

ECCENTRIC AGREEMENT IN ITALO-ROMANCE  
A CLOSER LOOK INTO FEATURE BUNDLES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Subject-verb agreement in Romance usually involves person and number features:

- (1) Maria                    mangia  
[Italian]  
Maria-3rd sg fem eats-3rd sg  
'Maria eats'
- (2) Tu                    dormi  
you-2nd sg sleep-2nd sg  
'You sleep'

No gender agreement between the subject and the verb (the verb shows no gender).

Ripatransone<sup>1</sup> (RT) dialect: **GENDER AGREEMENT**

- |        |             |                          |    |               |                       |
|--------|-------------|--------------------------|----|---------------|-----------------------|
| (3) a. | I' ridu     | (I laugh'-masc)          | b. | ia ride       | (I laugh'-fem)        |
|        | tu ridu     | (you laugh'-masc)        |    | tu ride       | (you laugh'-fem)      |
|        | issu ridu   | ('he laughs'-masc)       |    | esse ride ... |                       |
|        | noja ridemi |                          |    | noja ridema   |                       |
|        | voja rideti |                          |    | voja rideta   |                       |
|        | issi ridi   |                          |    | essa ride     |                       |
|        |             |                          |    |               | [from Rossi 2008: 31] |
| c.     | se ridə     | ('it is laughed'-neuter) |    |               |                       |

Moreover: **AGREEMENT MISMATCH**

- |        |                      |                 |          |            |
|--------|----------------------|-----------------|----------|------------|
| (4) a. | Babbu                | dicə            | le       | vərità     |
|        | dad-m sg             | says-3rd sg neu | the-f sg | truth-f sg |
|        | 'Dad told the truth' |                 |          |            |

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Antonio Giannetti and Alfredo Rossi for their help with Ripatransone data.

b. Mamme e kkottø li makkaru'  
 mum- f sg is-3rd sg cooked- pp neu the- m pl pasta- m pl  
 'Mum cooked pasta' [Mancini 1993: 107]

QUESTION

Where do these unusual agreement patterns stem from?

Typological speculations

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2. AGREEMENT IN RT

2.1. AGREEMENT PATTERNS WITH TRANSITIVE VERBS

NO MISMATCH

SUBJECT (m sg) – OBJECT (m sg):[all examples are taken from Mancini 1993:106-107]

(5) \_\_\_ so ngundratu n amigu  
 pro-m sg am met-m sg a friend – m sg  
 'I met a friend'

SUBJECT (f sg) – OBJECT (f sg)

(6) le frøkine e vvolute ne mele  
 the- f sg girl-f sg is wanted-f sg an-f sg  
 apple-f sg  
 'The girl wanted an apple'

✓ MISMATCH

GENDER

SUBJECT (m sg) – OBJECT (f sg)

- (7) I'                    maŋŋə l        e                    pələnde  
I-m sg            eat-n            the- f sg        polenta- f sg  
'I eat the polenta'

SUBJECT (f sg) – OBJECT (m sg)

- (8) mamme        e rrələvatə        lu                    mendi'  
mum- f sg    is washed- n        the-m sg        tablecloth-m sg  
'Mum has washed the tablecloth'

NUMBER

SUBJECT (m sg) – OBJECT (m pl)

- (9) —                    mazzə            li                    keppu'  
pro-m sg    kills-n            the-m pl        capons-m pl  
'He kills the capons'

SUBJECT (f sg) – OBJECT (f pl)

- (10) Semə            maŋŋata/ə        lə                    pera  
we-are        eaten-f pl/n        the-f pl        pears- f pl  
'We ate the pears'

SUBJECT (f pl) – OBJECT (f sg)

- (11) —                    maŋŋemə        le                    pələnde  
we-f pl        eat-n            the- f sg        polenta- f sg  
'We eat the polenta'

GENDER + NUMBER

SUBJECT (f pl) – OBJECT (n sg)

- (12) oggia lə            femməna    pijjə            lə                    sola  
today the-f pl    women-f pl    take-n        the-f sg        sun- n sg  
'Today the women catch the sun'

