

## A PUZZLING CONSTRAINT ON ITALIAN ADJECTIVES

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**§1. Background.** Cinque (2010) provided evidence that the main partition for adjectives is that between predicative and non-predicative adjectives: “predicative adjectives” are those that can serve as predicates of copular sentences, whereas “non-predicative adjectives” are those that cannot do so: e.g., *misteriosi* but not *principali* is a predicative adjective in Italian, given the contrast between \**I personaggi del romanzo sono principali* and *I personaggi del romanzo sono misteriosi* (‘The characters of the novel are \*main/ <sup>ok</sup>mysterious’).

**§2. The puzzle.** When a PP contains an NP qualified by an AP, AP can be freely omitted, as in (1a) (where the NP *personaggi* is qualified by the AP *misteriosi*), or can be a non-predicative adjective, as in (2a). Consider now the syntactic construction which, in traditional grammars, is known as the “complement of quality”; an example of this construction is *dai personaggi misteriosi* in (1b). Indeed, when an AP is embedded within the complement of quality, that AP cannot be omitted, and must be a predicative adjective. This point is illustrated in (1b) and (2b).

- (1a) Sono spaventato dai personaggi (misteriosi). [Italian]  
am scared *da*.the characters mysterious (= ‘I am scared by mysterious characters’).
- (1b) Il romanzo dai personaggi \*(misteriosi). [Italian]  
The novel *da*.the characters mysterious (= ‘the novel whose characters are mysterious’).
- (2a) Sono spaventato dai personaggi principali. [Italian]  
am scared *da*.the characters main (= ‘I am scared by main characters’).
- (2b) \*Il romanzo dai personaggi principali. [Italian]  
The novel *da*.the characters main.

Thus, despite being superficially identical to run-of-the-mill PPs headed by the preposition *da*, the Italian complement of quality contrasts with run-of-the-mill PPs in that the adjective contained in the complement of quality is more constrained. Where does this more constrained nature of the complement-of-quality-internal adjective come from?

**§3. Structural representation.** From the semantic point of view, the complement of quality *dai personaggi principali* ((1b)) consists of a nominal qualificand (*personaggi*) and an adjectival qualifier (*misteriosi*); moreover, *romanzo* ‘novel’ is interpreted as the possessor of *personaggi* ‘characters’ in (1b): (1b) is saying that some characters are zonally included in, or part of, a given novel. Following den Dikken (2006:10-12), I take the semantic notions “qualificand” and “qualifier” to be equivalent to the syntactic notions “subject” and “predicate”, respectively. In this way, *personaggi* is a subject, and *misteriosi* is a predicate in (1b). Accordingly, *romanzo* results as being the possessor of the complement-of-quality-internal subject *personaggi* in (1b). Now, the relations of predication and possession are translatable into configurational terms. Thus, the possessor-possessum relation corresponds to a phrase whose head is the possessum, and whose specifier is the possessor, such as in [NP your [N' [N° book]]] (see den Dikken 2015 for a more refined configurational codification of possession). On the other hand, the subject-predicate relation corresponds to a small clause (SC; see Moro 2019). In this way, the complement of quality *dai personaggi misteriosi* – in which *misteriosi* is the predicate, *personaggi* is the corresponding subject, and *romanzo* is the possessor of the subject *personaggi* – is structurally represented as in (3) at the beginning of the derivation.

- (3) [SC [NP\* romanzo [N\* [N\*° personaggi]]] [AP misteriosi] ].

In accordance with the theory of Dynamic Antisymmetry (Moro 2000) and the Labeling Algorithm (Chomsky 2013), (3) may yield two different structures, one of which is (4), where Spec-LP is filled by the complement-of-quality-internal predicate *misteriosi*.

- (4) [LP [AP misteriosi]<sub>i</sub> [L' L° [SC [NP\* romanzo [N\* [N\*° personaggi]]] *t<sub>i</sub>* ]]].

I take  $L^\circ$  to be a silent linking element with verb-like properties. In order to capture the fact that *romanzo* is not contained within the complement of quality *dai personaggi principali* in (1b), I assume that *romanzo* moves from NP\* (i.e., the phrase headed by *personaggi*) to an LP-external position in the course of the derivation leading from (4) to *dai personaggi misteriosi*. What exactly triggers this movement is left open for discussion: this movement may be enforced by the Labeling Algorithm, which requires any specifier of a non-criterial head to be empty (Rizzi 2016), or may be related to Case, since *personaggi* fails to be Case-marked in Spec-NP\* (no structural Case is assigned to Spec-NP\* in (5)). Whatever the trigger for this movement, *romanzo* moves to the specifier of the preposition *da*, which merges with LP, as indicated in (5) (I am abstracting away from the determiner *i* ‘the’ which introduces *personaggi* in (1b))

(5) [PP [romanzo]<sub>j</sub>] [<sub>P</sub> da [<sub>LP</sub> [<sub>AP</sub> misteriosi]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>L</sub>  $L^\circ$  [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>NP\*</sub>  $t_j$  [<sub>N\*</sub> [<sub>N\*</sub>° *personaggi*]]]  $t_i$ ]]]]].

