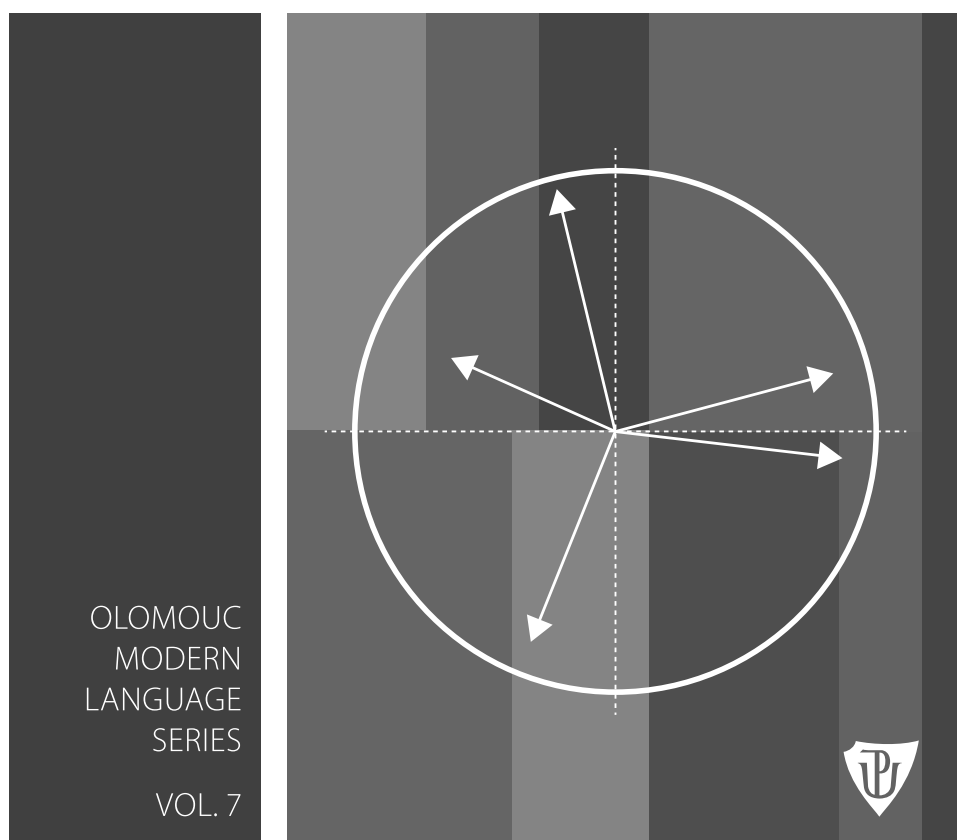


Edited by
Joseph Emonds, Markéta Janebová, and Ludmila Veselovská

Language Use and Linguistic Structure

Proceedings of the Olomouc Linguistics Colloquium 2018



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Palacký University
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Asymmetries in Plural Agreement in DPs

Leonardo M. Savoia^a, Benedetta Baldi^b, and M. Rita Manzini^c

University of Florence, Italy

^alsavoia@unifi.it; ^bbenedetta.baldi@unifi.it; ^cmariarita.manzini@unifi.it

Abstract: In some Friulian and Rhaeto-Romance varieties the inflection *-s* of the plural competes or interacts with the vocalic plural *-i*, and, in the feminine, with *-a*. In the North-Lombard varieties spoken in Switzerland (Soazza in the Mesolcina Valley) feminines select the plural inflection *-η*. This article addresses the asymmetric occurrence of sigmatic and nasal plural inflections in the DP and in the sentence, interacting with the nominal class (gender) inflection *-a*. Furthermore, *-η* inflection on clitics presents a complementary distribution with the verbal inflection. We argue: (i) that the asymmetries are restricted to the feminine *-a* because of the mass/plural properties of Romance *-a*; (ii) that the asymmetries between nouns and determiners or clitics depend on the referential properties of these elements, requiring a specialized inflection of plural; (iii) that the asymmetric distribution is phase-based, distinguishing phasal heads from their complement.

Keywords: nominal inflection; plural; morpho-syntactic asymmetries; agreement; phases

1. Background: Plural in Romance and Some Theoretical Points

Plural *-i*, *-e* in Italian and Romanian varieties (also *-a* in Italian) contrast with *-s* in Western Romance. The vocalic plural inflection is not totally eradicated but interacts with *-s* in Sardinian, Friulian, Rhaeto-Romance, Occitan and Franco-Provençal varieties spoken in peripheral areas of Italy. Moreover, in some North-Lombard varieties spoken in the Bregaglia Valley and in the Mesolcina Valley (Soazza) (Manzini and Savoia 2005, 2007), feminine selects the plural inflection *-η*. From a diachronic point of view the compresence of *-i/-e* and *-s/-η* is the result of an old continuum, competition and micro-variation between the two plural systems. The distribution of the vocalic plural

inflections is syntactically governed, in the sense that *-i* typically associates with D, i.e., with determiners and with subject and object clitics, including the dative. Also the nominal class (gender) inflection *-a* interacts with syntactic and nasal plural inflections. As a consequence, different asymmetries emerge between D and N that can be connected to the referential properties of these categories. Two main theoretical points are involved: the structure of the noun and the nature and distribution of number inflection inside NP. A further point is the behaviour of *-η*, occurring in complementary distribution with the verbal inflection. Schematizing, we find the following asymmetries:

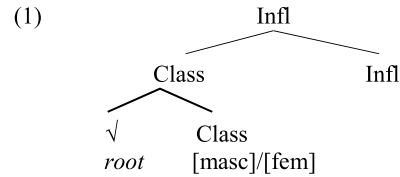
- between determiners and modifiers/nouns
- between *-s* and vocalic plurals
- between masculine and feminine plural inflections

There has been considerable theoretical interest, in the last decade or so, in the analysis of the noun inflectional morphology, for instance in familiar Indo-European languages (Halle and Marantz 1993; Halle and Vaux 1998 for a DM treatment of Latin), including our empirical focus here, i.e., Romance. The relevant categories we focus on encompass the traditional notions of gender, number and inflectional class. In keeping with Manzini and Savoia (2011, 2017a, b), Savoia, Manzini, Franco, and Baldi (2017), we assume a model of the internal morphological organization of the noun based on the idea that inflectional elements are bona fide lexical entries endowed with interpretive content. This theoretical point separates our approach to morphosyntax from DM and from other models in which exponents are inserted so as to correspond to clusters of features subject to be manipulated by rules. Along these lines, we assume that the innermost component of the noun is a root; following Marantz (1997), the root $\sqrt{}$ is category-less. Next to the root, a vocalic morpheme encodes properties that, depending on the language, include gender and/or number and/or declension class. A third slot may be available, specialized for number (e.g., Spanish) or for case (e.g., Latin).

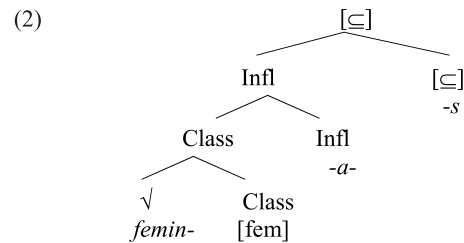
Our proposal is based on the idea that inflectional phenomena depend on the same basic computational mechanisms underlying syntax (Chomsky 2005), but moving away from traditional DM approaches. The category-less lexical root $\sqrt{}$ in the internal structure of the noun is interpreted as a predicate (Higginbotham 1985). This merges with inflectional elements (gender, number, etc.), as suggested in (1) for Italian and Romance varieties, which are endowed with interpretive content restricting the properties associated to the argument *x* open at the predicate (Manzini and Savoia 2017a, b; Savoia, Baldi, and Manzini 2018). Class corresponds to gender.¹ We assign the inflectional morpheme to an

¹ In Romance languages, some Class contents are determined directly by the root, as in the case of Italian *donn-a* “woman”, feminine, or *marit-o* “husband”, masculine. Some *root*, *Class* combinations have a compositional reading, as *gatt-o* “he-cat”, *gatt-a* “she-cat”.

Infl category, which merges with Class, including the root and its gender specification. Infl is discussed immediately below.



The standard DM treatment of inflectional class (Oltra-Massuet and Arregi 2005; Kramer 2015) has a Th(ematic vowel) node adjoined to Class/*n* post-syntactically. The content of Th are diacritics such as [I], [II], etc. for I, II inflectional class, etc. spelled out for instance as *-a*, *-o*, etc. in Spanish. We reject this treatment as it is based on a counter-cyclic operation and on the redundant stipulation of both inflectional classes and their corresponding vowels. Instead, we introduce an Infl node to host inflectional vowels selected by the underlying bases. In Italian and Italian type varieties the plural is obtained by a change of the inflection, i.e., by inserting *-i/-e/-a* inflections. In Spanish, Sardinian, and Rhaeto-Romance the specialized *-s* inflection combines with the Class inflection morpheme, *-a-* in (2) for Sardinian feminine nouns. The sigmatic plural belongs to an additional node, which is notated $[\subseteq]$ for reasons that we examine below.



Following the proposal of Manzini and Savoia (2011, 2017a, b), plural morphology is associated with the part-whole (or inclusion) property, i.e., $[\subseteq]$. In other words, the content of the plural, $[\subseteq]$, is that the argument of the root can be partitioned into subsets of individuals. In some Rhaeto-Romance varieties *-s* competes with the *-i* inflection (Savoia, Baldi, and Manzini 2018) or combines with it, as in the case of Friulian in Section 2. We conclude that both *-s* and *-i* are associated to this content, although some slight semantic difference may be involved insofar as in Romance clitic systems *-i* lexicalizes also the dative. In any event, in *-i* plurals the $[\subseteq]$ content must be associated with the Class node. As to agreement, we keep the assumption that Chomsky's (2001) Agree also

applies within DPs. However all phi-feature sets are treated as interpretable. What impels Agree to apply is the necessity of creating equivalence classes of phi-feature bundles denoting a single referent (Manzini and Savoia 2005, 2007, 2011).

2. Friulian Plural Systems

The data in (3), from Montereale (Central Friuli), show that *-i* and *-s* can both combine and exclude one another according to the different gender classes (Savoia, Baldi, and Manzini 2018). In the feminine, *-i* occurs between the lexical base and *-s* in nouns, while it appears alone in determiners, as in (3b). (3a) illustrates the *-a* singular.

