

Language Use and Linguistic Structure

Proceedings of the Olomouc Linguistics Colloquium 2023

Edited by Markéta Janebová, Michaela Čakányová, and Joseph Emonds

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Edited by Markéta Janebová, Michaela Čakányová, and Joseph Emonds

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Table of Contents

Alphabetical List of Authors	7
Acknowledgements	8
<i>Markéta Janebová, Michaela Čakányová, and Joseph Emonds</i>	
Introduction	9
<i>Markéta Janebová, Michaela Čakányová, and Joseph Emonds</i>	
Part I. Explorations in Morphology and Syntax	
Deriving Rationale Clauses: Infinitives and Imperatives	12
<i>Irina Burukina</i>	
A Note on Verum Focus in Tigrinya	24
<i>Gioia Cacchioli</i>	
Subjects of Verbs of Perception and Cognition in Czech	42
<i>Michaela Čakányová</i>	
Universal Syntactic Features of Open Categories	53
<i>Joseph Embley Emonds</i>	
Rethinking Null Expletives in Mandarin Chinese	64
<i>Chang Liu</i>	
The Neutral Case System of English	80
<i>Mark Newson and Krisztina Szécsényi</i>	
Split Inflection on Internominal Adjectives	92
<i>Feras Saeed</i>	
The Case Morpho-syntax in Aromanian (Southern Albania): Descriptive and Theoretical Aspects	109
<i>Leonardo M. Savoia and Benedetta Baldi</i>	
Part II. Explorations in Semantics and Pragmatics	
Few ≠ Not Many	127
<i>Peter Hallman</i>	
Predicative and Argumental Demonstratives as Clausal Proforms in Hungarian	138
<i>Péter Szűcs</i>	
Contrastive Uses Reconsidered: The Case of Hungarian Exophoric Demonstratives	151
<i>Enikő Tóth and Péter Csatár</i>	

A Note on Speech Act Recursion.....	165
<i>Tue Trinh</i>	

Part III. Explorations in Language Acquisition and Processing

Word-Stress and the Minimal Word Constraint in English.....	177
<i>Csaba Csides</i>	

The Distributive and Cumulative Readings Acquisition: Experimental Evidence from Czech.....	193
<i>Mojmír Dočekal and Žaneta Šulíková</i>	

Determining Argument Structure Variants by Numerical Optimization.....	210
<i>Krisztina Szécsényi and Tibor Szécsényi</i>	

Distinguishing Compositional and Non-Compositional Verbal Complexes: A Corpus-Based Approach.....	224
<i>Tibor Szécsényi and Lívia Gyulai</i>	

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The Case Morpho-syntax in Aromanian (Southern Albania): Descriptive and Theoretical Aspects

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Abstract: The Aromanian varieties spoken in southern Albania show a restricted system of case morphology including a specialized oblique inflection in the plural of definite nouns and, partially, in the feminine singular. The oblique forms occur in genitive, dative, and complex locative prepositions where they are introduced by the Possessive Introducer (PI). Pronouns have the same distribution, with some restrictions in relation to the person, whereby a limited DOM appears, which differentiates first/second person elements and third person elements. We adopt the idea that morphology is based on Merge within the syntactic computation and that sub-word elements are provided with interpretable content. This approach, inspired by Chomsky's recent work, will guide us in the analysis of the distribution of inflections, syncretism and the occurrence of oblique and prepositions.

Keywords: nominal paradigms, oblique case, syncretism, prepositions, Aromanian

1. Introduction

This work addresses the nominal paradigm and the case system of the Aromanian¹ varieties spoken in southern Albania,² more precisely the variety of Myzeqeja (Musachia), Rëmën, and that of the Gjirokastër and Korça areas, Fërshërot (in Fig. 1, the circles in the map indicate the two Southern Albania areas where the data analyzed were collected).³ In Aromanian, oblique forms are characterized by a specialized inflection (Capidan 1932, Caragiu Marioțeanu 1975, Poçi 2009), although generally

1 In Northern Macedonia and Albania, Aromanian has the status of a linguistic minority with the legal forms of protection. As other heritage languages, its transmission and use involve family members, friends, or the village circle, and are influenced by contact with Albanian, the public language (Stoica 2021). This explains the variability that characterizes the answers of our informants. Although the data collected specifically for this work at the beginning of July 2023 are largely consistent within each system and with data collected in previous occasions, a little margin of variability of speakers emerges, generally implying optional or parallel possibilities in each grammar.

2 As regards the geographical diffusion and number of Aromanian speakers, see Caragiu Marioțeanu (1975, 2016) and Capidan (1932). Stoica (2021), provides an important sociolinguistic investigation based on a number of oral histories collected through interviews with Aromanian informants of the region of Korça.

3 The data we discuss have been collected through field research in Myzeqeja (Libofshë, L), Rëmën, and in the region of Korça (Plasë, P), Fërshërot. We did several field surveys in the Aromanian communities, the last of which was on 4-8 July 2023. The use of the face-to-face interview explains the variability in the answers of our informants. Anyway, the data collected for this work at the beginning of July 2023 are consistent within each system and with data collected in previous investigations; a little variability generally implies optional or parallel possibilities in each grammar. We are very grateful to our informants, among others, Piro Mistaku for Libofshë, and Wilma Veriga for Korça-Plasë. They all agreed to collaborate and made a substantial contribution to the research, providing suggestions, comments and grammaticality judgments that greatly improved our understanding of phenomena.

limited to the definite plural and to the singular exponent *-i*. In addition, oblique contexts require in any case the possessive introducer (PI), thus unlike Romanian, thus differing from the old Rumanian (cf. Pană Dindelegan et al. 2019, Maiden et al. 2021). Caragiu Marioțeanu (1975, 237) assimilates these constructs to those of other Romance languages where dative and genitive require a prepositional introducer. However, as noticed, Aromanian presents a specialized inflection in some contexts. This particular morphology, which we descriptively label “case”, provides a test bench for the nature of this category, its role in syntax, and its relationship with the other inflectional properties. In this paper we assume that enclitic exponents (traditionally called ‘articles’) are inflectional elements (cf. Giurgea 2013). Initially in the generative literature these elements were considered clitics and identified with a functional head to which the noun moves giving rise to left-incorporation (Dobrovie-Sorin 1987, Giusti 1993); however, subsequent works, cf. Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Giusti 1998, Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2006, agree on their inflectional status. Indeed, as discussed and motivated by Ledgeway (2017), the inflectional nature of these formatives is clearly supported by their distribution. Indeed, post-nominal exponents cannot be separated from the root and their paradigm subsumes gender, number (and residually case) as generally the nominal paradigms of Latin and the other ancient and modern Romance varieties.

