

## Object-Past Participle Agreement and Information Structure in Friulian

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In the rise and fall of the active-inactive alignment across Romance (La Fauci 1988; Ledgeway 2012), Bentley (2006) argues that object-past participle agreement started off as an alignment-driven pattern and subsequently developed into a partially discourse-driven structure, where only a subset of objects triggered agreement, namely topical objects (Bentley 2006). The present paper investigates object-past participle agreement in Friulian, lending support to Bentley's (2006) claim that object-past participle agreement is sensitive to information structure. By comparing Italian and Friulian, I propose that the difference in object-past participle agreement pattern between the two languages is due to Friulian's possibility to resort to covert topicalisation (Polinsky and Potsdam 2001).

Italian has lost object-past participle agreement in all contexts (Loporcaro 2003, 2016), except when the direct object is an established topic in discourse-pragmatic terms (Bentley 2006). In the case of anaphoric agreement, the object is left dislocated and obligatorily resumed by an object clitic (Cinque 1990) (cf. 1).

(1) Le due multe, le ho pres-e ieri (Italian)  
the.FPL two-F.PL fine-F.PL 3PL.F.OCL have.1SG get.PTCP-F.PL yesterday  
“As for the two fines, I got them yesterday”

In (1), the past participle and the direct object agree in number and gender. Standardly, past participle agreement is triggered by clitic-movement: the clitic moves as a phrase and passes through the specifier position of the functional head hosting the past participle (Kayne 1989; Belletti 2001)

Unlike Italian, Friulian has conserved past participle agreement with the postverbal direct object (Benincà & Vanelli 1984; Haiman & Benincà 1992). The past participle and the object agree in number and gender, even when the direct object appears in canonical position and is not resumed by an agreeing object clitic. Nevertheless, object-past participle does not consistently take place, but is conditioned by the discourse-pragmatic status of the direct object. If the direct object is in *narrow focus* (Lambrecht 1994), object-past participle agreement does not take place (cf. 2).

(2) CONTEXT: What did you get? (Friulian)  
O ai cjapaat DO-S MULT-IS  
1SG.SCL have.1SG get.PTCP two-F.PL fine-F.PL  
“I have got two fines”

This is also true if the direct object figures in *broad focus* (Lambrecht 1994) (cf. 3).

(3) CONTEXT: What happened?  
O AI CJAPAAT DO-S MULT-IS  
1SG.SCL have.1SG get.PTCP two-F.PL fine-F.PL  
“I have got two fines”

Note that the focal portion of the sentence is represented in capitals. Conversely, if the object has topical status as background or stage-setting information (Erteschik-Shir 2007), object-past participle agreement obligatorily takes place (cf. 4).

(4) CONTEXT: Did you get two fines?!  
Ceppo! O ai cjapad-is do-s mult-is  
Of course 1SG.SCL have.1SG get.PTCP-F.PL two-F.PL fine-F.PL  
“Yes, that's correct. I have got two fines”

*Dos multis* has topical status in (4). However, it does not have to undergo clitic left dislocation: it can remain in its canonical position, agreeing in number and gender with the

past participle. The sentence in (4) begs the question of how past-participial agreement is triggered, since no apparent linear movement takes place and no object clitic is present. As was mentioned, Kayne (1989) and Beletti (2001) associate past participle agreement with the fronting of an internal argument, as in the Italian example in (1). In Kayne's (1989) original proposal, this movement would take place through the specifier position of AgrOP. However, since Chomsky's (2001) *probe-goal* model, the spec-head requirement in AgrOP has been substituted with feature valuation at the vP level (D'Alessandro & Roberts 2008). In the current paper, I propose that, in Friulian, feature valuation at the vP level takes place through covert movement (Huang 1982) of the direct object, which results in overt object-past participle agreement. The direct object bearing topical status moves covertly to satisfy the [+TOP] feature in the CP-domain: covert topicalisation in turn triggers feature valuation in the vP space as the topical element must transit through the vP phase edge (Chomsky 2001; Lopez 2007, 2009) before landing in its target position, namely TopP. Note that covert movement must be interpreted in light of Bobaljik's (2002) Single Output Syntax Model: the highest link of the chain remains silent and the lowest link of the chain is pronounced.

Object-past participle agreement in Friulian is therefore characterised by different interface requirements for focal and topical objects. Unlike focal objects, whose unmarked focus position is *in-situ*, topical objects cannot just be realised *in-situ*, but must satisfy the [+TOP] feature in the left peripheral space. In Friulian, but crucially not in Italian, this can be achieved through covert topicalisation, which manifests itself in object-past participle agreement. Object-past participle agreement, instead, does not take place with focal objects, as their [+FOC] feature can be satisfied *in-situ*.

It is important to note that focus fronting (Lopez 2009, Cruschina 2012 a.o.) does not trigger object-past participle agreement either in Italian or in Friulian (cf. 5).

- (5) DO-S      MULT-IS o            ai            cjapaat      iar  
 two-F.PL fine-F.PL 1SG.SCL have.1SG get.PTCP yesterday  
 "I got two fines yesterday"

This suggests that the mechanism behind feature valuation at vP is different for internally merged focal and topical objects. This leads to the proposal that movement due to the satisfaction of left peripheral focus is a PF operation crucial to the assignment of focal prosodic stress (see Cruschina 2012). In this regard, focus fronting is a means of PF linearization, which takes place once the syntactic computation of the sentence is complete and, therefore, is not sensitive to phase impenetrability. As a result, a fronted focal object does not trigger object-past participle agreement as the moved element does not pass through the vP phase edge, but moves directly to its target position in the C-domain.

### Selected References

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