How the syntactic change interferes on morphology: Romance plural isogloss

Nicola Lampitelli (University Paris VII)

I claim that romance plural isogloss (that is i/s markers) can be explained by means of syntactic change in the structure of Latin nouns. The change can be interpreted as a phrase loss.

Latin *rosās* structure is given in (1). I claim that the loss of both the case and *ThP* is responsible for the actual form of nominal plurals in modern Italian. Once *ThP* is lost, can the language still display a thematic vowel? And, are there any romance languages still having *ThP*? I claim that once *ThP* is lost, if a lexical vowel is still spelled out, it can be associated if there is a free V position (this is the case in Italian, cf. V in (2)). The theory also predicts that if such structures exist (with *ThP*), plural nouns exhibit the thematic vowel: this is the case in Portuguese (3).
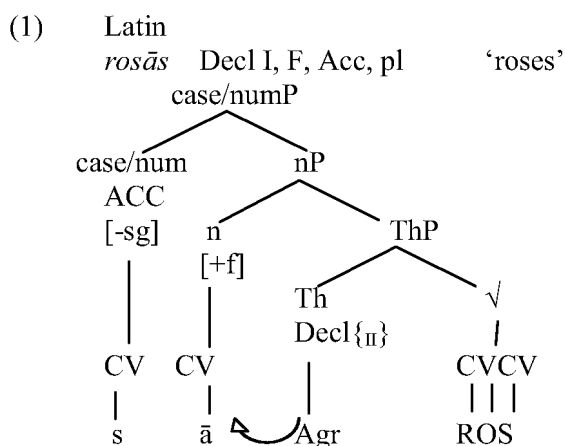
I claim that Italian plural is [i] and that it has an apophonic origin. Latin [s] has no more place in the structure: a vowel is needed and the only possibility is apophony, cf. Guerssel & Lowenstamm (1996): Ø → i (cf. (2)). Plural /i/ merges with feminine /a/ giving [e], as described by the Theory of Elements (cf. [KLV] (1995, 1990)).
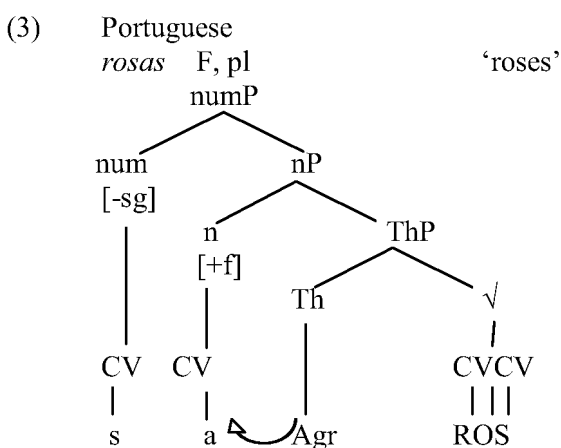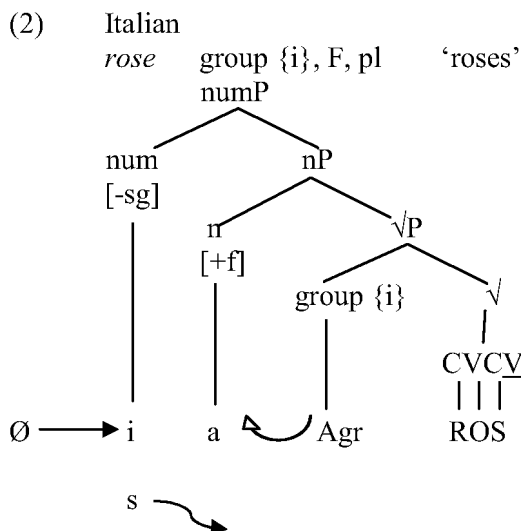
In (1), *case/num* node hosts accusative and plural marker; it is provided by a syllable CV. In all structures, *n* hosts the gender, as in Lowenstamm (to appear); it bears a syllable CV but in Italian (2). In Latin (1), *Th* bears the information about the declension. Via an agreement operation with *n*, a vowel appears (the so called thematic vowel). The declensions have disappeared; nevertheless Italian keeps a double distinction in the expression of gender:

   – group {i}: -a for F and -o for M   *rosa/lupo*   'rose/wolf'

   – group {ii}: -e for both genders   *cane/arte*   'dog/art'

The final vowel is spelled out via the agreement between *Spec√P* and *n* (cf. (2)). In Italian just one vocalic position is left available to morphology (underlined in (2)); otherwise, if the language doesn't lose *ThP*, the structure still has a place for the expression of the thematic vowel (a syllable CV in *n*). Moreover, in Portuguese, *numP* still bears a syllable CV, as it was the case in Latin. Each CV hosted by functional categories represents a morpheme (cf. Lowenstamm, (to appear)); its loss means then that the morpheme disappears.