SUBJECT (f pl) – OBJECT (m sg)

- (13) \_\_\_\_\_ semə maŋnatə lu prəsciutta  
pro- f pl are eaten-n the- m sg ham-m sg  
'We-fem have eaten the ham'

→ AGREEMENT MISMATCH BETWEEN THE SUBJECT AND THE OBJECT IS MARKED ON THE VERB

EXCEPTION

SUBJECT IS 3RD PL MASC ⇒ ALWAYS subject agreement

- (14) li frəki maŋni læ nucia e ll  
the-m pl boys-m pl eat-m pl the-f pl nuts-f pl and the  
uve  
grapes- f pl  
'The boys eat nuts and grapes'

Preliminary observation:

Masculine plural subject wins over everything else.

[Speculation: Are masculine and plural ranked higher?

Not quite! Masculine is not higher ranked: see (4a) and (7).

Plural is not higher ranked: see (13)]

2.2. 'CONTAGIOUS' AGREEMENT

RT also features inflection on items that usually don't display agreement.

The following examples are taken from Ledgeway (2005:4):

GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

- (15) Chissà chə vva fæcennu  
who-knows what he-goes doing-msg  
'Who knows what he's doing'  
(16) Mamma stieve cucənenne  
mum was-fem cooking-sg fem  
'Mum was cooking'  
(17) Sai skrivu?  
can-you write-masc  
'Can you write?'
- 
-

## INTERROGATIVES

- (18) Ndovu / ndovi va?  
where-msg where-mpl goes/go  
'Where does he/do they go?'

## PREPOSITIONS

- (19) Dopu lu ddi / dope le notte  
after-msg the-msg day-msg after-fsg the-fsg night-  
fsg  
'After the day/after the night'

...

I will not focus on these 'contagious agreement' patterns today.

TODAY: argument agreement mismatch

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### *3. DERIVING THE AGREEMENT MISMATCH*

#### *3.1. TRADITIONAL SPEC/HEAD AGREEMENT*

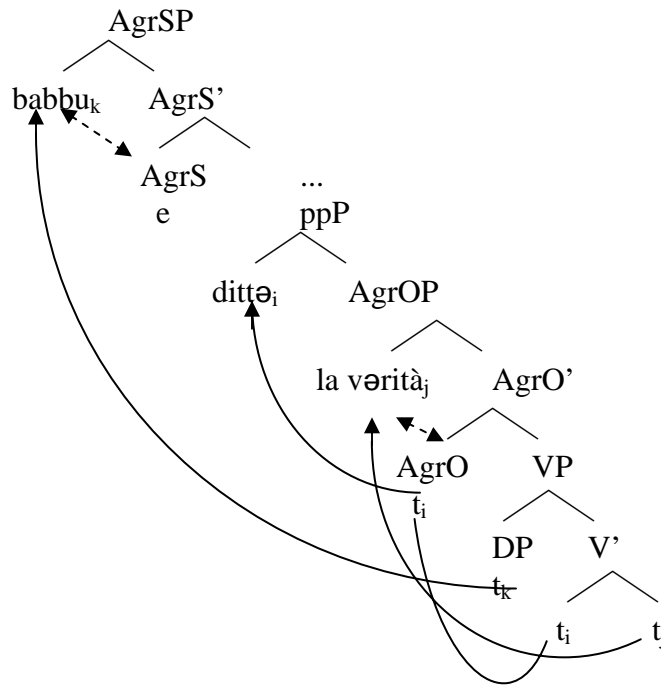
- (4) a. Babbu e dditte la verità  
dad-m sg is-3rd sg said-past part neu the-f sg truth-f sg  
'Dad told the truth'

The object agrees with the pp in Spec, AgrO

The subject agrees with the aux in Spec, AgrS

How do we end up with the -ə ending?

