

Morphological Autonomy

*Perspectives from Romance
Inflectional Morphology*

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Syncretism and Neutralization in the Marking of Romance Object Agreement*

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15.1 Introduction

This chapter is part of a larger research, which aims to pick out the aspects which can be of general interest for morphological theory from the empirical domain of Romance object agreement. This is familiar to Romance scholars under the heading 'past participle (henceforth PtP) agreement', as exemplified with Catalan in (1b):

- (1) a. He troba-t la carta /el cotxe
 have.1SG find-PTP[M.SG] DEF.F.SG letter(F) /DEF.M.SG car(M)
 'I've found the letter/the car'
- b. (La carta) I'=he troba-d-a /
 DEF.F.SG letter(F)) DO3SG.F=have.1SG find-PTP-F.SG/
 troba-t
 find-PTP[M.SG]
 '(The car) I've found it'
- c. (El cotxe) I'=he troba-t
 (DEF.M.SG car(M)) DO3SG.M=have.1SG find-PTP[M.SG]
 '(The car) I've found it'

While Romance PtP agreement is a much-investigated topic, most of the relevant literature focuses on its syntax (for instance, on the fact that Catalan has variable, rather than categorical, agreement with direct object clitics, in (1b)), rather than on the morphology that realizes it (for instance, on the fact that it is the same masculine singular form, *trobat*, which signals either object

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agreement or lack of agreement in (1c), whereas it unambiguously signals non-agreement, when occurring in (1a)).

The morpho-syntactic features involved in Romance object agreement are gender and number, and since in most modern languages both features have two values, the most often encountered pattern is the four-cell one exemplified again with Catalan in (2):

(2) Past participle inflection in Catalan *cantar* [kəntá] 'to sing'

| | M | F |
|----|-----------|-------------|
| SG | kəntá-t | kəntá-ð-ə |
| PL | kəntá-t-s | kəntá-ð-ə-s |

In section 15.2, I shall place this four-cell pattern into the broader context of Romance dialect variation, and show that this variation includes both richer systems (see (8) below) and more reduced ones (see (9)–(10)), in which only three, two, or one inflected forms are available. We shall also address the relationship between the reduction in the number of available forms and the reduction of the paradigm cells (defined in terms of combinations of the values of the morpho-syntactic features gender and number). The two, it will be shown, need not go hand in hand. Reduction of the available forms while the number of cells is kept constant is a (potential) source of syncretism (3a), except if the number of forms available in the given paradigm shrinks to just one yielding uninflectedness (3b); if on the other hand the number of cells is reduced, as one of the morpho-syntactic (feature-value) contrasts ceases to be relevant, the result may be neutralization (3c):

- (3) a. 'syncretism is the failure to make a morphosyntactically relevant distinction [...] under particular (morphological) conditions' (Baerman et al. 2005: 2);
 b. 'uninflectedness is about morphology being unresponsive to a feature that is syntactically relevant' (Baerman et al. 2005: 32);
 c. 'neutralization is about syntactical irrelevance as reflected in morphology' (Baerman et al. 2005: 32).

Consider the following French examples:

- (4) a. *Personne n'est venu*
 nobody NEG=AUX.3SG come.PTP
 'Nobody came'
 b. *Personne n'est mort* /**morte*
 nobody NEG=AUX.3SG die.PTP.M /die.PTP.F
 'Nobody died'

The (morphological) gloss in (4a) (from Corbett 2006: 29) does not specify gender/number values because in spoken French *venu(e)* is invariable. This uninflectedness concerns several inflectional classes (PtPs ending in -[y], -[i], and -[e]). Whenever one such PtP occurs in a context requiring object agreement, the rule applies vacuously as the morphology has become (through sound change) unresponsive to the feature gender.¹ By contrast, the strong PtP in (4b) does signal gender and occurs in the masculine, which is the syntactic default in most modern Romance varieties, with some exceptions that will be dealt with in section 15.2.1.² Note that in (4b) PtPs are not glossed for number, as in the spoken language distinct plural forms of the PtPs (still spelled *morts*, *mortes*) do not any longer surface phonetically in any syntactic context. Thus, for this specific paradigm number has become irrelevant, which does not however suffice to meet Baerman et al.'s (2005: 30) definition of neutralization:

- (5) Baerman et al. (2005: 30): 'Neutralization is defined as follows:
 i. In the presence of a particular combination of values of one or more other features (the context), there is a general loss of all values of a particular feature F found elsewhere in the language.
 ii. No syntactic objects distinguish any values of feature F in the given context, and feature F is therefore syntactically irrelevant in that context.'

In French, other syntactic objects still signal the number contrast, as shown in (6a–b) with possessives and direct object clitics, so that (5ii) is not satisfied.³

- (6) a. *Mon ami, je l'ai rencontré*
 my.M.SG friend(M) I DO[M.SG]=have.1SG meet.PTP
 'My friend, I've met him'

¹ Since *venir* is an unaccusative verb, the context qualifies for object agreement, under Perlmutter's (1978) unaccusative hypothesis (cf. Loporcaro 2010: 170–172). As argued in §15.2.5 below and shown in the glosses in (4b), in present-day French object agreement involves only gender, not number.

² It follows that, while the gloss in (4a) correctly accounts for the morphology, a syntactic gloss should include the gender specification 'M'.

³ The notion 'other syntactic object' is defined in terms of the specification of (increasingly comprehensive) domains of syncretism: (lexically determined) one specific lexeme < (morphologically determined) syncretism within a single inflectional class < over more than one inflectional class < throughout a word class < across more than one word class < across all potentially relevant word classes (Baerman et al. 2005: 206–217), where 'A word class can range from an individual lexeme and its paradigm through inflectional classes to nouns, nominals (a combination of nouns, pronouns and adjectives) and verbs' (Baerman et al. 2005: 119).

- b. Mes amis, je l-es=ai rencontrés
 my.PL friend(M) I DO-PL=have.1SG meet.PTP
 'My friends, I've met them'

Neutralization *stricto sensu*, as defined in (5), does occur in some (non-standard) Romance varieties, as we shall see in section 15.2. For syncretism too, the requirements established by Baerman et al. (2005: 34) are stricter than implied by the informal statement (3a). Consider their definition of canonical syncretism:

- (7) Baerman et al. (2005: 34): 'Canonical syncretism is defined as follows:
 i. There is, in certain contexts, a loss of distinction between some but not all values of a particular feature F. [...]
 ii. Other syntactic objects distinguish those values of feature F, and they are therefore syntactically relevant.'

The restrictiveness of clause (7i) ('some but not all values') has consequences for Romance object agreement, since both gender (except in a few varieties) and number are two-valued, and the theoretical apparatus of Baerman et al. (2005: 123) excludes, in such a situation, not just canonical syncretism but syncretism as such: 'Of course, we cannot tell whether there is syncretism once distinctions in a two-valued system are lost'.⁴ As we will see, the set of definitions in (5) and (7) leaves unclassified several instances of loss of distinction met in the paradigms available for object agreement across Romance. After reviewing some such paradigms, we shall take up the issue again in sections 15.2.2 and 15.2.4.

In section 15.3, I shall finally try to make sense of the inventory of observed syncretisms, drawing inspiration from studies of verb inflection and stem allomorphy in Italian and Italo-Romance within the autonomous morphology approach (cf. Maiden 2003; Pirrelli 2000). In that connection (section 15.4), some parallels will emerge between the regularities constraining the reduction of PtP paradigms and, on the one hand, morphological regularities observed in other nominal paradigms, and on the other hand morpho-syntactic regularities observed in (the gradual loss of) object agreement, as exemplified above with the vacillating agreement with object clitics in Catalan (1b).

⁴ The sections on gender and number syncretism in Baerman et al. (2005: 81–95) do not consider systems with binary contrasts: 'sets which show a tendency for syncretism between values are ones which are high cardinality (i.e. which typically are many-valued)' (Baerman et al. 2005: 123).

