Nome: a subject clitic in a Southern Italian dialect

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Abstract

Southern Italian dialects are taken to lack subject clitic pronouns. In this paper, we will present evidence of the existence of at least one subject clitic in a Southern Italian dialect. The case in point is Abruzzese, which has in fact an impersonal subject clitic pronoun: nome.

In this paper we show that nome is a clitic subject, more precisely a weak pronoun subject in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999). Nome is always used as a subject, and is located in a low subject position, Spec, AgrSP (Cardinaletti 2003, to appear).

Since nome is derived from Latin homo, in the second part of this paper, we outline a comparative analysis of some Romance derivates of homo, and we show that they follow a well-defined grammaticalization path (Egerland 2003, Welton-Lair 1999). As will be discussed, these derivates are still evolving into other forms, such as referential pronouns or verbal affixes.

1. Introduction

Dialects of Italian are well known for their wide syntactic variation. Dialectologists usually group Italian dialects into four main subgroups: the northern group; the central group; the upper southern group and the lower southern group (see Rohlfs 1972 and Ledgeway 2000). In this paper, we will be concerned with a dialect of the upper southern Italian group, namely Abruzzese. Upper southern Italian dialects present some syntactic, morphological and phonological traits which make them different from the Northern and Central dialects.

Southern Italian dialects constitute a heterogeneous group, which is unified by some salient phonological, morphological and syntactic traits.

In this paper, we are concerned with Abruzzese, a dialect spoken in central Italy that belongs to the southern group. The southern Italian group, also known as upper southern Italian group, includes the dialects spoken in southern Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Basilicata, northern Apulia and northern Calabria (see Rohlfs 1972 and Ledgeway 2000). The Abruzzo region is located in the centre of Italy, and is divided into two main dialectal areas, as shown in figure 1: the western area, which roughly coincides with the L’Aquila province, where a central Italian dialect is spoken, and the south-eastern area, roughly corresponding to the provinces of Teramo, Pescara and Chieti, where a southern-Italian dialect is spoken. In this paper, with the term Abruzzese we refer only to the south-eastern group, and in particular to the Abruzzese spoken in the Chieti province.
One characteristic which is usually taken into account, when one wants to detect the group a dialect is part of, is the use of subject clitics. The *pro*-drop/*non-pro*-drop division constitutes one of the most important syntactic isoglosses between northern and central-southern Italian dialects. In northern Italian dialects the subject is usually phonetically realized by means of a full DP or of a subject clitic. That is, northern dialects make large uses of expletives and subject clitics, while Southern Italian dialects don’t (Poletto 2000, Manzini and Savoia 2001, to appear).

In Venetian, for instance, it is necessary to add a subject clitic to the verb in order to have a defined reference:

(1) La magna [Poletto (2000: 14)]
she-SCL eats
‘She eats’

As shown in (2), Abruzzese patterns like Standard Italian (3) in lacking subject clitics of the Venetian type. The sentences in (2) and (3) are interpreted exactly like the sentence in (1), i. e. the pronoun reference is defined¹.

(2) Magne
‘He/she eats’

(3) Mangia
‘He/she eats’
As we show in this paper, Abruzzese, unlike the other dialects of its group, does have a subject clitic, namely *nome*. *Nome* is a 3rd plural impersonal pronoun, which occupies a position in the clause which is different from that of any other DP subjects in Abruzzese.

In the following section, we give a brief outline of Abruzzese syntax. In section 2.4., we introduce the impersonal constructions in Abruzzese. In section 3., we list the properties of *nome* and show that *nome* is invariably used as a subject. We then classify *nome* according to the classification of pronouns offered in Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) in section 4. *Nome* shows all the characteristics of a weak pronoun. In section 5., we concentrate on the position of *nome* in the clause. Finally, in section 6., we compare *nome* with its etymologically related Latin, Italian, French and Sardinian counterparts. Section 7 concludes our discussion.

2. Some notes on Abruzzese syntax

The description that follows mainly concerns the dialect of the Chieti province. We find considerable microvariation in the Abruzzo region: dialects of the same area can show morphophonological and syntactic characteristics which are very different from one another. Our main referent is the dialect spoken in Arielli, a small town in the Chieti province, unless otherwise specified.

2.1. The phonology of Abruzzese

For the transcription of Abruzzese, we use Latin letters, as is usually done for poems and novels. We use a ‘phonetic’ transcription, reporting the consonant clusters also at the beginning of words where the morphosyntactic reduplication takes place. All final e’s are /ɛ/. The j stands for /j/, and not for English j. An example:

\[4\] Uje so jite a bballe
today am gone at valley
‘Today I went down’

The phonetic transcription of (4) is given in (5):

\[(5)\] \`Uj s\=`jit\=e a\`b\=al\=ɛ

2.2. Singular/plural morphology in Abruzzese

Almost all nouns in Abruzzese end in –e. Before all endings have converged into –e, Abruzzese plural nouns have undergone Umlaut. This means that the second last vowel is higher in plural nouns than in singular ones. An example is (6):

\[(6)\] lu bardasce / li bardisce
the-MASC SG kid-SG the-MASC PL kids-MASC PL
The Umlaut affects also the verbal paradigm, as we will show in the next session.

### 2.3. Verb agreement in Abruzzese

The conjugation of verbs in Abruzzese follows the pattern illustrated in (7):

(7) Present tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person singular</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>ji magne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person singular</td>
<td>UML –e</td>
<td>tu migne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person singular</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>esse magne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person plural</td>
<td>-eme</td>
<td>nu magneme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person plural</td>
<td>-ete</td>
<td>vu magnete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person plural</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>jisse magne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is usually the case that 1st and 3rd person singular and 3rd person plural coincide, therefore it is impossible to tell 1st and 3rd person singular and 3rd person plural apart. The singular/plural alternation is however visible on periphrastic tenses:

(8) Past tense (passato prossimo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person singular</td>
<td>so’ –ate</td>
<td>je so’ magnate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person singular</td>
<td>si –ate</td>
<td>tu si magnate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person singular</td>
<td>a –ate</td>
<td>esse a magnate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person plural</td>
<td>seme –ite</td>
<td>nu seme magnite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person plural</td>
<td>sete -ite</td>
<td>vu sete magnite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person plural</td>
<td>a -ite</td>
<td>jisse a magnite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The singular/plural alternation is evident on the past participle, which invariably shows agreement with the subject.

