

Left-right asymmetries in Romance adjectives

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1. Theoretical approaches to adjunction/modification

Two major solutions are available.

- LCA/cartographic solution (Kayne 1994): adjunction is eradicated and adjunction configurations are reduced to head, Spec
- two Merge rules (Chomsky 2004): Set Merge (henceforth Merge) is the familiar rule forming labelled sets, reserved for complementation and edge configurations. A more complex rule, Pair Merge, forms ordered pairs (modification, i.e. predicate composition).

In both solutions adjunction comes at a cost.

- LCA/cartographic solution: (i) having to postulate as many heads as there are adjunct Specs, where these heads are otherwise unmotivated; (ii) having to postulate semantically vacuous movements (Chomsky 2001) for the sole purpose of deriving word order variation (remnant, roll-up, etc.)
- Pair Merge solution: (i) two rules of Merge; (ii) a SIMPL operation as part of EXT, “that converts $\langle \alpha, \beta \rangle$ to $\{\alpha, \beta\}$ ” (Chomsky 2004), i.e. Pair merge to Set Merge, prior to linearization.

2. Data

- some As must be postnominal, while other As can be pre-or postnominal
- As that occur closest to N in English, such as relational As (e.g. *electric*), are necessarily postnominal (1a)-(1b).
- the order of prenominal As is not reproduced postnominally. Rather, the two orders mirror one another (1c)-(1d).

- (1)
- *una nuova elettrica macchina
a new electric car
 - una nuova macchina elettrica
a new car electric
'a new electric car'
 - una macchina elettrica nuova
a car electric new
'a new electric car'
 - *una macchina nuova elettrica
a car new electric

3. Cinque (2010, 2014)

As can enter a lower configuration of *direct modification as APs* – or a higher configuration of embedding as *reduced relative clauses (RCs)*, fig 1.

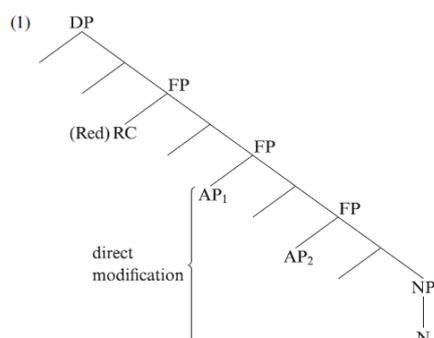


Fig. 1

NP moves to the left of some direct modification *APs*, though not necessarily all. The modified *NP* then moves to the left of *RCs*. At the end of the derivation postnominal *As* are either *APs* or *RC*, while prenominal *As* are only *APs*, fig 2.

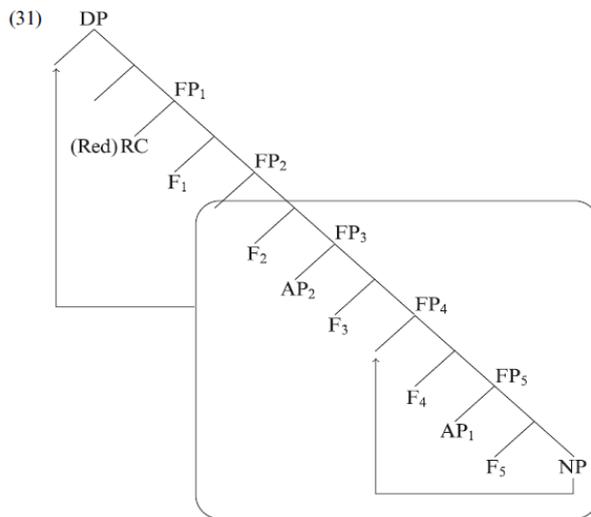


Fig . 2

4. Semantic evidence?

- In Italian, prenominal adjectives are always direct modification adjectives. This corresponds to the fact that they are only non-predicative (non-restrictive, non-intersective, individual level).
- postnominal adjectives can in principle be direct modification adjectives or reduced relatives. Therefore they are systematically ambiguous between predicative (intersective, restrictive, stage-level) and non-predicative meanings.