(20)



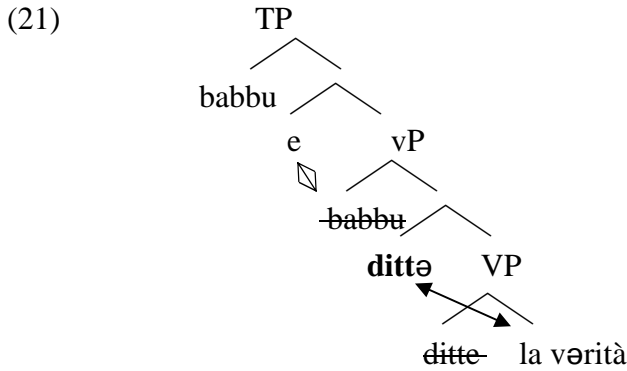
Two different heads are responsible for agreement--> how does the  $\emptyset$  end up on the past participle? How can the past participle “see” the subject?

### 3.2. CHOMSKY (2001) DBP PROBE-GOAL AGREE

- (i) Agree is not symmetric, but an **asymmetric**, relation between a **Probe** and a **Goal**. The Probe has uF features while the Goal has ‘matching’ iF features. Agree eliminates the uF features on the Probe by ‘valuing’ them and ‘removing them’/‘spelling them out phonologically’. Valuing is **unification** of the values of the features.
- (ii) uF features have **attributes with empty values** in their feature structures, i.e., [F: \_], while iF features have attributes with specified values, [F:x].
- (iii) Conditions on the Probe-Goal relation:
  1. Probe and Goal must be sufficiently **local** to each other (*Locality*) [CLOSEST C-COMMAND]
  2. Probe and Goal must be ‘matched’ in terms of attributes of features that enter into Agreement. However, match need not be identity. Specifically, the attributes on the Probe must **subsume** those on the Goal. This allows the Probe to have a subset of the attributes on the Goal. Defective Probes do not block Probing by a non-local complete Probe (*Maximize Match*).

Same problem as upstairs:

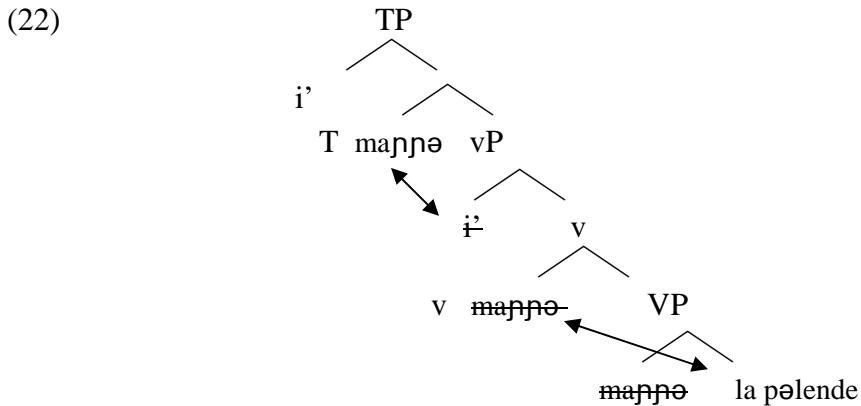
(4) a. Babbu e dditte la vèrità  
 dad-m sg is-3rd sg said-past part neu the-f sg truth-f sg  
 'Dad told the truth'



How do we express the feature mismatch between T and v?

In a simpler sentence, like (7), this is even more straightforward:

(7) I' maŋŋə le pələnde  
 I-m sg eat-n the- f sg polenta- f sg  
 'I eat the polenta'



v Agrees with the object, T Agrees with the subject

WORKING HYPOTHESIS:

① We need to express a condition on feature uniformity on two different heads

or

② one head has to “see” two Goals [Multiple Agree]

① how would these two heads see each other?

② if a Probe Agrees with a  $\varphi$ -complete object how can it still Probe? [See Cyclic Agree, 3.4.]

### 3.3. CONCORD

(23) a. Agree-check is a matching relation under which feature checking takes place.

b. Agree-concord is a matching relation under which no feature checking takes place.