### 2.4 Impersonals in Abruzzese

Abruzzese makes use of several distinct impersonal constructions, many of which have an Italian counterpart. Like Italian, it makes large use of the impersonal *SE* construction, as shown in (9):

(9) A sta case se magne e se bbeve
    at this house SE eats and SE drinks
    ‘In this place one eats and drinks’

This sentence has an Italian mirror image, exemplified in (10):

(10) In questa casa si mangia e si beve
Leaving aside the questions concerning the degree of exact overlapping of Italian *si* and Abruzzese *se*, we can claim that this construction is the same in the two languages.

Abruzzese also has other impersonal constructions, such as that with the 2nd person singular pronoun and the PRO construction, as shown in (11) and (12):

(11) Si vu’ esse bbelle t’ a di’ ‘mbegna’
    SE want-2ND bebeautiful you ?² must-2NDSG make an effort
    ‘If one wants to be beautiful one has to make an effort’

(12) Pi PRO muri’ e ppi ppaa’ li tasse ci sta semble tembe
    for PRO die-INF and for PRO pay the taxes there stays always
time
    ‘One can always wait for dying and for paying taxes’

Another construction, which is relevant for our discussion on *nome*, is the construction with a 3rd person plural pro exemplified in (13):

(13) A la Germanije anne magne li patane
    at the Germany have-3RD PL eat-3RD SG/PL the potatoes
    ‘In Germany people eat potatoes’

It should be noted that the verb *ave’* (to have) in Abruzzese is only used as an auxiliary. The verb which is used to express possession is *tene’* (to hold). The conjugation of the auxiliary in Abruzzese mirrors that of lexical verbs (cfr. 2.3.), and thus the 3rd person of the auxiliary *ave’* is *a* (they have). The form *anne* is only used together with a 3rd plural pro, in order to specify that the number feature is plural. Examples (11), (12) and (13) have the Italian counterpart in (14), (15) and (16) respectively:

(14) Se vuoi essere bello ti devi impegnare
(15) Per morire e per pagare le tasse ci è sempre tempo
(16) In Germania mangiano le patate

Abruzzese has yet another impersonal construction which is absent in Standard Italian, namely the *nome* construction, exemplified in (17).

(17) Nome magne tutta lu juorne
    nome eat all the day
    ‘People eat all day long’

*Nome* is an impersonal pronoun which doesn’t exist in other dialects of Italy. It mainly resists in the Chieti province and in some towns of the Teramo and Pescara provinces. Variants of this form include *ome, dome, nume* (cfr. Giammarco 1985), and *omme* (L. Savoia, p.c.). It is etymologically related to Latin *homo*. *Nome* refers to a group of people which exclude the subject, and its distribution overlaps with the distribution of 3rd person plural pro, as we will see in section 5.6.
In the next section, we first show that *nome* is a plural subject. Then, we pass to the classification of *nome* according to Cardinaletti and Starke’s (1999) hierarchy, and we show that *nome* is a weak pronoun.

3. Properties of *nome*

In this section, we offer a more detailed description of the characteristics of *nome*.

3.1. *Nome* as a subject pronoun

*Nome* can only occur in subject position. In (18), we see that *nome* can alternate with a full DP subject:

(18) a. Marije e Jide face’ li pinne a la fonde
    Mary and Ida did the clothes at the fountain
    ‘Mary and Ida used to wash the clothes at the fountain’

b. Nome face’ li pinne a la fonde
    *nome did the clothes at the fountain
    ‘People used to wash the clothes at the fountain’

*Nome* cannot appear in any other position in the clause than in the subject position. In (19) we show that *nome* cannot be the object of the verb (19a) nor of a preposition (19b):

(19) a. *So’ viste nome
    Am seen nome
    ‘I have seen somebody’

b. *So’ date nu cunzije a nome
    am given an advice to nome
    ‘I have given a piece of a advice to someone’

3.2. *Nome* as a plural subject

The verbal agreement pattern in Abruzzese provides evidence that *nome* is syntactically plural. As we have shown in section 2.3., the verb in Abruzzese doesn’t make any distinction between 3rd person singular or plural. The past participle, however, always agrees with the subject and is inflected for number. Therefore, we can detect the number feature on *nome* by looking at the past participle in a periphrastic tense:

(20) A nome magnite tutta lu journe
    have-3RD SG/PL nome eaten-PP PL all the day
    ‘Some people have eaten all the day’

In (20), the past participle is marked for plural, and agrees with *nome*. We can conclude that *nome* is syntactically plural.

The question now arises what kind of element *nome* is. In the next section we show that its position is peculiar both with respect to full lexical DPs and to
clitics. Nome is in fact a weak pronoun, according to Cardinaletti and Starke’s (1999) classification.

4. Nome: a weak pronoun

Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) have proposed a classification of pronouns which covers a wide range of them. According to Cardinaletti and Starke, pronouns differ with respect to the number of functional heads they include. According to their terminology, some pronouns are stronger than others because they include more functional heads in their internal structure. The less functional heads in the internal structure of the pronouns, the weaker the pronoun.

The first big categorization of pronouns Cardinaletti and Starke propose is between strong and deficient pronouns. Deficient pronouns are in turn divided into two groups: weak pronouns and clitics.

