unanswerable questions, for instance about whether the sub-discipline is fundamentally separable from the discipline.

Many other examples could be evoked here to illustrate this swing effect brought about by the two structures and the manner in which nouns have to adapt to this effect. Such flexibility in usage finally led us to believe that relationships in themselves do not prevent a speaker from conceptualizing by means of one or the other of the two structures.

To show this, let us first consider the case of the construction [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1]. It is likely to be applied to numerous situations. Take the following examples:

(32)a. *{L’amour / Internet} fait partie de la vie.*

‘{Love / The Internet} is part of life’

b. *L'ours fait partie de la montagne.*

‘Bears are part of the mountains’<sup>6</sup>

c. *Les engueulades font partie de la recherche scientifique.*

‘Disputes are part of scientific research’

We see here that the structure *faire partie de* allows one to highlight the autonomy of an N0 and the internal plurality of an N1 in very different contexts, even though N0 and N1 generally entertain a relationship of inclusion. Even the most dependent entities, such as units of measure, can integrate this structure, providing certain adjustments. Take the following example:

(33) *Une heure fait partie de cent millions d'années, parce que cent millions d'années ne sont autre chose qu'une heure répétée un certain nombre de fois.*

‘An hour is part of 100 million years, because one hundred million years are nothing but an hour repeated a certain number of times’

In this context, *faire partie de* profiles *heure* as an independent, autonomous content, in relation to a plurality (marked by the level of the inflection: *cent millions d'années*). More generally, it still seems possible to conceive of a composite entity under the aspect of a plurality of autonomous entities. For example, *un bâtiment* ‘a building’ or *un meuble* ‘a piece of furniture’ could be considered a group of rooms or of heterogeneous parts without this being contrary to intuition. This is what occurs in the following examples, which we take from Riegel (1984: 4):

(34)a. *La cave fait partie de la maison.*

‘The cellar is part of the house’

b. *Le pied fait partie de la table.*

‘The leg is part of the table’

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<sup>6</sup> In the context of the reintroduction of the bear in the Pyrenees.

Finally, the only limit to this type of application of the structure *faire partie de* is the relationship of attribution:

(35)a. \**L'inquiétude fait partie de la population.*

\*Worry do part of the population

b. \**Le rouge fait partie de la voiture.*

\*The red do part of the car

c. \**La beauté fait partie de Monroe.*

\*The beauty do part of Monroe

d. \**La calvitie fait partie de Peter.*

\*the baldness do part of Peter

The alternative structure [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] works along the same lines, albeit with a few more restrictions. For example, how to reconfigure the member-collection relationship, which always establishes relations between autonomous members (N0) and an internal plurality (N1), into a relation between a dependent part and an individual whole, is not obvious. But it is not altogether impossible:

(36) *Quand nous prenons le train pour le front, le 23 aout, la période d'épreuve est terminée. Murollo me traite exactement comme les autres. Le canonier Desperrin est la millionième partie de l'armée française.*

‘When we take the train to the front, on 23 August, the hardship time is over. Murollo treats me exactly like the others. The gunner Desperrin is the millionth part of the French army’

Between the soldier Desperrin, an independent and autonomous entity, on the one hand, and the French army, a collective noun that denotes an internal plurality on the other, it is only possible to establish a member-collection relation. Still, the example shows that it is always possible to profile this relationship in the terms unique to the structure [NP0 *être une partie de*

NP1]. In this context, the soldier Desperrin thus loses some autonomy and the army becomes more of a composite.

### 3.3 Idiomatic phrases

In Construction Grammar, idiomatic phrases are to be understood as a specific case of semantic properties which work within a given structure. In the case which we are considering here, these properties are the following:

(i) The structure [NP0 *être une partie* (Adj) *de* NP1] establishes a relation between a dependent N0 and an N1 designating a composite whole. Moreover, it is likely to mark a qualitative difference from N0 by means of an adjectival modifier. The metrological relation, which fulfils these requirements, thus fits perfectly into this structure (ex. (15)).

(ii) The structure [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] establishes a relation between an autonomous N0 and an obviously plural N1. This plurality can be indicated by inflection (plural NP1) or not (internal plurality of collective nouns or categorical nouns). The member-collection relation in this case applies perfectly to these constraints and, therefore, is frequently used in this construction.

These properties are schematic: they demonstrate a high level of abstraction. The idiomatic expressions associated with the two structures must be understood as specific instances of general properties. Let us demonstrate it first with [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1]. A quantitative analysis of the corpus shows a very high frequency of the particular use of this model, such as:

(37) [NP0 *être* {*une / la*} *partie* {*cachée / immergée / visible / émerge*} *de l'iceberg*].