Ordinarily, *da* translates English *from* and *by* and conveys the meaning “zonally included in” or “part of”, notated as “ $\subseteq$ ” (Manzini 2017; Rugna and Franco 2022). However, in (1b), *da* clearly does not convey the meaning that the novel at stake is included in some mysterious characters; on the contrary, the novel includes (“ $\supseteq$ ”) those characters in (1b). Rather than taking *da* to convey two contradictory values (i.e., “ $\subseteq$ ” as well as “ $\supseteq$ ”), I submit that *da* has no semantic load in (5) (along the lines of den Dikken 2006; Moro 2000:52-53), the possessive relation between *romanzo* (possessor) and *personaggi* (possessum) being structurally codified by base-generating *romanzo* in the Spec of *personaggi*. I take (5) to be the structural representation of *il romanzo dai misteriosi personaggi*. The order in (1b), namely *dai personaggi misteriosi*, is derived from (5) via the movement – typical of Romance syntax (Cinque 2010) – of a noun (*personaggi*) across an adjective (*misteriosi*). Both *il romanzo dai personaggi misteriosi* and *il romanzo dai misteriosi personaggi* are well-formed in Italian.

**§4. Subjacency à la Cinque.** The contrasts in (1)-(2) can be derived by applying the Subjacency Condition (“Subjacency” for short) to the structural representation in (5). Consider how. As shown by Moro (1997: Ch. 2), a consequence of Subjacency à la Cinque (1990:40-43) is that extraction from a SC-internal subject  $\alpha$  is only possible when  $\alpha$  is in the domain of a verb-like head that is in a local relation with the selector of  $\alpha$ . Moro illustrated this point by means of the contrast between \*Which wall do you think the cause of the riot was a picture of? ((6)) and Which wall do you think there was a picture of? ((7)). The DP subject *a picture of* is in the domain of the copula (a verb-like head) in (6)-(7), while *there* and the NP *cause of the riot* are the selectors (qua predicates) of the DP subject. Crucially, the copula is in a local relation with *there* in (7), but not with the NP *cause of the riot* in (6). Therefore, the extraction of *which wall* from the DP subject violates Subjacency à la Cinque in (6), but not in (7).

(6) ... [<sub>DP</sub> the [<sub>NP</sub> cause of the riot]]  $T^\circ_{\text{copula}}$  [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> a picture of  $t$ ] ...

(7) ... [<sub>DP</sub> there]  $T^\circ_{\text{copula}}$  [<sub>SC</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> a picture of  $t$ ] ...

**§5. Conclusion.** Going back to (5), *misteriosi* is the selector (qua predicate) of the SC-internal subject NP\*; moreover, the relation between *misteriosi* and  $L^\circ$  in (5) is as local as that between *there* and the copula in (7). Therefore, NP\* results as being in the domain of a verb-like head ( $L^\circ$ ) that is in a local relation with the selector of NP\* in (5). However, when *misteriosi* is dropped or replaced with a non-predicative adjective like *principali*, there is no longer a selector of NP\* with which  $L^\circ$  may enter a local relation (selection of subjects being the preserve of predicates; see Moro 1997:115; 2000:112). Thus, the extraction of *romanzo* from NP\* complies with Subjacency when *misteriosi* is present, but violates Subjacency when *misteriosi* is dropped or replaced with *principali*. In this way, the contrasts in (1)-(2) are reduced to Subjacency.

Chomsky 2013 *Lingua* 130. Cinque 1990 *Types of  $\bar{A}$ -dependencies*. Cinque 2010 *The syntax of adjectives*. den Dikken 2006 *Relators and Linkers*. den Dikken 2015 In E. Kiss, Surányi and Dékány, eds. Manzini 2017 In LaCara, Moulton, and Tessier, eds. Moro 1997 *The Raising of Predicates*. Moro 2000 *Dynamic Antisymmetry*. Moro 2019 *Phil Trans R Soc B* 375(1791). Rizzi 2016 *The Linguistic Review* 33(1) Rugna and Franco 2022 *Isogloss* 8(5).