According to Cardinaletti and Starke, deficient elements undergo some restrictions on their landing site, because of their lack of some functional projections. More specifically, deficient elements cannot occur in their base (= Theta) position, they cannot be dislocated, cannot occur in isolation, cannot be modified with sentential adverbs nor be coordinated. In this section, we show that nome belongs to the class of deficient elements and try to draw a first hypothesis on its exact position in the clause.

4.1. Preverbal subject position

It has been shown in section 3.1. that nome always occurs in subject position. Its distribution, though, differs from that of full lexical DP subjects. According to Cardinaletti and Starke, only strong pronouns have the same distribution of full DPs. (21) shows that this is not the case for nome, which is strictly preverbal and cannot occur in its thematic position. The verb in (21) and (22) is unaccusative and hence its subject is merged in the complement position. (21) and (22) show that nome cannot occur in the position where the full DP appears:

(21) a Giuwanne e Marije arrive dumane
     John and Mary arrive tomorrow

 b Dumane arrive Giuwanne e Marije
   tomorrow arrive John and Mary
   ‘John and Mary will arrive tomorrow’

(22) a Nome arrive dumane
     name arrive tomorrow

 b *Dumane arrive nome
   tomorrow arrive nome
   ‘Some people will arrive tomorrow’

(22) shows that the position of nome is strictly preverbal in simple tenses. In periphrastic tenses, nome always appears between the auxiliary and the past participle, as (18) shows:
The difference between *nome* and full DPs is very clearcut. No full DP can have the distribution that *nome* has in periphrastic tenses. (24) shows that a full DP is grammatical in the equivalent of (23b) and (23c), but ungrammatical in the equivalent of (24a):

(24) a *A Marije e Giuwanne arrivite have-3RD SG/PL Mary and John arrived-PP PL
b A ‘rrivite Marije e Giuwanne have-3RD SG/PL arrived-PP PL Mary and John
c Marije e Giuwanne a ‘rrivite Mary and John have-3RD SG/PL arrived-PP PL
‘Mary and John have arrived’

The data in (23) show that the preparticipial position is available only for *nome*. *Nome* cannot occur in its base position and can occur where full DPs cannot occur. As we have seen, the fact that a pronoun cannot occur in its base position tells us that it is not strong. In fact, *nome* doesn’t seem to behave as a strong pronoun. The hypothesis that *nome* is a deficient pronoun finds further support in the dislocation and focalization structures, as we show in the next section.

### 4.2. Dislocation + Focalization

In section 4.1. we have put forward the hypothesis that *nome* is a weak pronoun. This hypothesis is supported if we turn to dislocation and focalization phenomena.

Deficient pronouns cannot be dislocated. The examples that follow show that *nome* cannot be dislocated either:

(25) Jisse, a Giuwanne, l’ a viste
they-3RD PL to John him-3RD SG ACC have-3RD SG/PL seen-PP
‘It was them who saw John’

(26) *Nome, a Giuwanne, l’ a viste*
nome to John him-3RD SG ACC have-3RD SG ACC seen-PP
‘It was some people who saw John’
(27) and (28) show that nome cannot be focalized:

(27) A Giuwanne l’ a viste
to John him-3RD SG ACC have-3RD SG/PL seen-PP
JISSE
they-3RDPL
'It was them who saw John'

(28) * A Giuwanne l’ a viste
to John him-3RD SG ACC have-3RD SG/PL seen-PP
NOME
nome
'It was some people who saw John'

Nome shares the characteristics of deficient elements with respect to topicalization and focalization.

4.3. Occurrence in isolation, modification and coordination

Nome cannot occur in isolation, as (29) shows:

(29) Chi l’ a fatte?
who it-3RD SG ACC have-3RD SG/PL done-PP SG
Marije /*Nome
Mary / *nome
'Who has done that? Mary/ Somebody'

It is worth observing that the fact that nome cannot occur in isolation is not a result of semantic constraints. The strong counterpart of nome, namely cacchedune (somebody), can occur in isolation, as example (30) shows:

(30) Chi l’ a fatte?
who it-3RD SG ACC have-3RD SG/PL done-PP SG
Cacchedune somebody
'Who has done it? Somebody!'

The contrast between (29) and (30) suggests that the position constraints nome undergoes are syntactically driven.

According to Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), deficient elements cannot be modified by sentence adverbs or modifiers. This is in fact the case with nome, which cannot be modified by a C-modifier such as sole, as (31) shows, while its strong counterpart cacchedune can, as (32) shows:

(31) *A sole nome ditte quelle
have-3RD SG/PL only nome said that
'Only somebody said that'
(32) Sole cacchedune a ditte quelle only somebody said-3RD SG/PL said that ‘Only somebody said that’

Last, *nome* cannot be coordinated with a full DP, as (33) and (34) show:

(33) *Marije e nome (atre) a litte lu libbre* Mary and nome (else) have-3RD SG/PL read-PP PL the book ‘Mary and somebody else have read the book’

(34) Marije e cacchedune (atre) a litte lu libbre Mary and somebody else have-3RD SG/PL read-PP PL the book ‘Mary and somebody else have read the book’

To sum up, in this section we have shown that *nome* behaves as a deficient element. The question now is whether *nome* is a clitic or a weak pronoun. This issue is addressed in section 4.4.

4.4. Weak pronoun or clitic?

So far, we have shown that *nome* is a deficient element. According to Cardinaletti & Starke’s (1999) classification, deficient elements are subdivided into two subgroups: weak elements and clitics. The question now arises whether *nome* is a weak pronoun or a clitic. In order to provide an answer to this question, we can consider the distribution of clitics in Abruzzese. *Nome* always follows other clitics. (35a) shows a clitic cluster in Abruzzese. In (35b) *nome* is introduced within the clitic cluster.

