

THE BIPARTITE RECIPROCAL MARKER IN SERBIAN AND ITALIAN: NOVEL AGREEMENT PATTERNS ^a

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Abstract

In this paper we discuss the emergence of novel agreement patterns of the bipartite reciprocal markers (BRM) *jedan drugi* (Serbian) and *l'un(o) l'altro* (Italian), both meaning 'each other'. In Serbian, the most conclusive evidence of an ongoing change comes from novel case agreement patterns, where the first element of the BRM no longer agrees in case with the antecedent. For Italian, the absence of agreement on the first part (*l'un*) is understood to be a result of grammaticalization, accompanied by other symptoms such as semantic weakening. The major problems for this view are gender agreeing plural BRMs, and the fact that agreeing BRMs in general do not seem to be 'less reciprocal'.

Key words: bipartite reciprocal marker, case, number and gender agreement, Serbian, Italian.

БИНАРНИ РЕЦИПРОЧНИ МАРКЕР У СРПСКОМ И ИТАЛИЈАНСКОМ: НОВИ МОРФОСИНТАКСИЧКИ ОБЛИЦИ

Апстракт

У овом раду бавимо се новим морфосинтаксичким облицима бинарног реципрочног маркера у српском и италијанском (*jedan drugi* и *l'un(o) l'altro*). Нови модели слагања у падежу у српском, где се први елемент не слаже са антецедентом, најјасније указују на процес граматикализације. У италијанском, одсуство слагања у роду на првом елементу сматра се резултатом граматикализације, коју прате и други симптоми попут семантичког слабљења. Присуство реципрочних маркера у множини у истим контекстима, као и чињеница да се предлозима, где се први елемент обавезно слаже у роду с антецедентом, не де-

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лују „мање реципрочно“ од граматикализованог облика представљају изазов за овакву анализу.

Кључне речи: реципрочни маркер, падеж, број, род, конгруенција, српски, италијански.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we focus on the properties of the bipartite reciprocal markers – BRMs in Serbian and Italian (*jedan drugog* and *l'un l'altro* ‘each other/one another’). What these two languages have in common is that BRMs are an alternative or emphatic way of expressing reciprocity (the basic one being with the reflexive/reciprocal clitic *si* (Italian)/*se* (Serbian)). In both languages, BRMs seem to be in a process of change, as, on the one hand, there is an established set of morphosyntactic properties which most native speakers agree upon (standard forms and positions of the BRM, described to some extent in descriptive/reference grammars of standard Italian and Serbian), but new morphological and syntactic possibilities for the BRMs are also emerging, usually treated as non-standard, with varying degrees of acceptability among speakers. These changes are generally recorded in the spoken or informal language, usually of younger generations.

Reference grammars rarely give much attention to the description of BRMs, and Serbian and Italian are no exception. By carefully investigating the contexts usually overlooked in literature, we aim to arrive at an adequate description of a wide range of empirical facts that will set a more solid ground for subsequent analyses from any theoretical viewpoint.

BACKGROUND

In this section we lay out the basic assumptions about reciprocity in general, BRMs in Serbian and Italian (based on their standard descriptions), and grammaticalization as a potentially key process responsible for the emergence of innovative morphosyntactic patterns. Finally, we present how the data in this study was obtained.

BRMs and Reciprocity

We will keep to the notion that reciprocal constructions are grammatical means for the expression of symmetrical relations (cf. König & Kokutani, 2006). They involve at least two participants – A and B, and indicate that the semantic relation between A and B is the same as the relation between B and A.

(1) Peter and Mary love each other.

However, it has been long noted that *each other* can be used outside the strict symmetry or strong reciprocity contexts/situations, especially with sets involving more than two participants (cf. Dalrymple, Kanasawa, Kim, Mchombo and Peters, 1998, a. o.). In fact, BRMs can be used even for strong asymmetric relations (2).

- (2) The students followed **each other**. /The two crocodiles were lying on top of **each other**.