‘NP0 is {a / the} {hidden, submerged, visible, emerged} part of the iceberg’

We should specify that this form does not have a single occurrence in TLFi, with the exception of its inclusion under the entry *iceberg*, and that it appears only in LM and Frtx. In

this particular model, the adjectival modifier is simultaneously obligatory and limiting: it must take the form of a postnominal adjective and belong to a certain class of antonymic adjectives, such as *caché-visible* ‘hidden, visible’ or *émergé-immérgé* ‘emerged-submerged’. N1 is exemplified by the noun *iceberg*. The properties associated with N1 are respected: iceberg does not present any internal plurality and refers to a whole. Additionally, it has an internal homogeneity which makes it similar to the units of measure examined previously and specific to *être une partie de*. Consequently – and as in the case of nouns designating units of measure – the iceberg does not have intrinsic parts, unless it is designated qualitatively, which can be done by adding adjectival modifier. The only position characterized by a high degree of schematisation is NP0, which may designate virtually all kind of entities. The hundreds of occurrences of this model in our corpus tend to demonstrate that all semantic categories are likely to occupy the position of NP0, They range from proper nouns (38a) to nouns expressing events (38d) as well as quantifying NP (38b), and simple objects (38c), etc.

(38)a. *Madoff est la partie émergée de l’iceberg.*

‘Madoff is the tip of the iceberg’

b. *Les deux millions d’euros ne sont que la partie visible de l’iceberg.*

‘The two million euros are just the tip of the iceberg’

c. *La burqua est la partie émergée de l’iceberg.*

‘The burka is the emerged part of the iceberg’

d. *L’intervention du président est la partie visible de l’iceberg.*

‘The presidential intervention is only the tip of the iceberg’

It seems that no particular constraint may be applied to the subject argument of the construction. But in these cases, the coercion on NP0 is considerable. In (38a), Madoff does not designate an autonomous individual, but rather a dependent part of a financial affair. The same could be said about the other examples. In these contexts, NP0 is a process, an object, or

a quantity conceived of as dependent of a whole, in this case the metaphorical equivalent of an iceberg.

The global meaning of the structure is to relate the visibility of NP0 to its relevant smallness (in relation to the metaphorical equivalent of the iceberg). In the cases (much rarer) where the adjectives employed are *invisible* ‘hidden’ or *immerge* ‘submerged’, NP0 is generally conceived as a part having a central function in NP1. Due to space constraints, we will not concern ourselves with the distribution of these adjectives. We will only mention that this particular use of the structure [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] respects all the properties highlighted in the preceding sections.

Let us now turn to the competing structure [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1]. There exists a particular instantiation of this model which proves to be also very frequent in LM and FrTx. As in the previous case, this expression does not occur in TLFi except in annotation:

(39)[NP0 *faire partie des* {*meubles* / *des murs* / *du décor* / *du paysage*}]

‘NP0 is part of the {furniture / walls / decor / landscape}’

In this new model, N1 is a series of nouns which are plural (*meubles*, *murs*), or have intrinsic internal plurality (*décor*, *paysage*). These examples thus respect the unique property of N1 when it follows *faire partie de*. But these nouns carry an additional specification: they designate inanimate elements of the environment or a place in which N0 is found. The conjunction of these two parameters (plurality and surrounding environment) reduces the paradigm of possible candidates to about ten nouns: *meubles*, *murs*, *décor* and *paysage*, already cited, but also *maison* ‘house’, *atmosphère* ‘atmosphere’ or idiomatic expressions such as *l’air du temps* ‘the wind’.

(40)a. *La religion fait partie de l’air du temps.*

‘Religion is currently in the wind’

b. *La religion fait partie de l’atmosphère.*

‘Religion is part of the atmosphere’

c. *Cela fait 25 ans qu’il vient régulièrement ici. Il fait partie de la maison, maintenant.*

‘He’s been coming here regularly for 25 years. He is part of the family now’

In the last examples, one might think that even if the noun *maison* indeed designates an environment, it does not manifest the internal intrinsic plurality that we observe in *paysage* or *décor*. But in this case, *maison* does not designate the building, but the group of things and people included in this building (cf. ex. 24a–b). However, nouns which refer to the environment without having an internal plurality cannot be integrated into the structure. Such is the case of a mass noun such as *air*. Although it designates the environment in which humans evolve, it cannot enter into this structure due to its internal homogeneity and its absence of internal plurality.