(35) a Me le dice’
    to-me-CL DAT it-CL ACC said-3RD SG/PL IMPF
    ‘They used to tell me’

b Me le nome dice’
    to-me-CL DAT it-CL ACC nome said-3RD SG/PL IMPF
    ‘Some people used to tell me’

(35b) shows that *nome* follows the other clitics. This is still not enough in order to determine the exact nature of *nome*. The status of *nome* becomes clear if we consider once again periphrastic tenses. In (36) we can see that *nome* follows the auxiliary, while other clitics precede it:

(36) a Jisse ji si l’
    they-3RD PL to-him-CL DAT APPL it-CL ACC

b a magnite
    have-3RDSG/PL eaten-PP PL
    ‘They have eaten it (from him)’
Nome doesn’t pattern with other clitics. This leads us to conclude that it is a weak pronoun.

The next step is to identify the exact position of name inside the clause. We will be concerned with this issue in the next session.

5. The position of name

So far, we have shown that name has a special position when compared to the position clitics and full DPs occupy in the Abruzzese: no other element, in particular, can appear between the auxiliary and the main verb. The exact position which name occupies in the clause is not immediately clear. In principle, if the auxiliary is in T, name might occupy a position lower than that.

What this position is is not clear, though, especially because the position of the auxiliary has not been exactly defined yet.

The position of name needs to be determined with respect to all other elements in the clause. One of the most commonly used strategies in order to place an element in the clause structure is to check its position with respect to negation. This is the first step that we want to take.

5.1. Negation

Negation in Abruzzese precedes the main verb and follows the subject:

(37) Ji ne mmagne
     I-1ST SG NEG eat-1ST-3RD SG /3RD PL
     ‘I don’t eat’

(38) Jisse ne mmagne
     they-3RD PL NEG eat-3RD SG/PL
     ‘They don’t eat’

With respect to name, negation has a different distribution. In fact, it precedes name:

(39) Ne nome magne
     NEG name eat-3RD SG/PL
     ‘Some people don’t eat’

It is interesting observing the distribution of name with respect to both negation and the auxiliary in periphrastic tenses. (40) shows the position of a full DP subject in a clause which contains both an auxiliary and negation, while (41) shows the position of name.
For periphrastic tenses, the word order is given in (42):

(42) Neg – Aux – Nome

The comparison between (40) and (41) also supports Cardinaletti’s (2003, to appear) claim that there are two subject positions in a clause. In Abruzzese, there seems to be a subject position which is higher than Negation and one which is lower than Negation. The position of negation with respect to clitics is illustrated in (43):

(43) Ne ji l’ a ditte
    NEG to-him-DAT CL it-ACC CL have-3RD SG/PL said-PP
    ‘They/he haven’t said it to him’

By observing the data collected so far, we can draw an approximate scheme for word order in Abruzzese: in (37a) we have seen that a full DP subject precedes clitics. (37b) shows that clitics precede the auxiliary, while nome follows them. With respect to negation, we have seen in (40) that a full DP subject precedes Negation, while nome follows it, together with clitics, which follow negation, as shown in (43).

A first approximation to the word order pattern in Abruzzese is provided in (44):

(44) Full subj – Neg – CL – Aux – nome – PP

Nome appears to be very low in the structure, right above the Past Participle. It is not clear whether it appears inside the VP or outside it. In order to find out, it is necessary to test the position of nome with respect to low adverbs.

5.2. Low Adverbs

In his seminal work, Cinque (1999) has proposed, on the basis of their strong parallelism with adjectives, that adverbs are not adjuncts but rather occupy specifier positions of dedicated functional heads. Adverbs appear crosslinguistically in a fixed order, which is universal, invariant across languages (see also Alexiadou 1997). Those adverbs that both Alexiadou and Cinque classify as ‘low’ in the clause are of great help in identifying the position of nome. Let us first consider the low adverb bbone (‘well’). This adverb follows the past participle in Abruzzese, as shown in (45). This means that the participle in Abruzzese, much like its Standard Italian and Greek counterparts,
The fact that *nome* lands in the T field is not surprising. *Nome* is a subject, as we have shown in 3.1., and Spec, TP is considered to be a subject position (Bobaljik & Jonas 1996, McCloskey 1996).

Cardinaletti (1997, 2003, to appear) proposes that there are at least two preverbal subject positions in the clause: the AgrSP and the SubjP. She defines...
the AgrSP projection as the projection where phi-features are checked on Nominative DPs, and the SubjP projection as the one where the 'subject-of-predication' feature is checked. According to Cardinaletti, AgrSP usually hosts weak subjects, while SubjP hosts full DP subjects. In section 5.4., we show that nome occupies exactly the AgrSP projection, conforming with Cardinaletti's cartography of subject positions.

5.4. Nome in Spec, AgrSP

In section 4.4. we have shown that nome is a weak pronoun. As already mentioned, in Cardinaletti's view the structure of the 'subject' field looks as follows:

\[
(49) \quad \text{[SubjP [AgrSP* [TP ... [ ... [VP ... ]]]]]}
\]

The AgrSP is the lower subject projection, while SubjP is the higher one, which is dedicated to fully referential DP subjects. Weak pronouns are in the specifier of AgrSP. We propose that nome is a weak elements and occupies the specifier of AgrSP.

According to Cardinaletti, parentheticals cannot occur between AgrSP and the verb, while they can occur between a full DP subject and the verb. As (50) and (51) show, applying this test to nome and full DPs in Abruzzese, suggests that nome is indeed lower than SubjP:

\[
(50) \quad \text{Giwanne e Marie, penze ji, je’ bbuna ggende}
\]

John and Mary think I are-3RD SG/PL good-PL people-SG

‘John and Mary, I think, are good persons’

\[
(51) \quad \text{Nome, penze ji’, je’ bbuna ggende}
\]

nome think I, are-3RD SG/pL good-PL people-SG

‘They, I think, are good people’

Parentheticals are inserted, according to Cardinaletti (op.cit), between the higher subject position SubjP and the lower one AgrSP. (51) in particular confirms once more our hypothesis that nome behaves like a weak pronoun.