The terminology used for constructions with a BRM largely varies, depending on the type of analysis assumed. To remain theory neutral, we will simply refer to them as RM1 and RM2. RM1 matches the features of the antecedent phrase (typically, the subject, but also the object), while RM2 expresses the role of the complement of the verb or a preposition.

BRMs in the Serbian and Italian Standard Language – a Brief Overview

In Serbian, the BRM *jedan drugog* is often taken to be an alternative to the *se*-reciprocals. In Italian, however, the presence of the BRM largely depends on the reflexively/reciprocally marked predicate (SI-predicate). SI-predicates are unaccusative in general, requiring the use of the auxiliary BE (*essere*) rather than HAVE (*avere*). This makes *l'un l'altro* in the postverbal position an optional element.

- (3) Marko i Petar **se** poštuju /poštuju **jedan drugog**
 Marko and Petar SE respect respect one_{M.SG.NOM} other_{M.SG.ACC}
 'Marko and Petar respect each other'
- (4) a. Matteo e Marco *(si) sono baciati (**l'un l'altro**)
 Matteo and Marco SI AUX_{BE} kissed the one_{M.SG} the other_{M.SG}
- b. *Matteo e Marco hanno baciato (**l'un l'altro**)
 Matteo and Marco AUX_{HAVE} kissed the one_{M.SG} the other_{M.SG}
 'Matteo and Marco kissed each other'

In both languages, the BRM matches the gender features of the antecedent. In Serbian, the gender agreement is present both on RM1 and RM2, while in Italian, the singular BRM RM1 is typically invariable (masculine *l'un*), and it is RM2 that agrees with the antecedent. In addition to *l'un l'altro*, Italian also has a fully agreeing form, (*l'uno l'altro*), which is used with prepositions.

As for number features, both Serbian and Italian employ plural BRMs; in Italian, the plural form is standard only with prepositions. In Serbian, for antecedents of 3+ members, both singular and plural are allowed, and in the Italian standard, plural antecedents obligatorily take plural BRMs. For Serbian, it has been argued by LaTerza and Mitrović (2010) that the choice between a singular and plural BRM is governed by

semantic factors: plural BRMs are obligatory in strictly non-symmetric contexts. Italian plural BRM seems to behave the same way.

In Serbian, a rich case marking language, RM1 matches the case of the antecedent, while RM2 gets the case typically assigned by the verb (cf. Despić 2011, 87-88; LaTerza 2014, 123-124). In Italian, case is licensed structurally (no oblique cases).

Italian, a DP language, uses the definite article both on RM1 and RM2.

With prepositions, in both languages, the BRM splits: RM1 precedes the preposition, while RM2 follows it. In Serbian, RM2 bears the case typically assigned by the preposition (cf. Despić 2011, p. 87; LaTerza 2014, p. 121).

- (5) a. Matteo e Marco camminavano **l'uno** con **l'altro**
 Matteo and Marco Walk the one with the other
 'Matteo and Marco walk with each other'
- b. Petar i Marko Često šetaju **jedan** sa **drugim**
 Petar and Marko Often walk one_{NOM} with other_{INST}
 'Petar and Marko often walk with each other'

Finally, both Serbian and Italian have object oriented BRMs. Both Serbian and Italian BRMs can be used inside NPs. These are illustrated by Serbian examples in (6).

- (6) a. Preporučio ih_i Je **[jednu drugoj]**_i
 recommended them_{ACC} AUX one_{ACC} other_{DAT}
 'He recommended them to each other.' (Despić 2011, 87)
- b. Njihovo poštovanje **jedan** **drugog**
 their respect one_{M.SG.NOM} other_{M-SG.ACC}
 'Their respect of each other...' (Despić 2011, 87)