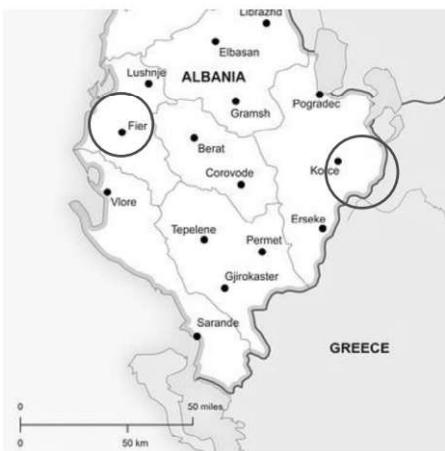


Figure 1.

The two Southern Albania areas where the data analyzed were collected.

2. Nominal and Pronominal Paradigms in Two Varieties

Nominal paradigms differentiate the direct form occurring in nominative or accusative contexts, from the oblique form. The latter shows a specialized inflection only in a subset of nouns and, however, requires to be introduced by the PI. In what follows, we collate the systems of direct and oblique definite and indefinite forms, in the singular and in the plural. The data of Libofshë in (1a,b) illustrate the singular direct forms: (a) exemplifies the definite form, with the so-called enclitic article, while (b) exemplifies the indefinite form preceded by the indefinite article *un/unə* “a/one”. (2a,b) illustrate the same alternations in plural contexts. The oblique contexts, for definite and indefinite forms are provided in (3a,b) for the singular and in (4a,b) for the plural. Genitive and dative contexts are introduced by the PI. In some Aromanian varieties, this morphological element is combined with a morpheme agreeing with the embedded noun, as in Libofshë. In the glosses the inflectional exponents have the following descriptive labels: *-u* = MSG/OBL, *-a* = FSG, *-ə/l-* = DEF, *-i* = PL/SG/OBL, *-ur-* = OBL.PL. The nature of the inflections will be reconsidered in subsequent sections.

(1)

- a. ari vənit / am vədzut fitʃor-**u** / fet-**a**
 (s)he.has come / I.have seen boy-SG.DEF / girl-FSG.DEF
 “the boy / the girl has come” / “I have seen the boy / the girl”
- b. ari vənit / am vədzut un fitʃor / unə fet-ə
 (s)he.has come / I.have seen a boy / a girl-FSG
 “the/a boy/man/girl has come” / “I have seen the/a boy/girl” Libofshë

(2)

- a. arə vənit / am vədzut fitʃor-**ʌ**-**i** / fet(ə)-**I**-**i**
 they.have come / I.have seen boy-DEF-PL / girl-DEF-PL
 “the boys/men/girls have come” / “I have seen the boys/men/girls”
- b. arə vənit / am vədzut mults fitʃor-**i** / mult fet-**i**
 they.have come / I.have seen many.PL boy(-PL) / many girl-PL
 “many boys/girls have come” / “I have seen many boys/girls” Libofshë

(3)

- a. i o ded **o** fitʃor-**u** / **o** bərbat-**u** / **a** li fet-**i**
 to.him/her it I.gave PI boy-MSG / PI man-MSG / PI girl-OBL
 “I gave it to the boy / the man / the girl”
- b. i o ded **o** un fitʃor / **o** un bərbat / **a** (**li**) un fet-**i**
 to.him/her it I.gave PI a boy / PI a man / PI a girl-OBL
 “I gave it to a boy / a man / a girl” Libofshë

(4)

- a. i o ded **o** fitʃor-**ʌ**-**u** / **o** bərbats-**ur**-**u** / **o** fet-**ʌ**-**u**
 to.them it I.gave PI boy-DEF-OBL / PI men.PL-DEF.OBL.PL / PI girl-PL-OBL
 “I gave it to the boys / the men / the girls”
- b. i o ded **o** ts-**uər** fitʃor(-**ʌ**)-**i** / **o** doi bərbats / **o** mult fet-**i**
 to.them it I.gave PI that-OBL.PL boy-DEF-PL / PI two man.PL / PI many girl-PL
 “I gave it to these boys / to two men / to many girls” Libofshë

A similar distribution appears in the Korça-Plasë variety in (5)–(8), where the plural oblique has the exponent *-or*. The feminine has the exponent *-i* in the plural and the singular oblique. The result is that in the singular, *-i* can be doubled in definite forms, as in (8a); besides, it is plural in definite forms, as in (6a,b). Definite singular forms insert *-u* in the masculine and *-a* in the feminine singular, in (5a), while in the plural the exponent *-l* occurs, palatalized in *-j* in the masculine, in (6a). Unlike Rëmën, in Fërshërot the indefinite article has the oblique inflection *-ui* in the masculine and *-ei* in the feminine, which is combined with the indefinite forms of masculine nouns or the inflected oblique of feminine nouns, in (7b).