The hypothesis, according to which nome is located in Spec, AgrSP, leaves some open questions. It is usually assumed that auxiliaries are located in T. If we adopt this view, a problem arises with respect to the location of nome in Spec, AgrSP. We have shown in (23) that nome always follows the auxiliary. If the auxiliary is in T and nome follows the auxiliary, then nome cannot be in Spec, AgrSP, because the AgrS projection precedes T. We discuss this apparent paradox in the next section.

A second problem arises when we consider the distribution of nome with respect to anne. We have shown in (13) that the form anne is a mere plural marker on the verb, which occurs with a 3rd plural pro. It is very interesting to observe that nome and anne cannot cooccur:
(52) *Anne nome magne tutta lu juorne
    have-3RD PL nome eat-3RD PL all the day
    ‘People eat all day long’

In principle, there would be nothing special with having the plural specification both on the auxiliary and on the pronoun. We discuss this problem in section 5.6.

5.5. Nome and the auxiliary

As shown in (23), here repeated as (53), *nome can never precede the auxiliary:

(53) a A nome arrivite
    have-3RD SG/PL nome arrived-PP PL
b *A ‘rrivite nome
    have-3RD SG/PL arrived-PP PL nome
c * Nome a ‘rrivite
    nome have-3RD SG/PL arrived-PP PL
    ‘Some people have arrived’

If the auxiliary is located in T, then *nome must occupy a position which is lower than T. In section 5.4., however, we have shown that nome occupies the Spec, AgrSP position, which is higher than T. This apparent paradox can be solved if we reconsider the position of the auxiliary in Abruzzese. Auxiliary selection in Abruzzese is not determined by the verb class. The usual pattern displays a selection of ‘be’ for 1st and 2nd persons singular and plural, and ‘have’ for 3rd persons, as we have exemplified in (8), here repeated as (54)

(54) Past tense (passato prossimo)
    1st person singular so –ate je so’ magnate
    2nd person singular si –ate tu si magnate
    3rd person singular a –ate esse a magnate
    1st person plural seme –ite nu seme magnite
    2nd person plural sete -ite vu sete magnite
    3rd person plural a -ite jisse a magnite

The status of the auxiliaries is not unique. It seems to us that ‘be’ has the status of a full verb, whereas the ‘have’ forms are clitic forms. That the two auxiliaries do not have the same status can be seen from the fact that the form a cannot appear in isolation, as (55) shows. This contrasts with the other forms, namely with the ‘be’ forms, which can appear in isolation, as shown in (56):

(55) *A state jesse, a!
    have-3RD SG/PL been he-3RD SG NOM have
    ‘It has been HIM!’
(56) Si ttu, si!
    are-2ND SG you-2ND SG NOM are-2ND SG
    ‘Is is YOU!’
In particular, compare the 3rd person form of ‘have’ and ‘be’:

(57) Je’ esse, je’!
is-3RD SG he-3RD SG NOM is-3RD SG
 ‘It is HIM!’

(58) * L’a fatte esse, l’ a!
it-3RD SG has-3RD SG/PL done he-3RD SG it-3RD SG has-3RD SG/PL
 ‘It was HIM who did it!’

(55) and (58) strongly suggest that a is a clitic, because it cannot appear on its own and because it cannot serve as a base for other clitics to attach to it, as in (58). (58) is turned into a grammatical sentence if a is followed by the past participle:

(59) L’a fatte esse, l’a fatte!
it-3RD SG has-3RD SG/PL done he-3RD SG it-3RD SG has-3RD SG/PL done
 ‘It was HIM who did it!’

The fact that a is weaker than je’ or any other form of the verb esse (‘be’) is also mirrored in the weaker semantic content of ave’. As we observed in 2.4., ave’ is only used as an auxiliary, and never as a full lexical verb. The expression of possession in Abruzzese is obtained by means of the verb tene’ (‘hold’). Esse is instead also used as a full verb, or in predicative constructions, not just as an auxiliary.

Nome is also a weak element, and therefore it is impossible to dislocate it together with a:

(60) *L’a nome fitte jisse, l’a nome
 it have-3RD SG/PL nome did-PP PL they, it have nome
 ‘It was THEM who did it’

If a is a clitic, it doesn’t necessarily need to sit in T. In particular, it cliticises on the past participle, or on the element which follows it, for instance nome.

5.6. Nome and anne

Another problem which was left unsolved in section 5.4. was the impossibility of co-occurrence of nome with the anne form, which is a 3rd plural form of the verb ‘have’ that can be used only in impersonal constructions with 3rd person plural pro.

In principle, nothing blocks the co-occurrence of number on the auxiliary and on the pronoun. In fact, this is the usual case, as we can see from the verbal paradigm in (8) and (54). The form tu si ditte (‘you are said’, ‘you said’), for instance, has number specification both on the pronoun and on the auxiliary. The problem becomes more intriguing when we consider the fact that nome can cooccur with a generic subject, such as tutte quinde (‘everybody’), as shown in (61):
Nome can hence cooccur with an open generic subject but not with anne. Why?
One possible explanation would be that nome is becoming more a more a plural marker on the auxiliary, just like anne is. Nome and anne cannot cooccur because they have the same role in the structure, i.e. that of marking the auxiliary with a plural feature. This would explain why nome can cooccur with an open generic subject, The arbitrary nature of nome is still present though, as nome cannot cooccur under any circumstance with a fully referential DP subject, as shown in (63):

(56) *Giuvianne e Marije nome je’ a fatija’
John and Mary nome went-3RD PL to work-INF
‘John and Mary used to go to work’

We believe that the above data suggest that nome is undergoing a transformation in its function: from an impersonal pronoun to a plural marker, i.e. from a weak pronoun to a clitic. This might be due to its position, always adjacent to the auxiliary, and to the fact that the 3rd person auxiliary a is not specified for person.