15.2 Paradigms

Let me start by providing in (8)–(10) a first, synthetic, list of the kind of paradigms I have come across in inspecting dialect variation across Romance:⁵

- (8) a. 5 cells, 5 forms: Surselvan [weak PtPs]; several dialects of central Italy (e.g. Maceratese, Serviglianese);
 b. 5 cells, 4 forms: Surselvan [strong PtPs with stem ending in coronal consonant other than /s/ and/or metaphonic root vowel alternation]; several dialects of central Italy (e.g. Matelicese, Sanseverinate, in the province of Macerata, Marche);
 c. 5 cells, 3 forms: Surselvan [strong PtPs with stem ending in /s/ and no vowel alternation], Agnonese [strong PtPs];
 d. 5 cells, 2 forms: Neapolitan [strong PtPs with metaphonic root vowel alternation], Agnonese [weak PtPs];
 e. 5 cells, 1 form: Neapolitan [weak PtPs; strong PtPs without metaphonic root vowel alternation].
- (9) a. 4 cells, 4 forms: Italian, Sardinian, northern Corsican, Occitan, Catalan, <Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian>;
 b. 4 cells, 3 forms: Sicilian, Calabrian, and Salentino [dialects with metaphony; PtP with metaphonic root vowel alternation], Grizzanese [strong PtPs], Piandelagottese [weak PtPs], Puter [strong PtPs with stem ending in /s/], Padovano [1st conjugation PtPs];
 c. 4 cells, 2 forms: French [strong PtPs], Altamurano [strong PtPs with metaphonic root vowel alternation], Milanese, Piandelagottese [strong PtPs], rural Veronese [1st conjugation PtPs];
 d. 4 cells, 1 form: French [weak PtPs], Altamurano [weak PtPs, strong PtPs without metaphonic root vowel alternation], Grizzanese [weak PtPs].

⁵ Varieties which are included in angled brackets have lost object agreement in perfective periphrastics, but still retain it elsewhere (for instance in participial clauses or in the passive). In square brackets, I specify the morpho(phono)logical conditions which determine the occurrence of the paradigm at issue. The database is a convenience sample of 145 varieties (featuring a total of 205 PtP inflectional paradigms), heavily biased geographically: while all the standard languages figure in the sample, fine-grained dialect variation has been scrutinized only for the Italo-Romance sub-family. Whether or not the generalizations arrived at on this (restricted) empirical basis can stand a systematic scrutiny of dialect evidence from the whole of Romance will remain an issue for further research. The data discussed here stem from several published sources as well as – whenever unreferenced – from my own field notes. A substantial bulk of paradigms over which the generalizations presented in §15.3 have been drawn was gained by inspecting the data provided in Manzini and Savoia's (2005: 553–627) comprehensive study of Italo-Romance morpho-syntactic variation.

- (10) a. 3 cells, 3 forms: Sicilian, Calabrian, and Salentino [dialects without metaphony], southern Corsican, Gallurese, Sassarese, Lurese (Logudorese), Sennorese (Logudorese);
 b. 3 cells, 2 forms: ?
 c. 3 cells, 1 form: ?

Only one etymological set of inflections is relevant for our discussion:⁶ all PtPs inflect, in all historical stages of the Romance languages, like first class adjectives, which means that the original situation was one in which three sets of forms were available, for three genders, as in *bonus, bona, bonum*. These three forms have to be multiplied by two numbers, singular and plural, and – for the P_{ROM} stage (on which cf. Zamboni 2000: 110–115) – also by three cases, *paccè* Lehmann (1982: 216 n. 24), who denies that P_{ROM} marked object agreement (in case, as well as in gender and number) on transitive verbs.

The most widespread system, already seen in (2), shows the familiar reduction to four cells, that prevails across Romance: in fact, the list in (9a) includes all of the major languages except French. Before turning to this more widespread kind of four-cell system (in sections 15.2.3–15.2.6), we will start our inspection of cross-Romance variation from the richer systems in (8).

15.2.1 Five-cell systems without syncretism

The systems in (8a) (5 cells, 5 inflected forms), occur in Surselvan (12) and in many dialects of central Italy, exemplified with Maceratese in (11):

- (11) Past participle inflection in Maceratese (Paciaroni and Loporcaro 2010)

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|--------------------|-----------|-----------|---|--------|------|------|
| a. | N | M | F | b. | N | M | F | |
| | SG | píjjá-t-o | píjjá-t-u | píjjá-t-a | | št-o | št-u | št-a |
| | PL | | píjjá-t-i | píjjá-t-e | | | št-i | št-e |
| | | ‘taken’ (all PtPs) | | | | ‘this’ | | |

| | | | | |
|----|----|-------|-----|-----|
| c. | N | M | F | |
| | SG | l-o | l-u | l-a |
| | PL | | l-i | l-e |
| | | ‘the’ | | |

⁶ By this I mean contextual inflection (Booij 1996), which is the locus of object agreement in gender and number.

- (12) Weak past participle inflection in Surselvan (Tekavčić 1973–74: 80–90, 444)

| | | | | |
|----|----|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| a. | N | M | F | |
| | SG | lava-u | lava-u-s | lava-d-a |
| | PL | | lava-i | lava-d-a-s |
| | | ‘washed’ (1 st macroclass) | | |

| | | | | |
|----|----|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| b. | N | M | F | |
| | SG | parti-u | parti-u-s | parti-d-a |
| | PL | | parti | parti-d-a-s |
| | | ‘left’ (2 nd macroclass) | | |

| | | | |
|----|----|-------|------|
| c. | M | F | |
| | SG | il | la |
| | PL | il-s | la-s |
| | | ‘the’ | |

In both kinds of systems, the fifth cell is associated with a third gender, the neuter,⁷ though with crucial differences, both morphological and morpho-syntactic. As for morphology proper, the main difference is that the paradigm with five distinct forms is found in all classes of PtPs in Maceratese, whereas it is restricted to only weak PtPs in Surselvan. Furthermore, the paradigms from other word classes added for comparison in (11b–c) and (12c) show that only in Maceratese five cell-paradigms are available in determiners, with the same inflections *-o* (N) vs. *-u* (M) occurring in PtPs, whereas Surselvan has a richer inflection (with the \emptyset ending as a marker of the third gender, as opposed to masculine *-s*) in just (predicative) adjectives and PtPs (except when used attributively). This brings us to the morpho-syntactic differences between the Surselvan and the Maceratese types of systems, which on the one hand concern the gender system in general, and on the other hand are specifically relevant to object agreement.⁸

In central Italian dialects, the neuter is a lexical gender, as there is a class of nouns which select neuter agreement (13a), contrasting with masculine (13b):

⁷ In central Italian systems like Maceratese in (8), the neuter includes mass nouns which do not inflect for number, so that no plural agreeing forms occur either.

⁸ I will neglect some further differences here: for instance, Maceratese has a fourth gender (alternating/ambigeneric, as argued in Paciaroni, Nolè, and Loporcaro 2008), which is, however, not relevant in the context of assessing the inflectional paradigm of PtPs as it is a controller gender (cf. Corbett 1991: 151) and consequently has no agreement morphemes of its own. The same applies to several other five- or four-cell systems discussed in what follows (cf. Tables 15.1–15.3 and (24)).

- (13) a. lo pa m=ε ppjačut-o/*-u
 DEF.N.SG bread(N) IO1SG=be.3SG please:PTP-N/*-M.SG
- b. lu prešuttu m=ε ppjačut-u/*-o
 DEF.M.SG ham(M) IO1SG=be.3SG please:PTP-M.SG/*-N
 'I have liked the bread/ham' (Maceratese)

In addition, neuter also expresses agreement with non-lexical controllers (14) as well as lack of agreement, occurring in clauses where a lexical controller is potentially there, but the syntactic configuration in which it occurs does not license agreement (15):

- (14) a. jji a lu mar-e m=ε ssempre
 to go.INF to DEF.M.SG sea(M)-SG IO1SG=be.3SG always
 pjačut-o/*-u
 please:PTP-N/*-M.SG (Maceratese)
 'I have always liked going to the sea'

- (15) peppe a ššord-o/*ššord-u lu
 Joseph(M) have.3SG untie.PTP-N / untie.PTP-M.SG DEF.M.SG
 kappj-u
 slip.knot(M)-SG (Maceratese)
 'Joseph has untied the slip knot'

In Surselvan too, the neuter may signal lack of agreement:

- (16) La malsogna ha caschunau biar-a-s
 DEF.F.SG illness(F) have.3SG cause.PTP.N much-F-PL
 unfrenda-s
 victim(F)-PL (Vieli and Décurtins 1962: 782)
 'The illness caused many victims'

Neuter agreement also occurs with non-lexical controllers (17a–b), as well as with proper nouns whose gender assignment may pose difficulties (like placenames (18)) and in other contexts which are reported to select neuter agreement cross-linguistically, like so-called 'pancake-agreement' constructions ((19), cf. Corbett 1991: 216; 2006: 150, 223):

- (17) a. Tgei ei succediu? (Wunderli 1993: 144)
 What be.3SG happen:PTP.N?
 'What happened?'