(5)

- a. vini / vidzui fətʃor-**u** / bərbat-**u** / fjat-**a**
 (s)he came / I.saw boy-SG.DEF / man-MSG.DEF / girl-FSG.DEF
- b. vini / vidzui un fitʃor / un bərbat / unə fjat-ə
 (s)he came / I.saw a boy / a man / a girl-FSG
 “the/a boy/man/girl came” / “I saw the/a boy/man/girl” Korça-Plasë

(6)

- a. 'vinərə / vidzui fətfor-**jə** / bərbats-**jə** / fet-**i-l-i**
 they.came / I.saw boy-PL.DEF / man- PL.DEF / girl-PL-DEF-PL
 “the boys/men/girls came” / “I saw the boys/men/girls”
- b. 'vinərə / vidzui mults fitfor / mults bərbats / mult-**i** fet-**i**
 they.came / I.saw many.PL boy / many man.PL / many.PL girl-PL
 “many boys/men/girls came” / “I saw many boys/men/girls” Korça-Plasë

(7)

- a. i det **a (t) fitfor-u** / a bərbat- **u** / a fet-**i-i**
 to.him/her I.gave PI boy-MSG.DEF / PI man-MSG.DEF / PI girl-OBL-OBL
 “I gave it to the boy / the man / the girl”
- b. i det **a un-ui fitfor** / a un-**ui** bərbat / a un-**ei** fyat-**i**
 to.him/her I.gave PI a-OBL.MSG boy / PI a-OBL.MSG man / PI a-OBL.FSG girl-OBL
 “I gave it to a boy/a man/ a girl” Korça-Plasë

(8)

- a. lə det **a fitfor-l-or** / a bərbats-**l-or** / a fet-**i-l-or**
 to.them I.gave PI boy-DEF-PL.OBL / PI men-DEF-PL.OBL / PI girl-PL-DEF-PL.OBL
 “I gave it to the boys / the men / the girls”
- b. lə det **a doi fitfor-l-or** / a doi bərbats-**l-or** / a dau fet-**i-l-or**
 to.them I.gave PI two boy-DEF-PL.OBL / PI two man-DEF-PL.OBL / PI two girl-PL- DEF-PL.OBL
 “I gave it to two boys / to two men / to two girls” Korça-Plasë

A particularly extensive syncretism of *-i* emerges, which occurs in indefinite singular direct and indirect forms, and in the direct singular and plural. We synthesize the data concerning the distribution of inflections in tables (9) and (10). In (c) the distribution of PIs is provided.

(9) a. *Definite paradigm*

	MSG	FSG	MPL	FPL
Nom/Acc contexts	-u	-a	(Pal/ʌ)-i	(-l/ʌ)-i
Dat/Gen contexts	-u	-i	-ʌ-u/ (Pal)-ur-u/-y-u	u/ʌ/l-u/-y-u-r-

b. *Indefinite paradigm*

	MSG	FSG	MPL	FPL
Nom/Acc contexts	∅	-ə	Pal/(-i)	-i
Dat/Gen contexts	∅	-i	∅/Pal/i	-i
c. PI:	o / __ N _{MSG} ,	ali / __ N _{FSG} ,	o / __ N _{PL}	Rämën (Libofshë)

Table (10) summarizes the data in (5)–(8). (10c) provides the PI paradigm.

(10)	a.	<i>Definite paradigm</i>		
		MSG	FSG	MPL
Nom/Acc contexts	-u	-a	-je	i/ə-l-i
Dat/Gen contexts	-u	-i-i	-l-or/l-u	i-l-or/l-u
b.		<i>Indefinite paradigm</i>		
		MSG	FSG	MPL
Nom/Acc contexts	∅	-ə/-e	Pal/∅	-i
Dat/Gen contexts	∅	-i	-l-or/l-u	i-l-or/l-u
c. PI:	(li) / <u>N_{FSG}</u> , a(l) / <u>N_{MSG}</u> , a			Fërshërot (Korça-Plasë)

In Class III, which derives from the third declension of Latin, the indefinite singular has the exponent *-i* and the definite singular the exponent *-l-i*, as in (11) for *mujer*- “woman” in Korça.

		<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>
Direct definite	a.	mujer-i-a	kənə-l-i	a'. mujer-(i-l)-i
Direct indefinite	b.	unə mujer-i	un kən-i	b'. mult-i mujer
Oblique definite	c.	a li mujer-i	a l kən-i-l-i	c'. a mujer-l-or
Oblique indefinite	d.	a un-ei mujer-i	a un-ui kən-i	d'. a dau mujer-l-u
				a doi kənə-l-u

In (11), we find *-l-i* in the singular masculine and feminine definite oblique, and *-i* in the singular masculine and feminine indefinite oblique; *-l-i* is also the inflection of the feminine plural. Finally *-i* is the exponent of the indefinite singular.

In summary:

- ✓ In the masculine singular, the enclitic definite exponents *-u* or *-l-i* are introduced in direct contexts
- ✓ The indefinite masculine singular form has no exponent except for the class in *-i*.
- ✓ The singular oblique has the inflection *-i* in the feminine, in all classes.
- ✓ The feminine singular, in direct contexts, shows the alternation between the definite exponent *-a*, as in (a), and the indefinite exponent *-ə* in (1b), and *-i* in (9b).
- ✓ In singular oblique contexts (definite or indefinite), in the feminine the inflection *-i* occurs.
- ✓ In the definite plural direct contexts in (2a), (6a), (9a), and (10a), both masculine and feminine present the plural inflection, *-ə/l-* (from Latin demonstrative **ille* “that”), which we associate with definiteness. In some dialects, the inflection *-je* occurs. Final obstruent or nasal of the masculine nouns palatalize, as for instance *bərbət/bərbəts* “man/men”, *kən/kən* “dog/dogs”, etc.

In the plural, definite oblique contexts show a specialized inflection in which *-u* combines with the plural formative *-ə*, *-r-*, in (4a), in Libofshë, and *-l-or* in Fërshërot in (8a). In indefinite contexts, the simple form of plural emerges, possibly preceded by the oblique form of the demonstrative, as in (4b), *o ts-uɔr fitfor(-ə)-i* “to these.OBL boys” in the variety of Libofshë. Some speakers of Fërshërot produced plural obliques with definite inflection even if preceded by modifiers, as in (8b), a structure largely attested in Albanian.