(3) *feminine*

- (a) l-a/ kist-a (bjel-a) fəmin-a vɛtf-a
 the-FSG/ this-FSG fine-FSG woman-FSG old-FSG
 “the/this (fine) woman old”

- (b) l-i/ kest-i fəmin-i-s (vɛtf-i-s)
 the-PL/ this-PL woman-PL-PL old-PL-PL
 “the/these women (old)”

In the masculine, we find the plural inflection *-s*, as in (4b, b’); *-i* characterizes a sub-set of nouns/adjectives, in (4c). Determiners, in (4b, c) present *(-i)* as the plural morpheme. The masculine singular is generally devoid of a specialized inflection, as in (4a), except for a subset of forms which introduce *-u*, like *vɛtf-u* “old”, *kist-u* “this”, as in (4a’, a”).

(4) *masculine*

- (a) l ɔŋ/ al fɔr/ al kurtfel
 the man/ the oven/ the knife

- (a’) kel/kist-u ɔŋ
 that/this-MSG man
 “that/this man”

- (a”) kel bjel ɔŋ vɛtf-u
 that fine man old-M
 “that fine man old”

- (b) i/ ke-i bje-i ɔŋ-s (vɛtf-u-s)
 the.PL/ that-PL nice-PL man-PL old-M-PL
 “the/those nice (old) men”

(b') i for-s
the.PL oven-PL
“the ovens”

(c) i kurtʃe-i
the.PL knife-PL
“the knives”

Plural clitics have the inflection (-) *i* both in the object (OCl) and subject (SCl) forms. In plural SCls, (-) *i* occurs in the 3rd person plural *i*, as in (5a); adjectives and participles agree in gender and number, as in (5a'). The masculine plural OCl is *i-u*, in (5b), and the feminine plural OCl is *l-i*, in (5b'). -*i*- is associated to the dative clitic as well, in (5c). Singular subject and object clitics are illustrated in (5d) and (5d') respectively.

(5) *clitics*

(a) l-i femin-i-s/ i ɔŋ-s i duar
the-PL woman-PL-PL/ the.PL man-PL SCl.PL sleep.3PS
“The women / the men sleep.”

(a') i soŋ vijnu-s/ vijnud-i-s
SCl.PL are come.(M)-PL/ come-PL-PL
“They have come.”

(b) i-u ai vjer-s
OCl.PL-M I.have open.(M)-PL
“I have opened them (masculine).”

(b') l-i ai vjert-i-s
OCl-PL I.have open-PL-PL
“I have opened them (feminine).”

(c) a i-e da kist-u
SCl to.him give.3PSG this-MSG
“(S)he gives him this.”

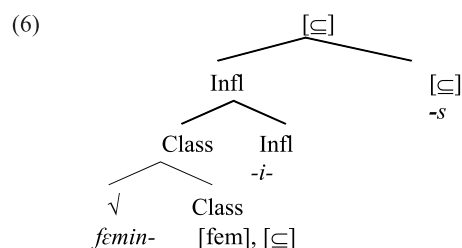
(d) a e vijnud-a / al e vi'ŋu
SCl.FSG is come-FSG / SCl.MSG come.MSG
“She has come / he has come.”

- (d') l-u ai vjert/ l-a ai vjert-a
 OCl-MSG I.have open.MSG/ OCl-FSG I.have open-FSG
 "I have opened it."

Montereale

On the basis of the preceding data, we may draw some generalizations:

- *(-i)* is the plural marker in determiners;
- *(-i)* characterizes clitics;
- *-i-* is the inflection of the feminine plural, inserted between the root and *-s*, so that the plural is reduplicated in feminine nouns, as in (6).



We associate *-s* with the specialized $[\subseteq]$ plural node, whereas *-i* seems to encode a slightly different denotation, able to introduce also the possessor, as suggested by its occurrence in the dative clitic *i-e* in (5c).

2.1 Rhaeto-Romance Varieties

Plural inflections in the Rhaeto-Romance (Ladin) varieties of Cadore (Italy), here exemplified by Borca, show a specular pattern with respect to Friulian. In the literature (Chiocchetti 2003; Rasom 2006; Pomino 2012), the asymmetric distribution of *-s* has been understood as involving a less complete inflection on determiners or pre-nominal adjectives. Feminine *-s* occurs on nouns and post-nominal/predicative modifiers and not on determiners. (7) exemplifies the gender and number inflection of nouns in the context of articles. Feminines in (5a') systematically have *-e-s*. Masculines present different morphemes, associated with different lexical subsets, i.e., *-e*, *-s*, *-i*, as in (7b', c'). Therefore, *-e(-)* is a plural morpheme.