As in the previous case, NP0 does not impose any particular constraint on these objects. As we see in the following examples, NP0 can designate particular individuals (41a), various objects (41b), nouns expressing states (41c) or activities (41d), etc.:

(41)a. *Pierre fait partie des meubles.*

‘Pierre is part of the furniture’

b. *Le vélo fait partie du décor au Pays-Bas.*

‘Bicycles are part of the decor in Holland’

c. *Ici, la pagaille fait partie du paysage.*

‘Here, chaos is part of the landscape’

d. *Le jardinage fait partie de l’air du temps.*

‘Gardening is in the wind’

The global meaning of the expression mainly consists in highlighting the high degree of integration of NP0 in NP1, which may result in various practical effects according to the context. In (41a), for example, Pierre is seen as someone who is so familiar that he is no more

visible. In (41c), the expression leaves us thinking that one has become indifferent to the chaos. We will not enter into a detailed analysis of these effects. What is important, in fact, is to underline once again that this particular instance of the structure [NP0 *faire partie* NP1] also conforms to all the properties highlighted in the preceding sections.

#### **4 Conclusion: return to dependency and autonomy**

Most research considering the part-whole relationship has given less attention to the structure [NP0 *être une partie de* NP1] than to the a priori relationship that it is supposed to denote. In this context, the comparison with the variant [NP0 *faire partie de* NP1] is delicate: does this latter express the same a priori relation (but in this case, how do we explain the distributions observed?) or is it actually another relation (but in this case is it still a part-whole relation?)? We see that to suppose the existence of an a priori relation which subsumes these two expressions and which constitutes the true objective of linguistic description is likely to complicate things. Consequently, in this study, we have reversed the terms of the problem by concentrating on the distributional constraints manifested by the two structures, regardless of the abstract relation(s) that they express. We have thus considered the predicates *être une partie de* and *faire partie de* as two distinct structures having their own rules, and not as more or less comparable vehicles of one (and the same) a priori relation.

Focusing our attention on the structures thus allows us to suspend the question of the part-whole relation. But it also has the effect of suspending its a priori character. Let us take the example of the chapter-book relation treated in Section 3.2. Dictionaries define a chapter as a part of a book. By conventional necessity, we accept that the relation between chapter and book is a priori, and consequently that chapter has a dependent relationship with book. But as we saw, the relationship between chapter and book can be freely expressed by either structure. In (30a), the relation that is established is that between a dependent part (*chapitre*) and the individual totality to which it belongs (*livre*), whereas in (30b) the construction highlights the



internal plurality of book and the autonomy of chapter. Consequently, the dependent or autonomous character of the part proves to be relative to the choice of a construction and not the state of things or a pre-established convention. The example of soldier Desperrin (example (36)) further illustrates this point. As a man, Desperrin is autonomous and his belonging to the army is contingent. Nevertheless, this does not prevent Desperrin and the army from entering into the structure [N0 *être une partie de* N1]. In this context, can we still speak of a member-collection relation? It seems difficult in so far as the characteristics of this relation (autonomy of NP0 and plurality of NP1) are neutralized by the structure. In general, we have seen that there is not a single relation that cannot be profiled, by means of certain arrangements, by the terms of one or the other construction. In these conditions, what interest would we have in insisting upon the existence of an a priori, pre-established relation and use it as the point of departure of our analyses?

By concentrating on linguistic expressions and their constraints rather than on an abstract relation supposedly conveyed by these expressions, we are led to abandon the criteria meant to guarantee the a priori character of the expressed relation – as for example the generic criterion that most studies systematically maintain – and move to a criterion of an entirely different nature, that of the frequency of occurrence in the corpus. We see the benefits of such an approach with the example of the sub-discipline-discipline relation, which (Winston et al., 1987) classified as a component-integral object relation<sup>7</sup>. Recall that in their taxonomy, the component-integral object relation is separable. Yet, in reality, it seems impossible to determine in absolute terms whether phonology is separable or is not separable from linguistics. This question can only be definitively answered in context, by the choice of one construction or another. Suddenly, the question of the separability of phonology (or of its autonomy, according to our reasoning) from linguistics is easily solved: the sub-discipline is

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<sup>7</sup> Citing the following example: *Phonology is part of linguistics* (Winston et al., 1987: 422).

conceived of as dependent upon the discipline but only within a particular discourse type, that of the TLFi. On the other hand, it would be both false and pointless to make a generalisation based on this result as to what is the true unique nature of the sub-discipline-discipline relation in itself.

The two structures, as well as the idiomatic expressions which derive from them, are thus to be understood as grammatical resources allowing us to profile a conceptual content in a different ways. To consider them as the vehicles of a relation – the part-whole relation – on which the whole analysis relies, can only complicate the analysis.

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