In all contexts, the oblique morphology is associated with the PI, namely *o* for the masculine singular and the plural, and *a li* for the feminine singular, regardless of the definite or indefinite nature of the DP, in Rëmën⁴, in (4a,b). In Fërshërot PIs are *a*, and variably *a li* before the singular

4 In these varieties the original **l* in simple onsets has changed to *y*. Thus, *ya* “to” corresponds to the original *la*, occurring in Romanian and other Aromanian languages.

feminine and *a t* before masculines, as in (8a,b). The paradigm of pronouns reproduces the same pattern shown by nouns, as in (12) for Libofshë. The direct forms, which occur in nominative/accusative contexts, in (12a), are distinguished from the dative, introduced by the PI, in (12b,c). The third person pronominal possessors are lexicalized by the oblique forms of third person pronouns, both in dative and genitive, cf. *o yui / a jei / o yora* “of him/her/them” in (12b) and (12c) (Manzini and Savoia 2018, Baldi and Savoia 2021).

(12)		1sg	2sg	3sg	3pl	1pl	2pl	
a.	direct	mini	tini	eu/ia	e&/eli	noi	voi	
		I/me	you	(s)he/him/her	they/them	we/us	you	
b.	dative	a jia	a tsea	o yui/a jei	o yorë	a nau	a vau	
		PI me	PI you	PI him/her	PI them	PI us	PI you	
c.	jn/ts	u ar	dato	a jn-ia	/ a ts-ea			Libofshë
		to.me/you	it have.	3PL given	PI me-OBL / PI you-OBL			
								“they gave it to me/you”

A similar system characterizes Fërshërot, with the difference that the third person elements also include the forms *nes_M / nes-ε_F / neʃ / nes-i* “he/she/they_M/they_F”.

2.1 Genitives

In contexts of possession the noun referring to the possessor has the oblique inflection introduced by the PI, as in dative, as in (13a,b) and (14a,b) for nominal contexts, and (13c) and (14c) for predicative occurrences, respectively for Libofshë and Korça-Plasë.

(13)								
a.	mən-a	o fitfor-u	/ a li fet-i		b.	kəd-a	o kən-l-i	
	hand- DEF.FSG	PI boy-MSG	/ PI girl-OBL			tail-DEF.SG	PI dog-DEF-OBL	
		“The hand of the boy/ of the girl”					“The tail of the dog / of a dog”	
c.	aist	esti	o fitfor-ʌ-u	/ o məjər-ʌ-u				
	that	is	PI boy-DEF-OBL	/ PI woman-DEF-OBL				
		“that is of the boys / of the women”		Libofshë				
(14)								
a.	mən-a	a/at fitfor-u	/ a li fet-i-i			a un-ci	mujer-i	
	hand- DEF.FSG	PI boy-MSG	/ PI girl-OBL-OBL			PI a-OBL	woman-OBL	
		“The hand of the boy/ of the girl/ of a woman”						
b.	mənə-l-i a	fitfor-l-or	/ a fet-i-i-or					
	hand- DEF-PL	PI boy-DEF.PL-OBL	/ PI girl-PL-DEF-OBL					
		“The hands of the boys/ of the girls”						
c.	aist	esti	al kən-i-l-i					
	this	is	PI dog-OBL-DEF-OBL					
		‘this is of the dog’			Korça-Plasë			

The PI precedes the possessor in all contexts, differently from Romanian where it occurs only in indefinite contexts (Dobrovie-Sorin 2013).

As we can expect, the genitive of first and second person is the possessive element, as in (15) illustrated for Libofshë and in (16) for Korça-Plasë. The feminine and masculine singular are exemplified

in (a,b) and the feminine and masculine plural in (a',b'). These forms agree with the noun designating the possessum, the head noun of DP, or the subject in predicative contexts. The third person possessors are lexicalized by the oblique forms of third person pronouns, so that dative and genitive coincide in the same forms, *o yui / a jei / o yorə* “of him/her/them” in (b), exactly as in nominal structures (Manzini and Savoia 2018, Baldi and Savoia 2021). The example in (15c) illustrates the possessive in predicative contexts.

(15)

- a. kən-l-i a ne-u / to-u / nəstər
dog-DEF.M PI my.MSG / your.MSG / our
“my/your/our dog”
- a'. keŋ-l-i a ne-ɻ-i / to-ɻ-i / nəst-i
dog.PL-DEF.M PI my-MPL / your-MPL / our-PL
“my/your/our dogs”
- b. sɔr-a o yu-i /a je-i / o y-ɔrə
sister.DEF.FSG PI him-OBL /PI her-OBL / PI them-PL.OBL
“his/her/their sister”
- c. atseu esti a mɛ-u/ / a ta-u
that. FSG is PI my.FSG / PI your.FSG
“that is mine/yours”

Libofshë

(16)

- a. men-a a mia / ta / lui
hand-DEF.M PI my.FSG / your.FSG / his
“my/your/his hand”
- a'. meŋ-l-i a mɛ-l-i / te-l-i / lui
hand.PL-DEF.F PI my-FPL / your-FPL / his
“my/your/his hands”

Korça-Plasë

The inflectional part of the possessive includes the definiteness element *-l-* that we find in nominal paradigms. In Rémén the original *-l-* has been velarized into *-u* in the final position, as in (15a,c), while in the masculine plural palatalizes in *-ɻ-*. Fürshërot has the realization *-t*, cf. (16a,a').

2.2 PI and Prepositions

Oblique morphology is associated with the PI, which covers possession and dative.⁵ The other basic prepositions combine with the direct morphology, i.e. the nominative, as in (17a,b,c) for the prepositions *ku* “with”, *ya* “at, to”, and *ti* “for”. A DOM effect emerges with locative elements, contrasting high-ranked referents, in (17c), with low-ranked referents, in (17d), as in many Romance varieties.

5 It is interesting to note that a similar distribution of the oblique characterizes the Northern Istro-Romanian variety spoken in Žejane (Geană 2020). In this dialect, both the dative and the genitive use the *a lu* construction, as illustrated in (i) (from Geană 2020, 184).

