

Some roots are bigger than others.

The view from *Piacentino* and *Lugagnanese*

Pamela Goryczka (University of Vienna) &
Luca Molinari (University of Warsaw & Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

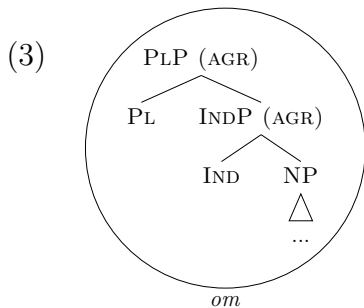
1. Data and Issue. The Gallo-Italic variety of Emiliano is subject to great diatopic micro-variation. In this study we focus on *Piacentino* (*Piac*) and *Lugagnanese* (*Lug*), two varieties spoken in the westmost province of Emilia-Romagna. These varieties exhibit an interesting diverging nominal gender/number agreement pattern in the singular (SG) vs the plural (PL). The patterns we investigate are represented in (1)-(2) (for a more detailed description of similar data including adjectival modifiers and determiners cf. Manzini & Savoia 2005). While MASC nouns are suffixless in the SG and the PL in both varieties (1), the PL of FEM nouns ending in unstressed *a* differs, i.e., in *Lug* nouns display a suffix (2d), in *Piac* they do not (2c). However, the two varieties present the same marker for SG FEM nouns (2a-b).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>(1) a. <i>l' om ält</i>
the.M.SG man tall</p> | <p>b. <i>j' om-∅ ält-∅</i>
the.M.PL men tall.PL</p> |
| <p>(2) a. <i>la donn- a ält- a</i>
the.F.SG woman- F.SG tall- F.SG</p> | <p>c. <i>ill donn-∅ ält-∅</i>
the.F.PL women tall.PL</p> |
| <p>b. <i>la donn- a ält- a</i>
the.F.SG woman- F.SG tall- F.SG</p> | <p>d. <i>al donn- i ält- i</i>
the.F.PL woman F.PL tall- F.PL</p> |

2. Main Aims. We aim to provide a unified, formal analysis of *Piac* and *Lug* nouns and their distinctive agreement patterns. We argue that a more fine-grained decomposition of the NP can account for the data observed in (1)-(2). Further, we intend to capture the diatopic variation seen in (2c-d), relying on the concept of ‘root size’ (Starke 2014), a common mechanism in Nanosyntax (Starke 2009). To the best of our knowledge, to date, only very few studies have applied a nanosyntactic approach to Italo-Romance varieties (e.g., Taraldsen 2009).

3. Theoretical Background. Our analysis is couched in Nanosyntax, a syntactic approach to word formation that follows the late-insertion principle, i.e., syntactic structure is assumed to be constructed first and then mapped onto lexical entries for spell-out. Lexical entries are essentially links between syntactic structures and phonological material/concepts. What sets Nanosyntax apart from other non-lexicalist approaches (e.g., Distributed Morphology) is that the syntactic information encoded by the lexical entry comprises a full syntactic tree, rather than just a terminal.

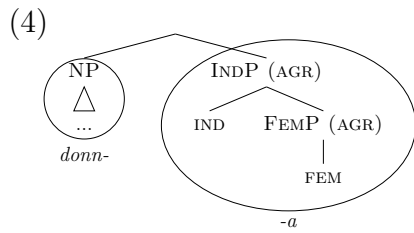
4. Analysis. In our analysis, we assume a set of privative features originally proposed by Harley and Ritter (2002) for pronouns, but extended to nominal declension by Caha (2023).



FEM noun roots can be decomposed in a series of functional projections, i.e., [FEMP [REFP [N]]]. MASC noun roots lack gender features altogether, namely [REFP [N]] (Baggio & Sudo 2022). To account for agreement, we adopt Caha’s (2023) approach to morphological concord, i.e., all nominal modifiers are assumed to have the same functional projections as nouns, and agreement markers can be taken to realise these projections¹, which is why we get an additional top layer. Take the lexical entry for *om* ‘man’ in (3). On top of the NP we find,

¹For reasons of space, we postpone the complete derivation including modifiers (i.e., adjectives and determiners) to the presentation.