- b. Tut quei ch' ei prigulus sto vegnir
 all that which be.3SG dangerous must.3SG come.INF
 evitau (Surselvan)
 avoid.PTP.N
 'Anything dangerous must be avoided'
- (18) a. Cuera ei simpatic (Wunderli 1993: 148)
 Chur be.3SG nice.N
 'Chur is nice'
- b. Falera ei vegl
 Falera be.3SG old.N
 'Falera is old'
- (19) a. Caschiel ei bien (Haiman and Benincà 1992: 217)
 cheese(M) be.3SG good.N
 'Cheese is good'
- b. Cigaretta-s ei nuscheivel
 cigarette(F)-PL be.3SG harmful.N
 '(Smoking) cigarettes is harmful'

On the other hand, Surselvan nouns are divided into two genders, masculine vs. feminine, while 'the neutral gender [...] is a target gender form which cannot normally have a prototypical noun phrase headed by a noun or pronoun as its controller' (Corbett 1991: 159). As seen in the quotation, a special term is sometimes used for this kind of gender, viz. *neutral*. Alternatively, this gender is termed here *non-lexical neuter*, to bring out the similarity with systems like (11), since in both systems the neuter retains some of its original syntactic functions.⁹

The non-lexical nature of Surselvan neuter has a straightforward diachronic explanation. While in central Italy some Latin neuter nouns remained in the neuter gender, which besides attracted other mass nouns (previously masculine, like 'bread' in (13a)),¹⁰ in Surselvan the neuter got depleted, as the Latin neuter nouns became masculine just like in Italian or French (e.g. *temps* < TEMPUS, *aur* < AURUM; Stimm 1976: 42):¹¹

⁹ I cannot advocate at length for the terminological choice preferred here, due to limitations of space. I use *default* to label a function, that of occurring in syntactic contexts where agreement is triggered by a non-lexical controller (17) or is not licensed at all (16). This terminology departs from Corbett's, who calls *neutral* the forms occurring 'just for agreement with problematic controllers' (Corbett 2006: 97), whereas *default* is reserved for forms of one lexical gender 'drafted in for this extra duty' (Corbett 2006: 96).

¹⁰ Actually, for this specific lexeme this is true of Classical Latin, though alongside *panis*, -is (M) also *pane*, -is (N) is attested (Plautus, *Cura* 367).

¹¹ In what follows, I use the convention, current in Romance studies, of giving Latin forms in small caps whenever they are mentioned as *etyma* for the Romance outcomes.

- (20) a. Il temps ei cumpleni-u-s
 DEF.M.SG time(M) be.3SG come.to.its.end-M.SG
 'Time is up'
- b. Igl aur ei grev-s
 DEF.M.SG gold(M) be.3SG heavy-M.SG
 'Gold is heavy'

15.2.2 Syncretism in five-cell paradigms

Let us now turn to types (8b–c), that is, to paradigms with five cells where two (or three) of those are occupied by syncretic forms. Compare (21)–(22), from the same two geographical domains considered so far. (In fact, (22) displays three distinct paradigms from the same system considered above, Surselvan.)

- (21) PtP inflection in the dialect of Matelica (province of Macerata, cf. Paciaroni and Loporcaro 2010)

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| a. N M F | b. N M F | c. N M F |
| SG pijjá-t-u pijjá-t-a | SG št-o št-u št-a | SG l-o l-u l-a |
| PL pijjá-t-i pijjá-t-e | PL št-i št-e | PL l-i l-e |
| 'taken' (all PtPs) | 'this' | 'the' |

- (22) Strong PtP inflection in Surselvan (Tekavčić 1973–74: 80–90, 444)

| | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| a. N M F | b. N M F | c. N M F |
| SG fatg fatg-s fatg-a | SG miers mors mors-a | SG ars ars-a |
| PL fatg-a-s | PL mors-a-s | PL ars-a-s |
| 'done' | 'bit' (<i>aviert, aviarts</i> 'opened') | 'burnt' |

The dialect of Matelica (21) has three (lexical) genders, like Maceratese, as seen from the determiner paradigms in (21b–c), but in the PtP (and the adjective) there is no masculine vs. neuter distinction. The fact that there are only four forms available, however, does not make the Matelica paradigm identical to the common Romance one (found e.g. in Italian, Spanish, Catalan, etc., see (2) above): the crucial difference is that *pijjátu* in Matelicese is syncretic for masculine and neuter, since the two genders are distinguished elsewhere in the system (21b–c). Surselvan too has five-cell paradigms with four forms (22a–b):¹² contrary to central Italian, here loss of distinction in strong PtPs first affects number in the masculine (22a–b), whereas the (masculine vs. neuter) gender contrast is affected in a following step (22c), where the paradigm shrinks to three forms only.

¹² Five forms, as we saw above in (12), are found only in weak PtPs.

Note that if one sticks to the definitions in (5) and (7) above, only (21a) would be a case of syncretism, whereas (22a–b) would not, since loss of distinction here affects a two-valued feature. However, (22a–b) do not qualify as neutralization either since, as shown in (12) above, the number contrast in the context [masculine] is syntactically relevant for other PtPs. Uninflectedness is not an option either, given that masculine *fatg-s* has an ending *-s*, contrasting with *-Ø/-a/-as* in the remaining cells of the paradigm. This set of data, thus, would be left unclassified under (5) and (7).¹³

Note further that in (22c) occurrence of the same form *ars* over three cells of the paradigm would be at the same time a syncretism (because of the loss of the masculine vs. neuter distinction) while not being syncretic for number, since the latter feature is two-valued. This is evidence enough that loss of distinctions in the PtP paradigm, here and across Romance, is better captured over the entire paradigm than in terms of each individual feature. This option is adopted in Baerman et al.'s (2005: 104) analysis of polarity effects, as exemplified by the gender/number syncretism in the Somali definite article (Saeed 1999: 112), where loss of distinction involves two (two-valued) features:

(23)

| | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| | M | F |
| SG | -ka | -ta |
| PL | -ta | -ka |

I will generalize this view, labelling syncretic not only *pijjátu* in (21a) but also *fatgs* and *mors* in (22a–b), where syncretism only concerns the feature number. The same approach will be applied to gender syncretism in the examples to be discussed below (sections 15.2.4ff.), occurring in systems with just two (target) genders.

If one considers the two sources discussed in the literature (cf. Baerman et al. 2005: 4), viz. blind phonological change vs. morpho-syntactic readjustment, it emerges that the syncretisms exemplified in (21)–(22) arose as the product of (different rounds of) sound change: Eastern Romance loss of final *-s* (which blurred the masculine vs. neuter distinction in the singular, as *BONUS* and *BONUM* merged into *bonu*), and northern Romance deletion of non-low vowels in the final syllable, whereby e.g. *M.SG ARSUS* and *M.PL ARSOS* both yielded *ars* (22c).

This happens to be the case in the overwhelming majority of the examples of syncretisms involving PtPs we are going to discuss, across Romance, which makes a substantial difference with respect to changes that took place in finite

¹³ The same applies to most of the data discussed in what follows.

verb inflection (TAM and person marking), where autonomously morphological change played a major role, as has been shown by Martin Maiden in several influential papers (beginning with Maiden 1992; cf. more recently Maiden 2003).