(i) Av zis a lu tatu
they.have.AUX say.PPLE DAT thief.DEF
“they told the thief”

(17)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| a. ku fitfor-u / un fitfor | b. mini neg ya un fet-ə / fet-a / tini |
| with boy-MSG / a boy | I go at a girl / girl-FSG / you |
| “with the boy / a boy” | “I go to a girl/ the girl / you” |
| c. o fakə ti atseu | d. esti a / tu / kət kas-ə |
| it I.do for that.MSG | is at home |
| “I do it for him” | “(s)he is at home” |
- Libofshë

The preposition *di* “of”, in complementary distribution with the PI, occurs in possessive contexts, as (18a,b), and, systematically, in locative complex prepositions. *Di* can select the indefinite form, in (18a).

(18)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| a. mən-a di mujer-ə | / ali mujer-i |
| hand-FSG of woman-FSG | / PI woman-OBL |
| “the hand of (the) woman” | Libofshë |
| b. men-a di aist fitfor | / a fitfor-u |
| hand-FSG of of this boy-MSG | / PP boy-MSG |
| “the hand of the boy / of that boy” | Korça-Plasë |

Complex prepositions (with locative, temporal, or instrumental meanings) combine a lexical item specifying place, direction, and time (the Axial part, cf. Svenonius (2006)), and the DP expressing the point of reference, i.e. the whole of which the axial noun is a part. The DP is introduced either as an oblique preceded by the PI as in (19a.i,ii)/ (20a.i,ii) or by the preposition *di* followed by the noun in *direct form*, as in (19b.i,ii)/ (20b.i,ii). In these constructs, first/second person referents are realized as feminine possesives, in (19a.ii) and (20a.ii), alternating with *di* “of” followed by the pronoun, in (19b.ii) and (20b.ii).

(19)

- | | |
|--|---|
| a.i dəninti o fitfor-ʌ-u / o mujer-ʌ-u | b. i. dəninti di fitfor-ʌ-i / mujer-ʌ-i |
| before PI boy-DEF-OBL / | before of boy- DEF-PL / |
| PI women-DEF-OBL | woman-DEF-PL |
| “Before the boys/ the women” / “Before the boys / the women” | |
| a.ii dən poi a me-u | b.ii. dən poi di mini |
| after PI my-FSG | after of me |
| “after me” / “after me” | Libofshë |

(20)

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| a.i dininti al fitfor-u / a mujer-ʌ-or | b. i. dəninti di fitfor / mujer-i |
| before PI boy-MSG / | before of boy /woman-FSG |
| PI women-DEF-OBL | |
| “Before the boy/ the women” / “Before the boy / the woman” | |
| a.ii tini əsti dininti a mi'a / a lui | b.ii dininti di mini / nes |
| you are before PI my-FSG/ PI he.MSG | of before of me / him |
| “You are before me/ him” | Korça-Plasë |

We note that speakers of Korça in (20b.i) use the indefinite form of the noun after the preposition *di* ‘of’. The reading is definite, linked to the universe of discourse. The structure in which the locative preposition introduces the indefinite form of the noun is usual in Albanian and in Aromanian, as in *pifti mən-ə* ‘on hand-FSG, i. e. on the hand present in the universe of discourse.

Finally, *di* occurs in other contexts, as the introducer of the substance of an object, in (21a), and the causer, in (21b). It can also introduce the infinitive in a subset of the infinitival constructs (Manzini and Savoia 2018).

- (21)

 - a. esti **di** dʒam
it.is of glass
“it is glass”
 - b. aist kəmij-li səntə yatə di ia
these shirt-FPL are washed by her (lit. she)
“these shirts are washed by her”

3. The Analysis: Some Proposals

Chomsky's most recent papers (Chomsky 2019, 2020, 2021) criticize the head movement as a genuine syntactic rule at the basis of the Probe-Goal φ -feature matching in affixation. Specifically, "head raising is problematic insofar as it does not entail semantic effects and, structurally, it is counter-cyclic". The solution of Chomsky (2019, 268) "is simply to drop the condition that Internal Merge (Movement) has to be triggered, so it's free, like External Merge". Chomsky (2021, 30, 36 ff.), assumes that Merge operation can create the combination of morphemes in complex words by amalgamation. Thus, in the case of inflected verbs, the amalgamation yields complex forms such as [INFL [v, Root]], which realizes the properties of the C/T Phase. In keeping with this conceptualization of the morphology-syntax relationship, the Merge operation combines sub-word elements (root and affixes) into a complex syntactic object. The traditional head movement involving post-nominal articles and the gender/number/case inflection in NPs can in turn be seen as a type of amalgamation, like verbal inflection.

Hence, the morphological merge is part of the syntactic computation and there is no specialized morphological component (Manzini et al. 2020, Savoia et al. 2018, Savoia, Baldi 2022; see also Collins and Kayne 2020, Marantz 2001). This excludes Late Insertion and the manipulation of terminal nodes used by Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993), where sub-word elements (affixes and clitics) are “dissociated morphemes”, involving post-syntactic rules (Embick and Noyer 2001, 557). In the approach that we adopt, lexical elements, including morphemes, are endowed with interpretable content; as a consequence, the agreement is the morphological manifestation of the identity between referential features corresponding to the same argument of the sentence.

3.1 Elementary Relators

In many natural languages, genitives, datives, and locatives are realized by the same cases or adpositions, giving rise to syncretism phenomena. An idea, originally formulated by Fillmore (1968), is that dative and genitive are the inflectional equivalent of prepositions *to*, and *of*, etc. If inflections have an interpretable content, we can conclude that oblique has a relational content exactly like prepositions and dative and genitive as well as *di/a* can be analyzed as elementary relators (Manzini et al. 2019, 2020). An idea variously supported in literature is that ‘possession’ corresponds to the more elementary part-whole relation. Following Belvin and den Dikken (1997), we construe possessors as ‘zonally including’ the possessee and notate the ‘inclusion’ (or part–whole) relation as [\sqsubseteq], to suggest that a part/whole interpretation is involved in genitives/ datives. Therefore, possession on a par with location can be understood as a type of “zonal inclusion” (Manzini and Savoia 2011, 2018). The crucial example is provided by *di*, which includes apparently diverse readings (cf. section 2.1). On this basis, we analyze *di* as the elementary operator, in (22) (Savoia et al. 2020).

