

# Lexicalizing number and gender in Lunigiana

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## Abstract

In this article, I present an analysis of gender and number marking on nouns in a group of Italian dialects. These dialects share the property that the plural morpheme is *-i* in both the feminine and the masculine gender in both declension classes. But there is an asymmetry: in contexts where plurality is marked on a determiner, the plural marking *-i* does not appear on nouns or adjectives in the feminine gender, but does appear on masculine nouns and adjectives. I argue that this asymmetry can be understood once it is recognized that a vocabulary item can lexicalize more than a single terminal, and that lexicalization is governed by the Superset Principle, i.e. if the lexicon associates a vocabulary item with a feature set  $F$ , it can lexicalize any constituent with the feature set  $F'$  provided  $F$  is a superset of  $F'$ .

## 1. Introduction

Current ‘late insertion’ accounts of the relationship between syntactic structure and vocabulary items (morphemes) tend to share the two assumptions in (1) and (2):

- (1) Vocabulary insertion targets only terminal nodes.
- (2) The Subset Principle

A vocabulary item  $A$  associated with the feature set  $F$  can replace a terminal  $X$  with the feature set  $F'$  if and only if  $F$  is a subset of  $F'$ .

However, a growing body of conceptual and empirical considerations suggests that (1) and (2) should be replaced with (3) and (4), as argued extensively by M. Starke (CASTL research seminars); cf. Abels and Muriungi (2008), Caha (2007), Caha (2009), Muriungi (2008), Taraldsen (to appear) as well as McCawley (1968), Neeleman and Szendrői (2007) and Weerman and Evers-Vermeul (2002):

- (3) Vocabulary insertion targets subtrees
- (4) The Superset Principle

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\* I am grateful to Rita Manzini for useful observations and to Lucie Medová for formatting the paper.

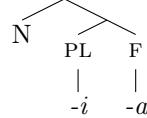
A vocabulary item  $A$  associated with the feature set  $F$  can replace a subtree  $X$  with the feature set  $F'$  if and only if  $F$  is a superset of  $F'$ .

The feature set of a subtree will be the set of features associated with its terminal nodes.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this remark is to provide an additional empirical argument for moving from (1)–(2) to (3)–(4).

## 2. Feminine plural marking in Lunigiana

Manzini and Savoia (2005:III, 618) report that various Italian dialects in the Lunigiana area never use the standard Italian *-e* as a marker of F.PL. Instead, one finds *-ja* on determiners, nouns and adjectives which would have *-a* in the F.SG, e.g. *dona* ‘woman’ vs *donja* ‘women’ in the Colonnata variety. Like Manzini & Savoia, I think the null hypothesis should be that *-ja* is decomposable as *-i* + *-a*, where *-a* is the usual feminine gender marker also found in the singular forms,<sup>2</sup> while *-i* is the plural affix also found in the plural of masculine nouns, both in Lunigianese, e.g. *kwanti omi* ‘how many men’ (Filattiera), and in Standard Italian. So, both on the standard approach and on mine, lexical insertion will target two syntactic nodes separately:

(5)



I take it that the configuration in (5) is created by successive movement of the N to the specifier of the PL head through the specifier of F, as shown in (8)):

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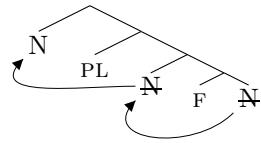
<sup>1</sup>If features are privative and associated one-to-one with syntactic heads ordered by a fixed hierarchy, a lexical entry will simply associate a vocabulary item with a syntactic structure  $\Sigma$ , and (4) is equivalent with (i):

(i) The Superset Principle

A vocabulary item  $A$  associated with the structure  $\Sigma$  can replace a tree  $X$  if and only if  $X$  is a subtree of  $\Sigma$ .