BRMs and Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization of BRMs. Cross-linguistically, the grammatical properties of constituent quantifiers in BRM are relatively unstable, which, in typological literature especially, is viewed as a reflex of grammaticalization (cf. Evans 2008, a.o.). Diachronic data from various languages indicates that BRMs start as autonomous units which then become grammaticalized as a new single unit. Grammaticalization is usually diagnosed by the changes in the semantic, phonological and morphosyntactic properties of RM1 and RM2. Semantic symptoms of grammaticalization include semantic weakening. For BRMs, semantic weakening is diagnosed by the loss of semantic compositionality (RM1 and RM2 have different semantic functions as BRM components than when used independently). The phonological correlate of grammaticalization is phono-

logical reduction. Whatever phonological make-up the individual elements of the BRM have, in the grammaticalized BRM, some of them disappear. Changes in the morphosyntactic properties, specifically loss of gender, number, and case agreement with the antecedent, are claimed to be “the most instructive evidence for the history of grammaticalization” (Kulikov, 2014, p. 126). Morphosyntactic tendencies observed in the grammaticalization process of BRMs in various IE languages can be summarized as follows: most changes affect RM1 first (‘reduced agreement’, with an invariable RM1 and an agreeing RM2). In fully grammaticalized forms, gender is fixed to masculine, and number to singular. The loss of case marking affects RM1, which becomes invariable. Haas (2007) argues that the development of BRM in languages such as English can better be captured if the semantic, phonological and morphosyntactic weakening is linked to the process of lexicalization, while grammaticalization should be understood as semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic context expansion.

The Serbian and Italian standard BRMs show different degrees of lexicalization. Phonological weakening is present in both languages (e.g., inability of RM1 of bearing contrastive focus stress); Italian *l’un l’altro* undergoes further reductions to the form *lullaltro*, where RM1 loses word stress.

In Serbian, the case, gender, and number agreement properties of the standard BRM do not exhibit symptoms of lexicalization. In Italian *l’un l’altro* RM1 is the invariable (masculine) form *l’un*, with RM2 showing gender agreement with the antecedent (reduced agreement).

- (7) Anna e Maria si sono ferite **l’un** **l’altra**
 Anna and Maria SI AUX hurt the one_M the other_F
 ‘Anna and Maria hurt each other’

The special status of *l’un l’altro* as a ‘set expression’ has been noted in reference grammars. An account of its grammaticalization is offered in Vezzosi (2010), where the author argues that *l’un l’altro* develops from the distributive (*l’*) *uno l’altro*, which were originally (in Old Italian), first used as two independent nominals. The reanalysis of the two nominals must have started from their uses in the postverbal position, with the plural antecedent in the subject topic position, triggering plural agreement on the verb. In the process of grammaticalization, “the two-quantifier construction [...] gradually loses its maximally distributive force, and during its fossilization in post-verbal position it acquires a non-maximally distributive but collective force, so as to encode weak as well as strong reciprocity” (Vezzosi, 2010, p. 366).

The empirical picture, however, reveals two issues with such descriptions of BRMs in Serbian and Italian. In non-standard Serbian, there exist forms of BRM that match the grammaticalization paths noted in other languages. In Italian, on the other hand, the grammaticalization path

suggested in literature is somewhat inconsistent in the light of the morphosyntactic properties of grammaticalized and non-grammaticalized BRMs.

Data Collection

The data we presented in the previous sections of the paper is primarily based on native speaker judgments, given that the spoken language corpora are insufficient or absent. In addition to the authors' native speaker judgments (for Serbian and Italian respectively), the Italian data also reflects the judgment of 12 other native speakers (ages 18 through 65), obtained via an acceptability judgment questionnaire, while the Serbian data includes the comprehension/production outputs of 15 native speakers (ages 22 through 23), and an acceptability judgment experiment (conducted by Milan Brkić, as a research course requirement).

SERBIAN 'JEDAN DRUGI'

Gender Agreement

The first innovation we note in the generalization that the BRM agrees in gender with the antecedent is with animate mixed gender antecedents. While the standard form employs neuter gender resolution (8a), in the novel form, RM2 has a masculine gender feature (8b), or both RM1 and RM2 are masculine (9).