(22) **di** = \subseteq

In the derivation in (23), R is the lexical root and φ is the abbreviation for nominal features, here definite plural. The axial element, namely the locative noun, merges with (23a), yielding the complex construct in (23b), associated with the syntactic domain in (23c), where the locative extends the event of v .

- (23) a. $< \text{di}_{\subseteq} [\varphi [R \text{ fitfor}-\lambda-i]] > \rightarrow [_{\text{p}} \text{ di}_{\subseteq} [\varphi [R \text{ fitfor}-\lambda-i]]]$ “under the boys” (11b’)
- b. $< \text{d}\text{\o}ninti_N, [_{\text{p}} \text{ di}_{\subseteq} [\varphi [R \text{ fitfor}-\lambda-i]]] > \rightarrow [_{\text{DP}} \text{ d}\text{\o}ninti [_{\text{PP}\subseteq} \text{ di} [\varphi [R \text{ fitfor}-\lambda-i]]]]$
- c. v.... Locative N P D $_{\varphi}$ N
 d\o ninti di $_{\subseteq}$ fitfor-\lambda-i

In complex PPs the locative item (Axial Part) is associated with a “possessor”, more precisely, its “zonal inclusion” fixed by the noun, in (23) *fitfor-ii* “the boys” (Franco and Manzini 2017, Savoia et al. 2020). The motion or state-in interpretation is derived from the type of locative event introduced by the verb in conjunction with the locative noun, as highlighted by the fact that the same preposition can occur with different readings. Simple locative prepositions include a spatial restriction on the elementary relator as in (24). The DOM effect, contrasting *ya/la/kət* and *a/tu*, depends on the lexical properties of these prepositions, subcategorized for the animacy/ deicticity (first/second person) properties of the complement.

(24) **la/ ya** : [[animate] \subseteq]

According to some analyses, PIs combine the invariable base *a* with the definite article, whereby *al* is essentially an agreement head, taking a genitive in Spec (Giurgea 2012, Dobrovie-Sorin 2013). Cornilescu (1995, 126–127) identifies *al* with a D marker. Other explanations assume that in *al* the preposition *a* combines with the enclitic article (cf. Grosu 1994, Cornilescu and Nicolae 2013). Actually, the invariable form *a* is attested in Old Romanian. Hence, if *a* corresponds to the Latin preposition *ad*, this explains why in Old Romanian *a* also introduced datives (Pană Dindelegan 2016).

Our data show that *a* can introduce both dative and genitive as in (3)–(4), (7)–(8), and (13)–(14); moreover, *a* can realize a locative reading with indefinite nouns of place, as *a kasə* “in the house” in (17d). *A* combines with the definiteness root *l-* (< Latin **ille*) on which Romance articles are generally based, alternating *a l/a t/o* with the masculines and plural and *a li* with the feminine. Thus *a* can be analyzed as a realization of the elementary relation [\subseteq], followed by the definite article, when requested, and by a fully quantificationally specified form of the noun (the oblique). On the contrary, the operator *di* is in itself able to introduce the inclusion relation, whereby it generally allows possessors to be realized as indefinite.⁶ As a result, *di* and *a* are in complementary distribution, save for deictics, first/second person pronouns, and demonstratives, where the selection restrictions are vacuously applied, as suggested by the *Elsewhere* order in (24a,b).

6 *Di* allows possessors to be realized as indefinite. The lexical content of the verb and the inherent referential properties of the possessor are sufficient to identify the referent, like in Italian PPs of the type *in casa* ‘at home’ (Longobardi 1996). Similar constructs appear in Albanian (Manzini and Savoia 2011).

- (24) a. $a = [[\subseteq]]$ (locative) / $_$ (deictic/ Q) [[N] (Oblique)]
 b. $di = [\subseteq]/ _$ (deictic) N

A, unlike *di*, admits a specialized inflection on the noun, the oblique. Some varieties associate an article with *a*, at least in some contexts, as in (25a,b,c).

- (25) a. $li \leftrightarrow a _ l_{FSG}$
 b. $t \leftrightarrow a _ l_{MSG}$
 c. $o = [\subseteq] / _ l_{MSG/ PL}$

This analysis can be also applied to other basic prepositions, such as *ti* “for”, which attributes the quality “beneficiary” to the recipient/ possessor, $[[\subseteq]]$, (beneficiary)].

4. Syncretism and Case

Nominal paradigms show widespread syncretism, an effect of which is the overlapping between plural and oblique, as in the case of the exponent *-i*, encompassing the indefinite singular Nom/Acc and Oblique, the definite singular Nom/Acc and Oblique, and variably the definite and indefinite plural⁷. Analogously *-u* occurs in the singular and plural. The syncretism between plural and oblique can be explained by the proposal of Chierchia (1998a,b) that plurality can be thought of as a subset relationship of sets of individuals referring to a word-internal interpretation (Manzini and Savoia 2014, 2018). Thus, as an instantiation of the part-of-whole operator \subseteq , the plural shares the elementary property of the oblique (Manzini and Savoia 2010, 2014), as in (26).

