SOUNDS – MEANING – COMMUNICATION 4

Anna Bloch-Rozmej / Anna Bondaruk (eds.)

Constraints on Structure and Derivation in Syntax, Phonology and Morphology

PETER LANG
EDITION

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The papers collected in this volume explore and discuss the major mechanisms, that is derivations and constraints, claimed to be responsible for various aspects of the linguistic systems, their syntax, phonology and morphology. The contributors approach these issues through a detailed analysis of selected phenomena of Modern English, Old English, Polish, Russian, Hungarian and Icelandic, offering novel theoretical and descriptive insights into the working of human language.

The Editors

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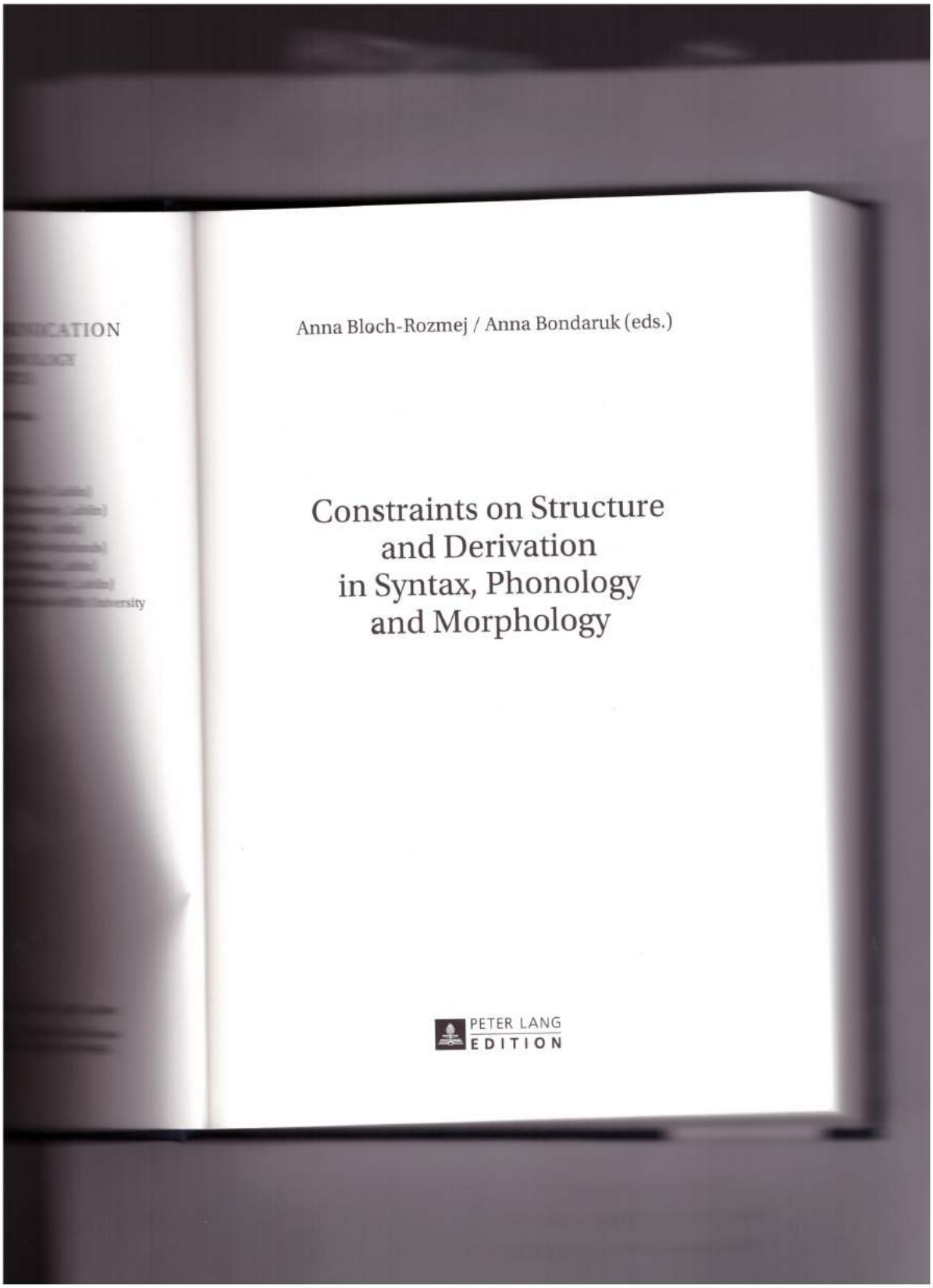

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Contents

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N morphology and its interpretation: The neuter in Italian and Albanian varieties

Abstract: The semantic literature and the theoretical syntax literature stress that the traditional opposition of singular and plural hides a tripartition between mass singulars, count singulars and count plurals, where mass singulars and count plurals form a natural class under certain semantic and syntactic tests. We show that morphological externalisation is sensitive to these deeper patterns, yielding both dedicated lexicalisations for mass singulars as opposed to count singulars (Central Italian dialects) – and common lexicalisations (syncretism) between mass singulars and count plurals (Italo-Albanian dialects). We consider the so-called neuter gender of Central Italian varieties, which has been observed to correlate with mass interpretation. Furthermore, we present data from Arbëresh varieties, where the so-called neuter is externalised by the same morphology as the plural, We take this to reflect not a morphological syncretism, but rather the existence of a common syntactico-semantic core between mass nouns and plurals; to be more precise, the mass vs. count contrast can be interpreted as the reflex of a more primitive property, which opposes non-individual, aggregate content to individual denotation. Thus, we support the idea that gender morphology on nouns is interpreted and is to be equated with a classifier, coding in particular the mass/count distinction.

