

Verbal agreement and the person-agreement split in two North-Eastern Italian varieties

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Cross-linguistically, we observe two different agreement patterns in inversion: (i) full agreement with the postverbal subject, as in English and Standard Italian, and (ii) defective agreement, as in French and several Italian dialects. I will present data from two North-Eastern Italian varieties that display an agreement alternation in inversion, providing evidence against Guasti & Rizzi's (2002) claim that the realization of agreement with postverbal subjects is stable within a language as it is tied to a parametric option. I claim that verbal agreement in inversion of the investigated Italian varieties is a reflex of the *thetic/categorical* distinction and is determined by the givenness of the postverbal DP. The dialects of Venice and Gazzolo (Verona) display obligatory agreement in SV but (apparent) optionality of agreement in inversion:

- (1) *Xè morto /morta na toseta.* (Gazzolo)
is died.M.SG died.F.SG a girl
'A girl died.'

Additionally, we observe a person agreement split: postverbal 1st and 2nd person pronouns obligatorily trigger full agreement, while 3rd person pronouns display the agreement alternation. The crucial property for agreement seems to be the givenness of the DP: New and unanchored DPs trigger defective agreement, while given DPs (active and semi-active, according to Lambrecht 1994) trigger full agreement. Building on Sasse's (1987) *thetic/categorical* distinction, I analyze the defective agreement utterances as *thetic* and the full agreement utterances as *categorical*, the decisive property being the givenness of the postverbal DP. Based on Bianchi & Chesi (2014), I assume that the *categorical* DP moves to a vP-peripheral topic position triggering agreement, while *thetic* DPs remain vP-internally.

- (2) a. *thetic*: [TP *xè* [AspP *morta*_i [VP [VP *t*_i *na toseta*]]]]
b. *categorical*: [TP *xè* [AspP *morta*_i [VP [TopP *na toseta*]_j [VP *t*_i *t*_j]]]]

Givenness as decisive property for full agreement equally delivers an explanation for the person-agreement asymmetry, since the referents of 1st and 2nd person pronouns are inherently given and thus obligatorily move higher than 3rd person pronouns whose referents are not *per se* given.

References: • Bianchi, V. & C. Chesi. 2014. Subject islands, reconstruction, and the flow of the computation. *Linguistic Inquiry* 45(4). 525–569. • Guasti, M. T. & L. Rizzi. 2002. Tense and agreement as distinct syntactic positions: Evidence from acquisition. In G. Cinque (ed.), *The functional structure of DP and IP*. Vol. 1, 167–194. Oxford: OUP. • Lambrecht, K. 1994. *Information structure and sentence form. Topic, focus and the mental representations of discourse referents*. Cambridge: CUP. • Sasse, H.-J. 1987. The *thetic/categorical* distinction revisited. *Linguistics* 25. 511–580.