- (26) a. $PL = [\subseteq]/ Root _$
 As a property of the noun (Chierchia 1998a,b)
 b. Dative/ Genitive = $[\subseteq]/ _ DP$
 The inclusion is read as the subset of a possessor and its scope is either sentential, or, in genitives, DP-internal. (Manzini and Savoia 2014, 422)

We know that the case, a classic category of the cartographic model, has a spurious status, in the sense that it is nothing but a manifestation of the agreement; inherent cases put other descriptive problems, interacting with prepositions or the morpho-syntactic organization of the sentence. Chomsky (2021, 16) concludes that “[c]ase doesn’t enter into semantic interpretation” and is part of externalization. Actually, the distribution of nominal inflections and the syncretism we have exemplified in section 2 suggest that the case can be identified with bundles of nominal features, such as number, definiteness, or syntactic operators. Thus, if we take the sentence *i o det o fit for-ʌ-u* “I gave it to the boys” (4a), Libofshë, the free application of Merge (Chomsky 2019, 2021), yields the amalgamation between the root and the definite inflection, marked by $-ʌ_{DEF.PL}$, in (27a), with which $-u_{\subseteq}$ is combined, creating the complex noun in (27b). The insertion of sub-word elements depends on subcategorization restrictions such as those in (27c), (27d) and (27e) for the plural

⁷ In the literature, the feminine singular *-i* is considered as the only exponent of the case associated with indefinite forms (Maiden et al. 2021, 75 ff.), whereas the case is generally expressed by the definiteness enclitic elements.

oblique inflection *-or* or *-ur* in (8a). The application of selectional restriction is Elsewhere ordered, whereby the more restricted context is satisfied first.⁸

- (27) a. $\langle [_{\text{R}} \text{ fitfor}], -\kappa_{\text{DEF.PL}} \rangle \rightarrow [_{\varphi} [\text{fitfor}] \cdot \kappa]$
 b. $\langle [_{\varphi} \text{ fitfor}] \cdot \kappa], -u_{\subseteq} \rangle \rightarrow [_{\subseteq} [_{\varphi} [\text{fitfor}] \cdot \kappa] \cdot u]$
 c. $-\kappa_{\text{DEF}, \subseteq} \leftrightarrow R_m$ —
 d. -or $\leftrightarrow \text{PI} [[_{\text{DEF}, \subseteq} \text{ } \cdot \text{ }]]$ (sub-set of lexical items)
 e. $-u_{\subseteq} \leftrightarrow \text{PI} [[_{\text{DEF}, \subseteq} \text{ } \cdot \text{ }]]$

The occurrence of the oblique inflection requires the introducer, here *o* (cf. (4a)), as in (28); Merge is based on the agreement between the syntactic features, including \subseteq , both within the noun and DP.

- (28) $\langle o_{\subseteq}, [\subseteq \text{ [fitfor]-}\lambda\text{-}u] \rangle \rightarrow [_{pp} o_{\subseteq} [\subseteq \text{ [fitfor]-}\lambda\text{-}u]]$

The inflected noun realizes the referential properties associated with D in the Phase DP, i.e. class, definiteness, and number, if we assume that DP is a Phase (cf. Manzini et al. 2020). If so, head-raising is excluded according to Chomsky (2019 ff.), and the inflected noun satisfies the featural content of the phase head D, as in (29). Adapting the conclusion of Chomsky (2021, 36) for verbal inflection, once eliminated head-movement there is no need for D to be at the edge of the Phase, here DP, and can be ‘within the domain of PIC and Transfer’. In other words, the inflected noun is the implementation of the agreement properties of DP⁹. The alternant *o* (in the variety of Libofshë) realizes the preposition that connects the noun to the event as the recipient.

- $$(29) \quad v.... \quad P/PI \quad D_\varphi \quad N$$

$$_0 \varphi / \subset \quad \text{fit for } -\lambda - u_{DEF / \subset}$$

In genitival contexts, *a+possessive* is illustrated in (30) for (16a'), *mən-l-i a mə-l-i* "my hands" (P). The part-whole reading is realized by the lexical content of the possessive element in (30a), in addition to the preposition *a*, as in (30b). In these contexts, the simple preposition *a* occurs in all varieties, suggesting that the possessive satisfies the referential properties associated with D in the Phase of DP, as in (30c).

⁸ An anonymous reviewer ask if syncretism is treated in terms of ‘Elsewhere’ ordered restrictions or specialized restrictions for each case. Our approach is not based on the ordering of restrictions as, for example, in DM, where the Impoverishment rule feeds the insertion of syncretic morphemes. In our approach, the insertion of an exponent is based on its interpretive content, whereby syncretism is the expected effect of common semantic properties. To achieve this result, it is necessary to rethink the descriptive categories of functional morphemes and reduce them to elementary semantic properties, such as the inclusion predicate in oblique and plural. Naturally, we use the Elsewhere application in the case of selectional restrictions to combine morphemes with subclasses of nominal contexts, as in (27c,d,e), independently of the occurrence of syncretism.

⁹ An anonymous reviewer observes that a phasal treatment ‘might in fact be made compatible with theories like DM since morphology in one phase might indeed affect syntactic computation in another higher phase.’ If we have understood correctly, DM could impoverish a morphological context making it possible to insert (Late insertion) the inflected form in a higher phase. Anyway, something like Late Merge is excluded by Chomsky (2019, 267) as costly and unmotivated. As for DM, the crucial point that we reject is the way to implement the relationship between syntactic information (phi-features) and morphology, that is obscured or deleted by Late insertion.

In dative, the first/second person pronouns have a specialized inflection for the oblique, as in (31a,b) for ... *a n̩-ia* “to me” (cf. (12c)).

- | | | | | |
|---------|--|---|------------|---|
| (31) a. | $a_{\subseteq}, [[n]_{1SG}] ia_{\subseteq}] >$ | $\rightarrow [a_{\subseteq} [nia_{\subseteq}]]$ | | |
| b. | v.... | P/PI | D_{ϕ} | N |

The preceding discussion supports the idea that nominal inflections belong to a set of very elementary semantic primitives. The paradigms show such a high degree of syncretism that there is no clearly specialized morpheme for oblique contexts, maybe except for *-or*, in (28d). The oblique plural *l-u*, *r-u*, and *k-u* include in turn the exponent *-u* that occurs in the definite masculine singular, as in (10) and (11). Thus, apart from *-a*, for the definite singular feminine in direct contexts, and the bases, *-l/k/r-*, for definiteness, the other inflections imply diverse interpretations.

In the first class, in (10) and (11), *-i* is associated with the oblique in the feminine singular and, in Rëmën, also characterizes indefinite feminine plurals. In Class III in (11) the definite masculine assumes the exponent *-l-i* in the singular and differs from the feminine, which only introduces *-i*. A natural hypothesis is that the syncretism of *-i* (singular/plural, direct/indirect forms) is related to its functional content, as in (32a), and its distribution to (32b).

