

# Accounting for the Definite Articles in Old Italian and Modern Dialects. No allomorphy - a common UR

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**Background and aims:** It is well known that Italian determiners seem to be governed by allomorphic rules. For instance, the definite masculine surfaces as: [il] before onsets [il+tavolo] ‘the table’, [l] before vowels [l+albero] ‘the tree’, and [lo] before s+C sequences, certain consonant clusters and inherent geminates: [lo+stampo] ‘the stamp’, [lo+psikologo] ‘the psychologist’, [lo+ts:ijo] ‘the uncle’. Faust et al. (2016) propose that this is not strictly speaking allomorphy because all Italian determiners share a common underlying form that varies in shape according to phonological conditions. Crucially, the underlying form is composed of two CV units (“bisyllabic”): C<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>V<sub>2</sub>. Definiteness is marked by a floating vowel under V<sub>1</sub> and a floating /l/ sits under C<sub>2</sub>, while V<sub>2</sub> expones phi-features.

Our major claim is that this underlying form and its morphological exponents have remained virtually unchanged since Old Italian and the only important changes have been to the phonological processes that affect its surface realisation. This analysis brings together diachrony, many modern dialects and Standard Italian under a shared, morphologically unified, decompositional analysis that is compatible with Distributed Morphology assumptions.

**Data:** The [lo] form (today restricted to Standard Italian) surfaced in Old Italian at the head of a DP structure at the beginning of an utterance before any onset (Formentin 2010): *lo giorno* sen’andava [Dante Inf. II,1]. It was also the only form within a DP after a final consonant: *si volse a retro a rimirar lo passo* [Dante Inf. I,27]. Meanwhile, after a vowel, /il/ was selected: [...] *di paura il cor* [...] [Dante Inf. I.15] and [...] *che ’l piè* [...] [Dante Inf. I.30].<sup>1</sup> The current geographical and typological distribution of [DP D [NP N]] is as follows: In Northern Italian dialects, before consonant-initial nouns, we get the so called ‘weak type’, St. Italian [il]. Meanwhile, in the Southern Italian dialects we find the so called ‘strong type’: [lu/o]. This is because Northern dialects had apocope after a sonorant, whereas Southern dialects did not (Neap. [o]). Interestingly, we also find the strong type [l + V] in a few Northern peripheral areas, such as today’s Liguria. Additionally, some other varieties such as Veneziano, Central Friulano changed from the strong type to the weak type in recent times (Benincà and Vanelli 1998: 72-73). In addition to the weak and strong types, there are also two shapes that we call here “bisyllabic”, found before all vowel-initial nouns: #\_V: the Southern Italian type with geminate [ll] and the ‘extended’ DEF D°. The ‘extended’ D° contains prosthetic vowels [i/e/a]: [ill] / [ell] / [all]. This variant is found from Tuscany to Sicily (in Old and Modern dialects):

(1) Old Tuscan (13-14<sup>th</sup> c.) (extended DEF D°)

Old Senese	< ell’amore >	Ita. <i>l’amore</i>	‘the love’
Old Lucchese	< ell’occhio >	Ita. <i>l’occhio</i>	‘the eye’

(2) Tuscan forms from the AIS maps (D° with different nominal agreement)<sup>2</sup>

	Tusc.		St. Ita.		
Pitigliano (Maremma, GR)	[ill ɔ:ka]	F SG	[l ɔ:ka]	<i>l’oca</i>	‘the duck’
	[ill a:le]	F PL	[le a:li]	<i>le ali</i>	‘the wings’
Montecatini (Pistoia)	[ell a:go]	M SG	[l a:go]	<i>l’ago</i>	‘the needle’

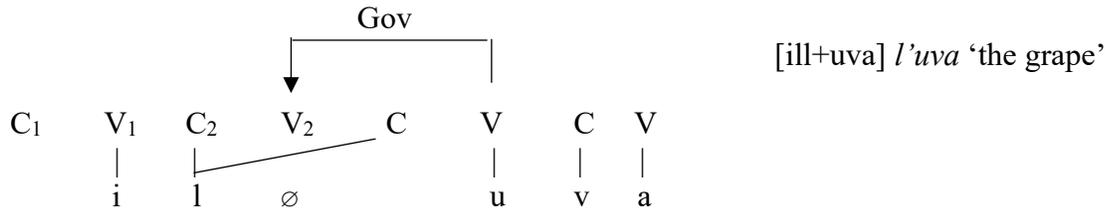
<sup>1</sup> We recall that according to Gröber’s law [l] is an enclitic to the previous N ending in a vowel: *che ’l* = [kel]. This suggests that in the [il] -type [i] is epenthetic before [l], not etymological. This gives just one DEF D° [l] generated from the [lo] form after apocope of [o] in the enclitic contexts of the DEF Ds, type < *che ’l* > (see Formentin 2010).