- (8) a. Petar i Marija vole **jedno** **drugo**
 Peter and Mary love one_{NOM.N} other_{ACC.N}
- b. **jedno** **drugog**
 one_{NOM.N} other_{ACC.M}
- ‘Peter and Mary love each other’
- (9) **Žena** i **muškarac** zaprosili **jedan** **drugog** u Diznilendu
 woman and man proposed-to one_{NOM.M} other_{ACC.M} in Disneyland
 ‘A woman and a man proposed to each other in Disneyland’
<https://shorturl.at/bjovB>

Also, the neuter marked BRM starts to be used outside resolution contexts. With both male antecedents, some speakers find neuter-neuter BRM acceptable¹, but for two female antecedents, neuter BRM is completely out.

- (10) a. Petar i Marko mrze **jedno** **drugo**
 Peter And Marc hate one_{NOM.N} other_{ACC.N}
 ‘Peter and Marko hate each other’

¹10 out of 15 speakers found this pattern fully acceptable;

- b. **Marija* i *Ana* mrze **jedno** **drugo**
 Maria and Anna hate one_{NOM.N} other_{ACC.N}
 ‘Maria and Anna hate each other’

Number Agreement

It has been noted in literature that the choice between a singular or plural is governed by a semantic difference. Specifically, LaTerza and Mitrović (2010) argue that singular BRMs are impossible/ungrammatical in weak reciprocity contexts, such as (11).

- (11) Članovi porodice su poštovali **jedan drugog** /**jedni druge** i
 members family AUX respected one_{SG} other_{SG} one_{PL} other_{PL} and
 odali su poštu ***jedan drugom** /**jedni drugima** na svojim
 paid AUX respect *one_{SG} other_{SG} one_{PL} other_{PL} at their
 sahranama
 funerals
 ‘The family members respected each other, and paid their respects at each others’ funerals.

While we agree with the judgment of the use of the singular BRM in (11), other weak reciprocity contexts actually do not disallow singular BRMs, as these authors report.

Plural BRMs are not freely available, though. With feminine plural antecedents, feminine plural BRMs are odd (as opposed to plural BRMs with masculine plural antecedents, which are fully acceptable in Serbian).²³

- (12) a. Novosadske mame preziru ??**jedne** **druge**
 Novi Sad Moms despise one_{F.PL.ACC} other_{F.PL.ACC}
 ‘Novi Sad moms despise each other’
 b. Novosadske tate preziru **jedni** **druge**
 Novi Sad Dads despise one_{M.PL.NOM} other_{M.PL.ACC}
 ‘Novi Sad dads despise each other’

² One might think that the syncretic morphology of the nominative and accusative in feminine plural forms is responsible for its decreased acceptability. However, the same contrast is found in Italian, so it is more likely that plural BRMs indeed prefer masculine antecedents;

³ An anonymous reviewer wonders what the acceptable version of (12a) would be, given that the Internet records at least two sentences with *jedne druge*. Our judgment is that the form is rather marked and that the singular form *jedna drugu* would be more felicitous here;

Case Marking

The descriptive generalization about case marking in Serbian is that the case of RM1 matches the case of the antecedent, and that the case of RM2 is the case normally associated with the position of the BRM. However, in informal/causal language, other patterns also emerge.

First, we present cases where RM1 does not match the nominative case of the subject antecedent. This takes place when the BRM is in the object position and with prepositions. Then, we move on to case mismatches between RM1 and the object antecedent.

Lack of nominative case on RM1 in the object position. In non-standard Serbian, both RM1 and RM2 can be marked with the same ‘object case’, as illustrated in the examples in (13) found on the Internet. Our informants also report that they often produce such forms in spontaneous speech.

- (13) a. zašto mi kao narod ne poštujemo **jednog drugog**
 why we as people not respect one_{ACC} other_{ACC}
 ‘why we as people/nations do not respect each other’
 (https://www.b92.net/info/komentari.php?nav_id=524829)
- b. ...gledao u Mihajla i Anu kako se **jednom drugom**
 watched at Mihajlo and Ana as RFL one_{M.SG.DAT} other_{M.SG.DAT}
 smeju
 smile
 ‘...he watched Ana and Mihajlo as they smiled at each other’
<https://shorturl.at/ekFR2>

Loss of nominative case on RM1 with prepositions. Recall from one of the previous sections that prepositions in standard Serbian always split the BRM – RM1 gets the case of the antecedent (nominative, with subject antecedents), and RM2 gets the case normally assigned by the preposition. Examples like (14), however, are relatively frequent in non-standard/spoken language. In the novel pattern, the preposition does not split RM1 from RM2 – the whole BRM shows up in the complement position of the preposition and both elements are assigned the same ‘prepositional’ case.