(7) *feminine*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(a) l-a botf-a/ɔndʒ-a/rɔð-a
 the-F mouth-FSG/nail-FSG/wheel-FSG
 "the mouth/the nail/the wheel"</p> | <p>(a') l-a botf-e-s/ɔndʒ-e-s/rɔð-e-s
 the-F mouth/nail/wheel-(F)PL-PL
 "the mouths/the nail/the wheels"</p> |
|--|--|

masculine

- | | |
|--|---|
| (b) al djɛd-o/jal
the.MSG finger-MSG/cock
“finger/cock” | (b') i djɛd-e/ ja-i
the.MPL finger-(M)PL/cock-MPL
“the fingers/ cocks” |
| (c) al fuo
the.MSG fire
“the fire” | (c') i fuo-s/ fuog-e
the.MPL fire-PL/fire-(M)PL
“the fires” |

Borca di Cadore

(8) shows the distribution of the *-s* plural in more contexts including pre-nominal modifiers and post-nominal adjectives. More precisely, (8a', b', c') display the fact that *-e-s* morphology occurs on the last element of the NP, the noun in (8a', b') and the adjective in (8c'). The article, the pre-nominal modifiers and the nouns followed by an adjective have the *-a* inflection, as in the singular forms in (8a, b, c). In the masculine in (9b', b"), determiners systematically show the inflection *-i*.

(8) *feminine*

- | | |
|--|--|
| (a) l-a/ kel-a/ kel autr-a femen-a
the-F/ that-F/ that other-F woman-F
“the/that/that other woman” | (a') l-a/ kel-a/ kel autr-a femen-e-s
the-F/ that-F/ that other-F woman-(F)PL-PL
“the/those/those other women” |
| (b) kel-a bɛl-a femen-a
that-F fine-F woman-F
“that fine woman” | (b') kel-a bɛl-a femen-e-s
that-F fine-F woman-(F)PL-PL
“those fine-PL women” |
| (c) kel-a femen-a bra-a
that-F woman-F good-F
“that good woman” | |

- (c') kel-a femēn-a vɛtʃ-e-s
 that-F woman-F old-PL-PL
 "those old women"

(9) *masculine*

- (a) kel (autr-o)/ (ke)st-o libr-o/tʃaŋ
 that other-MSG/ this-MSG book-MSG/dog
 "that (other) / this book/dog"

- (b') k-i/kist-i bje-i libr-e/ tʃɛ-i
 that/this-MPL nice-MPL book-(M)PL/dog-MPL
 "those/these nice books/dogs"

- (b'') k-i tʃɛ-i vɛtʃ-e
 that-MPL dog-MPL old-PL
 "those old dogs"

Borca di Cadore

(10a, b) illustrate plural exponents in subject and object clitics; (9c) illustrates the dative clitic and (10d) participles and predicative adjectives.

(10) *clitics*

- (a) i i / (el-e-s) l-e-s ǫɔrm-e
 they.MPL SCI.MPL / they-FPL-PL SCI-FPL-PL sleep.3P
 "They sleep."

- (b) l-a l/ l-a/ i/ l-e-s veð-e
 SCI.FSG OCl.MSG/ OCl-FSG/ OCl.MPL/ OCl- (F)PL-PL see-3PS
 "She sees him/her/them (masculine/feminine)."

- (c) i ǫa-o kest-o
 OblCl.DATIVE give-1PSG this.MSG
 "I give this to him/her/them."

- (d) al l-e-z a veðuð-e-s strak-e-s
 SCI.MSG OCl-FPL-PL have.3PS seen-(F)PL-PL tired-FPL-PL
 "He has seen them tired."

Borca di Cadore

In short, we observe that:

- plural *-s* characterizes feminine nouns/adjectives (7a') and a sub-set of masculine nouns (7b', c');
- in the feminine, the *-a* inflection occurs in pre-nominal modifiers and possibly in pre-adjectival nouns; plural *-s* is lexicalized on nouns or on post-nominal/predicative adjectives (8a', c'), (9d);
- in masculines, plurality is realized by *-e*, *-s* or *-i*, on pre-nominal modifiers, nouns and post-nominal adjectives, (9b', b'');
- (-) *i* lexicalizes the masculine plural in articles, in other modifiers and in clitics in (10a, b); in addition, it lexicalizes the dative clitic, in (10c).

The following asymmetries emerge in Ladin:

- i. between feminine and masculine, whereby only feminines constrain the distribution of the plural inflection to certain positions in the DP;
- ii. in the feminine, between left and right positions in the DP.

The asymmetry in (i) is unexpected if we consider related phenomena in Ibero-Romance *-s* plurals (Bonet, Lloret, and Mascaró 2015), which only present the left-right asymmetry. The asymmetry in (ii) is the mirror image of that normally found in Italian varieties, whereby definite/deictic elements require a (richer) plural morphology. Generally, the latter distribution is imputed to the role determiners play in the referential anchoring of arguments (Manzini and Savoia 2018; cf. Costa and Figueiredo [2002] on Brazilian Portuguese; Baier 2015). Under (ii), in the Ladin sigmatic plural, [_{NP} s] merges with [[[_{NP} fem] [_{NP} fem, _{Class}] -e [_{NP}]] giving rise to *femen-e-s*. The question is why *-a* is inserted on determiners. Two possibilities are immediately available, i.e., *-a* is a default solution or *-a* is an appropriate lexicalization of plural. We return to this question in Section 3.

