

## Agreeing adverbial *troppo* across Italo-Romance: Preliminary remarks

**Background** The Italo-Romance grammatical tradition (e.g. Rohlfs 1969; Serianni 1997) classifies forms such as *troppo* ‘too much’, *molto* ‘much’, *poco* ‘little’, etc. and their cognates as both adjectives and adverbs of quantity. This paper focuses on their so-called adverbial uses across Italo-Romance, and particularly on their agreement patterns: rather than being invariable elements, as expected because of their adverbial category (and as found in Standard Italian), these forms may agree in number and gender with the adjective that they modify in many Italo-Romance varieties; no structural explanation is currently available for this phenomenon. Building on Corver (1997), I model these agreement patterns by means of an underlying structural difference: adverbs of quantity display  $\phi$  agreement if they head QP and do not display  $\phi$  agreement if they are merged as adjuncts to QP and I relate the variation in this agreement pattern to diachronic variation.

**Data** Agreeing adverbs of quantity in Italo-Romance have been documented for both contemporary and historical Italo-Romance varieties (Formentin 1987:66, Compagna 1990:210–211, and Ledgeway 2009:719–720 all focus on (historical) Neapolitan; Brambilla Ageno 1960:34; Rohlfs 1969:886,955; Crisma 2012:485); as two AIS maps (943, 944) are dedicated to adverbial *troppo*, see (1), here I restrict my attention to the latter, leaving a wider-range investigation for future research.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>(1) a. è trop-<b>a</b> pišinin-a (AIS 943, 250)<br/>is too-SG.F small-SG.F</p> | <p>è trop-<b>a</b> scü-a (AIS 944, 250)<br/>is too-SG.F dark-SG.F</p>   |
| <p>b. è trap-<b>a</b> stʰot-a (AIS 943, 817)<br/>is too-SG.F small-SG.F</p>       | <p>è trap-<b>a</b> ašcur-a (AIS 944, 817)<br/>is too-SG.F dark-SG.F</p> |

This pattern differs from what is found in both Standard Italian and other Italo-Romance varieties, as in (2); both patterns are well attested across the entire Italo-Romance domain.

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| <p>(2) è trop-<b>u</b> streyt-a (AIS 943, 169)<br/>is too-SG.M small-SG.F</p> | <p>è trop-<b>u</b> scü-a (AIS 944, 250)<br/>is too-SG.M dark-SG.F</p> |
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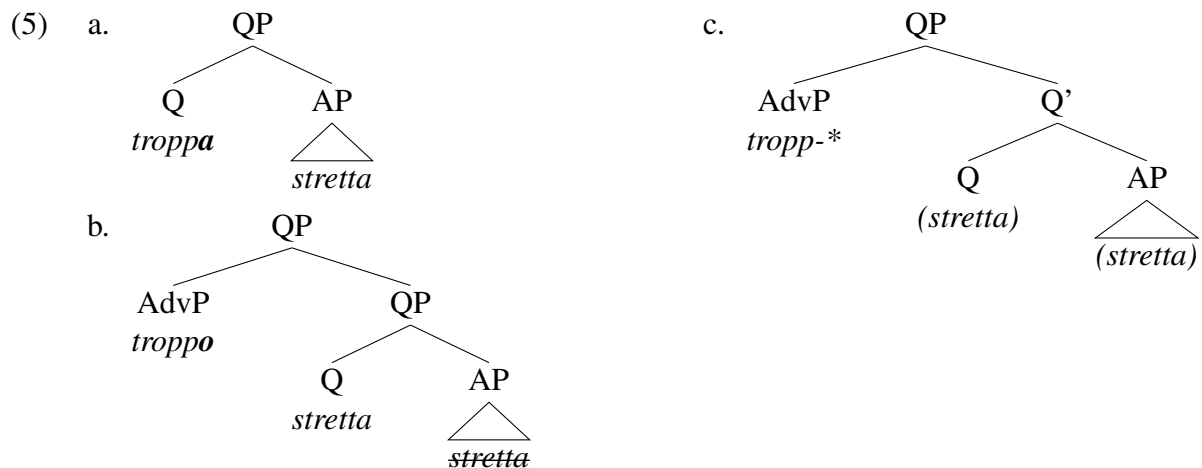
Interestingly,  $\phi$  agreement on adverbial *troppo* seems to be to some extent optional: this is shown e.g. by AIS for point 456, (3), but is also documented for historical varieties (the OVI records the agreeing version of adverbial *troppo* for about 80 different texts), as shown in (4):