<sup>2</sup> We also see the extended form in Central Dialects of Umbria *ell’ogna* [Ameli] and Lazio [Acquapendente] (AIS).

Vinci	[ell eska]	F SG	[l eska]	<i>l'esca</i>	'the bait'
Elba <sup>3</sup>	[ill u:va]	F SG	[l u:va]	<i>l'uva</i>	'the grape'

Cross-dialectally, these extended forms of the article are found across Southern Italian dialects in the form of a lateral geminate: [ll] + V (etymologically: -LL-) or [ell] + V. For example [all+akw] Pozzuoli and Neap. [ll+akw] 'the water' (cf. St. Ita. [l+ak:wa] *l'acqua* 'the water'). What needs to be explained is why, in these vowel-initial forms, the definite article takes on these special extended shapes. We show that this bisyllabic form of the article is yet another surface instance of the C<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>V<sub>2</sub> underlying representation:

(3) Gemination and the 'bisyllabic' UR



**Proposal:**

We propose that the UR for definite articles is composed of a template of two CV units: C<sub>1</sub>V<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>V<sub>2</sub> in Old Italian, and very many dialects. This UR expone DEF D° with a floating vowel beneath V<sub>1</sub> and an /l/ beneath C<sub>2</sub>; V<sub>2</sub> hosts the exponents of phi-features. This hypothesis reinforces what Faust et al. (2016) have built for Standard Italian determiners.

In our analysis, all the forms are derived from a single "bisyllabic" UR and indeed, overt reflexes of the full "bisyllabic" article are attested in some Old Italian areas (Formentin 1996, 2002): Old Pavano [Ruzzante] <igi> umene 'the men'<sup>4</sup> and Old Salentino <illi> codardi / <ella> femina 'the cowards'/'the woman'. For this presentation, we will focus on deriving the 'allomorphy' of the pre-vocalic extended forms: [ill/ell/all/ll] from a single UR, which has never previously been attempted. In Faust et al. (2016)'s analysis, the vowel-initial variant (/l-/) is the result of hiatus-induced truncation before vowel-initial roots: /ilo + <sup>C</sup>ago/ > (i)l∅<sup>C</sup>ago > [l+ago] 'the needle'. Part of the second CV is truncated before vowel-initial roots due to hiatus. Whereas, we propose that in Old Italian, and the dialects mentioned above, the preference is for maintaining the full second CV of the article's UR, which results in the gemination of the /l/. In some dialects, gemination involves the subsequent hardening of /l/ into a stop or its palatalization. In these varieties, the whole of the article's "bisyllabic" UR is retained, thereby resulting in gemination: /ilo + <sup>C</sup>uva/ > il∅<sup>C</sup>uva > [il:uva] (Elba). We will also provide an analysis for Old Padovan's allomorphy: *li* (*i*) *campi* ≠ *gi agni* LI CAMPI 'the fields' vs. ILLI ANNI 'the years'.

Crucially, in all of our cases, the variation is caused by the general phonology of the language interacting with a single UR that is surprisingly uniform across time and space. In all these dialects, the same phonological objects expone the same syntactic features, and the variation in surface forms are merely the effect of the micro-parametric differences in the phonological processes that interpret this UR according to its phonological context.

**References:** AIS <http://www3.pd.istc.cnr.it/navigais-web/>. Formentin, V. 1996. "Alcune considerazioni e un'ipotesi sull'articolo determinativo in area italo-romanza", in Studi offerti a Luigi Blasucci, (ed.) L. Lugnani, M. Santagata & A. Stussi, Lucca, M. Pacini Fazzi, 257-272. Faust et al. 2016/under review. Articles of Italian Unite. Formentin, V. 2002, "Antico padovano 'gi' da illi: condizioni italo-romanze di

<sup>3</sup> Pomonte, Capoliveri. Rohlfs II, § 416, p. 103-104.

<sup>4</sup> The form *gi* < ILLI v. see Stussi (1995: 124-134) with a palatalization triggered by /-i/.

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