3. The *a*- Plural and Distributional Restrictions

The asymmetry between the inflectional properties of determiners and nominal modifiers/ adjectives and those of nouns has been brought out in the literature. Different types of split emerge. Costa and Figueiredo (2002) describe Brazilian Portuguese varieties, in which plural inflection *-s* only occurs on the determiners of prenominal adjectives, as in *O-s/est-es/algun-s/un-s livr-o muit-o bonit-o* ‘The/these/some book very nice’. They adopt a distinction between dissociated and singleton morphemes, in the spirit of the DM treatment of Embick and Noyer (2001), whereby the plural in Brazilian Portuguese corresponds to a specialized interpretable morpheme (singleton), which combines only with the ‘‘element anchoring the information concerning number’’, namely determiners. In Cadore varieties, on the contrary, (feminine) determiners may lack the specialized

plural inflection. The distribution in which prenominal determiners and adjectives lack (a set of) agreement properties, as in Cadore varieties in (7)–(10), is discussed in Bonet, Lloret, and Mascaró (2015). Their idea is that pre-nominal agreement is due to a “family of constraints” enforcing or not general agreement at PF; on the contrary, post-nominal agreement is syntactic in nature and triggered by Spec-Head agreement (see also Cinque 2009).

The hypothesis that different manifestations of agreement could be referred to different syntactic operations, or to different components of grammar, is pursued by several authors. In particular, various approaches deal with noun-modifier agreement (concord) as a process applying in the morphological component, separating it from subject-verb agreement mechanism (Baier 2015). A mechanism based on the split between different types of features, specifically marked vs. unmarked, is pursued in Pomino (2012) in accounting for the lack of number inflection in Italian dialects. Our data call into question the proposals that try to explain the asymmetries between determiners/pre-nominal modifiers and nouns as involving the realization of plural inflection or the lack of it. In these approaches, number is treated as substantially accessory with respect to person and other referential properties. We put forward a different idea, assuming that what we see are different types of plural inflection, possibly endowed with different interpretive characterizations, which are inserted in different morpho-syntactic contexts.

The fact that the clearly plural morphologies *-s*, *-e* and *(-i)* occur not only complementarily but also in combination, excludes the notion of dissociated morpheme as an explanation for partial distributions of any of them. The occurrence of *-i* in sigmatic systems like Friulian singles out Ds as opposed to Ns—but this has nothing to do with the issue of singletons since plural is expressed (by varying means) throughout the DP. Rather, under some type of morpho-syntactic split, definiteness and deictic elements are endowed with specialized morphology, given the role they play in the identification of arguments. Generally, the occurrence of specialized plural elements is associated with the head of the DP phase, i.e., determiners and possibly other nominal modifiers.

In this perspective, we propose that the *-a* forms of feminine plural DPs are not reduced or default forms. Rather, *-a* is able to lexicalize plurality. More precisely, *-a* is selected in DPs by virtue of its interpretive content, that in a number of North Italian varieties, allows it to lexicalize plurality in the feminine class, e.g., in Viano (North Tuscany) in (11) and Bormio (North Lombardy) in (12) (Rohlf's [1949] 1968; Manzini and Savoia 2018, 2019). The same element is involved in the *-a* plurals of Italian and other Italian varieties (e.g., *uov-a* “eggs”; Acquaviva 2008; Manzini and Savoia 2017b; Savoia, Baldi, and Manzini 2018). Viano's (11a), (11c) and (11d) illustrate the distribution of *-a* as the only inflection of the feminine in all morpho-syntactic domains, including the two interpretations of singular and plural. The masculine plural is lexicalized by the specialized inflection *-i* in nouns, determiners and subject and object clitics, in (11b, c', d').

- (11) (a) l-a/ koɖ altr-a dɔnn-a
 the-F/ that other-F woman-F
 “the/that/those other woman/women”
- (b) əl gatt-o/ i gatt-i
 the.MSG cat-MSG/ the.MPL cat-MPL
 “the cat / the cats”
- (c) l-a dɔrmə/ dɔrmə-nə
 SCI-F sleep.3PSG/ sleep-3PPL
 “She sleeps/they sleep.”
- (c') i dɔrmə/ dɔrmə-nə
 SCI-M sleep.3PSG/ sleep-3PPL
 “He sleeps/they sleep.”
- (d) a l-a veðə
 SCI OCl-F see.1PSG
 “I see her/them.”
- (d') a l/ i veðə
 SCI OCl-MSG/ MPL see.1PSG
 “I see him/them.”

Viano

In the variety of Bormio, the *-a* plural is limited to nouns, whereas determiners, pre-nominal modifiers and clitics have *-i*, in (12a', b', e', f) in the feminine on a par with plural masculines, in (12c', d', e', f). Note that *-a* is the inflection of the 3rd person object clitic both in feminine and masculine, in (12e), as in many Lombard dialects (Manzini and Savoia 2005).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(12) (a) l-a femēn-a
 the-F woman-F
 “the woman”</p> <p>(b) kwel-a bəl-a femēn-a
 that-F nice-F woman-F
 “that fine woman”</p> | <p>(a') l-i femēn-a
 the-PL woman-F
 “the women”</p> <p>(b') kwel-i bəl-i femēn-a
 that-PL nice-F women-F
 “those fine women”</p> |
|---|--|