- (14) Petar i Marko uvek računaju *na* **jednog drugog**
 Petar and Marko always count on one_{ACC} other_{ACC}
 ‘Petar and Marko always count on each other’

This is not the only case pattern for non-split BRMs with prepositions. Nominative RM1 is also allowed following the preposition.

- (15) Petar i Marko uvek računaju *na* **jedan drugog**
 Peter and Marc always count on one_{NOM} other_{ACC}
 ‘Petar and Marko always count on each other’

An identical state of affairs has been noted for Icelandic (Sigurðsson, Sigurðsson and Wood, 2022). They label the cases as (16) *innovative* reciprocals, and (15) *hybrid* reciprocals. As we descriptively treat both types as innovations, we will use the term *case-congruent* BRMs for (14).

A more fine-grained insight comes from an experimental study of the acceptability of innovative and hybrid reciprocals. The study involved 53 native speakers of Serbian, ages 20 through 51, who were asked to judge the acceptability of case-congruent and hybrid reciprocals in locational PPs (headed by prepositions *naspram*, meaning ‘facing’ and *pored*, meaning ‘next to’ assigning genitive case) with subject antecedents on a scale ranging from one to seven.

- (16) a. Luka i Milan sede *naspram/pored* **jedan** drugog
 Luka and Milan sit facing/behind/next to one_{NOM} other_{GEN}
- b. **jednog** Drugog
 one_{GEN} other_{GEN}
 ‘Luka and Milan are sitting facing/next to each other’

The study revealed that hybrid and congruent reciprocals are acceptable (graded 5-7) for 23% to 41% of the participants. Also, a clear asymmetry emerged between the acceptability of these reciprocals with the preposition *naspram* (‘facing’) and *pored* (‘next to’), with *naspram* being more tolerant to novel BRM forms. The judgments are presented in Figures 1 through 4.

One key observation about hybrid reciprocals comes from Icelandic (Sigurðsson et al. 2021; Messick and Harðarson, 2023): the nominative case on RM1 does not case-agree with the subject. That fact that hybrid BRMs are possible with dative/quirky subjects indicates that the nominative case is marked as default, and not via agreement. So, the novel forms *both* have non-agreeing case on RM1. Now, which strategy – the default nominative or congruent oblique RM1 – is a stronger reflex of grammaticalization is a difficult question.

Luka i Milan sede naspram jedan drugog.
 53 responses

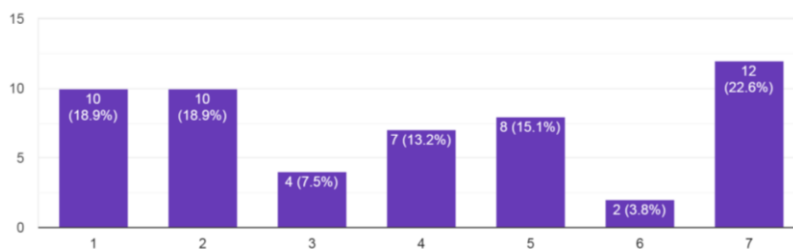


Figure 1. Acceptability judgments of the hybrid BRM with the preposition *naspram* ‘facing’

Luka i Milan sede naspram jednog drugog.

53 responses

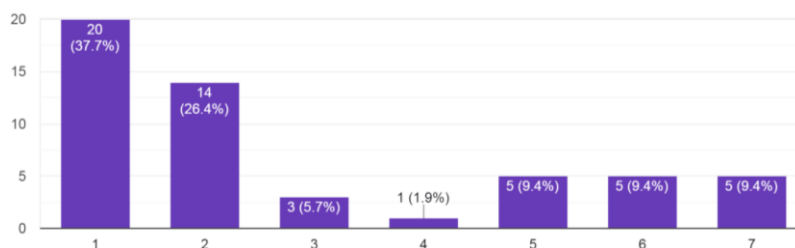


Figure 2. Acceptability judgments of the case-congruent BRM with the preposition *naspram* 'facing'

Luka i Milan sede pored jedan drugog.