Key words: nominal class, number, neuter, mass nouns, plural

1. Introduction

The semantic literature (see Lasersohn 2011 for a review) and the theoretical syntactic literature (Borer 2005) stress that the traditional opposition of singular and plural hides a tripartition between mass singulars, count singulars and count plurals, where mass singulars and count plurals form a natural class under certain semantic and syntactic tests. The present work is devoted to showing that morphological externalisation is sensitive to these deeper patterns, yielding both dedicated lexicalisations for mass singulars (as opposed to count singulars) – and common lexicalisations (so-called syncretisms) between mass singulars and count plurals.

Our discussion is placed within the framework of generative grammar, and specifically minimalist models. We assume that the units listed in the lexicon are morphemes, and that words are best defined as complex syntactic objects implying a structural organisation akin to that of phrases (Kihm 2005; Marantz 2007;

Déchaine et al. 2014; Kramer 2015 a. o.), in the spirit of Distributed Morphology (DM, Halle and Marantz 1993). In keeping with the proposals of Chomsky (1995; 2005), we assume that morphosyntactic structures are projected from lexical items, which we conceive in the classical way as pairings of Conceptual Intentional (C-I) and Sensory Motor (S-M) properties.

The morphosyntax of the Noun has been more extensively studied in the Romance languages than in the other language we consider, Albanian; the latter presents the added complexity of Case, to which we return in section 3. A description of nominal inflections in the Romance languages requires both a notion of inflectional class and a notion of gender. Nouns with different inflections, i.e. *-a* and *-o*, may belong to the same gender, for instance both the *-o* in (1b) and the *-a* in (2b) are masculine. And vice versa, nouns with the same inflectional ending may belong to different genders, for instance *-a* can be either feminine, as in (1a), or masculine, as in (2b). The examples in (3) show that the nominal inflection *-e* lacks a preferential gender association. In the examples (1)-(3), agreement is determined by gender (Corbett 1991).

(1)

a.	*l-a*	*cas-a*	*nuov-a*
	the	house	new
b.	*il*	*libr-o*	*vecchi-o*
	the	book	old

(2)

a.	*l-a*	*man-o*	*destr-a*
	the	hand	right
b.	*il*	*poet-a*	*famos-o*
	the	poet	famous

(3)

a.	*l-a*	*voc-e*	*alt-a*
	the	voice	loud
b.	*il*	*can-e*	*alt-o*
	the	dog	tall

Italian

It should be added that in Italian, which lacks a specialised plural ending *-s*, plurals are not fully predictable from singulars, complicating the picture further (D'Achille and Thornton 2003). Italian has a dedicated plural morphology *-i*, as in (4b), while other plurals correspond to a switch in inflectional class morphology, e.g. *-a* to *-e*, as in (4a).

(4)

a.	*l-e*	*cas-e*	*nuov-e*
	the	houses	new
b.	*i*	*libr-i*	*vecch-i*
	the	books	old

Italian

Uncontroversially, number has interpretive import. In particular, we follow Borer (2005) in conceiving the plural as endowed not with quantificational content, but rather with classifier content, roughly indicating count status. Furthermore, the literature agrees on the conclusion that count or mass status is not necessarily a property of the lexical base, but rather a property that derives from its syntactic construal. Thus, *formagg-* 'cheese' can be construed both as a mass term, e.g. *molto formaggio* 'a lot of cheese' or as a count term, as in *tre formaggi* 'three cheeses' (e.g. cheese types). The mass/count distinction can depend on the lexical content 'cheese', but also on the quantifiers associated with it or on morphological specifications such as plurality.

The question of whether gender has interpretive import, and what relation it has to the lexical base, is altogether more complex. Gender is obviously interpreted in instances of natural gender (Kramer 2015), like in *cugin-o* 'cousin-m' vs. *cugin-a* 'cousin-f'. Gender inflections are further able to introduce interpretations fixing other quantificational(-like) specifications, as noted by several authors (Crisma et al. 2011): "measure grade differences" as in pairs like *mel-a* 'apple.f' vs. *mel-o* 'apple.tree-m', or *buc-o* 'hole-m' vs. *buc-a* 'pothole-f' (bidimensional vs. tridimensional, according to Acquaviva 2008, 130).

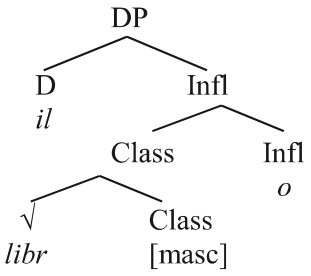
Not incidentally, this distribution highlights an interesting correspondence between systems of nominal inflection that are traditionally kept distinct, namely Romance (and Germanic) gender and number, nominal classes in Bantu languages and classifiers in Chinese (Kihm 2005; Ferrari-Bridgers 2008; Crisma et al. 2011; Déchaine et al. 2014). Kihm (2005, 486) compares Romance languages with the Bantu language Manjaku. He concludes that "the basic difference (…) appears thus to be at the same time limited and profound: limited because both language (UG) varieties share the category I term Class (…) profound because the lexical expressions of the said category are meaningful roots in Manjaku, but semantically empty functional items in Romance." However, Déchaine et al. (2014, 18) endorse the characterisation of gender morphology in Romance as endowed with semantic content, on a par with the nominal class morphology in Bantu, in the following terms: "French class partition is based on biological gender, distinguishing FEMININE and MASCULINE (…) class partition is subset formation, with each class/

subset defined by a particular semantic feature (…) And since the set of semantic features is not fixed, languages vary with respect to which features, and how many, they recruit for N-classes," leading to the much richer system of Bantu languages.

