

On Case marking of PRO in Italian

Cecchetto and Oniga (2004) – whose concern is specifically with Latin - take sentences (1) and (2) to show that PRO bears regular case in Italian and a Null Case approach should be dispensed with.

- (1) a. (Io) promisi [di PRO essere io/*me il vincitore]
I promised COMPL to-be I / *me the winner
'I guaranteed that the winner would be me'
b. (Io) ordinai a lui [di PRO essere me/*io nel film]
I ordered to him COMPL to-be me/*I in-the movie
'I asked him to play me in the movie'
- (2) a. (Io) dissi a lui [di PRO essere io nel film]
I told to him COMPL to-be I in-the movie
'I told him that the person in the movie was me'
b. (Io) dissi a lui [di essere me nel film]
I told to him COMPL to-be me in-the movie
'I told him to play me in the movie'

The authors propose that the case on the pronoun in the embedded clause in (1), (2) ultimately comes from the Controller (via the mediation of PRO). Hence, in Subject control contexts (1a) the Nominative form of the pronoun “*io*” surfaces, while in an oblique control context like (1b) the accusative form is used “*me*”. The authors further show that with a verb like “*dire*” (‘to say’) (2), which allows for both a subject control and an object control complement both a NOM and an ACC pronoun are grammatical.

The analysis of (1b), (2b) as Case transmission structures is questionable.

-The verb “*essere*” (‘to be’) in (1b), (2b) is used transitively with the meaning “to play”, “to interpret”. The accusative object in fact also surfaces in finite matrix clauses too, where no Case transmission can be postulated. ACC is assigned by the verb “*essere*” (‘to be’).

- (4) Nel prossimo film di Gianni, tu sarai me/*io
In-the next movie of Gianni, you will-be me/*I
'In the next movie by Gianni, you will play me'

- The controller in (1b), (2b) is a PP, but the authors “do not discuss whether and how the whole PP *a lui* is assigned dative” (Cecchetto and Oniga (2004: 145, fn. 3)) “since it is irrelevant for our purposes” (ibid.). What matters is that “*lui* checks accusative through the preposition *a*” (ibid.). However, if the PP is cliticized, the clitic is dative marked, as shown is (5), but the pronoun in the embedded clause can still only be Accusative marked.

- (5) Io gli ordinai di [PRO essere me/*a me/*essergli nel film]
I to-him ordered COMPL to-be me/ to me/ to be.to-me in-the movie
'I asked him to play me in the movie'

I conclude that the structures in (1b), (2b) cannot be analyzed as Case transmission structures and therefore PRO cannot be taken to be ACC marked in these sentences. Since Nominative is the default

Case in Italian, the NOM on the embedded clause pronoun in (1a) and (2a) is expected under both a Case transmission analysis and under a Null Case approach to PRO.

References

Cecchetto, C. and R. Oniga. 2004. A challenge to null Case theory. *Linguistic Inquiry* 35:141–149.