
\[
(1) \left[ vP \ DP \ v \ [\alpha \ V \ DP ] \right] 
\]

First, we argue that the presence/absence of \( \alpha \) captures a microparameter covering v-related phenomena in Romance (DOM, participial agreement, object shift). Second, we suggest that the \( \phi \)-feature composition of this head accounts for more fine-grained interlinguistic distinctions in Romance (OD clitic doubling, leismo, laismo, and auxiliary selection).

2. OBJECT ASYMMETRIES: Romance languages manifest various asymmetries with respect to well-known object-agreement phenomena. We focus on four of them here.

2.1. Differential Object Marking: Only some Western-Eastern languages (Spanish and Romanian) display a Case marker (pe, a) preceding DOs (in so-called DOM; Torrego 1998, Leonetti 2004, Lopez 2012, Richards 2004, a.o.); Central Romance rejects this Case marker.

(2) a. *Il caut pe un student (Romanian)  
   I'm looking for a student  
   I have seen Anna

2.2. VOS sentences: Central Romance (Catalan, Italian) generates VOS sentences via VP fronting, whereas Western-Eastern Romance (Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian) resort to object shift, as binding data reveal (Belletti 2004, Lopez 2012, Ordonez 1998, Zubizarreta 1998):

(3) a. Recogio cada coche, su dueno (Spanish)  
   Its owner picked each car up  
   Its owner picked each car up

2.3. VSO sentences: Only Western-Eastern languages (Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian) display VSO sentences, a fact that has sometimes been associated to an additional projection in the vP domain (Belletti 2004, Ordonez 2007, a.o.).

(4) a. O invita cam de lon pe fata acesta (Romanian)  
   My brother loves Marie

2.4. Participal agreement: Participles can agree with (displaced) objects in Central Romance (Catalan, French, Italian), but not in Western-Eastern Romance (Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian) (Kayne 1989, Paoli 2006, a.o.).

(5) a. Combien de tables as-tu repeintes? (French)  
   How many tables did you repaint?

3. A MICROPARAMETER FOR v IN ROMANCE. Considered together, the asymmetries above plausibly have the category "v" (or some object-agreement related projection) as its locus. Capitalizing on the first asymmetry (availability of DOM), we formalize this as in (6) below, taking v to be associated with a functional category (labeled \( \alpha \) here in order to be neutral as for its specific content) that is responsible for DOM, object shift (in VOS sentences), and VSO. Once \( \alpha \) is postulated, we need to adjust it so that we can distinguish Western-Eastern-Romance type languages (Spanish, Romanian, Portuguese) from Central-Romance type languages (Catalan, Italian, French). We argue that \( \alpha \) can have an agreement (\( \phi \)) or prepositional (\( p \)) nature, as follows:

\[
(6) \left[ vP \ DP \ v \ [\alpha \ V \ DP ] \right] 
\]
(6) \[ \{p \text{ DP v } [p \text{ } \alpha \text{ [vP V DP ]}] \} \text{ MICROPARAMETER } \rightarrow \alpha = \{p \} \]

For our modest purposes, we leave open the precise connection between \( \alpha \) and \( v \) in the lexicon. All that matters is that \( \alpha \) stands for a source of \( q \)-features or not (being thus ‘prepositional’). The presence of \( q \)-features on \( \alpha \) accounts for DOM and object shift (both being A-related phenomena; Ordonez 1998, Torrego 1998, Lopez 2012). Moreover, \( \alpha \) is also the position that hosts subjects in VSO sentences, under the fairly standard assumption that \( \alpha \) can manifest itself in isolation (as an independent projection below \( v \)) or incorporate into \( v \), giving rise to extra specifiers.

Interestingly, languages where \( \alpha \) is prepositional not only lack DOM, object shift, and VSO, but also display: (i) participial agreement (see 5a) and (ii) oblique clitics (see 7).

(7) a. J’en ai bu (French)  
I have drunk

b. Hi he viscut molt de temps (Catalan)  
CL have lived a-lot of time

I lived there for a long time

The correlation between oblique clitics and prepositional \( \alpha \) is straightforward if oblique Case has adpositions as its source. The same holds for participial agreement if participles involve an adjectival layer, and adjectives contain a preposition in their sublexical structure (as argued for by Amritavalli & Jayaseelan 2003, Mateu 2002, and Kayne 2008).

4. PARAMETRIZING \( \alpha \). Given that \( \alpha \) is an agreement element, its status should be subject to further cuts. We show that this is indeed the case. In particular, we argue that the \( q \)-feature make-up of \( \alpha \) can be complete of defective (Chomsky 2000, 2001), a factor that determines domino-effect (a cluster of) microparameters. In brief, we argue for (8):

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\alpha = p & q\text{-complete} & DO doubling/no leismo \\
& q\text{-defective} & no DO doubling/leismo \\
& p\text{-complete} & no AUX selection \\
& p\text{-defective} & AUX selection \\
\hline
& & Rio de la Plata Spanish \\
& no DO doubling/leismo & laismo \\
& no possessive have & \\
& possessive have & EPP/overt expletives \\
& no possessive have & no EPP/no overt expletives \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

The facts in (8) are well-known (Jaeggli 1982, Kayne 1993, Torrego 1995, Romero 1997, Fernandez-Ordonez 1999, Ordonez & Trevino 1999, 2008, a.o.), but have not been connected in a unitary fashion. We suggest that they follow from the feature specification of \( \alpha \). If \( \alpha = q \), then it can be \( q \)-complete (giving rise to clitic doubling) or \( q \)-defective (showing or not gender distinctions); If \( \alpha = p \), then it can be defective (feeding incorporation in the context of auxiliary be), or complete (bleeding it).

5. CONCLUSIONS. This paper aims at capturing different object-agreement-based asymmetries in Romance by focusing on the nature and feature composition of a functional projection (labelled \( \alpha \) here, although it could correspond to Chomsky’s Agro, Zubizarreta/Sportiche’s 1999 Cl, Pykännen/Marantz’s Appl, etc.). The proposal offers a way to handle a series of object-agreement-based facts in a unitary fashion, establishing interesting connections that are consistent with well-known observations about Romance languages.