## The morphosyntax of Italian expressive binominals

**1. Introduction.** Italian has many expressive elements, which can occur in Expressive Binominal NPs (EBNPs, Foolen 2004, Den Dikken 2006) encoding the speaker's perspective (Potts 2007). This talk focuses on the morphosyntactic properties of EBNPs containing *cazzo* lit. 'dick', *merda* lit. 'shit', and *idiota* lit. 'idiot'. We refer to the expressive noun as N1 and to the referential noun as N2.

(1)	Quel cazzo di dottore!	(2)	Quella merda di dotto	re! (3)	Quell' idiota di dottore!
	that dick of doctor		that shit of docto	or	that idiot of doctor
	'That horrible doctor!'		'That horrible doctor!'		'That idiot (of a) doctor!'

The aim of this talk is i) to explain the different morphosyntactic properties of these three expressive elements, shedding light on how nouns can grammaticalize into functional adjectives, and ii) to show that there are multiple ways in which elements can be expressive, namely as a fully grammaticalized functional head or as a nominalized root merged in a non-canonical position, which can be (I/E) merged either within the fseq of N2 or at the edge of it. Our proposal contributes to a better understanding the morphosyntax of EBNPs, i.e. their internal structure and the nature of the linking elment *di*, and, more generally, a refining of the formalization of expressivity (Potts 2007, Corver 2016, Biberauer 2018, Wiltschko 2021, Saab 2022 a.o.). **2. The data.** <u>2.1 Concord patterns</u>. The three expressive N1's under investigation show different concord patterns. *Cazzo* is invisible for gender concord, higher functional elements agreeing directly with N2 (4), and it has rigid number (5) (Doliana 2015, Giorgi & Poletto 2021).

(4)	Un- <b>a</b> cazz-o di serat- <b>a</b>	(5)	*Dei	cazz-i	di pecoron-i
	a-ғ.sg dick-м.sg of evening-ғ-sg		а.м.р	L dick-м.1	PL of ram-м-PL
	'A fucking evening'		'Som	e fucking	; rams'

In contrast, merda is visible for gender concord (6), and its number agrees with N2 (7).

(6) Un-a / \*Un merd-a di giorn-o
a.F.SG / a.M.SG shit.F.SG of day.M.SG
'A fucking day'
(7) Delle merd-e di pecor-e!
a.F.PL shit.F.PL of sheep.F.PL
'Some fucking sheep'

Finally, *idiota* (as well as higher functional elements) agrees with N2 in both number and gender (8)-(9).

(8)	Delle idiot-e di	dottor-esse	(9)	Degli idiot-i	di dottor-i
	a.F.PL idiot-F.PL of	doctor-f.pl		а.м.pl idiot-м.pl	of doctor-м.рг
	'Some idiot doctor	rs'		'Some idiot doct	ors'

<u>2.2 Comparative and attributive EBNPs</u>. Den Dikken (2006) distinguishes two readings in EBNPs, i.e. an 'attributive' reading (ATTR) (10), and a 'comparative' one (COMP) (11).

(10)	Quell' idiota <b>di</b> dottore	(11)	Quell' idiota <b>del</b> dottore
	that idiot of doctor		that idiot of the doctor
	'Idiot as a doctor'		'Idiot as a man (who happens to be a doc-
			tor)'

The two different readings correlate with the amount of structure that can follow *di*, which is the bare N2 in ATTR, but can include functional elements (e.g. Det) in COMP. EBNPs with *idiota* and *merda* can have both readings, whereas EBNPs with *cazzo* only have the ATTR reading. This is shown by the fact that *merda/idiota di* can be followed by full DPs, whereas *cazzo di* can only be followed by a bare NP (cf. *quel cazzo di dottore* vs \**quel cazzo del dottore*).

**3. Analysis.** <u>3.1 *Cazzo-EBNPs.*</u> Expressive *cazzo* is an element that has grammaticalized completely and become a (monomorphemic) functional element (cf. Giorgi & Poletto 2021). All its features and original root content have been stripped away, and only an abstract expressive content remains, i.e.  $\sqrt{cAzz}-o_{M,SG} \rightarrow cazzo_{expr}$ . In EBNPs this functional head is merged in the **head** position of the functional adjectival projection A<sub>value</sub>P (Cinque 2015) (12). Because of its monomorphemic nature and lack of  $\phi$ -features, *cazzo* is invisible for agreement to higher functional elements, and cannot pluralise. Despite occurring in an adjectival position, *cazzo* isn't a real functional adjective (yet), and as such it cannot directly enter into a concord relationship with N2. The impossibility of concord with N2 triggers the insertion of *di*, i.e. *di* is a linker which fulfills the role normally taken by concord on adjectives (cf. Manzini 2021).