Thus, number and gender have (interpretive and morphosyntactic) properties that draw them close to one another and to other systems of nominal inflection, such as nominal classes of the Bantu type (called genders by Carstens 2008) and to classifiers. Let us assume that lexical roots are category-less predicates (Marantz 1997). The assumption that even non-eventive nouns are predicates and that they have an argument slot, called the R-role, is fairly standard in the generative literature (Higginbotham 1985; Williams 1994). Binding of the R-role by higher Q/D operators yields what is ordinarily known as a referring DP. The next step is to assume that the functional layer closest to the root corresponds to whatever classification system the language employs: gender and number in Romance, nominal class in Bantu, classifiers proper in Chinese.

Several authors assume that the Class layer of structure contributes the N categorisation to the expression. To be more precise, Kihm (2005, 462) argues that "the /-a/ morpheme of Spanish *gata* 'she-cat' (…) represents (…) the n° head taking the √gat root as its complement," hence construes *-a* as an exponent of the *n* functional category of Marantz (1997). Similarly for Ferrari-Bridgers (2008, 253), "with regard to feminine nouns (…) the feature [n] is morphologically realised as ‹a›." However, Manzini and Savoia (2005; 2007; 2011a), rejecting the Marantzian *n* nominaliser, propose that the N category is connected to the expression of the argument (the R-role) of the predicative base. In fairly theory neutral terms, in (5) we assume that the nominal character of *libro* 'book' depends on the presence of the both the Class content [masculine] and the Infl head *-o*.

(5)



Next, we need to ask how *libr-* is matched with the *-o* inflection and with the [masc] gender – and in general how lexical bases are matched to inflectional

classes and Class (e.g. gender).[1] Generative theories are of course powerful enough to stipulate the required information. For instance, in their account of Latin, Halle and Vaux (1998) assign class diacritics (I–V) to lexical bases (cf. recently Kramer 2015 on Spanish); the contexts of insertion for thematic vowels are simply defined in terms of such diacritics.

Another approach is suggested by Acquaviva (2009, 5), namely that "morphological and semantic information can be dependent on the choice of a root without being encoded on the root itself." His idea is that "root Vocabulary items are *licensed* in certain syntactic environments. To say 'a noun has gender X', for instance, means from this perspective that 'a root Vocabulary item is licensed in the context of [n] with gender X' (…) Licensing statements that apply to lists of roots, by themselves, are not more (nor less) arbitrary than explicit specifications on each root (…) The crucial difference from earlier approaches is that meaning arises in a construction, not in a root." Simplifying even further, Kayne (2010, 73–74) suggests that the relevant licensing mechanism is simply selection. In other words, the standard syntactic notion of selectional restriction is powerful enough to encode the fact that a certain Class content or a certain Infl is associated with a certain lexical base and not with others. This is not to say that the content of lexical bases, including inherent properties like (in)animacy, (non)countability, concrete vs. abstract status, sex, etc., should not be able to drive coupling with Class content (including the traditional classes masculine/feminine).

In the body of the article, we will consider the so-called neuter gender of Central Italian varieties, which has been observed to correlate with mass interpretation (cf. the traditional designation *neutro de materia*). Secondly, we shall present data from Italo-Albanian varieties, where the so-called neuter is externalised by the same morphology as the plural; we take this to reflect not morphological syncretism, but rather the existence of a common syntactico-semantic core between mass nouns and plurals. Our general aim is to bring into sharper focus some of the notions and structures that we have briefly introduced here, contributing to a fully explicit picture of the structure of Ns.

1 A further element of complexity is introduced by examples where gender/number content is not externalised on the Noun. Still staying with Italian examples, an important subset of nouns, like *città* 'town' (feminine), virtù '*virtue*' (feminine), *bambù* 'bamboo' (masculine), are bare roots, i.e. they lack an Infl exponent, though they are associated with the feminine or masculine class and also admit a singular and a plural interpretation.

2. The Central Italian neuter

In several Central Italian varieties (Rohlfs 1968 [1949], §419; Manzini and Savoia 2005, §5.1.2; Loporcaro and Paciaroni 2011), N morphology appears to encode the count/mass distinction; specifically mass denotation appears to be implied by what is traditionally called the neuter. In the variety of *Monte Giberto* (Marche), all three genders are distinguished both on Ds and on lexical categories (nouns, adjectives, participles); (6)–(9) illustrate the distribution of *-a*/*-u*/*-o* classes inside the DP. In (6b)–(8b), the unaccusative predicate 'come' agrees with the subject, in the masculine, feminine and neuter, displaying *-u*, *-a* or *-o* morphology respectively. (6c)–(8c) show the contrast between the masculine/feminine accusative clitics and the neuter clitic. The neuter *-o* is found as the invariable inflection on meteorological verbs and on unergative and transitive participles, in (9). Importantly, (8c) points to the fact that eventive/propositional denotation is also externalised by the neuter. Moreover, (8a") illustrates that the same interpretive content can be introduced independently of the inflectional class exponent *-o* on the Noun. Thus, the *-e* inflection combines with the mass/substance base *latt-* 'milk', still triggering the *-o* inflection on the determiners and adjectives.