- (32) a. -i = subset-of-whole
 b. i \subset \leftrightarrow R _ or 1 _

This analysis also applies to *-u*, which covers the plural in obliques and the definiteness in the masculine singular, as *fit/or-u* “the boy” in (9a)–(10a). The extension of plural exponents to singular readings is dealt with by Manzini and Savoia (2010). In discussing the nature of the standard Romanian inflection *-i*, they observe that “essentially like Latin *-i*, as a Q element [...] it will have the plural reading when taking scope over the words – or the possessive (dative/genitive) reading when taking sentential scope”. Indeed, both *-u* and *-i* can introduce plurality, as in the plural oblique, and the reference to a singularity. This pattern is not exceptional. For instance, in Latin, *-i* realizes the masculine plural and the genitive and dative singular, and, similarly *-e* (*<*ai*) feminine plural, and genitive and dative singular (Halle and Vaux 1997). Also in Italian *-i*, typically associated with the plural, can characterize the third singular person pronouns, cf. *egl-i/lu-i/le-i* “he/she” *colu-i* “he” and, in addition, the oblique *gl-i* “to him/her/them”, *a/di cu-i* “to/of which”, *altru-i* “of others”.

What we mean is that if plurality coincides with the sub-set relation, a subset including a single individual is admitted (Chierchia 1998a,b).¹⁰ Thus we conclude that the part-whole relationship can satisfy the definite singular reference, as suggested in (33).

¹⁰ Usually, languages have the singular for this, but there are uses of the generic plural that admit a singular interpretation, such as *They are knocking at the door.* (*It's Peter.*) or *How many came? Just one* (cf. Manzini and Savoia 2014, 222).

- (33) a. [ken-(l)-[-i_≤]] “dog / the dogs”
 b. $\exists x \subseteq \{\text{dog}\}$
 “an x such that x is a subset of the set of individuals with the property dog”

As we have pointed out in the discussion about (25), even the specialized oblique inflection of person pronouns in (12), and of plural nouns, such as *-ur-u/-c-u* in (9) and *-l-or* in (10), are not able to license the part-whole relationship alone, but they must be combined with *a*. This exponent can combine with forms non-specialized for the oblique, such as *a fitfor-u* / *a un fitfor* “to/of the boy / a boy”, in (3a,b), *a li mujev-i* “to/ of Art woman” in (9c). However, *a* is compatible with the specialized oblique form, if available, as in the plural and in the singular, cf. *a li fet-i* “to/of the girl”, *a un-ei fet-i* “to/of one-Obl girl” in (7a,b), etc. In other words, *-i_≤* / *-u_≤* / *-or_≤* cannot be thought as something like ‘inherent cases’, but do not have the referential strength to introduce the part-whole interpretation over DPs, unlike the preposition *di* “of” or *a*. They are specialized plurals requiring *a*, as in the restriction in (34).

- (34) -or/-ur_≤ - \leftrightarrow *a* (Art) Q [N __]

Thus, a plural oblique such as (35a) cannot license a dative reading on DPs. It is only a plural allomorph selected in the PIs contexts, as (34). Merging the inflected noun with the preposition *a* gives rise to the oblique interpretation, as in (35b) and its externalization, in (35c).

- (35) a. [_≤[bərbats]-ur-u]]
 b. $< a_{\leq}, [\subseteq[\text{bərbats}]\text{-ur-u}]] > \rightarrow [a_{\leq} [\subseteq[\text{bərbats}]\text{-ur-u}]]]$
 c. v.... P D_φ N
 a_≤ bərbats-ur-u_≤

Obviously, a theoretical model where a common principle underlies oblique and plural morphology predicts a certain amount of ambiguity. However, as Chomsky (2021, 23) concludes, “Access at any other stage of the derivation will yield some form of deviance or incoherence”. The sentence will have the task of assigning the correct interpretation.

Finally, like most Romance languages, Aromanian has a set of object clitics that distinguish accusative, as the accusative *mi* “me”, and the dative *pi* “to me”. In our data, object clitics systematically double the first and second person pronouns, in (36), and optionally the third person ones. The clitic cluster *dative+accusative* is instead anywhere required, as in the examples in section 2.

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---------|------|-------------|
| (36) mi / ti | ved-i | (pi) | mini / tini |
| me / you | see-3SG | PREP | me / you |
| “(s)he sees me/you” | | | |

What interests us now, is the DOM that turns out in (36), whereby the first and second person objects are (variably) introduced by the specialized preposition *pi* (< *per), recalling DOM in Romanian (Dobrovie-Sorin 1990), Spanish (Jaeggli 1981) and Southern Italian dialects (Manzini and Savoia 2005). In Aromanian, *pi* selects the nominative/ accusative form of the pronoun, like other prepositions, and is doubled by the accusative clitic, as in (37).

(37)	C	OCl	T	Acc _φ	v	V	(PP)	N
	mi _φ		ved-i				pi	mini _φ

In (37), *mi* is realized as part of the verb inflection in T, by assuming with Roberts (2010) that OCl's realize the IA agreement of v. first/ second person must be interpreted as a sort of dative/ possessor of the event, here introduced by *pi*; no morpho-syntactic property prevents *mini* from agreeing with *mi*.

5. Conclusions

In this work we adopt a morpho-syntactic model in which sub-word elements are fully interpretable forms, the combination of which is implemented by syntactic computation. We follow the proposals discussed by Chomsky (2019, 2021) in the direction of a syntax based on the free application of Merge (IM and EM) and on the hypothesis that inflected words are a possible realization of the Phases. Our approach to nominal features as elementary properties, such as number, definiteness, and semantic operators, allows us to bring to light the relationship between prepositions, oblique, and plurality. They appear to be realizations of the same basic relation of inclusion, typically expressed by the preposition *di* “of”. In keeping with this conceptualization, the combination of the PI and the inflected noun in oblique contexts can be accounted for as the effect of a selection restriction in a specialized context.

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