Exceptional Agreement in Italian Pseudo-Relatives

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We propose that constituent pseudo-relatives (PRs) in Italian are headed by a null determiner, which is responsible for mediating an AGREE relation between the subject within the PR and external probes, in a fashion similar to suggestions for Long Distance Agreement (LDA) in Basque (Preminger 2009) and Tsez (Bjorkman and Zeijlstra 2015).

**Background:** PRs are finite constructions in which the subject appears before a che-clause with a subject gap (Radford 1977, Kayne 1975, Guasti 1988, Cinque 1992). Cinque argued that constituent PRs like (1) are structurally and semantically ambiguous. In one parse, he claims, the che-clause merely modifies the individuals described by the matrix subject (Carlo e Paolo) hence PL agreement. In the other parse, the whole PR is an event-denoting subject (hence SG agreement) which properly contains an embedded subject.

(1) [PR Carlo e Paolo che ballano il tango] è/sono un evento da non perdere.

‘Carlo and Paolo that dance-PRES the tango is/are an event to not miss.’

**Proposal:** We argue that, regardless of surface agreement, (1) has the same analysis: an event-denoting DP, headed by a null D\(_C\) containing a DP subject (DP\(_S\)) followed by a C’ predicate (2).

(2) [DP \(D_C\) [CP [DP\(_S\) Carlo e Paolo] [C’ che ballano ]]] \(\sim\) event-type

**Evidence:** Matrix PL agreement in (1) cannot be attributed to the fact that the construction is an individual-denoting expression because individual denoting expressions cannot be predicated by sono un evento (3), unlike the event-denoting noun destruction. (1) must be an event-denoting PR.

(3) [ #Carlo e Paolo] / [ La distruzione di Roma] sono/era un evento da non perdere.

‘Carlo and Paolo are an event not to miss.’

Similarly, (4) demonstrates that agreement is possible with the subject embedded inside the event-denoting PR. It is clear here that the verb seguono ‘follow’ relates the time of two events.

(4) [ Carlo e Paolo che ballano il tango] seguono sempre l’arrivo di Maria.

‘Carlo and Paolo dancing the tango always follows the arrival of Maria.’

Here then is a classic ‘syntax-semantics’ mismatch—the PR as a whole is the matrix subject, and yet its own subject can trigger matrix agreement in an exceptional way.

**Analysis:** DP\(_S\) bears the same case as the PR as whole does (pronominal subject data, not shown). We propose optional \(\phi\)-agreement piggy-backs on Case transmission. In the PL version of (1), D\(_C\) gets \(\phi\)-valued by DP\(_S\) (an option, since D\(_C\)’s own complement, a CP, lacks \(\phi\) features, Iatridou and Embick 1997). D\(_C\) then in turn values matrix T, giving LDA. The singular option arises when D\(_C\) takes on default 3SG. In both cases, however, Case is passed from T to D\(_C\) to DP\(_S\) (Reuland 1983).

(5) a. T ... [DP \(D_C\) [CP [DP\(_S\) Carlo e Paolo] che ... ]]

Plural version of (1)

b. T ... [DP \(D_C\) [CP [DP\(_S\) Carlo e Paolo] che ... ]]

Singular version of (1)