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>(c) l omen / al gat
 the man / the.MSG cat
 “the man / the cat”</p> <p>(d) kwe-l bəl omen
 that nice man
 “that nice man”</p> <p>(e) al/l-a dɔrm
 SCI.3MSG/-FSG sleep.3PSG
 “he/she sleeps.”</p> <p>(f) al l-a/ i-a tʃam-a
 SCI.3MSG OCl-SG/ OCl-PL call-3PSG
 “he calls him/her/them”</p> | <p>(c') i omen/gat
 the.PL man/cat
 “the men / the cats”</p> <p>(d') kw-i be-i omen
 that-PL nice-PL men
 “those nice men”</p> <p>(e') i/l-i dɔrm-ən
 SCI.3MPL/-PL sleep-3PPL
 “they sleep”</p> |
|---|---|

Bormio

The data in (11) and (12) provide crucial evidence concerning the nature of *-a*:

- *-a* is able to lexicalize the plural on its own, as in (11) for Viano, where it embraces both singular and plural interpretation in all contexts;
- in (12) for Bormio, *-a* occurs in the plural of nouns in combination with *-i* in D and pre-nominal modifiers. In other words, this distribution is compatible with that of the plural specialized inflection in other varieties;
- in both languages we conclude that the interpretive value of *-a* implies a possible reference to (sub)sets of individuals.

These facts, on the one hand, support the idea that *-a* is able to encode a (type of) plural reading. On the other, they suggest that the *-a* inflection in determiners of the variety of Borca in (7)–(10) is a morpheme endowed with specialized content suitable for expressing the plural properties of D. We characterize this content as [aggregate]. The notion of *aggregate* is used by Chierchia (2010) to characterize the common core of mass and plural denotation. Manzini and Savoia (2017a, b, 2018), Savoia, Baldi, and Manzini (2018) have recourse to the [aggr(egate)] class in differentiating the *-a* plural from the *-i* plural, for instance in standard Italian. In (13) we extend this to Borca. Thus *-a* on determiners has both gender [fem] and number [aggr] content.

(14)

```

graph TD
    DP --> D1[D]
    DP --> C1["[C]"]
    D1 --> D2[D]
    D1 --> C2["Infl -a-"]
    D2 --> D3[D]
    D2 --> C3["Class [fem] [aggr]"]
    D3 --> keti[keti]
    C3 --> C4["Class [fem] [aggr]"]
    C3 --> C5["Infl -a-"]
    C4 --> fenei[fenei]
    C5 --> C6["Class [fem] [aggr]"]
    C5 --> C7["Infl -a-"]
    C6 --> C8["Class [fem] [aggr]"]
    C6 --> C9["Infl -e"]
    C8 --> veti[veti]
    C9 --> C10["Class [fem]"]
    C9 --> C11["Infl -e"]
    
```

4. The *-η* Feminine Plural in the Soazza Variety

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articles, in (15a')–(16a'). Masculines realize plurality on articles, and some sub-sets of masculine nouns present the specialized morphology *-i* or *-ŋ*, as illustrated in (15c'), (16b').

(15) *feminine*

- | | |
|---|--|
| (a) l-a ʃkabel-a
the-F chair-F
“the chair” | (a') l-a ʃkabel-əŋ
the-F chair-FPL
“the chairs” |
|---|--|

masculine

- | | |
|---|---|
| (b) ɛl di:t
the.M finger
“the finger” | (b') i di:t
the.MPL finger
“the fingers” |
| (c) ɛl mar'tel
the.M hammer
“the hammer” | (c') i mar'te-i
the.MPL hammer-MPL
“the hammers” |

(16) *feminine*

- | | |
|---|--|
| (a) kwel-a ʃkabel-a/mat-a
that-F chair-F/ girl-F
“that chair/girl” | (a') kwel-əŋ ʃkabel-əŋ/ma't-a-ŋ
that- FPL chair- FPL/girl- FPL
“those chairs/girls” |
|---|--|

masculine

- | | |
|---|---|
| (b) kwel ɔm/mat/di:t
that.M man/boy/finger
“that man/boy/finger” | (b') kw-i ɔm-əŋ/ma'to-ŋ/ di:t
that-MPL man-PL/boy-PL/finger
“those men/boys/fingers” |
|---|---|

Soazza

Feminine subject and object clitics exclude *-ŋ* and realize the form *l-a* for singular and plural, (17)–(18). In clitic contexts, *-ŋ* is added to the inflected verb, in (17b, b', c', d). Ambiguous readings are triggered when 3rd person feminine SCl and OCl combine, as in (17d). Note that *-ŋ* behaves like an enclitic adding to the personal inflection; for instance, it combines with the ending *-i* of the 1st sg in (17e).

- (17) (a) əl/ l-a dɔrm
SCl.MSG/ SCl-F sleeps.3PS
“(S)he sleeps.”

- (a') l a dor'mi:t
 SCI.3P has slept
 “(S)he has slept.”
- (b) i dɔrm/ l-a dɔrm-əŋ
 SCIMPL sleep/ SCI-F sleep-PL
 “They sleep.”
- (b') i a dor'mit/ l a-ŋ dor'mit
 SCI.MPL have.3P slept/ SCI have-3PL slept
 “They have slept.”
- (c) tu l/ l-a/ i ve:t
 SCI.2PS OCl.M/ OCl-F/ OCl.M see.2PS
 “You see him/her/them.”
- (c') tu l-a ved- əŋ
 SCI OCl-F see- 3FPL
 “You see them.”
- (d) l-a l-a tʃam-əŋ
 SCI-F OCl-F call-3FPL
 “She calls them / they call her.”
- (e) l-a tʃam-i-əŋ
 OCl-F call-1PSG-FPL
 “I call them.”

