

## CHAPTER 7: Further differences between English (Germanic) and Italian (Romance)

Here three more differences between English (Germanic) and Italian (Romance) are discussed, which seem to follow from the analysis sketched so far.

**7.1 Epithets with prenominal and postnominal adjectives.** As observed in Stowell (1981,287), in English, epithets resuming a previously introduced referent can only have prenominal, not postnominal adjectives (see (1)). This is presumably due to the fact that such epithets can only contain nonrestrictive modifiers and that only prenominal adjectives can be interpreted nonrestrictively in English:<sup>1</sup>

(1) I tried to visit the mayor last week, but [the angry old man]/\*[the man angry at his constituents] refused to see me

This is not true for Italian (Romance), where also postnominal APs can be interpreted nonrestrictively:

(2) Ho cercato di parlare con Gianni, ma [quel **maledetto** imbroglione]/[quell'imbroglione **maledetto**] non si è fatto trovare

I have tried to talk with G., but that damn swindler/that swindler damn not himself has made find  
'I tried to talk to G., but that damn swindler was not to be found anywhere'

**7.2 Idiomatic readings with prenominal and postnominal adjectives.** As noted by Sadler and Arnold (1994,194f), in English "prenominal adjective noun combinations allow idiomatic interpretations whereas postnominal and predicative adjectives do not". See (180):

(3)a A red herring

b ??A herring red in character

c ??A herring (which) is red (on the intended meaning)”

(4)a A white lie

b ??A lie white in spirit

c ??A lie which was white (on the intended meaning)

In Italian, instead, both pre- and postnominal adjectives allow for idiomatic interpretations:

(5)a Di bassa lega (lit. ‘of low alloy ‘= vulgar/of bad taste)

b Di buon senso (lit. ‘of good sense’ = of common sense)

(6)a Ad armi pari (lit. ‘at weapons even’ = with equal chances)

b Ai ferri corti (lit. ‘at the irons short’ = in bad terms (with someone))

This follows if idiomatic readings are only possible with direct modification APs, because only these are nonintersective, and if in Italian postnominal adjectives can also involve direct modification.<sup>2</sup>

**7.3 A constraint on Romance prenominal adjectives.** Demonte (1999b,68ff) mentions the observation found in traditional grammars of Spanish “that adjectives preceding a series of singular coordinated nouns which they modify “agree [in gender and number] with the immediately following noun”, as in [(7)a], while “the adjective specifying various preceding singular (nouns), all of the same gender, should show plural agreement”, as in [(7)c]” (p.68). Also see Camacho (2003, 127ff).

(7)a con **ferviente** devoción y cariño (Real Academia Española, p.391)

with fervent (sing.) devotion (sing.) and affection (sing.)

b ??con **fervientes** devoción y cariño

with fervent (pl.) devotion (sing.) and affection (sing.)

c con devoción y cariño **fervientes**

with devotion (sing.) and affection (sing.) fervent (pl.)

A similar restriction is noted for French in Noally (1999,90):

(8)a avec une **étonnante** grâce et sincérité (Noally 1999,90)

with an astonishing (sing.) grace (sing.) and sincerity (sing.)

b ??avec d'**étonnantes** grâce et sincérité (Noally 1999,90)

with astonishing (pl.) grace (sing.) and sincerity (sing.)

As Noally (1999,90) notes, “[l]a seule solution qui reste, c’est donc de postposer l’adjectif en le mettant au pluriel”:

(9) ...avec une grâce et une sincérité **étonnantes**

with a grace (sing.) and a sincerity (sing.) astonishing (pl.)

Italian behaves similarly:

(10)a (Ci trattò) con grande amore e affetto

((s)he treated us) with great (sing.) love (sing.) and affection (sing.)

b \*(Ci trattò) con grandi amore e affetto

((s)he treated us) with great (pl.) love (sing.) and affection (sing.)

c (Ci trattò) con amore e affetto grandi

((s)he treated us) with love (sing.) and affection (sing.) great (pl.)

‘(S)he treated us with great love and affection’

This can perhaps be made sense of if, as noted, prenominal adjectives in Romance are only direct modification adjectives modifying a constituent smaller than dP, the first nominal constituent with referential import (see the brief discussion in Chapter 3, section 3.4). As a consequence of that, the coordination which follows them cannot count as the coordination of two singular referential dPs, making up a plural referential dP.<sup>3</sup>

As postnominal adjectives can (also) be derived from a relative clause source, merged higher than dP (see structure (24) of Chapter 3 above), they will be able to modify a coordination of two singular referential dPs making up a plural referential dP, with which they agree in the plural. This is, we claim, the case in (7)c, (9), and (10)c.

Note that this leads one to expect that adjectives that are direct modifiers only will not be able to enter the postnominal plural option, as this is only open to the higher indirect modification adjectives. The expectation appears fulfilled. See the examples in (11), with adjectives that have no predicative usage:

(11) a ??in sicurezza e padronanza complete

with confidence (sing.) and command (sing.) complete (pl.)

(cf. in completa/??complete sicurezza e padronanza ‘with complete (sing./??pl.) confidence and command)

b ??con protervia e arroganza probabili

with insolence (sing.) and arrogance (sing.) probable (pl.)

(cf. con probabile/??probabili protervia e arroganza ‘with probable (sing./??pl.) insolence (sing.) and arrogance (sing.)’)

c ??per calcolo e interesse puri e semplici

for calculation (sing.) and interest (sing.) simple (pl.)

‘for simple calculation and interest’

(cf. per puro e semplice/??puri e semplici calcolo e interesse ‘for simple (sing./??pl.) calculation (sing.) and interest (sing.)’)

The constraint observed for Romance is not detectable in English given that prenominal both direct and indirect modification adjectives are available, and the adjective does not overtly agree in number with the noun. In German, where the adjective does show number agreement with the noun, instead of the expected possibility of both singular agreement (with direct modification adjectives) and plural agreement (with indirect modification adjectives), only singular agreement is apparently possible, for reasons that remain to be understood:

(12)a mit offenbarer/großer Sympathie und Liebe

with apparent/big (sing.) sympathy and love

b \*mit offenbaren/großen Sympathie und Liebe

with apparent/big (pl.) sympathy and love

---

<sup>1</sup> The epithet with the postnominal adjective in (1) is of course fine if *angry at his constituents* is interpreted as an appositive, or parenthetical, modification of *the man*.

<sup>2</sup> For numerous examples of idiomatic AN and NA sequences in Italian, see Jamrozik (1996). Also see the Appendix, sections 1 and 3, for the parallel fact that only *de*-less adjectives in Mandarin Chinese and only long-form adjectives in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian allow for idiomatic readings.

<sup>3</sup> The impression that the prenominal adjective in (10), and similar cases, modifies both singular nouns is plausibly due to the deletion (non pronunciation) of an identical instance of the adjective in the second conjunct: *con grande amore e*

---

GRANDE *affetto*. For a different analysis, see Androutsopoulou and Español-Echevarría (2006), and Androutsopoulou, Español-Echevarría and Prévost (2008, section 2.3).