<sup>2</sup>Harris (1991) argues that nominal endings like *-a*, which he calls class markers, reflect gender only indirectly. This is largely based on the observation that there are nouns in *-a*, e.g. *artista* ‘artist’ and *pirata* ‘pirate’, which trigger masculine agreement on determiners and adjectives, there is a feminine noun *mano* ‘hand’ in *-o* (otherwise limited to masculine forms), and the *e*-class contains both masculine and feminine nouns and adjectives. I could adopt Harris’s conclusion here without any consequences for the analysis. The features F and M that appear throughout should then be thought of as whatever features one might use to characterize the different class markers. However, my analysis of the *e*-class in section 8 seems to remove the motivation this class might provide for distinguishing class-markers from gender-heads, there is only one noun like *mano*, and the peculiarity of *artista* etc. is limited to the singular. Thus, I remain relatively unconvinced by Harris’s arguments, and treat *-a* etc. as gender-heads.

(6)



That is, I assume that the heads PL and F appear in their underlying order. One reason for assuming this is that it seems natural to assume that the gender marker, being directly selected by the N, should be below Number (PL).

I also assume that traces are ignored when the lexicalization procedure parses a syntactic structure.<sup>3</sup> Then, [PL [ F ]] is a subtree in (6), and it could be targeted by vocabulary insertion of *-e* with the lexical entry in (7a):