[from Di Sciullo 2005:189]

Concord = Match of valued features

Concord = feature spread

(24) **La**            **bella**            **casa**            **rossa**  
the-f sg      beautiful-f sg      house- f sg      red-f sg  
'The beautiful red house'

Concord does not help either: we have a feature mismatch marker; no feature copying

### 3.4. CYCLIC AGREE (Béjar & Rezac 2009, Rezac 2007, 2008)

Assumptions [from Béjar & Rezac 2009, 7; 12]:

- $\pi$ -features are articulated into a set of hierarchically organized features, each of which can Agree independently
- any Probe on  $\nu$  will first seek match in the object first Merged with  $\nu$ , the VP, because of the Earliness Principle (probe as early as possible - Pesetsky&Torrego 2001)
- upon subsequent Merge of the EA and further projection of  $\nu$  [Spec,  $\nu$ ] falls into the domain of any remaining probe on  $\nu$  because  $\nu$ 's the sister of the new projection under Bare Phrase Structure

(25)

CYCLIC EXPANSION OF THE SEARCH SPACE

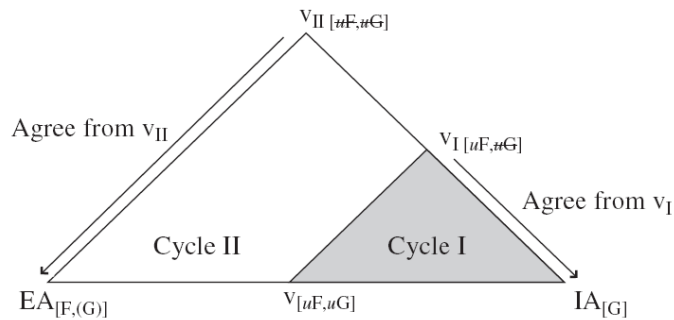


Figure 3

Cyclic expansion of the search space

[from Béjar & Rezac 2009: 48]

Applying B&R's cyclic Agree to RT:

$v$  Agrees with the IA. The IA is fully valued  $\Leftrightarrow$  no need to expand the search space.

3.5. DOMINANCE

Schoorlemmer (2009): Dominance, not c-command, is the necessary configuration for Agree.

Assumptions: the Probe is a head

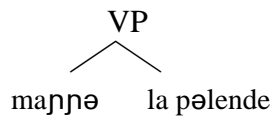
By virtue of BPS: the Probe-head is in *feature sharing* with the non-terminal nodes projected by it.

Non-terminal nodes are consequently Probes.

Schoorlemmer's system at work on RT data:

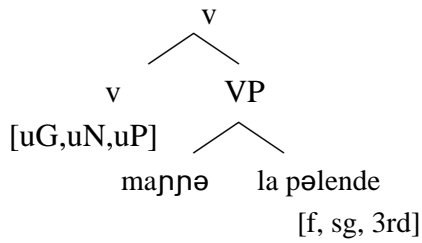
Merge  $v$  and IA:

(26)



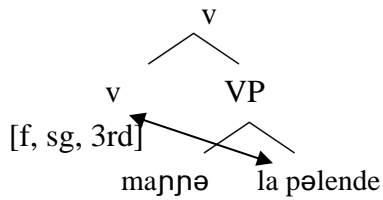
Merge  $v$  with VP:

(27)



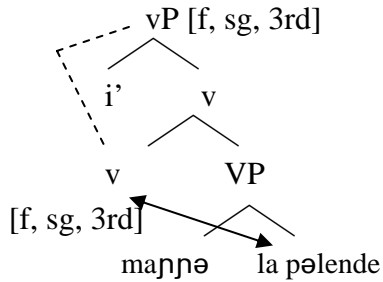
*v* Probes the IA [Earliness Principle: probe as soon as you can]

(28)



*v* is merged with the EA; feature sharing between *v* and *vP*

(29)



Two ways to go:

3rd person=no person (Benveniste 1966 onwards). Then *vP* is still an active Probe for person.

Agree *vP* and *i'*. *vP*'s person is valued as 1st.

3rd person = valued person. *vP* is not an active Probe.

But what about GENDER? *vP* is NOT an active probe for gender. How is gender mismatch obtained?