Consider *stupendo ballerino* ‘beautiful dancer’; one can actually get both the subjective meaning and the intersective one, as in (2). That the prenominal position in Italian can host intersective adjectives is independently also motivated by adjectives like *grande* ‘big’ to be intersective and context-dependent, rather than non-intersective.

- (2) a. Ho visto uno stupendo ballerino al bar – biondo, alto, muscoloso
I.have seen a beautiful dancer at-the bar: blond, tall, muscular
- b. Ho visto uno stupendo ballerino in Giselle – tecnicamente perfetto ed espressivo
I.have seen a beautiful dancer in Giselle: technically perfect and expressive

Adjectives which normally occur in prenominal position in Italian restrict the meaning of the noun they modify. This is true of the description of lost property in (3a) where indication of size is restrictive, as of (3b), where not any possible candidate is young, but the modifier restricts the noun in this sense.

- (3) a. Ho smarrito una piccola/grande valigia di marca Samsonite ...
I-have lost a small/big bag of brand Samsonite ...
- b. Il nostro candidato ideale è un giovane studioso italiano ...
the our candidate ideal is a young scholar Italian ...

Finally, several participial adjectives, which are obviously stage-level, can occur prenominally, as in (4).

- (4) a. C'erano pochi annoiati presenti
there were few bored participants

- b. la sorridente signora alla tua destra
‘the smiling woman on your right’

5. Evidence at PHON

French *liaison*:

- (5) a. les_amis (Det-N: obligatory liaison for all registers)
‘the friends’
b. mauvais_amis (adjective-N: very strong tendency for liaison)
‘bad friends’
c. #amis_anglais (N-adjective: weak tendency)
‘English friends’ Bouchard (1998: 150-151)

Similar judgements are replicated by Rizzi and Savoia (1993), Manzini and Savoia (2017) for /u/ propagation in South Italian varieties, involving masculine gender.

Differential plural marking (Manzini, Savoia, Baldi 2018, 2020, 2021): prenominal As pattern with Ds and postnominal As with Ns, independently of the particular morphology being instantiated.

- (6) a. **o-s** **primeir-o-s** livr-o
(DEF)M-PL first-M-PL book-M
‘the first books’
b. o-s **livr-o** **bonit-o**
(DEF)M-PL book-M good-M
‘the nice books’ Brazilian Portuguese (Costa and Figueiredo Silva 2002)
- (7) a. **l-a** **picol-a** cès-e-s
the-F small-F house-F-PL
‘the little houses’
b. l-a **cès-e-s** **picol-e-s**
the-F house-F-PL small-F-PL
‘the little houses’ Ladin (Rasom 2008)

Data of the relevant kind occur beside dialectal Brazilian Portuguese (originally Naro and Scherre) and Ladin, also in Walloon (Bernstein 1993), Occitan (Pomino & Stark 2009) and several Italo-Romance varieties (Manzini and Savoia 2005), see also Bonet (2018) for Catalan.

E.g. Cyrino and Espinal (2019:32) "In the case of (54b) [= (4b)] we have to assume that N moves to a higher position above the specifier position of the functional projection corresponding to the adjective. *At the post-syntactic linearization level the pluralized noun c-commands the adjective, and therefore overt exponence of the plural marker at Spell-out is predicted*". This does not follow from Fig. 2.

6. Pair Merge

Abels and Neeleman (2012) assume that As are Pair Merged with N. Precedence is not encoded in core syntax (Chomsky 2013), linearization of A to right or left of N is introduced at PHON. According to Abels and Neeleman, it is stipulated of every treelet (N, A), according to the semantic class of A. This is insufficient if left/right asymmetries at PHON correspond to a c-command (search domain) divide (Cyrino-Espinal) or to a phase divide (Manzini et al).