- (7) a.  $-\text{e} \leftrightarrow \{\text{PL}, \text{F}\}$   
b.
- 
- ```

graph TD
    N1[N] --> PL1((PL))
    PL1 --> F1[F]
    PL1 --> -e[-e]
    
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This would produce the Standard Italian F.PL forms. Lunigianese, however, doesn't have the Standard Italian *-e*. So, instead, F and PL are lexicalized separately, as would, of course, be entirely possible also on standard accounts.

Notice that if traces are ignored by the lexicalization process, F and PL will end up forming a constituent for the purposes of lexicalization even if N has a complement stranded by N-movement in (6). In fact, Cinque's successful (2005) account of Greenberg's Universal 20 in terms of NP-movement implies that the complements of N are evacuated from a NP before the NP starts raising across adjectives, numerals or demonstratives, and the positions the complements of N are evacuated to must obviously be above the position N has raised to in (6).

### 3. Masculine plural marking in Lunigiana

The plural forms of masculine nouns have a single affix *-i* in Lunigianese, e.g. *kwanti omi* 'how many men', instead of the two affixes seen in the feminine plural. That is, there is no separate affix comparable to the *-a* of the feminine paradigm spelling out the gender marker. Yet, on the assumption that all nouns conform to the same structural template, one would expect that the position lexicalized by *-a* in the feminine forms should be present in the structure of the masculine forms as well.

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<sup>3</sup>Any theory has to have a way of encoding the fact that the N in (6) is going to be lexicalized in its derived position rather than in the position of the trace (or copy). Saying that traces are ignored when the lexicalization procedure parses the input tree, amounts to saying that this procedure only sees syntactic elements in the positions where they are lexicalized.

If (3) is valid, one can in fact analyze a masculine plural like *omi* ‘men’ as in (8b), positing the lexical entry in (8a):

- (8) a.  $-i \leftrightarrow \{\text{PL}, \text{M}\}$   
      b.  $\begin{array}{c} om \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{PL} \quad \text{M} \\ -i \end{array}$

That is, the surface discrepancy between feminine plurals and masculine plurals would not be attributed to an underlying structural difference, but rather to the irreducibly idiosyncratic properties of VIs (vocabulary items). The fact that *-i* associated with the feature set {PL, M} also lexicalizes just PL in the feminine forms, would follow from the Superset Principle, but is inconsistent with the Subset Principle.

There are two other analytical options, both compatible with (1)–(2): One could assume that the two heads hosting *-i* and *-a* in the feminine plurals fuse into one in the masculine paradigm, or assume that the gender marker is Ø in the masculine paradigms.<sup>4</sup>

Taking the first of these two options one will have to block fusion in the feminine paradigm, since the feminine plurals would otherwise also surface with just *-i* or just *-a* rather than *-ia*.<sup>5</sup> Thus, there will be two different components of the grammar in which unpredictable properties are stipulated, the lexicon and a morphological component comprising fusion. This appears to be an unwarranted weakening of the theory in view of the fact that the alternative analysis in (8) successfully relegates unpredictability to the lexicon alone.

As for the second option consistent with (1)–(2), there is no general argument against null morphemes as such, and, as we will see in the next section, the form of singular masculine nouns and adjectives in Lunigianese seems eminently compatible with the hypothesis that the masculine gender marker is lexicalized by  $\emptyset$  in these varieties.

#### 4. Masculine singular nouns in Lunigiana

Most masculine nouns do not have an exponent of gender in the singular, i.e. no *-o* comparable to the Standard Italian M.SG. *-o*:

- (9) a. om  
*man*  
 ‘a man’ b. fradel  
*brother*  
 ‘a brother’

<sup>4</sup>I agree with Ramchand (2008) and Fábregas (2007) that every node must be lexicalized, but this must still allow lexicalization by  $\emptyset$ .