<u>3.2 Merda-EBNPs</u>. Merda is a semi-lexical element, i.e. a root that gets nominalized by *n*, appears in the fseq of a lower N, and shows morposyntactic deficiency (Cavirani-Pots 2020, cf. Klockmann 2017). It has its own interpretable GEN-feature, but its interpretable NUM-feature enters the derivation unvalued (13) (we follow Pesetsky & Torrego 2004 in assuming interpretable features can start out as valued or unvalued). Since *merda* is not a functional head like *cazzo*, it gets inserted in the **specifier** position of A<sub>value</sub>P. Di is inserted for a similar reason as with *cazzo*, i.e. to replace adjectival concord - in this case failure of GEN-concord. As for *merda*'s unvalued NUM-feature, this feature does get valued by N2 via concord. Higher functional heads like D have their features valued by the closest Goal, which is the *merda*-phrase (and not the N2): GEN is always F, but NUM is ultimately determined by N2.



<u>3.3 Idiota-EBNPs</u> In EBNPs, *idiota* is a zero-derived deadjectival noun. Its root first gets adjectivized by *a*, which comes with a set of uninterpretable, unvalued  $\phi$ -features. However, due to its animacy-requirements in EBNPs, this adjective gets nominalized (animacy-features being part of the nominal fseq); *n* is thus inserted on top of *a* (14). We assume that both nominal, interpretable  $\phi$ -features of *idiota* are unvalued: GEN is unvalued because *idiota* can both refer to a male and a female entity, and NUM is unvalued in this binominal context, like *merda*. This complex structure is inserted into the same position as *merda* in (13), namely spec, A<sub>value</sub>. *Di*-insertion takes place because the nominal *phi*-features cannot participate in concord with N2: the adjectival  $\phi$ -features will do this already, leaving the nominal ones unexpressed. *Idiota*'s adjectival unvalued *phi*-features show (full) concord with N2, and are visible for higher functional heads.

<u>3.4 ATTR and COMP readings</u>. Following Den Dikken (2006), we assume that ATTR and COMP are derived differently: in ATTR, N1 is base-merged higher than N2, as in (12) and (13) above. In COMP, N1 starts lower than N2 and gets higher via movement (predicate inversion). This explains why *cazzo* cannot have a COMP reading, under the assumption that it cannot undergo predicate inversion. This is because *cazzo*, on account of its functional nature cannot occur in predicative position (cf. \**Quel dottore è un cazzo* vs *Quel dottore è una merda* 'This doctor is a piece of shit'). With *merda* and *idiota*, the COMP reading is possible, and results from predicative inversion. In COMP, functional elements like determiners can occur between *di* and N2, since predicate inversion moves the expressive N1 to the left edge of the DP headed by N2.

**Conclusion**. In this paper, we have shown that different morphosyntactic behaviour in terms of concord of three Italian expressive 'nouns' in EBNPs result from their syntactic make up: *cazzo* is a fully functional element, *merda* is a root which its own GEN-feature, and an unvalued NUM-feature, whereas *idiota* is a derived element, starting out as an adjective, and getting nominalized before being merged into the fseq of N2. Alternatively, DPs containing expressive elements can be merged lower than N2 and moved higher at the edge of N2's DP; however, this is only possible if the element is still a noun itself (i.e. *cazzo* is excluded from the comparative reading).

Selected references • Cinque, 2015. Augmentative, pejorative, diminutive and endearing heads in the extended nominal projection. In *Structures, Strategies and Beyond.* • Foolen, 2004. Expressive binominal NPs in Germanic and Romance languages. In *Studies in Linguistic Motivation.* • Den Dikken, 2006. *Relators and Linkers.* • Potts, 2007. The expressive dimension, *Theoretical Linguistics* 33(2). • Manzini, 2021. Chomsky's (2020) Links and linker phenomena. *Qulso* 7.