53 responses

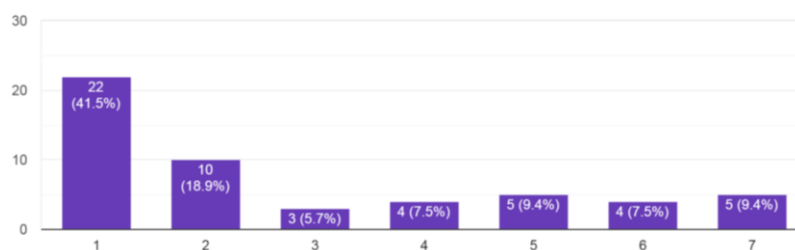


Figure 3. Acceptability judgments of the hybrid BRM with the preposition *pored* 'next to'

Luka i Milan sede pored jednog drugog.

53 responses

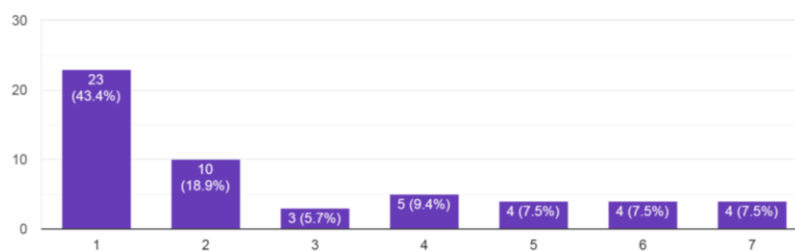


Figure 4. Acceptability judgments of the case-congruent BRM with the preposition *pored* 'next to'

Lack of nominative on the BRM with ditransitive verbs. Case-congruent BRMs are possible in ditransitive constructions. ACC-ACC theme BRMs (17) are generally judged as fully acceptable or more acceptable than DAT-DAT recipients of both masculine and feminine gender.

- (17) Petar i Marko su stalno **jednog drugog** preporučivali svim
 Peter and Marc AUX always one_{ACC} other_{ACC} recommended to-all
 svojim nadređenima
 their superiors
 ‘Peter and Marc always recommended each other to all of their superiors’

BRMs with ‘double’ dative case are possible for some speakers, who also report that fronting the dative BRM to the preverbal position improves its acceptability. This only holds for feminine gender, though, as the masculine *jednom_{DAT}-drugom_{DAT}* is generally unacceptable.

- (18) Ana i Marija su **?jednoj drugoj** preporučile novu haljinu
 Anna and Maria AUX one_{DAT} other_{DAT} recommended new dress
 ‘Anna and Maria recommended a new dress to each other’

It is clear that case-congruent reciprocals occur in all syntactic environments in Serbian, with DAT-DAT BRMs being subject to most restrictions.

Loss of case agreement between RM1 and the object antecedent. Object oriented BRMs also allow both innovative and hybrid forms. First, we illustrate this for theme object antecedents and recipient BRMs in ditransitive constructions.

For masculine object antecedents, the hybrid NOM-DAT is better than the congruent DAT-DAT (19); with female object antecedents, the reverse holds (even though the congruent form itself is marginally acceptable, for almost all speakers consulted *jedna drugoj* is fully unacceptable).

- (19) Petar je predstavio *goste* **?(?)*jednom drugom*** */?jedan*
 Peter AUX introduced guests_{F.PL.ACC} one_{M.SG.DAT} other_{M.SG.DAT} one_{SG.NOM}

drugom

other_{M.SG.DAT}

‘Peter introduced his (female) guests to each other’

- (20) Petar je predstavio *gošće* **??*jednoj drugoj*** */?*jedna*
 Peter AUX introduced guests_{F.PL.ACC} one_{F.SG.DAT} other_{F.SG.DAT} one_{F.SG.NOM}

drugoj

other_{F.SG.DAT}

‘Peter introduced his (female) guests to each other’

The sharp contrast between the hybrid masculine and feminine suggests that the masculine nominative *jedan* is slowly paving its way to being default-invariable. Note also that the hybrid NOM-DAT is possible only in the singular form, as plural nominative *jedni* is fully ungrammati-

cal (21b). Plural congruent BRMs (*jednim drugima*) are also significantly less acceptable than the singular (*jednom drugom*).