<sup>5</sup>Taking *-ia* as a single morpheme would seem to beg the question why this morpheme looks exactly like the concatenation of an independently existing plural marker and a gender marker.

As for those few that do, I assume that the final vocalic element is epenthetic, following R. Manzini (p.c.).

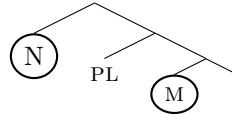
This is obviously consistent with saying that the gender marker is lexicalized by  $\emptyset$  on masculine nouns and adjectives, i.e.  $\emptyset \leftrightarrow \{M\}$ . But (3)–(4) also allows one to assume that the masculine gender M is lexicalized by the root along with N, e.g. /om/ = [ N [ M ]], in the singular (assuming also privative PL, although that is not critical):<sup>6</sup>

(10)



In the masculine plural forms (produced by N-movement without pied-piping), however, N and M do not form a subtree:

(11)



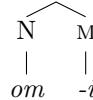
Therefore, no root can lexicalize N and M together in the plural forms. But  $-i$  can lexicalize M together with PL if it has the entry in (8a) (repeated below):

- (12) a.  $-i \leftrightarrow \{PL, M\}$   
 b.
- 

As already pointed out in section 2, the Superset Principle makes this fully consistent with the hypothesis that  $-i$  lexicalizes just PL in F.PL forms.

Since the Superset Principle would also allow  $-i$  to lexicalize just M in the masculine singular, as in (14), we also need to say why the M.SG is in fact not *omi*, but *om*:

(13)



When a VI with the feature set  $F$  replaces a subtree  $T$  whose feature set is a proper subset of  $F$ , a number of the features in  $F$  fails to find a match in  $T$ . This is explicitly allowed by the Superset Principle, but we may still assume that the lexicalization procedure seeks to minimize the number of unmatched features when faced with a choice between two competing lexicalization patterns. If so, the pattern in (10), in which no

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<sup>6</sup>Notice that this rests on the assumption that ‘lexical’ VIs are introduced exactly the same way as ‘functional’ VIs. In particular, they are not confined to special ‘root phrases’, but replace phrases built up from syntactic heads at the end of the syntactic computation.

feature associated with *om* is unmatched, is preferred over (14), in which both the feature M associated with *om* and the feature PL associated with *-i* fail to be matched in the substructures targeted by lexicalization.<sup>7</sup>

At this point, then, two analytical options remain alive for the M.SG forms of Lunigianese. The gender marker M may either be lexicalized by the nominal root or by a null morpheme Ø. But I will show that denying that the gender marker is Ø in masculine nouns in Lunigianese leads directly to an explanatory account of the facts we will examine in the next section, whereas the competing analysis doesn't.

### 5. Silent PL in Colonnata

In the Colonnata dialect of Lunigianese, the plural *-i* on the feminine noun seems to be in complementary distribution with the plural marking on determiners and quantifiers, i.e. when the noun cooccurs with an article or quantifier marked with *-i* (reflected only in the palatalization of the *l*- of the article in (14a)), only the gender marker *-a* appears on the noun:

- (14) a. λa δona  
*the.PL.F woman.F*  
 ‘the women’  
 b. tantja δona  
*so.many.PL.F woman.F*  
 ‘so many women’

Otherwise, the noun has the full F.PL inflection *-ia*, e.g. *tre d'donja* ‘three women’.

I take this to be an ellipsis phenomenon in the specific sense that whenever the element lexicalizing PL is spelled out on a determiner or a quantifier, it is not also pronounced on the noun or an attributive adjective. Similarly, PL is not pronounced on a past participle agreeing with a F.PL object clitic, as in (16a). But from this perspective, it is surprising that *-i* is in fact always spelled out on a M.PL form (with the exceptions discussed in section 6):

- (15) kwanti omi  
*how.many.PL man.PL*  
 ‘how many men’

(Filattiera)

- (16) a. a λ o camata  
*S O.F.PL have.1.SG called.F*  
 ‘I have called them<sub>feminine</sub>.’

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<sup>7</sup>In fact, ‘Minimize unmatched features’ can be shown to underlie the various blocking effects discussed in Caha (2009) and Taraldsen (to appear).

- b. a j o camati  
*S O.M.PL have.1.SG called.M*  
 ‘I have called them<sub>masc</sub>.’  
 (Colonnata)