(6)

a. *l-a* *vokk-a* *rapɛrt-a*
   the-f mouth-f open-f
   'the open mouth'

b. *ɛ* *vvinut-a*
   she.is come-f
   'She has come'

c. *l-a* *ɣatt-a* *a* *l-a* *veðo*
   the-f cat-f Cl her.f I.see
   'I see the (she-)cat'

(7)

a. *l-u* *nas-u* *ruʃʃ-u*
   the-m nose-m red-m
   'the red nose'

a'. *kwill-u* *ka* *ɛ* *bbell-u*
   that-m dog is nice-m
   'That dog is nice'

b. *ɛ* *vvinut-u* *un ɔm-u*
   has come-m a man-m
   'A man has come'

c. *l-u* *ka* *a* *l-u* *veðo*
the-m dog Cl him-m I.see
'I see the dog'

(8)
a. *l-o* *kaʃ-o*
the-n cheese-n
a'. *kwell-o/l-o* *vi(n-o)* *vɛcc-o/roʃʃ-o*
that-n/the-n wine-n old-n/red-n
'that/the old/red wine'
a''. *l-o* *latt-e* *jattʃ-o*
the-n milk-n cold-n
'the cold milk'
b. *ɛ* *kkaʃkat-o* *l-o* *pa*
has fallen-n the-n bread
'The bread has fallen'
c. *l-o* *sapete*
it-n you.know
'You know it'

(9)
a. *sɔ* *ddurmit-o*
I.am slept-n
'I have slept'
b. *sɔ* *rrapɛrt-o* *l-a* *pɔrt-a*
I.am opened-n the-f door-f
'I have opened the door'
c. *a* *pjɔt-o*
has rained-n
'It has rained'

Monte Giberto

The data in (10) illustrate the variety of *Mascioni* (Abruzzo), in which the *-o* inflection is limited to the determiners. In this variety, the mass noun *vin-u* 'wine' is associated with the *-u* inflection, as is the adjective modifying it in (10b). However, the determiners of the noun have a different inflection, namely *-o*, which is uniquely associated with the determiners of mass nouns. Similarly in (10c), the pronoun can only refer to a mass referent (not to an individual).

(10)

a.	*l-o/kweʃt-o/kwell-o*		*vin-u*
	the-n/that-n/this-n		wine
b.	*kwell-o*	*vin-u*	*vecc-u*
	that-n	wine-m	old-m
	'that old wine'		
c.	*l-o*	*viju*	
	it-n	I.see	
	'I see it'		

Mascioni

In traditional terms, in the language of *Monte Giberto* there are three genders, namely masculine, feminine and neuter. If we assume that the neuter corresponds to the Elsewhere gender, we predict that it will show up in environments where invariable inflections are selected in Romance varieties, such as in (9). Apart from this, it characterises mass nouns,[2] and eventive/propositional contents.

Within the theoretical literature, Kučerova and Moro (2011) address data present in *Mascioni* and illustrated in (10). According to them, "a mass noun is structurally an NP, and as such has no number projection," i.e. no DivP in the sense of Borer (2005). Furthermore, "since gender is dependent on number, mass nouns are necessarily genderless." In their words, "if a mass noun can be interpreted as <e,t> (…) the overt agreement is realised as the morphological default. In our case we obtain M.SG. on predicative adjectives. In contrast, if the structure requires type <e>, (…) an additional structure must be introduced. The marked morphological realisation we see in these cases – our "third" gender – is a direct reflex of the last-resort semantic process implemented as a structural adjustment." The authors acknowledge that there is an implementation problem concerning "structural adjustment;" in any event a realisational (Late Insertion) view of inflectional morphology is implied. Apart from this, Kučerova and Moro do not make clear what the relation between a language with *-o* only on determiners, which they consider, and other types of Romance varieties may be, including for instance *Monte Giberto*. In short, for Kučerova and Moro (2011), the *-o* ending is a mere morphophonological reflex of an interpretive operation, itself bearing no interpretive properties. In this they agree with more traditional approaches such

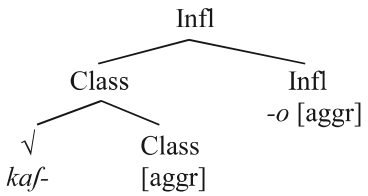
2 The literature quotes such minimal pairs as *ferr-u* 'iron (count)' (i.e. iron instrument) vs. *ferr-o* 'iron (mass)' (i.e. the material) in *Borgorose* (Lazio), cf. Kucerova and Moro (2011); or *pel-o* 'hair (mass)' vs. *pel-u* 'hair (count)' (i.e. a single strand of hair) in Asturian, cf. Hall (1968).

as Loporcaro and Paciaroni (2011), according to whom the *-o* corresponds to the neuter gender in the traditional sense of the term, deprived of any interpretive significance.

Pomino and Stark (2009) discuss standard Spanish, where only Ds have the special, neuter inflection.[3] In their terms, the traditional neuter corresponds to a non-individuated property, whereas feminine and masculine are subclasses of [+individuated]. However, as pointed out by Loporcaro and Paciaroni (2011), in dialects such as *Monte Giberto*, where *-o* and *-u* are differentiated on Ns, not all *-u* Ns are count nouns. This means that *-u* is not associated with an individuated characterisation (nor are feminine nouns, which include both mass and count).

In proposing a characterisation of the content associated with *-o*, it is useful to make reference to the concept of mass terms as aggregates of smaller non-atomic elements (Chierchia 2010; Wiese 2012). Thus, the lexical root 'cheese' in (8a) together with the *-o* inflectional morphology denotes an aggregate. The *-o* morphology is not compatible with an individual, atomic reading (or a fortiori a plural reading). This provides fairly solid grounds for associating the aggregate content with *-o* itself (Franco et al 2015b). Thus, the structure in (11a) does away with the traditional class neuter (to complement masculine, feminine) in favour of the class mass/aggregate. The elementary [aggregate] content applies to the denotation of 'cheese' in (11) meaning that it admits to be factored into smaller parts (under existential closure, there is some x such that x is a part of the whole 'cheese').