Note that nome has the same meaning as 3rd plural arbitrary pro, and therefore it enters in competition with it. In this case, one would expect that, if anything like the Avoid Pronoun Principle were active, the covert/null variant would be preferred. In addition, as Jaeggli (1986) points out, if there is a choice between a null variant and a phonetically realised variant of a pronoun, the null variant will convey the arbitrary meaning. Nome would need to change its function then. This is indeed the case.

Supportive evidence for this claim is provided by the dialect of Montenerodomo, also in the Chieti province, where the form (h)omme can cooccur with fully referential DP subjects, and is reduced to a plural marker (Leonardo Savoia, p.c.). We will return on this issue in section 6.9.

So far, we have shown that nome, an Abruzzese impersonal pronoun, has the status of weak pronoun according to Cardinaletti & Starke’s classification. Nome occupies the Spec, AgrSP position, i.e. the position of weak subjects, and is undergoing a transformation in its function: from impersonal pronoun to plural marker, from a weak pronoun to a clitic.

In the next section we discuss the historical development of Latin homo, from which nome derives, and examine the different forms this noun has in the modern Romance languages. As we will demonstrate, the modern counterparts of homo bear different functions across the modern Romance languages. However, the changes this pronoun underwent are consistent with general pattern of grammaticalization. Different (Romance) languages and dialects exhibit different stages of such a grammaticalization process. While in its initial function homo patterned like any other noun phrase, occupying subject as well as object and indirect object positions, its modern counterparts exhibit the following split: i) they may maintain the original meaning and the original
distribution, ii) they may behave like generic pronouns, iii) they may pattern like arbitrary pronouns, iv) they may become verbal affixes, or v) such pronouns might have disappeared from the language, under the effect of competition with other items bearing the same meaning. We take (iv) and (v) to be the final stages of the grammaticalization path proposed by Egerland (2003):

(63) the diachronic pronominalisation of HOMO:
Lexical DP > Impersonal generic pronoun > Impersonal arbitrary pronoun
[from Egerland 2003]

6. Nome, Latin homo and its derivates

The form nome derives from Latin homo (‘man’). The uses of nome are, however, quite different from the uses of Latin homo, and so are also the syntactic properties of the two lexical items under discussion. In this section, we provide an overview of the syntactic and semantic characteristics of homo and its derivates: old Italian omo and om, modern Italian uomo/l’uomo, French homme and on Sardinian omine and omu and Abruzzese ommene and nome.

6.1. Homo

The Latin word homo had several uses. It was mainly used to define a human being, as opposed to vir, which was the specialized form for ‘man’. Latin homo was used as an indefinite, generic pronoun, to indicate the human beings. This use is exemplified in (57):

(64) Homo homini lupus
    homo-NOM homo-DAT wolf
    ‘Man is an enemy for the man’

Moreover, homo could be used with a specific reference, to indicate a person who was already introduced in the discourse. This use is shown in (65):

(65) Collocari iussit hominem in aureo lecto
    put-INF ordered-PAST PF 3RD SG homo-ACC in golden bed
    ‘He made the man lay in a golden bed’ [Cicero in Castiglioni & Mariotti 1966]

‘The man’ in (65) is a specific man, which was already introduced in the discourse. Latin homo could appear in any DP position. It could be used as a subject (66), as an object (67) and as an indirect object (68):
(66) Homo homini lupus
homo-NOM homo-DAT wolf
‘The man is an enemy to the man/ People are enemies of each other’

(67) Tollere hominem ex homine
take away homo-ACC from homo-ABL
‘Take away the human nature from the man’ [Cicero, in Castiglioni & Mariotti 1966]

(68) Minucius homini respondit
Minucius homo-DAT replied
‘Minucius replied to the man’

Homo always triggered 3rd person singular agreement, even when used in the sense of ‘people’. Several Romance forms are derived from Latin homo. Some of them have kept the generic ‘human being’ reading, like Italian and French homme. The full NP has given birth to some reduced forms, like Italian omo and French on, which are not generic NPs but rather arbitrary pronouns. That is, they refer to an unspecified person, but not to the whole humanity. The predication is done of an arbitrary group of people (Cinque 1988, Egerland 2003, Welton-Lair, 1999). Nome is a further development of Old Italian omo. It has acquired a syntactic characterization that doesn’t belong to any of the antecedent forms, together with a semantic specialization for exclusiveness, which also does not derive from the Latin or Old Italian forms.

6.2. Old Italian omo

Omo is the direct outcome of Latin homo. Old Italian made large use of such item, which was used both as a generic (69) and as an arbitrary pronoun (70). Omo could appear in old Italian in both the diphtongal uomo and in the non diphtongal form omo.

(69) …che ciascheduna cosa la quale l’omo fa…
that each thing which omo does
‘…that each thing that a man does’
[Boccaccio, Decameron, Giornata prima, Novella prima, 2]

(70) …com’om che ten lo foco like omo that holds the fire
‘Like a man
[Jacopo da Lentini, Meravigliosamente, stanza VI, v. 29, ~1233-1240]

The form omo was the most commonly used, and both the generic and the arbitrary reading were available for it. Omo could be used in subject position, as exemplified in both (69) and (70), in object position and in indirect object position, as shown in (71) and (72) respectively:
In (67), *l'uomo* is a specific man already mentioned in the discourse. It cannot mean ‘some man’, or ‘somebody’. In that case, the form we would use is *un uomo*, or *una persona*. The form *un uomo*, with an indefinite article, would need to be discussed in more details. We will not enter the discussion of definite and indefinite articles here.