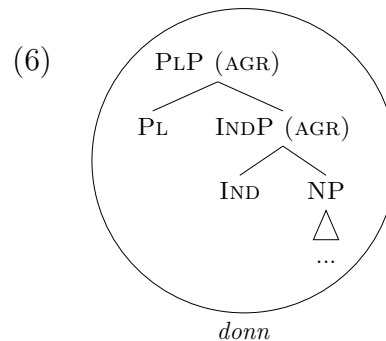
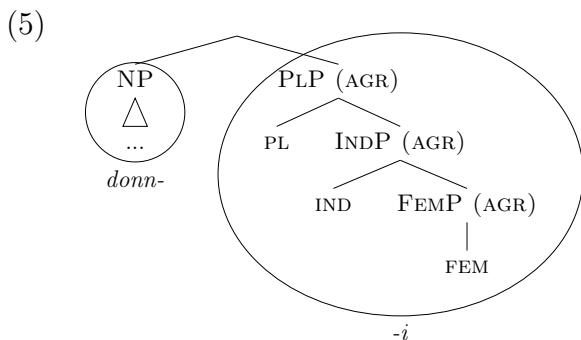
proceeding bottom-up, the features IND (*individuation*, i.e., SG), and PL. The lexicalisation of the structure follows the *Superset Principle* (Starke 2009), which states that the lexical entry associated with the tree can spell out any node contained in it as long as the featural hierarchy is respected. This explains why *om* in both *Piac* and *Lug* can also lexicalise the smaller structure [INDP(AGR)[NP]], i.e., the singular form.



To account for the similarities and differences between the two varieties with FEM nouns we rely on the concept of ‘root size’ (Starke 2014), i.e., while lexical items may have a rather complex internal structure, they may also ‘shrink’ in circumstances where they cannot spell out the entire syntactic structure. As shown in (4), both *Piac* and *Lug* have the same structural make-up² of the SG *donna*, i.e., the root

donn lexicalises NP while the suffix *a* spells out [INDP(AGR)[FEMP(AGR)]].

In contrast, the diverging PL forms are depicted in (5) and (6). In (5) the complex [PLP(AGR)[INDP(AGR)[FEMP(AGR)]] is spelled out by *i* in *Lug*. As for *Piac*, *donna* has the same structure given in (3) for *om*, but recall its NP has the structure [FEMP [REFP [N]]]. The difference between the two varieties thus lies in the size of the root of FEM nouns in the PL, which is structurally bigger in *Piac*.



5. Conclusions. Our proposal explains the asymmetry in nominal gender/number agreement in *Piac* and *Lug* from a theoretical perspective, using recent analytical devices developed in Nanosyntax. Essentially, diatopic variation is thus understood as root-size variation (Starke 2014). The general pattern found in *Piacentino* parallels the Gallic one. In contrast, *Lugagnanese* displays a suffix in PL FEM nouns, just like Italian, which is the *roof language* (Loporcaro 2009) this variety is in contact with. *Piacentino* has not been affected by this change probably because of its socio-linguistic prestige, being the variety spoken in the capital city of the province.

References: Baggio, P. & Sudo, Y. 2022. The Representation of Gender and Inflectional Class in Italian: A Reply to Kučerová 2018. *Linguistic Inquiry* 2022, 1-20. Caha, P. 2023. The Layered Structure of Concord: A Nanosyntactic Approach. In P. Caha, P. Rudnev & S. Toldova (eds.), *The Many Facets of Agreement*. Munich: LINCOM. Harley, H. & E. Ritter. 2002. Person and Number in Pronouns: A Feature-Geometric Analysis. *Language* 78, 482–526. Loporcaro, M. 2009. *Profilo linguistico dei dialetti italiani*. Roma/Bari: Laterza. Manzini, R. & Savoia, L. 2005. *I dialetti italiani e romanci. Morfosintassi generativa*. Volume III. Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso. Starke, M. 2009. Nanosyntax. A Short Primer to a New Approach to Language. In P. Svenonius, G. Ramchand, M. Starke & T. Taraldsen (eds.), *Nordlyd 36: Special issue on Nanosyntax*, 1–6. Tromsø: University of Tromsø. Starke, M. 2014. Towards elegant parameters: Language variation reduces to the size of lexically-stored trees. In M. C. Picallo (ed.), *Linguistic Variation in the Minimalist Framework*. 140-152. Oxford: Oxford Academic. Starke, M. 2018. Complex left branches, spellout, and prefixes. In L. Baunaz, K. De Clercq, L. Haegeman, & E. Lander (eds.), *Exploring Nanosyntax*, 239–249. Oxford: OUP. Taraldsen, K. T. 2009. Lexicalising Number and Gender in Lunigiana. *Nordlyd 36: Special issue on Nanosyntax*, 113–127. Tromsø: University of Tromsø.

²In Nanosyntax, structural movements are induced by the so-called ‘Spell-out Algorithm’ (Starke 2018). We presuppose the algorithm since we cannot discuss it in more detail for reasons of space.