In particular, this is surprising if *-i* is just specified as {PL}, as it would have to be on an analysis of F.PL *-ia* adhering to (2). But on an account assuming (4), the Superset Principle, rather than (2), we can assign *-i* the lexical entry in (8a), as the feminine vs. masculine asymmetry discussed in section 2 requires, if the masculine gender marker is not lexicalized by Ø in Lunigianese. This allows us to take advantage of the fact that even with feminine nouns the gender marker is always spelled out. The following sections will show how this works.

## 6. Why ellipsis preserves the *-i* in the M.PL

Suppose now the structure in (15) is embedded under a determiner with its own PL marking. On the basis of (8), we now expect the PL head in (15) not to be pronounced. Yet, as (15) shows, the noun will have a final *-i*.

We know from (14) that although the exponent of PL is not pronounced in the presence of an inflected determiner, the gender marker (*-a*) is. The hypothesis that *-i* lexicalizes both PL and the masculine gender marker, i.e.  $-i \leftrightarrow \{\text{PL, M}\}$ , enables us to use this fact to explain why masculine plural nouns and adjectives retain *-i* even in the contexts where the feminine forms lose it.

Since ellipsis never affects the gender marker, suppose that PL-ellipsis reflects the existence of a lexical entry  $\emptyset \leftrightarrow \{\text{PL}\}$  associated with a recoverability condition. Then, elliptical feminine plurals arise from the lexicalization pattern in (17):

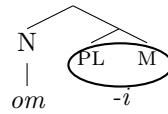


That is, there will be no plural *-i*, because the only piece of structure that could be lexicalized by it is silent.

Notice that whenever the recoverability condition is met, Ø will always be preferred over *-i* for the lexicalization of PL in the feminine form, since Ø is a perfect fit for PL, while *-i* has one feature (M) not matched by the target.

But when the PL head is lexicalized in a masculine form, a system minimizing unmatched features will select the lexicalization pattern depicted in (18), assuming, as before, that *-i* has the lexical entry in (8a) ( $-i \leftrightarrow \{\text{PL, M}\}$ ):

(18)



Thus, we have the result that the *-i* of the M.PL forms is retained under ellipsis for exactly the same reason as the gender-marking *-a* of the F.PL forms:  $\emptyset$  doesn't lexicalize the gender marker.

### 7. The case for (3)–(4) at this point

To assess the import of the Lunigiana facts, it is necessary to begin by considering how analyses consistent with (1)–(2) would account for the same facts. From section 3, we know that an analysis respecting (1) should assume that the masculine gender feature M is lexicalized by  $\emptyset$  in Lunigiana in order to maintain morphosyntactic parallelism between the feminine plurals in *-ia* and the masculine plurals in *-i*. In section 4, we saw that the shape of masculine singular nouns is compatible with that assumption. But in section 5, we noticed that although the plural marker *-i* disappears from the feminine forms in certain contexts, it remains in the masculine forms in the same environments. If the masculine plural forms are parsed as in (19b), maintaining total parallelism with the feminine forms exemplified in (19a), an ellipsis rule targeting the feature PL should make the *-i* disappear in the masculine forms as well:

(19)



Accordingly, upholding (1) comes at a price. Rather than formulate the ellipsis rule in the simplest form compatible with the feminine paradigm, we must add that PL is only deleted when preceding F. But the analysis is unable to tie this up with any other property distinguishing masculine from feminine nouns.

Abandoning (1) in favor of (3), however, we can deny that the gender marker M is ever lexicalized by  $\emptyset$  in Lunigiana, taking *-i* to lexicalize the constituent [ PL [ M ] ] in masculine plural forms like *omi*. Correspondingly, the Superset Principle predicts that *-i* will appear in masculine plural forms (as a lexicalization of M) in the contexts where it disappears in the feminine forms even if we maintain the simplest possible statement of the ellipsis rule. The contrast between the masculine plural and the feminine in ellipsis environments simply derived from the lexical entry for *-i*.