Sound change was responsible also for the further reduction in the set of distinct inflections found in another type of five-cell system (8d), met with in Italo-Romance dialects spoken in the upper part of the central-southern area. These are exemplified with Neapolitan in Table 15.1:¹⁴

TABLE 15.1. Past participle inflection in Neapolitan

| | a. N | M | F | b. N | M | F | c. N | M | F | d. N | M | F |
|----|----------|---|-------|--------|---|---|----------|---|---|------------------|---|---|
| SG | rutta | | rotta | fatta | | | lavata | | | o | | |
| | [+RF] | | | | | | | | | [+RF] | | |
| PL | rotta | | | fatta | | | lavata | | | e | | |
| | [+RF] | | | | | | | | | e [+RF] | | |
| | 'broken' | | | 'done' | | | 'washed' | | | definite article | | |

Like the dialects of central Italy exemplified with Maceratese above, Neapolitan has a three-(target-)gender system (cf. fn. 8) including neuter (to which mass nouns and abstracts are assigned, and whose agreeing forms are used also in default contexts). The neuter vs. masculine contrast is formally signalled in the definite article, Table 15.1 (d) and some other determiners, as well as in pronominal *do* clitics:

| | | | | | |
|------|----|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| (24) | a. | a | kasə | a | vekə |
| | | DEF.F.SG | house(F) | DO.3F.SG | see.1SG |
| | b. | o | kanə | o | vekə |
| | | DEF.M.SG | dog(M) | DO.3M.SG | see.1SG |
| | c. | o | ppanə | o | bbekə |
| | | DEF.N | bread(N) | DO.3N | see.1SG |

¹⁴ [+RF] stands for 'causes Raddoppiamento Fonosintattico on the initial consonant of the following word'. RF is subject to some syntactic (adjacency) conditions (cf. Fanciullo 1986), which are fulfilled in the contexts exemplified in Table 15.1 (c-d).

| | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|-------|---------|
| d. ka | si | ššemə | o | bbekə |
| that | be.2SG | stupid | DO.3N | see.1SG |
| 'I see the house/the dog/the bread/that you're stupid' | | | | |

While the masculine and neuter forms of the article share the same phonetic shape, they contrast phonologically in that the neuter (as seen in the example Table 15.1 (c)) brings about RF: by the way, RF also discriminates between the otherwise homophonous masculine and feminine plural articles in Table 15.1 (d), thus guaranteeing that the gender/number system has a five-cell paradigm.¹⁵

Within this three-gender and two-number system, PtPs (like adjectives) never contrast more than two distinct forms, because of sound change: merger of final vowels to schwa has destroyed all inherited inflectional distinctions originally conveyed by canonical affixal morphology. The result is uninflectedness in all weak participles (Table 15.1 (c)) and in strong PtPs without metaphonic root-vowel alternation (Table 15.1 (b)). In the complementary subset of strong PtPs with metaphonic alternation (Table 15.1 (a)), two forms still convey a binary distinction [\pm feminine], with syncretism of number as well as of (masculine vs. neuter) gender.

A slightly less reduced five-cell system is found in some dialects spoken further north of Naples:

TABLE 15.2. Gender distinction in Agnonese

| | N | M | F | Agnonese |
|----|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| SG | lə mɔjlə | ru miɣrə | la ɣallojɲe | (province of Isernia, Molise) |
| PL | | rə miɣrə | lə ɣallojɲə | (RSUZH-FC 2007) ^a |
| | 'the honey' | 'the wall(s)' | 'the hen(s)' | |

^a The data come from the 2007 fieldwork campaign of the Romanisches Seminar of the University of Zurich (henceforth RSUZH-FC).

¹⁵ Five distinct forms occur also for the demonstrative *stu* 'this', whereas in *do* clitics RF has been extended to the M.PL form, thus resulting in convergent gender marking. Cf. Merlo (1917: 105–111), De Blasi and Imperatore (2000²: 47–49) on RF as a device conveying the masculine vs. neuter as well as the masculine vs. feminine plural contrasts in Neapolitan. Note that even if one were to assume for Neapolitan neuter the analysis Corbett (2000: 124–126) proposes for Asturian neuter in terms of (secondary) number, we would still get a five-cell paradigm, though defined by a different combination of features.

As shown in Table 15.2, the dialect of Agnone (province of Isernia) has a neuter gender which, unlike in Neapolitan, contrasts with masculine through the segmental shape of the article rather than RE.¹⁶ Also contrary to Neapolitan, in this area the merger of final vowels was not complete. Since -A > [ɐ] remained distinct, a F.SG form contrasts with the others even in weak PtPs (Table 15.3 (b)). This contrast in final vowels cumulates with metaphonic alternation in the stressed root vowel, of the kind already seen for Neapolitan in Table 15.1 (a), thus yielding the three distinct inflectional forms available for strong PtPs, exemplified in Table 15.3 (a):

TABLE 15.3. Past participle inflection in Agnese

| | a. N M F | b. N M F | c. N M F | d. N M F |
|----|------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|
| SG | vívɔtə vévɔtə | partíɣtə partíɣtə | lə ru la | lə rɔ la |
| PL | vévɔtə | | rɔ lə | lə |
| | 'drunk' [metaph] | 'left' [weak] | definite article | object clitic |

To sum up, syncretism in five-cell systems seems to result in one of the patterns schematically listed in Table 15.4 (a-d):

TABLE 15.4. Syncretism in five-cell systems

| | a. N M F | b. N M F | c. N M F | d. N M F | *e. N M F | *f. N M F |
|----|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| SG | A B | A B C | A B | A B | A | A |
| PL | C D | D | C | | B | B |

There are a number of logically conceivable alternative options (only two of which are given in Table 15.4 (e-f)): however, to the best of my knowledge, these do not seem to occur in any Romance variety.

¹⁶ The dialect also has a fourth (controller) gender, along the lines illustrated in n. 8 above.

15.2.3 Four-cell systems with syncretism

Since we have already exemplified in (2) the four-cell/four-forms system occurring in all the standard Romance languages but French, we can start our review right away from four-cell systems with loss of distinctions. Syncretism between two cells occurs in several northern Italian dialects, exemplified with an Emilian variety, Grizzanese, in Table 15.5.

TABLE 15.5. Past participle inflection in Grizzanese (Loporcaro 1991: 73-74)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M F | d. M F |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| SG | fa:t farta | lavá | be:l be:la | e la |
| PL | farti | | be: be:li | i al |
| | 'done' [strong] | 'washed' [weak] | 'beautiful' | definite article/subject clitic |

In this dialect, all strong PtPs have three forms (Table 15.5 (a)), whereas weak PtPs (exemplified in (b) with first macroclass) became uninflected through apocope. As a consequence, object agreement is observed with strong PtPs only, not with weak ones. That the pattern in Table 15.5 (a) is indeed syncretic is shown by the fact that number in masculine is distinguished in other word classes: see one irregular adjective in (c) and definite articles/subject clitics in (d) of Table 15.5.

The same syncretism of M.SG and PL, whereas the F.SG and PL remain distinct from each other and from the masculine, occurs in another dialect of southern Emilia, that of Piandelagotti; see Table 15.6.

TABLE 15.6. Past participle inflection in Piandelagottese (RSUZH-FC 2007)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M f | d. M F |
|----|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------|
| SG | in̥kminčá: in̥kminčá:da | vištə višta | e/al/u la | štə šta |
| PL | in̥kminčá:da | | i əl/lo | ščə štjə |
| | 'begun' [weak] | 'seen' [strong] | def. art./subj. clitic | 'this' |

Here, contrary to Grizzanese, it is weak, rather than strong, PtPs which show a richer inflectional paradigm (a), with three distinct forms, whereas in strong PtPs (b) the paradigm reduces to a binary contrast F.SG (*višta*) vs. the rest (*vištə*).