As a full NP, *l'uomo* can appear in any NP position. It can appear as a subject, as shown in (74), as an object and as an indirect object, as shown in (75) and (76) respectively:

(74) L'uomo entrò e si sedette accanto a me  
the man entered and sat next to me  
‘The man came in and sat next to me’

(75) Il buco dell’ozono minaccia l'uomo  
the hole of the hozone threatens the man  
‘The hozone hole threatens the man’
(76) Questa scoperta porta l'uomo ancora piu' avanti
this discovery takes the man yet more forward
'This discovery takes the man one step forward'

, in Italian, is thus the exact syntactic and semantic counterpart of
Latin homo. Italian uses other means to convey the arbitrary reading, such as
the use of the indefinite article or the use of other impersonal pronouns or NP,
such as 'qualcuno', or 'alcuni'. Also French has kept the full NP with a generic
or with a specific reference. We treat the French counterpart of homo and
l'uomo in section 6.4.

6.4. French homme

Latin homo has developed into two different forms in modern French: the full
NP homme and the clitic pronoun on. The former is used as a generic or as a
referential NP. It can appear in any NP position and doesn’t convey an arbitrary
reading. The latter is an arbitrary pronoun, which is developing nowadays into
a first person plural pronoun.

The double outcome of the NP homo in French is quite interesting, in that it
shows the existence of dedicated forms for generic/arbitrary/ referential/
The full form, as we said, can convey a generic meaning (77) as well as it
can identify a specific man (78):

(77) L'homme est un animal social
the man is an animal social
'Man is a sociable animal'

(78) L'homme est entré et (il) s'est assis a coté de moi
the man is entered and SE-is sat at side of me
'The man came in and sat next to me'

Thus, also l'homme keeps the same meanings that Latin homo used to
have. The interesting fact about French is that it has developed a parallel form,
which conveys the arbitrary reading and which is grammaticalizing into a 1st
person plural pronoun. Such form is on, which we discuss in the next section.

6.5. French on

French on is an indefinite pronoun, etymologically related to Latin homo. It
bears an arbitrary meaning, as (79) shows, but it can also be used with a 1st
person plural meaning, as in (80) (see Kayne 1972, 1975):

(79) On ne me fera jamais croire cela
on not me make-FUT never believe that
'Nobody will never convince me of that'
(80) On a bien mangé dans ce restaurant
on has well eaten in that restaurant
‘We have eaten well in that restaurant’

These meanings are innovative with respect to Latin homo. On has, however, developed also other independent meanings: it can be used as a 3rd plural pronoun, as in (81):

(81) On lui a offert un travail intéressant
on him-DAT have offered a job interesting
‘They offered him an interesting job’

Observe that, in (81), the speaker cannot be included in the set of referents for on. In (80), on the other hand, it is. For an analysis of inclusiveness of impersonal pronouns, see D’Alessandro & Alexiadou (2003).

On can also be used as a substitute for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronoun, as shown in the following examples:

(82) On montrera dans ce livre que...
on show-FUT in this book that
‘I will show in this book that…’ [from Le Petit Robert]

(83) Alors? On s’en va comme ça?
So on SE part goes like this
‘And so? Are you going away like this?’ [Sartre, in Le Petit Robert]

(84) On me confie ses petites pensées
on me-DAT confides his little thoughts
‘He confides to me his little thoughts’ [Diderot, in Le Petit Robert]

In particular, on in (84) strictly resembles the use of Latin homo with a specific referent.

What emerges by a closer look at on is its multiple meaning. It is being used as a ‘default pronoun’, both as a personal or an impersonal one. This might be due to the underspecification of its person feature (see D’Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003). According to D’Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003, some pronouns, such as on and Italian impersonal se can vary their meaning according to the environment in which they appear. In particular, an important role in the definition of the referent of such pronouns is played by the Speech Act and the aspectual characterisation of the sentence. The fact that on can appear in so many different contexts, identifying so many different referents, shows us once more that its feature specification is incomplete. For the mechanisms which provide on with a complete feature specification see D’Alessandro & Alexiadou (op.cit.).

So far, we have seen that on can convey the meaning of:
(i) a 1st singular pronoun (82)
(ii) a 2nd singular/plural pronoun (83)
(iii) a 3rd singular pronoun (84)
(iv) a 1st plural pronoun (80)
(v) a 3rd plural pronoun (81)

In addition, on can have the meaning of an arbitrary pronoun, as shown in (79).

The uses of on as a 1st singular, 2nd singular, 3rd singular, 2nd plural and 3rd plural are quite restricted nowadays. According to many French speakers, on is almost always used as a 1st plural pronoun. This is not surprising. Such a transformation of an impersonal pronoun into a 1st plural pronoun is a quite frequent phenomenon crosslinguistically. D'Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003 show that this phenomenon is not only restricted to Romance languages, such as Italian, but is also alive in non Indoeuropean languages, like Finnish for instance.

In particular, if we refer to the grammaticalization path in (64), we can say that on is developing according to the path proposed by Egerland (2003). In some cases, on is still used as an arbitrary pronoun. In most cases, though, it is used as a referential 1st person pronoun. We can thus add another step to the grammaticalization path proposed in Egerland (2003) (see also Jónson 1992, van Gelderen 1997 and Welton-Lair 1999):

\[(85) \text{Lexical DP} > \text{Impersonal generic pronoun} > \text{Impersonal arbitrary pronoun} > \text{referential pronoun}\]

The fact that on is a clitic forces it to appear in a specific functional projection (see Poletto 2000 and Manzini & Savoia 2001 and to appear). This also entails that on can be either appear in a subject position, or in an object or indirect object position, but not in either one. This is indeed the case. On is only used as a subject (Grevisse 1986, Le Petit Robert 1993).

We have shown that on is grammaticalizing as a 1st person plural pronoun. Several factors, however, affect the transformation of an impersonal pronoun into another kind of element. Much of the result of the transformation depends on the nature of the pronoun. On can transform into a 1st person plural because of its feature underspecification (D'Alessandro & Alexiadou 2003). Some other pronouns, such as Abruzzese nome, present a completely specified phi-feature set. In this case, the grammaticalization will follow another path, and the pronoun will transform into a verbal affix, as we show in 6.9.