So, the case for (3)–(4) is not made by showing that no theory consistent with (1)–(2) can provide a descriptively accurate account of the Lunigiana facts considered in the preceding sections. What we have seen is rather that

a descriptively accurate analysis consistent with (1)–(2) requires a brute force stipulation to handle the feminine–masculine contrast in the plural forms. A theory based on (3)–(4) delivers a much more elegant analysis of the same facts, relegating idiosyncracies to the one component where idiosyncracies cannot be avoided, i.e. the lexicon.

This is a perfectly valid line of argument in my opinion, and one that has been profitably pursued in the development of linguistic theory. And some Lunigiana facts that remain to be discussed will strengthen my case.

### 8. Another declension class

Manzini & Savoia's description indicates that even some M.PL forms may in fact lose the *-i* in Lunigianese dialects. But the only examples given are the adjective *zoven* 'young' (Standard Italian PL *giovani*) in Filattiera and the noun *can* 'dogs' (Standard Italian *cani*) from Bedizzano. R. Manzini (p.c.) adds *brev* 'short' (Standard Italian *breve*). These contrast with M.PL adjectives like *bravi* 'good, clever', *belli* 'beautiful' and nouns like *omi* 'men' in the same contexts.

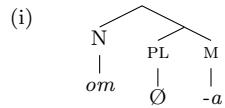
If the examples are representative, we have a contrast between declension classes. Adjectives like *zoven* and nouns like *can* fall into the class of masculine nouns and adjectives whose SG forms end in *-e* rather than *-o* in Standard Italian. In Lunigiana, they apparently have no final vowel in the singular.

As a first step towards an analysis, I adopt the view that the *-e* appearing in the singular forms of nouns and adjectives in the Standard Italian *e*-class is epenthetic. This leads to the further conclusion that the gender marker must be lexicalized by the root in the *-e* class of Standard Italian. Feminine nouns in this declension class lexicalize the feminine gender marker, and masculine nouns lexicalize the masculine gender marker, along with the other features lexicalized by any nominal root. To extend this to adjectives, we must represent one of the two genders as an aggregate of two privative features. Taking the feminine as the marked gender, I decompose it into {F,M}.<sup>8</sup>

An *e*-class adjective like *breve* 'short' must then have the entry *breve* ↔ {A, M, F}, and the Superset Principle will allow it to lexicalize the gender

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<sup>8</sup>When the feminine is decomposed as {F, M}, and, correspondingly, the F.SG gender marker is assigned the entry *-a* ↔ {F, M}, *-a* becomes a candidate for lexicalizing the gender marker in an elliptical masculine plural, as in (i):



But since one of the features associated with *-a* is unmatched in its target in (i), this option is blocked in favor of (18).

marker both in the feminine and the masculine forms. This forced move will be seen to have another benign consequence later on.

On this view, the derivation of a Standard Italian masculine singular like *cane* proceeds in the two steps shown in (20):

- (20) a. (lexicalization)  
 b. *can* ↔ *cane* (epenthesis)

This accounts for the fact that the feminine and the masculine forms have the same singular ending in the *e*-class. We might also capture this by saying that the gender marker is lexicalized by  $\emptyset$  in both genders in the *e*-class. However, the feminine and the masculine forms also syncretize in the plural in this class. Both the feminine *noce* ‘nut’ and the masculine *cane* form their plurals with *-i*: *noci*, *cani*. Positing zero allomorphs for the gender marker turns out not to yield an account of this.

The fact that the feminine nouns in the *e*-class form their plurals with *-i* is unexpected if the structure underlying these forms are exactly like those motivated on the basis of the Lunigianese F.PL *-ia* in section 2, i.e. [ N [ PL [ F/M ] ] ]. To see this, consider first what we need to say to make the plural of *donna* come out as *donne* rather than *donnaia* in Standard Italian. Assuming the feminine plural marker *-e* in Standard Italian *donne* ‘women’ to come from the entry *-e* ↔ {PL, F, M}, both lexicalization patterns in (21) are a priori possible:

- (21) a.   
 b.