#### 4. RT AGREEMENT EXPLAINED

#### 4.1. FEATURE HIERARCHY

Müller (forth)

- All syntactic operations are feature driven
- Also External Merge is triggered by features [subcategorization features]
- two types of features:
  - [**•F•**] = structure-building features [edge features and subcategorization features]
  - [**\*F\***] = probe features [ $\varnothing$ -features, triggering Agree]
- Features on lexical items are ordered

EXAMPLE: Transitive  $\nu$  has two subcategorization features: [**•V•**] and [**•D•**]

These features are hierarchically organized: [**•V•**]  $\succ$  [**•D•**]

$\nu$  discharges first the [**•V•**] feature by Merge ( $\nu$ , VP), then the [**•D•**] feature by Merge ( $\nu$ , DP)

- *Last resort*

(30) Every syntactic operation must discharge either [**•F•**] or [**\*F\***]  
 Only features at the top of a feature list are accessible

PROPOSAL  
 RT and other SIDs have a richer feature set on  $\nu$  than the rest of Romance  
 Features in RT are ordered differently than in the rest of Romance

More specifically:

- subcategorization features are higher in the hierarchy in RT than probe features
- RT has a complex  $\nu$  [i.e.  $\nu$  has an additional [**•V•**] feature]

RT: [**•F•**]  $\succ$  [**\*F\***]

First build the spine, then Agree --> cf. Müller (2004) on ergative languages [4.2.]

(31)  $\nu_1$  in RT: [**•V•**]  $\succ$  [**•D•**]  $\succ$  [**•V•**]  $\succ$  [**\*uP, uN, uG**]

$\nu_1$	[ <b>•V•</b> ] = Merge with VP ①	{ <b>•BUILD THE SPINE! •</b> }
	[ <b>•D•</b> ] = Merge with EA ②	{ <b>•BUILD THE SPINE! •</b> }
	[ <b>•V•</b> ] = Merge with an extra $\nu_2$ [or split into two $\nu$ s] ③	{ <b>•BUILD THE SPINE! •</b> }
	[ <b>*uP, uN, uG*</b> ] = Agree ④	{ <b>*AGREE!*</b> }

(32)  $v_2$  in RT: [ $\bullet V \bullet$ ] > [ $\ast uP, uN, uG$ ]

$v_2$	[ $\bullet V \bullet$ ] = Merge with T	{ $\bullet$ BUILD THE SPINE! $\bullet$ }
	[ $\ast uP, uN, uG \ast$ ] = Agree	{ $\ast$ AGREE! $\ast$ }

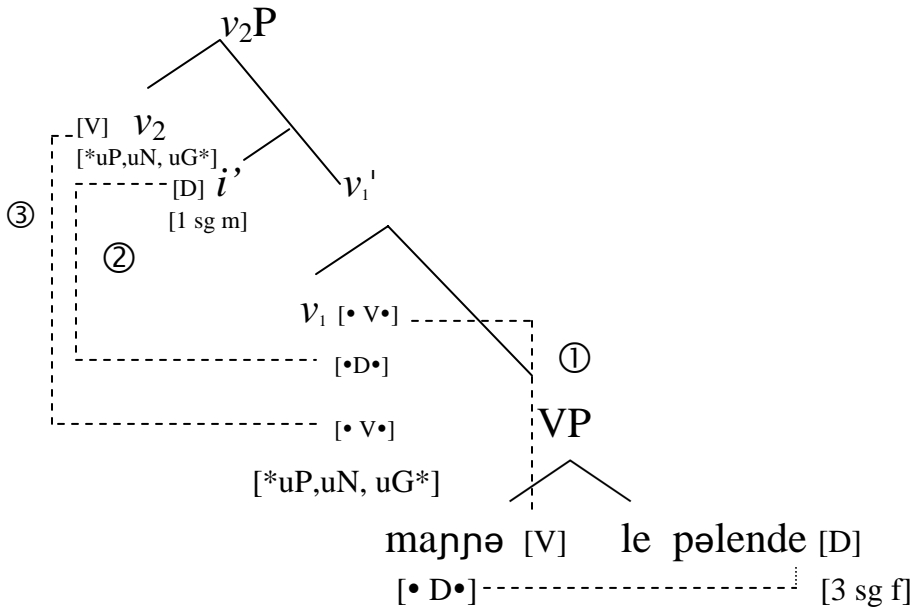
ALTERNATIVELY  $v_1$  could have a third [ $\bullet V \bullet$ ] = Merge with T and  $v_2$  would only have  $\ast F \ast$