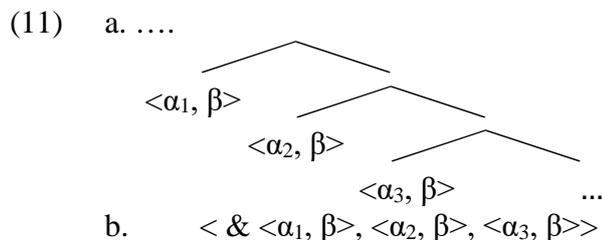
In order to deal with (9) Chomsky (2020: 49-52) introduces a notion of Pair Merge sequence: “we’re forming a sequence which begins with some conjunction, and then contains elements, each of which is predicated of something. So we have a sequence of elements that looks like [10], with links L_i ”. In turn, “L for nominal sequences is just n , the categorizer of each of the coordinated phrases”.

- (9) a. a young man
b. a happy young man

(10) < CONJ, < S₁, L₁ >, ... , < S_n, L_n >>

No Pair Merge analysis has been worked out specifically for Romance As.

I take (11a) as a tree/labelled bracketing notation for (11b). The conjunction operator could perhaps be a contribution of the SEM interface. Labelled brackets and trees are displayed linearly; in order to be able to use them at all I adopt the convention of notating higher constituent to the left of lower ones.



7. Postnominal As

The position closest to N of obligatorily postnominal relational, color, shape As suggests that they are merged lowest in the NP. This suggests Pair Merge with the Root R (Fabregas 2020, Newell 2021 for relational As). Extending Pair Merge with the root R to any postnominal A, we obtain (12).

(12) [RP [R <nuova, macchina> [R <elettrica, macchina>]] di Gianni]

SIMPL applies as part of externalization, normalizing the structure to a Set Merge one, (13a). As Italian is a head-initial language, the N head is leftmost, and the remaining order is simply determined by c-command, (13b).

(13) a. [_{nP} n [_{NP} [_N nuova [_N elettrica [_N macchina]]] di Gianni]]
 b. macchina > elettrica > nuova > di Gianni

As are lower than PP complements, yielding the precedence order N - A* - PP*.

(14) a. una macchina elettrica (*di Gianni) nuova
 a car electric of Gianni new
 'a new electric car (of Gianni's)'
 b. una macchina (*di Gianni) elettrica nuova
 a car of Gianni electric new
 'a new electric car (of Gianni's)'

Entire APs can also be Pair Merged with the Link in a sequence.

(15) a. una macchina elettrica capace di 200km/h di Gianni
 a car electric capable of 200km/h of Gianni
 b. [RP [R <capace di 200km/h, R> [R <elettrica, R>]] di Gianni]
 c. [_{nP} n [_{NP} [_N capace di 200 km/h [_N elettrica [_N macchina]]] di Gianni]]
 d. macchina > elettrica > capace di 200 km/h > di Gianni

However phrasal APs and PPs freely reorder. Perhaps we can invoke focusing & topicalization at the vP edge.

(16) a. una macchina grigia (per la polvere) di Gianni
 a car grey with dust of Gianni
 b. una macchina di Gianni grigia *(per la polvere)
 a curtain of the living room grey with dust

8. Prenominal As

Prenominal As (which in any event exclude lowest As) are Pair Merged with the nominalizer and phase head *n*.

- (17) a. una nuova grossa/grossa nuova macchina di Gianni
a new big/big new car of Gianni's
b. [_{nP} <grossa, n> [_{nP} <nuova, n> [_{nP} <macchina, n> [_{RP} macchina di Gianni]]]]

Under the operation SIMPL, Pair Merge structures are normalized to Set Merge ones.