(11)

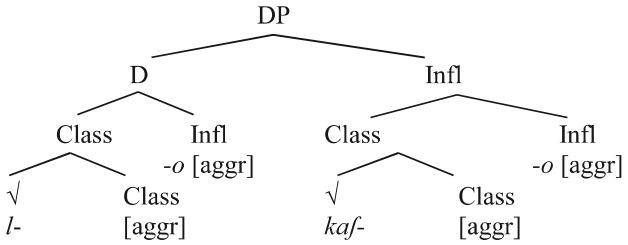


As we saw in (8), and as indicated in the structure in (12), the *-o* inflection turns up not just on lexical roots but also on Ds/Qs and on As. In other words, it represents a feature to which the syntactic rule of Agree is sensitive. Therefore, as

3 Other Romance varieties in which only a sub-set of D elements may encode the count-mass distinction include Portuguese, in which the distinction appears only in the paradigm of demonstratives (e.g. *isto/isso/aquilo* [mass-singular] vs. *êste/êsse/aquêle* [count-singular]) (Ledgeway 2012).

in traditional accounts, *Monte Giberto* appears to have three classes triggering agreement – except that they are masculine, feminine and mass, or [aggregate].

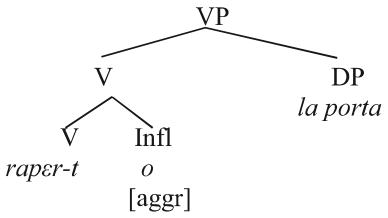
(12) cf. (8a)



Recall that in the absence of agreement with an internal argument, the perfect participle lexicalises an *-o* inflection, as in (9). If *-o* is a neuter inflection, one could invoke the traditional idea that neuter is the default gender – so that in the absence of agreement with the internal argument (for whatever reason) the default inflection surfaces. Independently of any other consideration, this account is rendered difficult, or impossible, by the fact that the so-called neuter inflection is now associated with a semantic content [aggregate]. This content is hardly a default. However, it is a natural candidate as a representation of the temporal continuum underlying an event, as "aggregate of components/atoms of imagineable continuums (substances/events)" (Chierchia 2010). This suggests to us that *-o* forms of the participle in (9) correspond to a lexicalisation of the event argument, which is assumed to be associated with a verb and existentially closed in neo-Davidsonian frameworks such as Higginbotham (1985). In other words, the structure of the participial form in (13) is essentially like that of the mass noun in (12).[4]

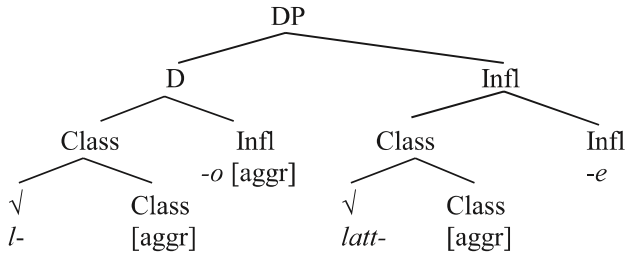
4 A different question involves formulating a theory of Agree that allows us to capture the distribution of agreement of the perfect participle with internal argument DPs in (6)–(8) vs. its agreement with the eventive argument in (9). Standard minimalist theory predicts that the perfect participle will always agree with the internal argument, on the assumption that *v* probes for it. This, however, is incorrect, since, as Kayne (1989) established, the perfect participle of French, Italian, etc. only agrees with those internal arguments that undergo movement/Agree across it (internal arguments of unaccusatives, clitics), i.e. that move to the edge of *v*P. In minimalist terms, the shape of the data suggests that elements moved to the edge of *v*P are closer to the probe on *v* than the eventive argument – so that Agree targets the latter only in the absence of an internal argument.

(13) cf. (9b)



Let us return to our core concerns, concerning the internal structure of Ns. As illustrated in (8c), an *-o* inflection on D can combine with an *-e* inflection on the noun, as in *l-o latt-e* 'the milk'. This configuration is of interest to the extent that *-e*, while fulfilling the required Infl slot, seems to be compatible with any class, including the traditional masculine and feminine. Ultimately, it will be the semantic content of the lexical base, 'milk' that drive coupling with the class [aggregate]. In (14), this, in turn, determines the presence of the *-o* inflection on functional heads like D that are morphologically compatible with it. Technically, the lexical properties of the root 'milk', rather than driving the presence of the [aggregate] specification on its own Infl, drives its presence on D, entering Agree with Infl.

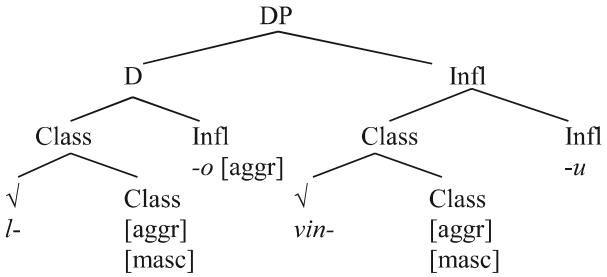
(14) cf. (8c)



This line of analysis has consequences for languages like *Mascioni* in (10), where the distribution of *-o* is restricted to D categories (definite and demonstrative Ds). As in *Monte Giberto*, *-o* carries the mass/aggregate property, since only mass nouns admit of the *-o* series of Ds or are picked up by *-o* pronouns. The issue is the agreement patterns that *-o* enters into, namely with *-u*/*-e* inflected Ns, as in the simple example in (10a), whose structure we provide in (15) below. We can say that (15) works along the same lines as (14), with the abstract property [aggregate] dictated by the lexical content 'wine' lexicalised only on the D element of the (D, Infl) Agree set. What is still missing from this account is that in *Mascioni* agreement with As and perfect participles seems to depend on another

class feature, namely [masculine]. In other words, the [aggregate] class feature is defined only for a subset of the [masculine] class, which we also indicated in (15); something similar is proposed for Neapolitan by Ledgeway (2009).

(15) cf. (10a)



In connection with (15), it may be interesting to consider whether there are properties of the [feminine] class that block [aggregate]. However, note that in Cantabrian varieties, *-o* predicative As can agree with both masculine and feminine mass nouns (Fernández-Ordóñez 2009), pointing to the strictly parametric nature of the constraints involved.