This solution is more elegant and states that actually selectional features are only on phase-heads

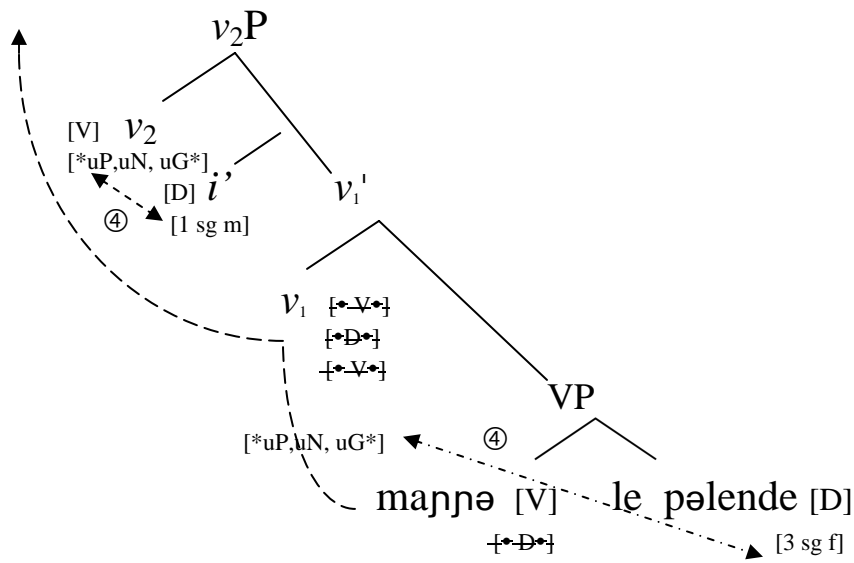
#### 4.2. HOW IT WORKS

(7) I'            manɲə        le            pələnde  
 I-m sg        eat-n            the- f sg        polenta- f sg  
 'I eat the polenta'

(33) { $\bullet$ BUILD THE SPINE!  $\bullet$ }



(34) { $\ast$ AGREE! $\ast$ }



(35)

$\left. \begin{array}{l} v_1 [3 \text{ sg f}] \\ v_2 [1 \text{ sg m}] \end{array} \right\} \Rightarrow ! \text{ feature mismatch}$

$v_1$  and  $v_2$  form a complex

The content is SHARED between the two heads

Cf. Ouali's (2008) SHARE, Schoorlemmer's (2009) SHARE, etc.

- split the heads;
- feature inheritance, Chomsky 2005 AND
- retain a copy on the phase head—SHARE (Ouali 2008):

(36) SHARE

Transfer  $\Phi$ -features from C to T and keep a copy.

[Ouali 2008: 169]

$v_1$ - $v_2$  are in a SHARE relation: [ups, unr, ugn] are SHARED between the two heads;

SHARE can only apply if the two heads constitute a UNIT. In this case there has to be UNIFORMITY OF VALUES between the two  $v$ 's (see Anagnostopoulou 2005):

(37) A CONDITION ON MULTIPLE AGREE



(41)

Abruzzese unergative			
1st sg	ji I	so' am-1st sg	fatijate worked-pp sg
2nd sg	tu you	si are-2nd sg	fatijate worked-pp sg
3rd sg	esse she	a has-3rd sg	fatijate worked-pp sg
1st pl	nu we	seme are-1st pl	fatijite worked-pp pl
2nd pl	vu you-pl	sete are-2nd pl	fatijite worked-pp pl
3rd pl	jisse they	a have-3rd pl	fatijite worked-pp pl

[D'Alessandro & Roberts 2010]

- More agreement displacement phenomena [part participle agreement]