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>(3) è trop / trop-<b>a</b> šträt-a (AIS 943, 456)<br/>is too-SG.M too-SG.F small-SG.F</p>                                                                                                         | <p>è trop / trop-<b>a</b><br/>is too.SG.M too.SG.F</p> |
| <p>bur-a (AIS 944, 456)<br/>dark-SG.F</p>                                                                                                                                                            |                                                        |
| <p>(4) Boccaccio, <i>Decameron</i> X, conclusions (ed. Branca)<br/>tropp-<b>a</b> lung-a consuetudine [...] tropp-<b>o</b> lung-a dimoranza<br/>too-SG.F long-SG.F use too-(SG.M) long-SG.F stay</p> |                                                        |

**Proposal** My proposal to capture this distribution tries to resolve the tension between the semantics of *troppo* and its (traditional) categorisation as an adverb. On the one hand, *troppo* quantificationally specifies that the property denoted by the adjective that it modifies is present to a degree that exceeds a(n implicit) point of reference; as such, on semantic grounds, it can be construed as a degree head of category Q (Corver 1997) that is merged in the functional spine of the NP–DP domain and selects for AP. Under this view, we can expect agreement; in this respect, I follow standard minimalist assumptions. On the other hand, however, *troppo* has clear adjunct-like properties, and most importantly it is not restricted to adjectival modification

but it can also combine with verbs and (plural and mass) nouns (in this sense, it is a “type C” expression in the sense of Doetjes 2008): its insensitivity to the categorial properties of the expression that it modifies suggests that *troppo* does not c-select at all, like a regular adverb. Under this view, agreement is ruled out.

I propose that these two radically different views of *troppo* are not truly at odds with each other, but are instead diachronically related along a cline of grammaticalisation and degammaticalisation. In fact, adjuncts are known to grammaticalise as heads (via a specifier step) in cyclical change (van Gelderen 2017; a.o.); likewise, adjectival modifiers cross-linguistically tend to develop into quantifiers or intensifiers, in patterns of adjectives used adverbially (Hummel 2017). More concretely, then, I propose that *troppo* is the Q head in varieties in which it agrees with the adjective that it modifies, (5a), and that it is an adjunct to QP in varieties in which it does not agree with the adjective, (5b). An intermediate position available to *troppo* in its grammaticalisation or degammaticalisation path is provided by Spec,QP, (5c): elements in this position are taken to show agreement with the modified adjective by Corver (1997). However, for agreement to hold, the adjective needs to be able to raise to the Q head (raising is independently motivated in these cases). I propose that varieties in which *troppo* optionally agrees with the adjective (see again (3)–(4)), *troppo* is either grammaticalising (from adjunct, no agreement; to head, agreement) or degammaticalising (from head, agreement; to adjunct, no agreement); crucially, the availability of both agreement patterns suggests that change is in progress. I take this to mean that speakers have two possible grammars, identical in all respects to the exception of the position of *troppo*: adjunct to QP or Spec,QP in grammar A and Q head or Spec,QP in grammar B. In grammar A (grammaticalisation), the adjective independently rose to Q (Corver 1997), hence *troppo* in Spec,QP can agree with it: hence we get both the agreeing (*troppo* in Spec,QP) and the non agreeing (*troppo* is an adjunct) pattern. Instead, in grammar B (degammaticalisation), Q is occupied by *troppo* in the conservative grammar and is not filled by the adjective in the innovative one: as such, *troppo* cannot agree with the adjective once it starts degammaticalising in Spec,QP, deriving the agreement optionality.



**References.** Brambilla Ageno 1960. Per il testo di Masuccio Salernitano. *Romance Philology* 14:28–42. ► Compagna 1990 (ed.). *Lupo de Spechio, Summa dei re di Napoli e Sicilia e dei re d’Aragona*. Liguori. ► Corver 1997. The internal syntax of the Dutch extended adjectival projection. *Nat. Lang. Linguist. Theory* 15: 289–368. ► Doetjes 2008. Adjectives and Degree Modification. In Kennedy & McNally (eds), *Adjectives and Adverbs: Syntax, Semantics, and Discourse*, 123–155). OUP. ► Formentin 1987 (ed.). *Francesco Galeota, Le lettere del «Colibeto»*. Liguori. ► van Gelderen 2019. Cyclical change and problems of projection. In Bouzouita *et al.* (eds), *Cycles in Language Change*, 13–32. OUP. ► Hummel 2017. Adjectives with adverbial functions in Romance. In Hummel & Valera (eds), *Adjective Adverb Interfaces in Romance*, 13–46. Benjamins. ► Ledgeway 2009. *Grammatica diacronica del napoletano*. Niemeyer. ► Rohlfs 1969. *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti* 3. Einaudi. ► Serianni 1997. *Italiano. Grammatica, sintassi, dubbi*. Garzanti.