The syntactic relevance of (the two values of) both the gender and the number features for all the inflectional classes involved is demonstrated by the four distinct forms occurring (Table 15.6 (c–d)) in pronominal clitics, articles and other determiners (variation within one and same cell is determined phonologically).¹⁷

As to the diachronic changes that brought about the two kinds of syncretisms in Table 15.6, in (b) we are facing a familiar case of blind phonological change: all non-low vowels merged to [ə] (as shown in Table 15.7 (b)) so that only the F.SG ending, whose exponent was the low vowel, could escape the merger.¹⁸

TABLE 15.7. Causes of the syncretisms

| | a. Latin | b. merger of non-low Vs | c. apocope |
|------|----------|-------------------------|------------|
| F.SG | -ATA | -áɾda | -áɾda |
| F.PL | -ATE | -áɾdə | -áɾdə |
| M.PL | -ATI | | -áɾ |
| M.SG | -ATU | | |

In weak PtPs (Table 15.6 (a)), this regular sound change cumulated with apocope, which in Table 15.7 (c) is ordered after final vowel merger, but might just as well have applied before, since it was not a phonologically regular change. This is shown by the fact that the same suffix -ATE did undergo apocope in other word classes (as a derivative suffix in nouns, like VERITATE > *vritá* 'truth'). The fact that what was phonologically the same string did not undergo the change in F.PL weak PtPs means that apocope in those paradigms

¹⁷ The forms of the definite article and subject clitic in Piandelagottese are selected according to the following initial consonant in the M.SG (cf. Malagoli 1910–13) and to syllabic structure in the F.PL (cf. Loporcaro 1998 for a similar condition in nearby Grizzanese).

¹⁸ Inclusion in a box in Table 15.7 (b–c) signals application of the relevant change.

was sensitive to the morpho-syntactic feature value [masculine]. In this way, selective application of apocope permitted the preservation of inflectional distinctions, whereas in other systems, such as Table 15.5, apocope destroyed distinctions.

Another syncretic pattern with three forms for four cells conflates masculine and feminine in the plural. This is observed in those dialects from Calabria, Sicily, and Salento which display metaphonic alternation in the root vowel. Consider the schemes in Table 15.8, from the Northern Calabrian dialect of Castrovillari (Province of Cosenza).

TABLE 15.8. Past participle inflection in Castrovillarese (Pace 1994: 95–97)

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F |
|----|----------|--------|--------|-------|----------|------|
| SG | lavatu | lavata | fattu | fatta | kutu | kota |
| PL | lavati | | fattu | | kuti | koti |
| | 'washed' | | 'done' | | 'picked' | |

In weak PtPs (Table 15.8 (a)) as well as strong PtPs with a non-mid stressed vowel (Table 15.8 (b)), one finds convergent gender marking, with loss of distinction in the plural brought about by sound change: the original feminine ending -e was raised to -i and thus merged with the masculine, which resulted in convergent gender marking in (a–b). However, in Table 15.8 (c) the masculine vs. feminine contrast in the plural was rescued by metaphony, which applied prior to final unstressed mid vowel raising and caused stressed mid vowels to raise before a final high vowel (occurring in the masculine inflections).

15.2.4 Three-cell systems with convergent gender marking

Final vowel raising applied as a regular sound change throughout the extreme South (i.e. in central-southern Calabrian, Sicilian, and northern Salentino), as well as in southern Corsican and Sassarese-Gallurese in northern Sardinia. In all of the dialects of those areas which do not display metaphony – exemplified in Table 15.9 with the central Calabrian dialect of Catanzaro – final mid-vowel raising brought about not just syncretism in PtPs but complete neutralization of gender marking in the plural, in all word classes. This is illustrated for Catanzarese comparing the inflection of PtPs (a–b), adjectives

(c), and articles (d) (all determiners inflect the same way) as well as object clitics and pronouns (d–e) of Table 15.9:

TABLE 15.9. Past participle inflection in Catanzarese (Caligiuri 1995–96: 14–79)

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | d. M | F | e. M | F |
|----|----------|--------|--------|-------|---------------|------|-------------------------|---|----------|------|
| SG | apertu | aperta | hattu | hatta | bōnu | bōna | u | a | idzu | idza |
| PL | aperti | | hatti | | bōni | | i | | idzi | |
| | 'opened' | | 'done' | | 'good' (adj.) | | def. art. / DO clit. | | 3p pron. | |

Interestingly, what at first sight appears to be the same development in Table 15.8 (a–b) and Table 15.9 – and indeed is the same change, in phonological terms (i.e. $-e > -i$, affecting the feminine plural endings, among other endings) – turns out to be two different morphological changes, but only upon consideration of the whole morphological system of the two (kinds of) varieties at issue.

Note further that, while the system in Table 15.9 provides a *prima facie* case of neutralization, Table 15.8 (a–b) would not satisfy either of the definitions of neutralization vs. (canonical) syncretism, introduced in (5) and (7) above. It cannot be neutralization on a par with what can be observed in Table 15.9 because of clause (5ii): as shown in Table 15.8 (c), other syntactic objects within the same word class (i.e. PtPs of a different inflectional class) do distinguish different gender values in the given context. But Table 15.8 (a–b) cannot be canonical syncretism either because of clause (7i), since the loss of distinction involves not just *some* but *all* the values of the feature gender. This provides further evidence in support of the idea that, as argued in section 15.2.2 above, syncretism in Romance object agreement is best handled by computing it over the whole paradigm, rather than over specific features.

Diachronically, the neutralization seen in Table 15.9, resulting in convergent gender marking, may arise through sound change, as was the case in that Calabrian dialect. The same situation occurs also throughout southern Calabrian, in most of Sicilian, as well as in southern Corsican and the dialects of northern Sardinia, exemplified with Gallurese in (25):

(25) Dialect of Calangianus (Gallurese; cf. Loporcaro 2006: 335)

- a. kišt-i kaβaɖɖ-i l=a kkomparat-i me vratedɖ-u
 this-PL horse(M)-PL DO=have.3SG buy:PTP-PL my brother(M)-SG

- b. kišt-i akk-i l=a kkomparat-i me vratedɖ-u
 this-PL cow(F)-PL DO=have.3SG buy:PTP-PL my brother(M)-SG
 '(These horses/cows) my brother bought them'

The same neutralization of gender has occurred for purely morphological (rather than phonological) reasons in the northern Logudorese dialects which are in contact with Gallurese (and Sassarese). This is exemplified in (26) with data from the dialect of Luras (province of Sassari):

(26) Dialect of Luras (Logudorese; cf. Loporcaro 2006: 334)

- a. s-as káɖɖ-ɔɔ l-az=app-ɔ ɣɔmparáð-aza
 this-PL horse(M)-PL DO-PL=have-1SG buy:PTP-PL
 b. s-al vákk-aza l-az=app-ɔ ɣɔmparáð-aza
 this-PL cow(F)-PL DO-PL=have-1SG buy:PTP-PL

The Northern Logudorese variety of Luras (like the one of Sennori, cf. Table 15.10 (b–c)) modified an inflectional paradigm of the Logudorese type (Table 15.10 (d)), with parallel gender marking, because of contact with the

TABLE 15.10. Past participle inflection in the dialects of northern Sardinia

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | < | d. M | F |
|----|-------------------------|----|------------------|----|---------------------|----|--|------------------------|----|
| SG | -u | -a | -u | -a | -u | -a | change due to | -u | -a |
| PL | -i | | -as | | -ɔs | | contact with | -ɔs -as | |
| | Gallurese, Sassarese | | Lurese (NLog) | | Sennorese (NLog) | | Gallurese (Luras) or Sassarese (Sénnori) | (common) Logudorese | |

convergent gender marking paradigm of Gallurese/Sassarese (Table 15.10 (a)):

In Luras, the ending $-as$ formerly marking F.PL agreement was extended to mark agreement in plural as such, while the reverse happened in Sennori, where the originally M.PL agreement morph $-ɔs$ was generalized: the result was neutralization in both cases.

As for three-cell paradigms, my sample does not contain any systems displaying syncretism in PtP inflection between any of the three cells that remain distinct after neutralization of the gender contrast in the plural.