Ariellese (Abruzzese) past participle agreement with the plural argument (D'Alessandro & Roberts 2010):

- (42) a. Giuwannə a pittatə nu murə  
**John-sg** has-3<sup>rd</sup> sg/pl painted-**pp sg** **a wall**  
 'John has painted a wall' [sg SUBJ-sg OBJ]
- b. Giuwannə a pittitə ddu murə  
 John-sg has-3<sup>rd</sup> sg painted-**pp pl** **two walls**  
 'John has painted two walls' [sg SUBJ-pl OBJ]
- c. Giuwannə e Mmarijə a pittitə  
**John and Mary-pl** have-3<sup>rd</sup> sg/pl **painted-pp pl**  
 nu murə  
 a wall  
 'John and Mary have painted a wall' [pl SUBJ – sg OBJ]
- d. Giuwannə e Mmarijə a pittitə ddu  
 John and Mary-pl have-3<sup>rd</sup> sg/pl **painted-pp pl** **two**  
 murə  
**walls**  
 'John and Mary have painted two walls' [pl SUBJ -pl OBJ]

QUESTION

What kind of languages are these Central-Southern Italian dialects?

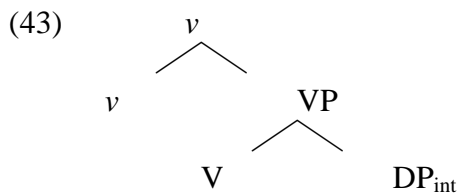
4.4. TYPOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS

Central and Upper-Southern Italian dialects exhibit some features that are uncommon within Romance.

- split auxiliary selection [also found in ergative languages]
- agreement mismatch phenomena [also found in ergative languages]
- tense, mood & subordination splits [also found in ergative languages]

Müller (2004): the “ergative parameter” (Marantz 1984, Mahajan 1994) arises from the indeterminacy of operations at the  $\nu$ -cycle.

At the stage of (43):



- the EA is available for merger
- the IA is an active Goal for Agree with  $\nu$ .

Languages RANK the two requirements

- $\text{Agree}(\nu, \text{IA}) > \text{Merge}(\text{EA}, \nu) \Leftrightarrow [\text{Nominative-Accusative}]$
- $\text{Merge}(\text{EA}, \nu) > \text{Agree}(\nu, \text{IA}) \Leftrightarrow [\text{Ergative-Absolutive}]$

#### 4.3.1. IS RT ERGATIVE?

Is RT Ergative? It could be.

But it also displays Nominative-Accusative features (Case on pronouns, primarily):

#### SPECULATION 1

If features are hierarchically ordered, there are several logical possibilities in their order.

USIDs and CIDs are “hybrid” languages. They display features that group them with ergative languages and features that group them with nominative languages.

Ergative and nominative are distributed along a continuum.  
Different ranking of features will originate different clusters of properties,  
i.e. different language types.

What are the ranking possibilities?

Consider a transitive  $\nu$ :

$[\bullet F\bullet] \succ [*F*] \succ$  Merge over Agree [Ergative-Absolutive]  
 $[*F*] \succ [\bullet F\bullet]$  Agree over Merge [Nominative-Accusative]  
[Müller 2004]

But there are many more possibilities

Merge-Agree-Merge (Merge the EA, Agree, then Merge the Aux? –USIDs)

Feature parametrization?

SPECULATION 2

If  $\nu$  licenses the subject then the language will have a defective T, hence  
it will be *pro*-drop [D'Alessandro & Roberts 2010]

Agreement mismatch arises when  $\nu$  “sees” both the EA and the IA, i.e.  
when we have a complex  $\nu$ . In this case we also have a defective T

Languages that present agreement mismatch/displacement are null-  
subject.

BASQUE ✓  
MORDVINIAN ✓  
KAROK ✓  
GEORGIAN ✓

...

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## 5. CONCLUSIONS/SUMMARY

- RT shows gender agreement on the verb
  - Agreement mismatch
  - Rich  $\nu$  and feature ranking
  - Typological generalizations about ergative and nominative languages
  - Agreement displacement and *pro*-drop?
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