- (18) [_{DP} una [_{nP} grossa [_{nP} NUOVA [_{nP} n [_{NP} macchina di Gianni]]]]]

Why is the A*- n string ordered leftwards? Part of the answer is that *prenominal As in Italian are themselves just heads*. English bars prenominal APs with complements modifiers to the right (Emonds 1976, Williams 1982, Sheehan 2017); however it allows all forms of left branch recursion. The Italian counterparts are generally ungrammatical. The only form of degree modification allowed in prenominal position is the relative superlative. (One way to get rid of the exception represented by the superlative (20c) would be to say that the degree quantifier *più* 'more, most' is attached on the main functional spine of the NP).

- (19) a. a very/surprisingly new car
b. a more/less famous linguist than Chomsky
c. the most famous linguist in Italy
(20) a. *una molto/certamente vecchia macchina
a very old car
a'. una vecchissima macchina
a very-old car
b. *un più/meno famoso linguista (di Chomsky)
a more/less famous linguist (than Chomsky)
c. il più famoso linguista in Italia
the most famous linguist in Italy

In the precedence statements (21), heads, understood as minimal projections, whether they do or do not label, must precede phrasal complements, hence in this instance NP.

- (21) *n* > NP by head - complement
A > NP by head - complement
A > *n* by c-command

Next, the question arise whether prenominal As are the only *n* modifiers, or *n* modifiers can also be postnominal. Consider phrasal APs. Pair Merge sequences with Link *n* look like (22), their normalized structure at the PHON interface like (23).

- (22) [_{nP} <[molto vecchia], n> [_{nP} <macchina, n> [_{RP} macchina]]]]
(23) [_{nP} [_{AP} molto vecchia] [_{nP} n [_{NP} macchina]]]]

The linearization statements that force the precedence order N - AP can be summarized as in (24), i.e. heads precede phrases and phrases are ordered amongst themselves c-command.

- (24) *n* > NP by head - complement
n > AP by head - complement
NP > AP by c-command

9. Differential plural marking

Cyrino & Espinal (2019: 19) assume two parameters for one distribution

- (i) the PLURALIZER is a syntactic adjunct to D: A constraint applies whereby “if X (that is, a pluralized D) c-commands Y (that is, N or A), which in its turn c-commands Z (N or A), *plural marking maybe overt on X alone, on X-Y, on X-Y-Z, but not on X-Z*”. Languages like Italian or BP are instances of this pattern.
- (ii) Languages like Fassano display a marked parameter value whereby PLURALIZER is adjoined to n

Manzini, Savoia and Baldi (2018, 2020, 2021) point out that all approaches fail to apply to languages which on the hand display exactly the same structural divide as Ladin or BP, but on the other hand realize two different plurals.

- (25) a. **l-i** **bjel-i** fēmin-i-s
 the-PL nice-PL woman-PL-PL
 ‘the nice women’
- b. l-i **fēmin-i-s** **vɛtʃ-i-s**
 the-PL woman-PL-PL old-PL-PL
 ‘the old women’
- Montereale (Friulian)

In Chomsky (2007), the notion of phase is tied up with externalization – on externalization effects of phases cf. D’Alessandro and Roberts 2008 on perfect participle agreement, D’Alessandro & Scheer 2015 on phonosyntax.

- (26) DPM: Externalization parameter (Manzini et al.)
 Within the DP, occurrences of the φ -feature (set) F, are externalized
- (i) uniformly throughout
 - (ii) uniformly in each Spell-Out domain

10. Interaction of As syntax and the DPM parameter

Prediction: Uniform realization of phi-features morphology characterizes the complement of *n*, namely NP including N and As adjoined to N, i.e. postnominal As. The remaining portion of the DP can display a different externalization – including *n*, As adjoined to *n*, and D.

(27)		D/Q	A		N	A	
(a)		-s	-s		-	-	BP
(b)	(F)	-i	-i		-i-s	-i-s	Friulian
(c)	(F)	-	-		-e-s	-e-s	Ladin
(d)		-s	-s		-	-	<i>liaison</i>

Which externalization (e.g. sigmatic vs. non-sigmatic) is immaterial.