3. The Arbëresh neuter

Arbëresh dialects, i.e. Tosk Albanian varieties spoken in Southern Italy, preserve a neuter noun class associated with mass denotation, now absent in standard Albanian. In these languages, exemplified in (16)–(17), the neuter definite nominative/accusative singular inflection *-t* in (16b-c) and (17a-b), the demonstrative *ata/kta* 'that/this' in (16a) and (17c) and the pre-adjectival linker *tə* in (16b-c) and (17b-c) (Franco et al. 2015a), all coincide with definite plural forms.[5] This is shown by the comparison with plural nouns, where the inflection *-t* characterises the plural definite of the feminine and masculine genders alike, as in (16d), (17d). Examples (16e), (17e) display the combination of the plural form of the demonstrative with a plural noun in the indefinite form.

(16)

a. *ata* *diaθ*
that cheese
'that cheese'

5 In (16c), (17b), *-i-* is inserted between a root ending in coronal and a *-t* morpheme.

b. *diaθ-t* *əʃt* *tə* *barð*
cheese-Def is Lkr white
'The cheese is white'
c. *mil-i-t* *əʃt* *tə* *barð*
flour-Def is Lkr white
'The flour is white'
d. *burra-t* */gra:-t*
men-Def /women-Def
'the men/women'
e. *ata* *burra* */gra:*
those men /women
'those men/women'

Firmo (Calabria)

(17)
a. *miʃ-t*
meat-Def
'the meat'
b. *bar-i-t* *tə* *ʎart*
grass-Def Lkr tall
'the tall grass'
c. *kta* *miʃ* *ɔʃt* *tə* *rɛʃkt*
this meat is Lkr rotten
'This meat is rotten'
d. *burra-t* */gra:-t*
men-Def / women-Def
'the men/women'
e. *kta* *burra* */gra:*
these men /women
'these men/women'

Civita (Calabria)

In the oblique (genitive/dative) case, the inflection of the neuter, as in (18a), (19a) coincides with that of the masculine, exemplified in (18b) – and is again characterised by the *-t* ending. Neuter nouns further admit a special plural feminine inflection *-ər-a*, as in (18c), (19b), coercing (cf. Cowper and Currie Hall 2012) the interpretation 'types of' (or possibly 'pieces of'), essentially as the plural of mass nouns does in English. In (18c), and in (19b), the final *-t* is the plural definite ending, already seen in examples (16)–(17).

(18)

a. *sapur-i* *i* *diaθ-i-t*
taste-Def Lkr cheese-Def.Gen
'the taste of the cheese'

b. *burr-i-t*
man-Obl.Def
'to/of the man'

c. *diaθ-əra-t*
cheese-Suff-Def
'the cheeses (i.e. the types of cheese)'

Firmo

(19)

a. *pɪrpara* *miʃ-i-t*
before meat-Obl.Def
'in front of the meat'

b. *miʃ-əɾa-t*
meat-Suff-Def
'the meats (i.e. the types of meat)'

Civita

Thus, the *-t* definite ending externalises the plural of count Ns, the oblique masculine singular and also the so-called neuter with mass nouns. Furthermore, the *ata/kta* demonstratives and the linker in front of adjectives are also morphologically plural. As we mentioned at the outset, the similarities between count plurals and mass singulars have been highlighted by the semantic and syntactic literature. From the morphological point of view, the link between mass nouns and the plural inflection emerges in a number of typologically diverse languages. In Shona (Bantu, Déchaine et al. 2014), a set of mass nouns is characterised by the same *mì* class morphology which externalises the plural in a set of count nouns. In Dagaare (Niger-Congo, Grimm 2012), the same *-ri* morpheme is the exponent of the plural for individuated referents and of the singular for less or not individuated ones, including mass nouns. In Persian (Ghanabiadi 2012), the plural inflection *-hâ* can also combine with mass nouns (introducing a definite reading).

Going back to the Arbëresh data, Manzini and Savoia (2011b; 2012) provide an account for the syncretism between the *-t* plural inflection and the *-t* oblique masculine singular inflection. Their account uses the idea that the *-t* morphology in Albanian carries both a definiteness property and a property ($\subseteq$), ambiguous between number and oblique, as schematised in the lexical entry in (20).

(20) *-t*: (⊆), definite

Despite the traditional paradigmatic organisation of Noun inflection in Albanian according to definiteness, number/gender and case, the so-called direct cases may in fact be characterised by a pure phi-features inflection. This is consistent with the standard minimalist account of direct cases (Chomsky 2001) which assumes that they correspond to the checking of phi-features against the *v* and I projections of the verb. In other words, case reduces to Agree also in the sense that the externalisation of the direct case is carried entirely by phi-features (gender and number).

Consider then a direct case plural definite like (21a), where the specifications of number/plurality and of definiteness are carried by the *-t* according to the entry in (20). We assume that the *-t* contributes plurality to Nouns by virtue of its (⊆) content, as sketched in (21b) for the example in (21a) – namely by isolating a subset of the set (or set of sets) of all things that are 'man'. In other words, (⊆) says that subsets can be partitioned off from the set (the property) denoted by the lexical base.

(21)
a. burr-a-t
   'the men'
b. the x, x (⊆) {man}
   i.e. the x such that x is a subset of the set of things with the property 'man'

The account of the occurrences of the *-t* as an oblique (masculine singular) again makes use of the lexical entry in (20). The oblique occurs both in genitive contexts, i.e. as an adnominal modifier, for instance in (22a), and in dative contexts, for instance the second object of a ditransitive in (22b). The idea is that the (⊆) relation, when applied to phrasal constituents, yields the meaning of genitives and datives. To see the point, it is useful to refer to the traditional characterisation of the genitive relation as a possession relation (inherent, material, of a mental state or other). Following Kayne (1984), the second object of ditransitives can, in turn, be characterised as entertaining a possessor relation to the first object (the theme) and similarly for the other characteristic dative environments (e.g. experiencers as possessors of mental states).