Soazza

In (18a) the presence of a plural lexical subject forces agreement with *-ŋ*; in (18b) the agreement with the plural participle may imply a plural OCl, although the reading with a plural SCI is available.

- (18) (a) kwel-əŋ ma'ta-ŋ l-a l-a lav- əŋ
 that-FPL girl-FPL SCI-F OCl-F wash- 3FPL
 “Those girls wash her/them.”
- (b) l-a l a-ŋ tʃamad-əŋ
 SCI-F OCl.F have-3FPL called-3FPL
 “She/they has/have called them (feminine).”

- (c) i a-ŋ tʃa'ma-i
 OCl.MPL have-3PPL called-MPL
 “They have called them.” Soazza

Finally, *-ŋ* combines with post-verbal *l-* in imperatives, in (19).

- (19) tʃama l-əŋ imperative
 call them.FPL
 “Call them!”

In short, 3rd person referential elements, i.e., articles and clitics, exclude the feminine plural inflection *-ŋ*. These elements, endowed with referential properties/definiteness, the *-a* inflection is required for the plural. At an abstract enough level, in Soazza variety the distribution of *-ŋ* follows a similar pattern to that investigated for Friulian in Section 2 and for the Cadore varieties in Section 2.1, showing an asymmetry between the plural inflection on D and the one on N. The plural *-ŋ*, that we represent as the part-whole relation [\subseteq], therefore like *-s*, is introduced by the elements inside NP and, in the sentence, by the inflected verb, in (20). In this instance an ambiguous reading emerges, since the plural inflection of the verb is referred to a *l-a* clitic which could be either the subject or the object.

- (20)
-
- ```

graph TD
 IP1[IP] --- D1[D]
 IP1 --- IP2[IP]
 D1 --- D2[D]
 D1 --- fem1[fem]
 D2 --- l[l]
 D2 --- fem2[fem]
 IP2 --- Infl[Infl]
 IP2 --- I[I]
 IP2 --- vP[vP]
 Infl --- a["-a_{x/y}"]
 I --- ved["ved_{x,y}"]
 I --- sub["[⊆]"]
 vP --- en["-əŋ_{x/y}"]

```

The behaviour of plural agreement in the Soazza dialect is discussed by Nevins (2011, 8–9). He assumes that the ability of number to extend ambiguously to object or subject descends from the underspecified status of singular, whereby “unmarked values of number, e.g., [-singular], are never syntactically active and never referred to in the syntax”. By contrast, “person features are always fully specified on syntactic arguments”, thus excluding generalization processes.

We construe the facts differently. Beginning with the examples concerning DPs, we take it that referential D elements require the *-a* plural, preventing them from combining with *-ŋ*. In sentential contexts, *-ŋ* combines with the verb; thus the same property [ $\subseteq$ ] is introduced in nouns and in verbs by the morpheme *-ŋ*. It remains to be explained how the *-ŋ* inflection of the finite verb may be referred to the object clitic. We will come back to this in Section 5.



## 5. A Syntactic Sketch

As suggested at the end of Section 3, the occurrence of plural inflection may be connected with the phase domains (Chomsky 2001, 2005, 2013). We assume that the internal structure of the phase is universally defined and that the head and the complement of the phase are independently individuated by the Phase Impenetrability Condition. According to Manzini and Savoia (2018), Manzini, Baldi, and Savoia (2018), the head-complement articulation of phases provides us with a syntactic characterization of the different distributions of agreement morphemes. What may be observed is the following generalization.

**(Micro)variation:** When the phase is externalized, a given referential property *P* can be differently realized on the head of the phase vs the complement of the phase. Logical possibilities include: non-realization on head, non-realization on complement and different realization. All logical possibilities are instantiated.

On the basis of the preceding generalization, we are in a position to schematize the occurrence of plural inflections in the different varieties we have investigated. What we are especially interested in is whether traces of the phasal organization may be visible in the vP and CP phases. Indeed, Manzini and Savoia (2019) and Savoia, Baldi and Manzini (2018) find phasal organization in the externalization of clitic-verb clusters in vP and CP, in another Lombard variety with nasal plurals, namely Casaccia.

In Friulian (Montereale), the head of DP phase, i.e., determiners *D* and possibly other nominal modifiers, and the NP complement of the phase are distinguished in that they are associated with different plural elements, as in (21). In the sentential domain, clitics display *-i* alone, like determiners, while participles externalize *-s* like nouns (though a subset of adjectives has *-i*). Therefore, in each phase *-i* is associated with referential/argumental content, namely with *D* in DP, with OCl in vP and with SCl in CP. Nouns and participles systematically include *-s*.