6.6. Sardinian omine

Sardinian omine has the same use as Latin homo, Italian l'uomo and French l'homme. It can be used as a generic NP with the meaning of ‘the human being’, as in (87), and to indentify a specific referent (88):

\[(87) \text{S'omine est omine si facet su chi devet fachere}\]

‘The man is a man if he does what he has to do' [Ditzionariu.com]
The arbitrary meaning is instead conveyed by the form *omo*.

### 6.7. Sardinian *omo*

Sardinian has a form which is directly linked to Latin *homo* and which conveys the arbitrary reading. Such form, *omo*, is always used as a subject (Francesca Biggio, p.c.) and is 3rd person plural:

(88) Omo nanta ki proiri
omo say-3RD PL that rains
‘They say that it will rain’

*Omo* is 3rd person plural, and as such it is in competition with 3rd plural arbitrary *pro*. This is leading to the disappearing of *omo* as an arbitrary pronoun. The sentence in (88) is more often uttered as (89):

(89) Naki (=nanta ki) proiri
say-3RD PL that rains
‘They say that it will rain’

*Omo* is getting lost because there is another lexical item in the grammar which conveys the same meaning, and both the Avoid Pronoun Principle and Jaeggli’s generalization about arbitrary pronouns suggest that the non-phonetically realized form will be selected.

So far, we have seen two possible outcomes for arbitrary pronouns: French *on* is transforming into a 1st person plural pronoun; Sardinian *omo* is just disappearing. In the next section, we will present another possible outcome of the process of grammaticalization of an impersonal pronoun: its transformation into a verbal affix.

### 6.8. Abruzzese *l’ommene*

Also Abruzzese has a full NP form descending from *homo*. Such form, *l’ommene*, is parallel to Latin *homo*.

In (90), *l’ommene* has the generic meaning of human being:

(90) L’ommene jè ‘ na cosa triste
the ommene is a thing sad
‘Man is a difficult issue’

In (91), *l’ommene* refers to a specific man, already introduced in the discourse:
(91) (chil) L’ommene a ndrate e s’a ‘ssitate
that-the ommene has entered and SE has sat
‘The man entered and sat down’

6.9. Abruzzese nome

Abruzzese *nome*, as we said, is 3rd person plural and has an arbitrary meaning. In section 5.6., we have shown that *nome* is incompatible with 3rd person plural pro.

When a 3rd person plural arbitrary *pro* is present, the form *anne* is used as a plural marker on the verb. The verb, in fact, does not differentiate between 3rd singular and 3rd plural, and it would be impossible to detect the presence of an arbitrary plural pro without a device which tells us that the verb is plural (see example 8).

*Nome* and 3rd person plural pro are in competition for the arbitrary meaning. If we compare the sentences in (82) and (83), we see that they have exactly the same meaning:

(92) Nome dice ca dumane piove
nome say-3RD SG/ PL that tomorrow rains
‘They say that it will rain tomorrow’

(93) Anne dice ca dumane piove
PL say-3RD SG/PL that tomorrow rains-3RD SG
‘They say that it will rain tomorrow’

*Nome* and *anne* cannot occur together. This indirectly suggests that *nome* and arbitrary *pro* are in competition. There is no reason why, in fact, a 3rd person verbal inflection could not cooccur with a 3rd person pronoun. Abruzzese allows the double specification of phi-features on the verb and on the pronoun, as (94) shows:

(94) Tu ti migne ‘na mele
you-2ND SG NOM you-2ND SG DAT eat-2ND SG an apple
‘You eat an apple’

According to Jaeggli’s generalization and to the Avoid Pronoun Principle, the form *nome* should never appear when there is a non-phonetically realized version of it in the lexicon. *Nome* has developed the arbitrary reading as a result of its evolution process. It is specified for arbitrariness, and therefore it can still compete with a 3rd plural pro which also conveys a specific referential meaning together with the arbitrary one.

Our prediction would be that *nome* lost its arbitrary reading though, and disappeared from the lexicon like Sardinian *omo* or acquired another function, like French *on*. The latter seems to be the case. At least in one dialect of Abruzzese, the equivalent form of *nome, omme* is used as a 3rd person plural marker on the verb (Leonardo Savoia, p.c.). The fact that in some parts of Abruzzo this other step of grammaticalization has taken place shows that the
transformation from 3rd plural arbitrary pronoun into a 3rd plural verbal affix is the next step that nome will undertake.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have examined in details the impersonal pronoun nome in Abruzzese. After a short introduction to Abruzzese syntax in section 2., we have introduced the characteristics of nome in section 3. and have shown that nome is a weak subject pronoun, which renders it very peculiar when confronted with Abruzzese grammar, which lacks weak subjects (section 4.). We have proposed that nome occupies the lower subject position AgrSP (Cardinaletti to appear) in section 5.

In section 6., we have compared nome with its etymologically related counterparts in other Romance languages, such as French, Italian and Sardinian and with its Latin original form homo. We have observed a development of the semantics of such counterparts along the lines of the grammaticalization path proposed in Egerland 2003 and ---. Latin homo has an Italian, a French and a Sardinian semantic counterpart. Other forms, usually reduced, have developed along the lines we have just mentioned. Such reduced form have all developed an arbitrary semantic interpretation, and are themselves undergoing further change. The last stages of grammaticalization of the forms derived from homo have parted from each other. Some of them, like Abruzzese nome and French on, are changing their grammatical function under the pressure of competition with semantically similar lexical items: nome is being reanalysed as a 3rd person plural affix while on is being reanalysed as a 1st person plural pronoun. Others have just disappeared or are disappearing, like Sardinian omo.

References


Notes

1 We leave aside the matter of gender specification on subject clitics.
2 This a is used in several contexts in Abruzzese. It is not clear what guides its distribution.
3 Abruzzese lacks the future tense.
4 Observe that the 3rd person form of esse (‘be’) is used in predicative constructions, but not as an auxiliary.