(22)

a.	*libr-i*	*i*	*burri-t*
	book-def	Lkr	man-obl.def
	'the book of the man'		
b.	*j-a*	*ðɛ*	*burri-t*
	to.him-it	I.gave	man-obl.def
	'I gave it to the man'		

We take the relevant characterisation of possession to be an inclusion, hence (⊆) (cf. Belvin and den Dikken 1997 on the verb 'have'). Under this proposal, the interpretation of the genitive (22a) is as in (23a); roughly speaking, the possessum 'the book' is included by/part of the possessor 'man'. The interpretation of the dative in (22b) is as in (23b); in other words, I caused a possession relation to hold, whereby the possessum 'it' is again included by/part of the possessor 'man'. The oblique case is also selected by prepositions, in particular locative prepositions (or, better, AxialPart categories, in the sense of Svenonius 2006), as in (19a). Again, we may assume that an abstract (⊆) relation is involved, between a location and individual.

(23)

a. [*libr-i* [*i burri-*[$_{(\subseteq)}$*t*]]]
   i.e. 'the book' included by / possessed by 'the man'

b. *j a* ðɛ [*ɪ burri-*[$_{(\subseteq)}$*t*]]
   i.e. 'it' included by / possessed by 'the man'

In short, the (⊆) inflection is responsible for the oblique case (genitive/dative) when construed as a dyadic predicate, yielding a possession relation between the element to which it attaches and the internal argument of a verb (dative) or the head of a noun phrase (genitive) in (23). The different interpretations in (23) correspond simply to two different syntactic scopes of (⊆), i.e. to the two different contexts of attachment. The so-called dative reading depends on the VP-attachment of the (⊆) argument. In the genitive reading, the (⊆) argument is a complement of the head noun of the phrase.

More importantly, the distinction between the plural reading in (21) and the oblique reading in (23) need not depend on different lexical entries for *-t*, but can be imputed to the different elements that the (⊆) relation holds of – namely a root in (21), but phrasal DPs in (23).

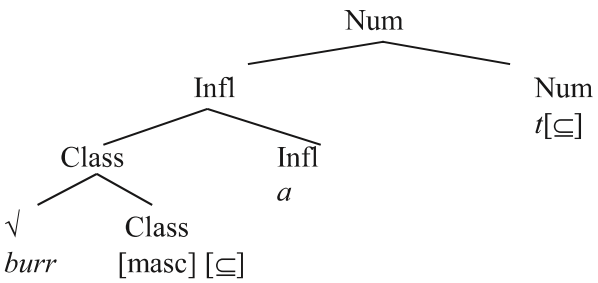
With this much background, we are ready to go back to the fact that the same *-t* morphology characterises the direct cases not only of the plural, as in (21), but also of the so-called neuters – which, as we have seen, have a mass denotation. A count singular is an atomic individual; a count plural is a set of atomic individuals, as in (21). Following Chierchia (2010), a mass singular, e.g. 'cheese', is in fact a plurality of sorts, a whole made up of parts, each of which is itself 'cheese'. The surfacing of the same *-t* morphology on mass singulars as on plurals suggests that the same (⊆) content is relevant as for plurals. In this instance, however, it is used as a mereological part-whole operator to assert the existence of non-atomic parts in the whole denoted by the predicative base, i.e. [⊆ aggregate]. To use more intuitive terms, a singular mass noun is like a plural count noun in that both include a multiplicity of some sort – namely a multiplicity of individuals in

(21), or a multiplicity of parts in (24) – a characterisation that we can also extend to Central Italian dialects in section 2.

(24)
a. *diaθ-t*
'the cheese'
b. $\exists$ x [x $\subseteq_{aggr}$ 'cheese']
i.e. there is an x such that x is a part of 'cheese'

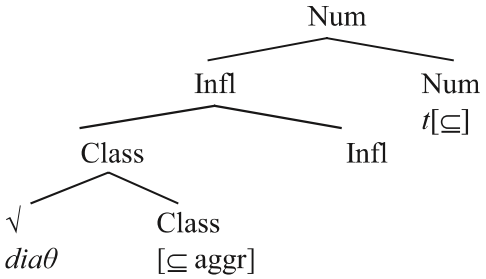
The analysis in (20)-(24) still leaves out a certain number of morphological details. The most important omission concerns the fact that between the noun's root and the *-t* ending (or other consonantal endings with descriptive case content), there generally appears a vocalic morpheme. Thus, count plurals are characterised by the vocalic inflection *-a*, which can be seen between the lexical root and the *-t* plural ending in example (21a). The same vowel *-a* lexicalises plurality in the indefinite declension, found in combination with demonstratives in (16e), (17e). We may assume that *-a* fills the Infl position, as in (25), where its lexicalisation is sensitive to the [⊆] class property – though we continue imputing the [⊆] content to *-t*, assuming that it is associated with a specialised Num projection.

(25) cf. (21a)



The structure of the Arbëresh neuter *diaθ-t* 'cheese' is displayed in (26). Morphologically, it is of note that *-t* combines with the bare base; in (26) we assume that the Infl layer of structure is present and not externalised, though nothing hinges on this as far as we can tell. More importantly, following our conclusions on Central Italian, and as suggested by the discussion surrounding (24), we indicate the class content of the traditional neuter as [⊆ aggregate]. In this instance, it is the Number projection that is sensitive to this class content, which surfaces through the *-t* definiteness morphology.