15.2.5 Four-cell paradigms again

Let us now revert to four-cell paradigms. We have seen that they may show either syncretism of gender in the context of plural number (the southern Italo-Romance examples in Table 15.8) or syncretism of number in the context of masculine gender, exemplified with the Emilian dialects in the Tables 15.5 and Tables 15.6. The two syncretisms may combine (as we saw for strong PtPs in Piandelagotti, Table 15.6 (b)), or they may co-occur in the same variety, in different inflectional classes. This happens in the north-western Lombard dialect of Casale Corte Cerro (province of Verbania):

TABLE 15.11. Past participle inflection in the dialect of Casale Corte Cerro (Verbania; Weber Wetzel 2002: 127)

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F |
|----|----------------------|--------|------------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------|
| SG | levá | levá: | rispundý | rispundúe | drumí | drumía |
| PL | levé / levá:j | levá:j | rispundý:j | rispundú: | | drumí:j |
| | 'washed' [1st conj.] | | 'answered' [2nd conj.] | | 'slept' [3rd conj.] | |

While 2nd conjugation PtPs (Table 15.11 (b)) have four distinct forms, 3rd conjugation PtPs (Table 15.11 (c)) have syncretic forms for M.SG and PL, and 1st conjugation PtPs (Table 15.11 (a)) have variation in the M.PL form, which can be either *levé*, distinct from those occurring in the other cells, or *levá:j*, identical to the F.PL. (Thus gender in the plural is variably syncretic.)

There is still another syncretism pattern in four-cell paradigms with three forms, although it occurs much more seldom than the two reviewed up to now. This is exemplified by 1st conjugation PtPs (Table 15.12 (a)) in Padovano, where there is one syncretic form for M.SG and F.SG. (All other conjugations have four distinct forms, as seen in Table 15.12 (c–d).)

The first conjugation paradigm has a complex history, as fourteenth-century Padovano (Table 15.12 (b)) still had the much more common mirror-image system (cf. Salvioni 1905: 289–291; Ineichen 1957: 77, 80, 82, 113). Then the paradigm (as the whole dialect) was upset by Venetian influence, which eventually resulted in (a) in Table 15.12.

Two different syncretic paradigms – which we have already seen separately – co-occur also in the western Emilian dialect of Groppallo (province of Piacenza), where first conjugation PtPs (Table 15.13 (a)) have three distinct forms:

TABLE 15.12. Past participle inflection in Padovano (Maschi and Penello 2004: 22; Tomasin 2004: 112–113)

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | d. M | F |
|----|--------------------|--------|--------------|----|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------|
| SG | kantá | | -à / -ò | -à | tazúo / -ésto | tazúa / -ésta | partío | partía |
| PL | kantái | kantáe | -à / -è | | tazúi / -ésti | tazúe / -éste | partii | partíe |
| | 'sung' [1st conj.] | | 14th century | | 'shut up' [2nd conj.] | | 'left' [3rd conj.] | |

TABLE 15.13. Past participle inflection in the dialect of Groppallo (Zörner 1989: 57, 197–199, 295)

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | d. M | F |
|----|--------------------|------|---------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|-----------------|------|
| SG | kátó | kātá | sěty(d) | sětyda | kapí(d) | kapída | fat | fata |
| PL | káté | | | | | | | |
| | 'sung' [1st conj.] | | 'heard' [2nd conj.] | | 'understood' [3rd conj.] | | 'done' [strong] | |

TABLE 15.14. Article/demonstrative/adjective inflection in Groppallo (Zörner 1989: 153–158)

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | d. M | F |
|----|----------------------------|---------|--------|------|------------|-------|--------|-------|
| SG | u fjø | a fjøra | kul | kula | tévad | tévda | mágar | mágra |
| PL | i fjø | s fjør | ki | kel | | | | |
| | 'the son(s) / daughter(s)' | | 'that' | | 'lukewarm' | | 'slim' | |

That syncretism, rather than neutralization, is at play here is shown by the four distinct forms in the paradigm of the article and the demonstrative (Table 15.14 (a–b)). PtPs of the remaining inflectional classes (Table 15.13 (b–d)) have a more reduced paradigm (the same found in adjectives, Table 15.14 (c–d)), which brings us to the final step in this overview of occurring syncretism patterns, viz. the discussion of four-cell paradigms in which only two distinct forms are available.

15.2.6 Four cells, two forms

Here too, the observed syncretic patterns are constrained. The Apulian variety of Altamura in Table 15.15 exemplifies the pattern generally found in Italian dialects of the lower part of the centre-south area, which differ from Neapolitan (seen above in Table 15.1) in that they lack a neuter gender:

TABLE 15.15. Past participle inflection in Altamurano

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | d. M | F | e. M | F |
|----|----------|-------|--------|---|----------|---|-------|----|--------|-------|
| SG | rɪttə | rɔttə | fattə | | lavátə | | u | la | kussə | kəssə |
| PL | | | | | | | i | | kussə | |
| | 'broken' | | 'done' | | 'washed' | | 'the' | | 'this' | |

Except for the missing neuter, PtP inflection is as in Neapolitan:¹⁹ there are two forms in strong PtPs with metaphonic root-vowel alternation (Table 15.15 (a)), whereas all remaining PtPs (Table 15.15 (b–c)) are uninflected. The syntactic relevance of number is shown by the paradigms of the article and other determiners in Table 15.15 (d–e).

¹⁹ Contrary to Neapolitan, in Altamurano masculine plural agreement is restricted to masculine animates (ia), whereas masculine inanimates display alternating agreement ((ib), cf. Loporcaro 1997: 343): (Both animates and inanimates would require masculine agreement in the singular.)

- (i) a. I wajpɔnə s=awɔnnə rɪttə/rɔttə l-a kɛjp
 DER.PL boy(M.ANIM)\PL REFL=have.3PL break.PTP\M/PTP\F DER-F.SG head(F)
- b. I ʃkatələ s=awɔnnə rɔttə/*rɪttə
 DER.PL box(M.INANIM) REFL=have.3PL break.PTP\F/broken.PTP\M

Occurrence of the feminine form in (ia) signals agreement with the initial direct object *la kejp* 'the head', not with *i wajpɔnə* 'the boys', which requires masculine agreement.

There is still another widely documented pattern of syncretism in northern Italian dialects, which has already been exemplified above with strong PtP inflection in the southern Emilian dialect of Piandelagotti (Table 15.6 (b)) and is further illustrated in Table 15.16 with Milanese:

TABLE 15.16. Past participle inflection in Milanese (Beretta 1980: 62, 132–145, 159; Nicoli 1983: 287, 320)

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | d. M | F | e. M | F | f. M | F |
|----|---------------|-------|------------------|-------|---------|-------|-------------|------|-------|----|--------|------|
| SG | sta: | stada | frit | frita | prim | prima | bəl | bela | el | la | kel | kela |
| PL | | | | | | | bei | | i | | ki | |
| | 'been' [weak] | | 'fried' [strong] | | 'first' | | 'beautiful' | | 'the' | | 'that' | |

As shown in Table 15.16 (a–b) strong and weak PtPs inflect the same way: there is only one dedicated form for F.SG, all the rest is syncretic. The system has four cells, but never four different agreement forms: the overall structure of the paradigm results as one compares the different syncretisms that occur in PtPs and adjectives (Table 15.16 (a–c)), on the one hand, and articles and other determiners (Table 15.16 (e–f)) on the other.²⁰

Further reduction in a four-cell paradigm yields uninflectedness. Across Romance, this happens more often in weak PtPs, as we saw with several Italo-Romance examples up to now. Among the standard languages, French is a case in point:

TABLE 15.17. Past participle inflection in French

| | a. M | F | b. M | F | c. M | F | d. M | F |
|----|---------------|---|------------------|------|---------------------|----|-------------|--------|
| SG | ʃâte | | pɛi | pɛiz | lə | la | bo | bəl |
| PL | | | | | le(z) | | bo(z) | bəl(z) |
| | 'sung' [weak] | | 'taken' [strong] | | def. art./DO clitic | | 'beautiful' | |

²⁰ Diachronically, sound change is partly responsible for the phenomena illustrated in Table 15.16. But also morpho-syntactic readjustment plays a role: in the plural of the determiners, what were originally the masculine forms were generalized; moreover, apocope in the PtP did not apply regularly, as shown by comparison with deverbal nouns such as *manġada* 'an act of eating(F)', pl. *manġad*, distinct from *manġa*: 'eaten.F.PL', *partida* 'game(F)', pl. *partid*, distinct from *parti*: 'left.F.PL' (Beretta 1980: 69).