To block (21b), we need to assume that the entry for *-i* is *-i* ↔ {PL, M}. Then, a lexicalization procedure seeking to minimize unmatched features in the VIs will prefer (21a) over (21b), since the gender feature M associated with *-i* fails to find a match in its target in (21b), while no feature of *-e* is unmatched in (21a).

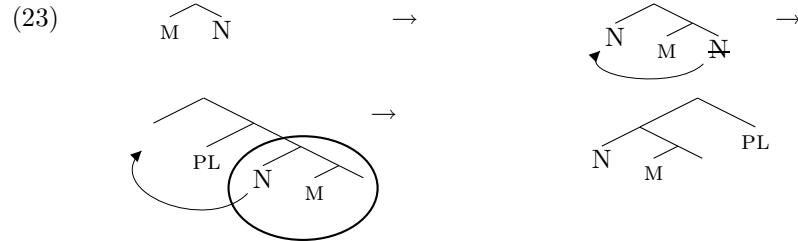
In this light, consider the options in (22), with a feminine *e*-class noun, assuming  $\emptyset$  ↔ {F, M}:

- (22) a.   
 b.

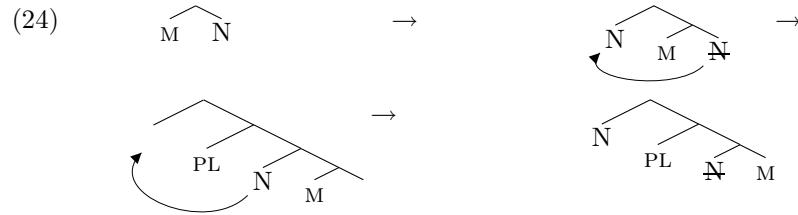
Given *-i* ↔ {PL, M}, (22a) will be preferred over (22b) for exactly the same reason (21a) is preferred over (21b), incorrectly predicting that the

plural form of *noce* should be *noce* rather than *noci*. Therefore, I suggest that the plurals of *e*-class nouns in Standard Italian have a different structure from the plurals in the *o/i*-class and the *a/e*-class, which will continue to be the one arrived at in section (2), i.e. [ N [ PL [ F [ M ]]]].

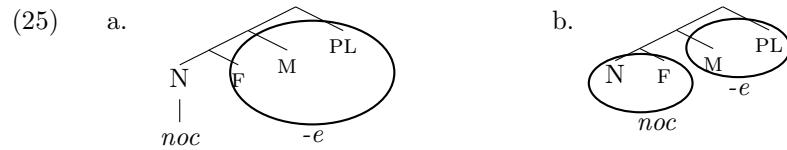
More precisely, I propose that the movement of N across PL at the second step of the derivation pied-pipes the gender marker in the *e*-class, leading to the ‘roll-up’ derivation in (23) (where traces are ignored):



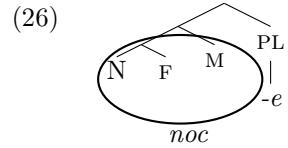
The derivation for nouns in other classes will not involve pied-piping:



Treating the *e*-class as special in exactly this way, we are immediately able not only to rule out plurals in *-e* for the feminine *e*-class nouns, but also to account for the masculine–feminine syncretism in the plural. Notice first that *-e* cannot lexicalize any of {PL, F, M} together in the rolled-up structure [[ N F ] M ] PL ], since they do not form non-trivial constituents in this structure. That is, the assumption that lexicalization targets subtrees rules out the patterns in (25), among others:

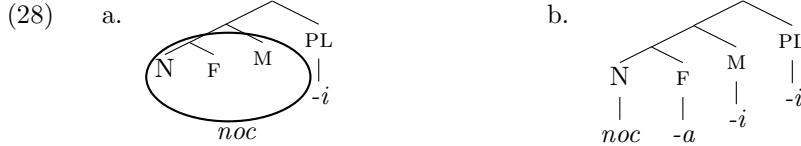


Thus, *-e* can lexicalize PL in feminine *e*-class nouns only if it lexicalizes only the single head PL, as in (26):



(28) shows two of the a priori possible lexicalization patterns competing with (26), given the lexical entries in (27):

- (27) a.  $noc \leftrightarrow \{N, F, M\}$   
 b.  $-a \leftrightarrow \{F, M\}$   
 c.  $-e \leftrightarrow \{PL, F, M\}$   
 d.  $-i \leftrightarrow \{PL, M\}$



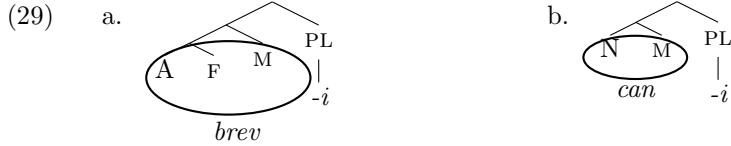
The version (28b) is dispreferred relative to both (28a) and (26), since the root *noce* is associated with two features not matched in its target, while all features of *noce* are matched in (28a) and (26). Replacing *-a* with *-e* in (28b) or *-i* with *-e* wouldn't change this, and (28a) is therefore the only competitor to (26).

Comparing now (28a) to (26), we see that *-e* has two features not matching the target in (26) (M and F), while *-i* has only one (M). Therefore, (26) in fact blocks (28a), and we correctly predict that the plural form of *noce* is *noci*, relying on the decomposition of gender needed to accommodate the *e*-class adjectives.

What we have seen, is that an analysis based on (3)–(4) and assuming roll-up derivations for *e*-class nouns in Standard Italian accounts for the feminine–masculine syncretism in the plural without any appeal to context-sensitive allomorphy. Instead, we assume that nouns and adjectives in this class trigger pied-piping. Yet, within the space of analytical options compatible with (1)–(2), there is one that achieves the same desideratum: Delete F in *e*-class nouns and adjectives. However, we will now see that there is one fact which this alternative analysis can only handle at a cost, while the analysis assuming (3)–(4) automatically predicts it.

## 9. Back to Lunigiana

Suppose we say that the Lunigiana varieties also have a separate class with the properties I have attributed to the Standard Italian *e*-class except there is no epenthetic *-e*. If an adjective like *brev* or a noun like *can* belongs to this class, the structure underlying its plural form will be the one created by the roll-up derivation, i.e.  $[[[N] M] F] PL$  for feminine nouns/adjectives and  $[[[N] M] PL]$  for the masculine ones. This gives rise to the lexicalization patterns we have already seen for Standard Italian:



Since the root lexicalizes the gender marker both in the feminine and the masculine forms, we have two correct predictions. The plural ending in the feminine forms is *-i* rather than *-ia*, and in the contexts licensing PL-ellipsis, the *-i* disappears both in the feminine and the masculine forms, giving M/F.PL *brev* and *can*, as desired, since PL matches all features of  $\emptyset$  (with the entry  $\emptyset \leftrightarrow \{\text{PL}\}$ ), but leaves one feature of *-i* (M) unmatched.

The latter prediction cannot easily be replicated in an analysis consistent with (1)–(2). As already noted, such an analysis could capture the feminine–masculine syncretism in the *e*-class plurals by deleting the feature F from the gender marker. But in order to prevent the plural *-i* from being targeted by PL-ellipsis in the masculine forms of the class corresponding to the Standard Italian *o/i*-class, e.g. *omi* ‘men’ or *belli* ‘beautiful<sub>pl</sub>’, such an analysis needs to make ellipsis applicable only in the context of a gender marker associated with F. So the question now arises why PL-ellipsis is applicable at all with *e*-class nouns and adjectives.

One could of course sidestep this problem by saying that what is deleted in the *e*-class is the whole gender marker, both in the feminine and the masculine forms, and that PL-ellipsis applies except in the neighborhood of a gender marker bearing the feature M.<sup>9</sup> But negative context specifications of this sort extend the power of distributional statements in such a way that one can restrict the distribution of a form to a set of paradigm cells not corresponding to a natural class. Consider, for example, the following distribution of the allomorphs A and B next to elements of a category C subclassified by two binary features X and Y:

(30)

|    | +X | -X |
|----|----|----|
| +Y | BC | AC |
| -Y | AC | AC |

The distribution of A in (30) cannot be given by a statement defining its context as a natural class, e.g.  $A \leftrightarrow Z/\{-C, +X\}$ . But it can be stated as  $A \leftrightarrow Z$  except in  $\{-C, +X, +Y\}$ . However, a distributional pattern like (30) can also be handled by blocking. One would posit  $A \leftrightarrow Z/\{-C\}$  and  $B \leftrightarrow Z/\{-C, +X, +Y\}$ , relying on some version of the ‘elsewhere principle’ to choose B over A next to a C specified as  $\{+X, +Y\}$ . The fact that an analysis consistent with (1)–(2) needs a negative context specification for PL-ellipsis in Lunigiana therefore means that adopting such an analysis

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<sup>9</sup> Deleting just M instead of F would also account for the feminine–masculine syncretism in the *e*-class, and would predict PL-ellipsis in the masculine *e*-class forms with the masculine rather than the feminine decomposed as {M, F}, but would require positing a special F.PL allomorph *-i* for the *e*-class.

leads to a theory that have two different ways of handling paradigms like (30). But parsimony would dictate that there should only be one.

The alternative analysis based on (3)–(4), as developed over the preceding sections, is in fact a blocking account of PL-ellipsis in the Lunigiana varieties. In the ellipsis contexts, *-i* appears instead of  $\emptyset$  just in case there is an extra feature (M) which can be lexicalized by *-i*, but not by  $\emptyset$ .

## 10. Summary

I believe that the preceding sections have shown that adopting (3)–(4) enables one to develop a coherent and relatively elegant account of the Lunigiana facts. Competing accounts adhering to (1)–(2), on the other, can achieve descriptive adequacy only by resorting to various ad hoc measures some of which seriously reduce the appeal of the underlying general theory of the syntax–lexicon connection.

Of course, I would view this conclusion lightly, if a theory based on (1)–(2) were known to provide more insightful analyses in other cases, or could be argued to be more constrained. But I know of no case where an analysis compatible with (1)–(2) has been shown to be superior to any analysis based on (3)–(4). As for restrictiveness, I note that analyses officially vindicating (1)–(2) typically fall back on ‘morphological’ processes like fusion to deal with facts that on the face of it contradict the basic premise. This, of course, both undermines any claim to restrictiveness and complicates the architecture of the system by adding a ‘morphological component’ which becomes totally redundant once (3)–(4) are adopted.

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