(26) cf. (24a)



In the oblique case, the definite form of the so-called neuter, as in (18a), (19a), and the definite form of the masculine, as in (22), coincide. The relevant structure parallels that of the plural in (25), except that a *-i* vowel, normally associated with the [masculine] class is inserted between the root and the *-t* ending (still endowed with the [⊆] content, construed as a phrasal relation, cf. (23)). We leave it open here whether so-called neuters have in fact a mixed declension – neuter in the direct cases and masculine in the oblique.[6]

In summary, if our line of analysis is correct, the morphology of Arbëresh embeds a revealing treatment of the count-mass distinction. More precisely, it corresponds to a system in which the same inflection externalises the plural of count nouns and the singular of mass nouns, as schematised in (27a), contrary to more usual systems of the type in (27b), where mass nouns fall in the same inflectional class as the singular of count nouns.

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6 In varieties that have come to our notice only at the final editing stage, neuter and plural forms coincide in the oblique as well, for instance the variety *Greci*, cf. *diaθ-ui-t* 'of/to the cheese', *trim-ui-t* 'of/to the boys'.
Further data acquired at this stage allow us to show that Ns can determine [⊆ aggregate] agreement on Ds even though they themselves do not display the *-t* inflection, but belong to other inflectional classes, e.g. singular *-a* in (i). This introduces a further parallel with Central Italian dialects and confirms that [⊆ aggregate] is a bona fide Class property, triggering target agreement.

(i) *vɛr-a* *əʃt* *tə* *mir*
wine-def is Lkr good
'The wine is good'

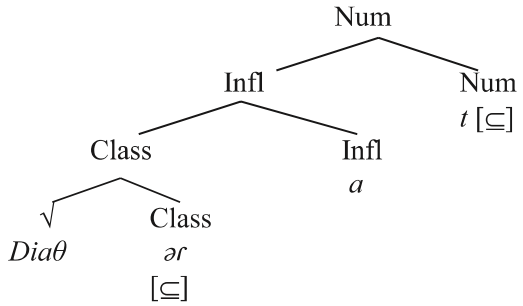
(ii) *kəta/ata* *vɛr* *ngə mə pərcɛn*
this.pl/that.pl wine not to.me likes
'I don't like this/that wine' *S. Benedetto Ullano*

(27) a. plural count + singular mass nouns vs. singular count nouns
b. plural count nouns vs. singular (mass/count) nouns

As already mentioned, the literature concerning the count/mass distinction stresses the different syntactic behaviours that separate mass nouns like *water* from count nouns like *horse* (Chierchia 2010; Lasersohn 2011; Borer 2005), in particular in quantificational contexts. So, for example in English, different quantifiers take mass or count nouns in their scope, as *much water* vs. *many horses,* etc. The boundary line between the two noun types is generally taken to be defined by the (in)ability to pluralise; this suggests that mass nouns can be treated like a sort of inherent plurality of pieces of a substance (Chierchia 2010). In this sense, we can expect that a language could encode this property by assigning the same inflection to plural and mass nouns – which is the gist of the Arbëresh data considered here. Therefore, labels like neuter, or gender, conceal deeper conceptual categories.

This discussion is also relevant to the way in which we represent the pluralisation of mass terms like 'cheese'. In Arbëresh, the latter involves the suffix *-əɾa-*, which fairly obviously is to be decomposed into a suffix *-əɾ-* and the normal *-a* inflection of the plural. It is natural to interpret the *-əɾ-* suffix as a singulative – denoting the fact that the argument of the root is to be interpreted as countable (hence 'types of cheese', 'pieces of cheese', etc.). In (28) we tentatively associated the suffix with the Class node, where it replaces the [⊆ aggregate] class characterisation in (26). The rest of the structure simply reprises that of the count plural in (25).

(28)



4. Conclusions

In inflection systems the linguist is faced with the classical problem of how best to represent syncretisms. For instance, the Arbëresh examples in (16)–(17) involve

several contexts of occurrence and interpretations for the *-t* morpheme, covering a wide variety of slots, both oblique and non-oblique, both singular and plural. The classical descriptive solution is to treat all of the different occurrences of *-t* as homophonous: there is a *-t* oblique singular, a *-t* accusative plural, etc. A different approach characterises Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993), whereby the same *-t* may be involved, albeit with an impoverished content (see Trommer 2002 for an account of the Albanian *-t* as the Elsewhere of the system). In the DM framework, the unification of lexical entries requires us to accept that exponents have an opaque relation to the syntax they embody, in the sense that they may be radically underspecified.

In contrast, we are interested in maintaining the (minimalist) position that the lexicon is the basis for the projection of syntactic structures. Therefore, we aim at showing that N inflections are bona fide lexical entries – endowed with an intrinsic interpretive content, capable of projecting all and only the information that the syntax requires. Thus, a lexical base, expressing predicative content ('cheese') combines with inflectional elements that are traditionally labelled neuter. Crucially, the latter introduce descriptive content, restricting the lexical base (or rather its argument) prior to saturation by the Determiner or another operator. Specifically, the content that we have proposed defines "an aggregate of components/atoms of imaginable continuums (substances/events)," corresponding to the feature [aggregate].

An interesting aspect of the data we are examining is that the typologically and functionally separate notions of nominal class, number and case merge in a unique exponent, for instance the *-t* inflection. One may interpret these data, in the DM way, as indicating the application of post-syntactic Fusion operations or other morphological readjustments. Since we reject the idea of a DM-like Morphological Structure component, we take the evidence to show that the traditional categories of number, gender and case conceal some different, deeper underlying categorisations.

Thus, we have characterised N morphology as endowed with semantic content, providing evidence about the active involvement of Class at the syntax-semantic interface. In particular, we have argued that the so-called neuter involves coding of the mass/count distinction. To be more precise, the mass vs. count contrast

can be interpreted as the reflex of a more primitive property, which differentiates non-individual, aggregate content from individual denotation.

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