Two forms are available just for a few subclasses of strong PtPs (cf. Kilani-Schoch and Dressler 2005: 145–146), exemplified in Table 15.17 (b) and (4b) above. Here, in principle, one might wonder whether the inflectional paradigm itself still has to be analysed as a four-cell one, due to the uncertain status of inflectional number marking, which is overtly preserved only in *liaison* contexts. Under many analyses (including Kilani-Schoch and Dressler's 2005), *liaison* consonants are regarded as epenthetic. Anyway, for an adjective like *beau* (Table 15.17 (d)) one still has to specify that [z] may occur after some instances of [bo] (plural) but not after some other (singular), which implies positing distinct cells for singular vs. plural. Within nominal morphology, plural is also signalled overtly in articles and pronominal clitics (Table 15.17 (c)), although with gender syncretism. As for PtPs, in contemporary spoken French plural [z] is never realized, as PtPs never occur in *liaison* contexts. Therefore, there is no evidence at all for four forms: strong PtPs in French (and in all Oil dialects),²¹ are an instance of a four-cell, two-form paradigm, just like strong PtPs in Altamurano and many southern Italo-Romance varieties.

In this dialect group, one also comes across a further pattern, which is encountered in the dialects of eastern Abruzzo exemplified with the variety of Lanciano in Table 15.18:

TABLE 15.18. Past participle inflection in Lancianese (Giammarco 1973: 164–165; R. D'Alessandro, p.c.)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M F | d. M F |
|----|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------|
| SG | jitə | arrəvátə | messə | lu la |
| PL | | arrəvétə | missə | li lə |
| | 'gone' [3rd conj.] | 'arrived' [1st conj.] | 'put' [strong] | 'the' |

Here too, final vowels have merged, so that non-metaphonic PtPs became uninflected (Table 15.18 (a)). And here too, as in Neapolitan, Agnonese, or Altamurano, two forms are still distinguished if a metaphonic alternation has arisen (Table 15.18 (b–c)). The difference with respect to the rest of southern Italy comes from the fact that metaphony in this area was induced by final -i, not by final -u. In terms of PtP inflection, this means that a metaphonic form

²¹ Cf. e.g. the discussion of Liégeois, with data from Remacle (1956: 148), in Loporcaro (2010).

occurs in the M.PL only, whereas the non-metaphonic form occurs elsewhere.²² In this case we have to do with syncretism, not neutralization, as shown by the four forms of the definite article (Table 15.18 (d)).

Finally, there is still one type of syncretism that we have not seen so far. This is found, today, in the western Veneto dialects spoken around Verona (Table 15.19 (a)), and was found in Verona itself in the fourteenth century:

TABLE 15.19. PtP inflection in Veronese (Bondardo 1972: 73–74; Zamboni 1974: 48; Maschi and Penello 2004: 24; Bertoletti 2005: 65–76)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M F |
|----|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| SG | mapá | mapá mapáa | mapado mapada |
| PL | mapé | mapé mapé/mapá | mapé |
| | 'eaten' (rural) | 'eaten' (urban, 13th century) | 'eaten' (urban, 15th–21st century) |

In this paradigm, that occurs only in one inflectional class (1st conjugation) – as in Padovano, above – gender is syncretic in both numbers, due to a combination of apocope (in the singular) and vowel coalescence (in the plural). Not only is this paradigm seldom met with. It also is instable. In urban Veronese, it had not yet arisen by the thirteenth century (the dialect had at that time the much more common pattern in Table 15.19 (b)), and by the early fifteenth century (Table 15.19 (c)), apocope – which arguably had never led to restructuring underlyingly (cf. Bertoletti 2005: 72–73) – had been suppressed in the singular, which led to the restoration of the equally familiar pattern in Table 15.19 (c), with syncretism only in the plural, that is found in Veronese until today.

15.3 Generalizations

Let us now see which generalizations emerge from the overview in section 15.2. Even without quantification, it is fair to say that some patterns occur over and

²² The exceptionality of this pattern is, again, the product of a diachronic accident: only in eastern Abruzzo, in fact, the two sound changes that caused the emergence of this system co-occur.

again, whereas others either do not occur at all or seem to be rare. Within four-cell paradigms, single syncretism between two cells could in principle result in any one of the patterns in Table 15.20, double syncretism could generate the patterns in Table 15.21, and syncretism of three cells any one of the patterns in Table 15.22:

TABLE 15.20. Syncretism in four-cell systems (three distinct forms)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M F | d. M F | e. M F | f. M F |
|----|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| SG | A B | A B | A | A B | A B | A B |
| PL | C | C | B C | C | C A | B C |
| | many | many | Padovano | ? | ? | ? |

TABLE 15.21. Syncretism in four-cell systems (two distinct forms)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M F |
|----|--------|----------------|--------|
| SG | A B | A | A B |
| PL | | B | B A |
| | many | rural Veronese | ? |

TABLE 15.22. Syncretism in four-cell systems (two distinct forms, with merger of three cells)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M F | d. M F |
|----|--------|------------|--------|--------|
| SG | A B | A | A | A |
| PL | | B | B | B |
| | many | Lancianese | ? | ? |

Yet not all of these logically conceivable options are attested. Polarity effects (as in Tables 15.20 (e-f) and 15.21 (c)) never occur, which squares with the cross-linguistic rarity of this type of syncretism (cf. Baerman et al. 2005: 103-111).²³ Of the remaining patterns, Table 15.20 (a-b), 15.21 (a), and 15.22 (a) occur in very many varieties, whereas I have not found any occurrence of Table 15.20 (d), 15.21 (c), and 15.22 (c-d). In between there are some types of inflectional paradigms which do occur, but only seldom: Table 15.20 (c) only in Padovano, 15.21 (b) only in rural Veronese, 15.22 (b) only in eastern Abruzzese (i.e. one instance each out of 205 paradigms in the sample).

The following generalizations seem to emerge. First, if there is only one form distinct from the one occurring in the context of default agreement, this will be associated with F.SG. Second, syncretism is most likely to affect either (a) the expression of gender in the plural rather than in the singular (Table 15.20 (a)); or (b) the expression of number in both genders (Table 15.21 (a)); or (c) if one gender value is affected, then the expression of number in the masculine (Table 15.20 (b)), whereas the mirror-image in Table 15.20 (d), with number syncretism just in the feminine gender, does not seem to occur.

Combining the two preferred syncretisms (syncretic gender in plural and syncretic number in the masculine), one further gets the equally well-documented pattern in Table 15.22 (a), with one single form for M.SG and M/F.PL, contrasting with a dedicated form for F.SG only. Here too, other conceivable options are either rare or non-attested: among my 145 sample varieties there are no instances of a binary contrast with one dedicated form for just the F.PL or just the M.SG, contrasting with an elsewhere form. To synthetically express these generalizations, the four cells from the bidimensional matrixes given in the Tables 15.20 - 15.22 can be ordered along the vertical dimension, as shown in Table 15.23:²⁴ (For each column, only one representative Romance variety is mentioned, among those that have been discussed so far.)

²³ Old Venetian could be an instance of the kind of system exemplified in Table 15.20 (e), as sound change affected both M.SG *-ao* (< *-ATU*) and F.PL *-ae* (< *-ATB*) merging them to *-à*. This would have led to the following system (Stussi 1995: 128):

| | M | F |
|----|--------|---------|
| SG | kantà | kantàda |
| PL | kantài | kantà |

However, texts always show variation (*-ao/-à* and *-ae/-à*), so the system never was categorically as depicted in Table 15.20 (e) and the four cells remained distinct all along.