(21) Montereale

- |               |     |            |        |
|---------------|-----|------------|--------|
| (a) DP phase: | D   | A          | N      |
|               | -i  | i-(s)      | (-i)-s |
| (b) vP phase: | OCl | Participle |        |
|               | -i  | (-i)-s     |        |
| (c) CP phase: | SCl | I          |        |
|               | i   | ...        |        |

A different picture is presented by Cadore varieties (Borca), in (22). In the vP phase, object clitics lexicalize the plural specifications by means of the exponents *(-i)* or *-s*, according

to gender. In the masculine, the *-i* lexicalization obviously characterizes the D head of the DP phase, suggesting a pattern of lexicalization not dissimilar from that of Friulian where the same morphology privileges the categorial content D. At the same time, the feminine returns a different picture, since OCl and SCl are associated with the plural morphology which in DPs excludes D. From (22) we conclude that the distribution of *-i* is best understood as targeting D material. The distribution of feminine plurals suggests that only the DP phase registers the contrast between referential and lexical content elements, reserving the *-a* specialized inflection to D.

(22) Borca

|               |               |                    |                         |
|---------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| (a) DP phase: | D             | A                  | N                       |
|               | $-i_M/-a_F$   | $-e-s_F/-a_F/-e_M$ | $-e-s_F/-a_F/-e_M/-i_M$ |
| (b) vP phase: | OCl           | Participle         |                         |
|               | $-i_M/-e-s_F$ | $-i_M/-e-s_F$      |                         |
| (c) CP phase: | SCl           | I                  |                         |
|               | $-i_M/-e-s_F$ |                    |                         |

In Soazza, feminine plural *-η* is excluded from D, SCl and OCl; thus, as in Cadore varieties, we find a language where *-a* is the inflection of plural selected by referential elements, strengthening its connection with rich referential content. Similar to (21)–(22), the masculine plural *-i* contrasts with the distribution of feminine inflections, insofar as it is usually associated to the referential D elements. What is more relevant for present purposes is that the distribution of plural feminine *-η* for Soazza in (23), differently from the others considered, involves I in the CP phase. DP-phase contexts externalize *-η* on the lexical complement NP of the phase head. In the CP phase, the plural *-η* is introduced on the inflected verb in I and may interpretively be associated with the external or the internal argument. Not dissimilarly, in the vP phase *-η* occurs on the participle, and interpretively connected to the internal argument.

(23) Soazza

|               |             |            |           |      |
|---------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------|
| (a) DP phase: | D/Q         | Adj        | N         | Adj  |
|               | $-a_F/-i_M$ | $-η/(-i)$  | $-η/(-i)$ | $-η$ |
| (b) vP phase: | OCl         | Participle |           |      |
|               | $-a/-i_M$   | $-η/-i$    |           |      |
| (c) CP phase: | SCl         | I          |           |      |
|               | $-a/-i_M$   | $-η$       |           |      |

Given the discussion that precedes, evidently the plural specification  $-\eta$  is externalized on the phase complement in DP, i.e., on NP, to the exclusion of D. On the other hand, if we take the participle and the finite verb to be exponents of the  $v$  and  $I$  head of the  $vP$  and CP phases (the latter by inheritance from C), then the generalization does not extend to the  $vP$  and CP phases. The generalization holds that in a phase only one element bears the plural inflection associated with the specialized  $[\acute{I}]$  node. A stronger thesis would be that plural is in fact associated with the phase head in  $vP$  and CP, mirroring what happens in the DP. An argument in favour of this are the imperative data in (19) where the  $-\eta$  morphology is in fact attached to the enclitic. One way to understand the data is that once the verb positions in C the clitic stranded in I acts as the agreement head of the phase.

Finally, recall that we still lack an account why a sentence like (20) is ambiguous between object and subject agreement. The general idea is that each phase contains a single exponent for plurality, and that this uniqueness is dictated by association with the phase head. This means that no pluralizable clitic (i.e., 3rd person accusative) can bear plural morphology, which is instead associated with the finite verb. As is often found in parametrization, the externalization solution is essentially idiosyncratic, but against an invariant basis for it in the computational component.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

We argued that phase theory may predict the split between phasal heads and phasal complements, though not the coupling of each with one or another morphology. The need to satisfy other requirements may be involved:

- Referential elements select inflections endowed with specialized referential import, if available in the lexicon.
- This asymmetry especially concerns feminines.

The fact that  $(-)\acute{i}$  can lexicalize the plural independently of gender distinctions means that its content, on a par with  $-s$ , is the part-whole relation  $[\subseteq]$ ; in many varieties it also doubles the marker  $-s$ . In addition,  $-i$  lexicalizes the dative; in other words its  $[\subseteq]$  content translates into possessive inclusion (Manzini and Savoia 2011). The lexical content of the different plural inflections is tentatively specified in (24).

(24) plural in Romance

|              |                                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| $-s/-\eta$ : | $[\subseteq]$ merged in $[\subseteq]$ |
| $-i$ :       | $[\subseteq]$ , merged in Class/Infl  |
| $-a$ :       | [aggregate] merged in Class/Infl      |

In many Italo-Romance varieties, the feminine inflection seems to be associated with a richer referential content than the masculine, which in the singular lacks any

externalization. As far as we can tell, the opposite is not found, at least in Romance. This is possibly connected to the fact that *-a* turns out to be a number, as in (24), rather than a gender—and not to functional considerations such as the markedness of feminine.

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