This situation allows a prediction: if a given language has the structure as in (2), plurality is restricted to a reduced core group of nouns as the free V is a property of the root stem; otherwise, if the language has the structure as in (3), there's no restriction on pluralisation. This is actually the case, as Italian can't pluralize loan words, oxytone and/or abridged ones as *film* 'movie', *città* 'town' and *moto(cicletta)* 'motorbike'. None of these restrictions applies to Portuguese.

(1)   Latin
       rosās   Decl I, F, Acc, pl   'roses'

(2)   Italian
      rose   group {i}, F, pl   'roses'

```
                    numP
                   /    \
              num          nP
             [-sg]        /   \
                        n        √P
                       [+f]     /   \
                            group {i}    √
                                         |
                                       CVCV
                                       | | |
        Ø ——→ i       a   ∿⌣ Agr      ROS

                    s ⌣↘
```

(3)   Portuguese
      rosas   F, pl   'roses'

```
                    numP
                   /    \
              num          nP
             [-sg]        /   \
                        n        ThP
                       [+f]     /   \
                             Th        √
                              |        |
        CV      CV          CVCV
        |       |           | | |
        s       a  ∿⌣ Agr    ROS
```

Bibliography

Äbischer, P. (1960) La finale -e du féminin pluriel italien, in Studi Linguistici Italiani, I:5-48.

Äbischer, P. (1961) La finale -i des pluriels italiens et ses origines, in SLI, II:73-111.

Benveniste, E (1984) Origine de la formation des noms en indo-européen, Paris:Maisonneuve.

Embick, D. & M. Halle, (2003) On the status of stem in the Morphological Theory, in T. Geerts & H. Jacobs (eds) *Proceedings of Going Romance 2003*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Embick, D. & R. Noyer (2004) Distributed Morphology and the Syntax/Morphology Interface, U. Pennsylvania.

Guerssel, M. & J. Lowenstamm (1996) Ablaut in Classical Arabic Measure I Active Verbal Forms. In J. Lecarme, J. Lowenstamm & U. Shlonsky (eds), *Studies in Afroasiatic Grammar*, The Hague: Holland Academic Graphics, 123-134.

Halle, M. & A. Marantz (1993) Distributed Morphology and the pieces of inflection, *The view from the Building 20*, K. Hale & S. J. Kayser, eds. MIT Press.

Kihm, A. (2002) What's in a Noun: Noun Classes, Gender, and Nounness. Ms. Université Paris 7.

[KLV]: Kaye, J., Lowenstamm, J. & J. R. Vergnaud (1985), The internal structure of phonological elements: a theory of charm and government, *Phonology Yearbook* 2:305-328.

[KLV], (1990), Constituent structure in phonology, *Phonology Yearbook* 7, 2:193-231.

Longobardi, G. (2001). Formal Syntax, Diachronic Minimalism, and Etymology: The History of French *Chez*. *Linguistic Inquiry*. 32(2), 275-302.

Lowenstamm, J. (1996) CV as the only syllable type, in *Current trends in Phonology. Models and Methods*, Durand J. & B. Lakes eds, Salford, Mancherster (ESRI):419-441.

Lowenstamm, J. (to appear) *On n, ROOT, and types of nouns*. In Hartmann, J. M., V. Hegedus and H. van Riemsdijk (eds) (2008). Sounds of Silence: Empty Elements in Syntax and Phonology. [North Holland Linguistic Series, Linguistic Variations Volume 63]. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Marantz, A. (1997) *No Escape from Syntax: Don't try Morphological Analysis in the Privacy of Your Own Lexicon*, University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics 4.2: 201-225.

Müller, G. (2004) A Distributed Morphology Approach to Syncretism in Russian Noun Inflection. In O. Arnaudova, W. Browne, M. L. Rivero, & D. Stojanovic (eds.), Proceedings of FASL 12.

Percus, O. (2008) Gender features and interpretation: a case study. Ms. Université de Nantes.

Rohlfs, G. (1969) Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti, Torino:Einaudi.