²⁴ This display is possible only if we leave out the three marginal patterns which represent exceptions to the above generalizations.

TABLE 15.23. Generalization about syncretism patterns in two-gender systems

| | French (weak) | Milanese | French (strong) | Grizzanese (strong) | Castrovill. (metaph.) | Italian |
|---------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| F.SG | | I ₂ | | | | |
| F.PL | | | | I ₃ | | |
| M.PL | | | | | | I ₄ |
| M.SG | I ₁ | | | | | |
| default | | | | | | |

The idea underlying this display is the same behind Pirrelli's (2000: 64) and Pirrelli and Battista's (2000: 355) representation of base allomorphy in Italian verbal inflection: if a Romance variety has inflection in (a certain inflectional class of) PtPs, then the first inflection (I₂) contrasting with the one occurring as a default (I₁) is likely to be associated with F.SG (possibly also syncretically with F.PL, but only if I₁ extends to M.PL). If the system has three distinct inflections, the next one (I₃) will be associated with F.PL, and finally the last one is going to be a dedicated inflection for M.PL.²⁵ The same can be repeated for five-cell paradigms (Table 15.24), in varieties which have a neuter gender (either lexical

TABLE 15.24. Generalization about syncretism patterns in systems with neuter gender

| | Neapolitan (weak) | Agnonese (weak) | Neapolitan (metaph.) | Surselvan (ars) | Matelicese | Surselvan (fatgs) | Maceratese |
|---------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| F.SG | | I ₂ | | | | | |
| F.PL | | | | I ₃ | | | |
| M.PL | | | | | I ₄ | | |
| M.SG | | | | | | | I ₅ |
| N.SG | I ₁ | | | | | | |
| default | | | | | | | |

²⁵ A difference between the schemes in Tables 15.23 and 15.24 and the distribution of the base allomorphs over verb paradigms, is that in the latter case partition classes can be derived from richer ones through the union of some other classes, whereas in the case of PtP inflections there are exceptions.

or non-lexical), which provides the inflection occurring on the PtP in default context.

15.4 Some parallels

Independent evidence from morphology (section 15.4.1) and the morphology-syntax interface (section 15.4.2) supports the hierarchy that emerges in Tables 15.23 and 15.24.

15.4.1 Morphological

Barbato (2010) has reconstructed the intricate changes that were responsible for the reshaping of the possessive paradigm throughout Romance. In medieval varieties of southern Italo-Romance, the following change took place:

TABLE 15.25. Morphomic change in 2SG/3SG possessives in Old Sicilian (Barbato 2010)

| | a. M F | b. M F | c. M F | d. M F |
|----|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| SG | ME-U *MI-A | TU-U TU-A | *TO-U TU-A | to-u tu-a |
| PL | ME-I ME-E | TU-I TU-E | TO-I TO-E | to-i |
| | 'my/mine' | 'your(s)' | | Old Sicilian |

In Table 15.25 (a), regular sound change has raised a stressed mid vowel occurring before a low one (MEA > MIA). This introduces base allomorphy in the 1SG as opposed to the paradigms of *tu*u(s) and *su*u(s), in which sound change had no reason to apply. Yet, in a preliterary stage of several varieties (including old Sicilian and old Neapolitan), the paradigms of second and third person possessives were reshaped from Table 15.25 (b) to (c). This change was not motivated phonetically nor morpho-syntactically, since it applied in three cells of the paradigm which form no natural class in terms of feature values. It also did not dispose of base allomorphy, but on the contrary extended the same allomorphy pattern which had arisen independently in the 1st person. This is why Barbato dubs it, following Maiden and with Aronoff's terminology, a morphomic change.

As a result, as in the most widespread case of syncretism in PtP inflection, base allomorphy designs here a partition which opposes, throughout the possessive paradigm, the F.SG form to the remaining ones.

15.4.2 *Morpho-syntactic*

Consider finally the gradual loss of PtP agreement with DO clitics in Catalan. Here, agreement is described today as only optional (cf. Wheeler 1988: 194), whereby its loss/retention with different clitics results in an implicational scale:

TABLE 15.26. Gradual loss of PtP agreement with DO clitics in Catalan

| | i. | ii. | iii. | iv. | | |
|----------------------|----|-----|------|-----|---------------|------|
| a. l'he trobad-a | + | + | + | - | l'he trobat | F.SG |
| b. les hetrobades-es | + | + | - | - | les he trobat | F.PL |
| c. els he trobat-s | + | - | - | - | els he trobat | M.PL |
| d. l'he trobat | | | | | l'he trobat | M.SG |

In the most conservative option (Table 15.26 (i)), agreement is realized throughout, whatever the object clitic: only when the DO is a M.SG clitic, this is indistinguishable from non-agreement, as in most Romance varieties. The next step (ii) consists in loss of agreement with the M.PL, then (iii), with the F.PL clitic. The final step is the loss of agreement with the F.SG clitic too: speakers who choose the (iv) option have eliminated agreement altogether, so that their grammar is, in this respect, like that of Spanish. But while contact with Castilian can be invoked, here, as a concomitant driving force leading to the loss of agreement in Catalan, the steps through which this loss proceeds in Table 15.26 are not shaped by contact.²⁶

This is confirmed by the fact that selective loss along similar lines occurs in totally different Romance varieties, such as Toulousan regional French (Séguy 1951: 54), or Badiotto:

(27) Colfosco-Badia (Manzini and Savoia 2005, II: 594–595):

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| a. al | l=a | od-úd-a |
| SUBJ.M.SG | DO.3F.SG=have.3SG | see-PTP-F.SG |
| (F.SG: categorical PtP agreement) | | |

²⁶ Nor are they the product of other extra-morphological factors, like sound change, since the morphological roots of the rule are intact: speakers displaying the agreement pattern in Table 15.26 (iii), for instance, by no way cancel their plural inflections on adjectives or nouns, nor on PtPs used attributively, or occurring in the passive construction or in participial clauses. Variation and change, here, do not concern PtPs as such but only object agreement in the compound perfective verb tenses.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| b. al | ləz=a | od-ú/od-úd-es |
| SUBJ.M.SG | DO.3F.PL=have.3SG | see-PTP[M.SG]/see-PTP-F.PL |
| (F.PL: optional PtP agreement) | | |
| c. al | i=a | od-ú |
| SUBJ.M.SG | DO.3M.PL=have.3SG | see-PTP[M.SG] |
| (M.PL: no PtP agreement) | | |
| 'He has seen her/them(F/M)' | | |

For the Catalan facts in Table 15.26, local economy explanations have been invoked, based on the observation that in the F.SG the prevocalic form of the DO clitic *la* preceding the perfective auxiliary is homophonous to the M.SG one, as seen above in (1b–c) (Cortés 1993: 205 n.13). Thus, if agreement is omitted here, the gender–number information is lost, which does not happen in the plural, where the masculine vs. feminine clitics have phonologically distinct forms. But this cannot explain why agreement disappears first with M.PL, rather than F.PL clitics, and not the other way round, nor why this is so in Badiotto and Toulousan as well. The answer must come from the morphology, in the sense that the internal structure of the paradigm seems to be relevant here. Interestingly, the scale in Table 15.26 very much resembles that we came up with in Table 15.23 after comparing the patterns of syncretism encountered for participial gender/number inflection across Romance.

15.5 Conclusion

To sum up, in spite of the wild dialect variation, syncretism in the marking of Romance object agreement seems to be amenable to some generalizations, the crucial one being that a (dedicated) form for F.SG is the most syncretism-resistant, which results from convergence of the tendencies for gender syncretism in the plural and number syncretism in the masculine. These tendencies emerged generally from blind phonological change. Yet, they seem to have acquired the status of valid synchronic generalizations, as shown by the fact that (the output of) changes from different domains (section 15.4) seem to obey the same hierarchy. This hierarchy, in turn, becomes visible under a view according to which syncretism operates over the entire paradigm, rather than single features. An alternative approach, treating loss of distinction in number and gender separately would encounter problems in drawing the divide between syncretism and neutralization and in classifying properly most of the data discussed here.