- (28) a. [DP OS [n_P **primeiros** [n_P *n* [NP **livro**]]]] BP
 b. [DP OS [n_P *n* [NP **livro bonito**]]]
- (29) a. [DP li [n_P **bjeli** [n_P *n* [NP **fēminis**]]]] Friulian
 b. [DP li [n_P *n* [NP **fēminis vɛtʃis**]]]

Problem 1: Shifting phase borders I

The data reported so far are partially idealized. The prenominal As can in fact pattern with N.

- (30) a. o-s **primeir-o** **livr-o** BP
 (DEF)MPL first-M book-M
 ‘the first books’
- b. l-i **bjel-is** **fēmin-is** Friulian
 the-PL nice-FPL woman-FPL
 ‘the nice women’

- (31) *Colonnata* (M&S, Cavirani 2018) Lunigianese
- a. **kiʎa bonja/belja** ðona
ʎa nɔʃtrja ka
- b. kiʎa **brava ðonna**
- c. kiʎa ðona granda
that-PL woman big
- Filattiera* (M&S)
- a. **kja beja** ðona
- b. kja **brava ðona**
- c. ja skarpa niva
ja kamiza fata d lana
- Caprio* (Restori1892)
- a. **ja beja** бага ‘the beautiful berries’
- Ameilia* (Cavirani 2018)
- a. **stja beja** antʃuga ‘these beautiful anchovies’

I assume that grammars where prenominal As pattern with N (as opposed to D) reveal a more complex n phase structure, where the n^* phase head is separate from the n segment to which As attach.

- (32) a. [DP OS [_{n*P} n^* [_{nP} primero [_{NP} livro]]]
- b. [DP li [_{n*P} n^* [_{nP} bjelis [_{NP} feminis]]]

Problem 2: Shifting phase borders II

It is possible for N to patterns with D (and prenominal A) against postnominal A.

- (33) a. **L-a cès-a** picol-es Ladin (Rasom 2008)
the-F house-F small-FPL
‘The small houses of Fassa.’
- b. **essas estradas** nova BP (Scherre 2001)
‘these new roads’

We assume that given the inheritance Pair $\langle n, R \rangle$, the position where the Noun is realized is n , rather than R (i.e. ‘head movement takes place’).

- (34) [DP kela [_{nP} femena [_{NP} N vetʃes]]]

Problem 3: Is discontinuity attested?

As the configuration in (35) is allowed, shouldn’t we observe discontinuous patterns, including D and postnominal A and excluding the central part of the DP? Descriptions of the phenomena (e.g. Scherre 2001) categorically exclude this pattern, cf. Cyrino and Espinal, quoted above.

- (35) [**D** [_{nP} [_{NP} N] **AP**]]

Let us look at an actual example under the hypothetical assumption that the AP is Pair Merged with n . (36b) is the normalized structure – assuming that v is the phase head determining the closing off of the n phase.

- (36) a. ja kamiza fata d lana Filattiera (Lunigiana)
the-PL shirt made of wool
- b. ... v ... [DP ja [_{nP} [_{NP} kamisa] [_{AP} fata d lana]]]

I assume that APs have an internal structure like (37a). The idea is that the v phase head closes both the AP complement of a and the NP complement of n sealing them off morphologically.

- (37) a. [_{aP} [_{AP} fata d lana]]
- b. ... v ... [DP ja [_{nP} [_{NP} kamisa] [_{aP} [_{AP} fata d lana]]]]

This may also encompass (38)-(39).

- (38) a. **laŋ** buti λ a **pleŋa(ŋ)** (da viŋ) Casaccia (Val Bregaglia, CH)
the bottle-PL full-PL of wine
b. l eŋ dona guluza(ŋ) da viŋ
they are woman greedy-PL of wine
- (39) a. **ki λ a** δ ona granda/b ϵ lja Colonnata (Lunigiana)
that-PL woman big/nice-PL
b. a \int eŋ novja/nowa
they are new-PL/new

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