- (21) a. Petar ih je predstavio **jedan** drugom/ **jednog** drugom
 Peter them._{CL.ACC} AUX introduced one_{SG.NOM} other_{DAT} one_{SG.ACC} other_{DAT}
- b. Petar ih je predstavio ***jedni** drugima/ **jedne** drugima
 Peter them._{CL.ACC} AUX introduced one_{PL.NOM} other_{DAT} one_{PL.ACC} other_{DAT}
 ‘Peter introduced them to each other’

Object oriented BRMs in PP complements can also have both hybrid (22a) and congruent forms (22b), which for masculine antecedents seems to be more acceptable than the BRM with an agreeing RM1 (*jednog_{ACC} na drugog_{ACC}*). Moreover, speakers use other strategies as well: non-agreeing nominative RM1 before the preposition (22c) or non-agreeing neuter, case-ambiguous (22d).

- (22) a. Petar ih je uputio **na jedan drugog**
 Petar them_{CL.ACC} AUX directed at one_{NOM} other_{M.ACC}
- b. **na jednog drugog**
 at one_{ACC} other_{M.ACC}
- c. **jedan** na **drugog**
 one_{M.NOM} at other_{M.ACC}
- d. **jedno** na **drugog**
 one_{N.NOM} at other_{M.ACC}
- ‘Petar directed them to each other’

Case patterns with NP-internal BRMs (complements and possessors). BRM complements of nouns can also be case-congruent.

- (23) Žene bi često trebale biti pomoć **jednoj drugoj**
 women AUX often should be help one_{F.SG.DAT} other_{F.SG.DAT}
 LIT. ‘Women should often be help to each other’

The use of BRMs as possessors has also spread among speakers. In addition to the default pattern with RM1 in the nominative, and RM2 in the genitive case (case structurally assigned by nominals), case congruent GEN-GEN forms are possible.

- (24) Potrošile su sve pare **jedne druge**
 spent_{F.PL} aux all money one_{F.SG.GEN} other_{F.SG.GEN}
 ‘They spent all of each other’s money’

Summary

There is plenty empirical evidence that Serbian develops new forms of the BRM, which deviate from standard agreement patterns. With respect to case, BRMs with non-agreeing RM1 come as (i) case-congruent

(bearing the same case as RM2) and (ii) hybrid (with non-agreeing, default nominative), and are possible in virtually all syntactic contexts. The new forms exhibit sensitivity to certain number and gender features. Masculine singular is generally judged as more acceptable than feminine and plural, but the use of neuter BRMs for plural masculine antecedents is somewhat surprising.

ITALIAN BRM

In the opening sections, we presented the view that *l'un l'altro* has undergone some amount of grammaticalization (Vezzosi, 2010). We will now carefully investigate the contexts in which not only *l'un l'altro*, but other forms of BRM (*(l) uno l'altro*) occur. If *l'un l'altro* has been lexicalized and grammaticalized from the agreeing *(l) uno l'altro* – either through reanalysis of two independent distributors in structurally adjacent positions or via the loss of preposition – acquiring an obligatory article, invariable gender form of RM1, singular number and ‘less distributive’ semantics, which allowed (and restricted) its use in novel syntactic contexts (reciprocalized SI-predicates) – we expect to find asymmetries with agreeing BRM forms that would provide more details of its grammaticalization path.

Grammaticalized ‘l’un l’altro’ in Italian: Gender and Number Agreement

The reduced form of *l'un l'altro* has been taken as the first indicator that it has long entered the process of grammaticalization. However, the statement that *l'un altro* has reduced agreement is imprecise, as it only has reduced *gender* agreement. As expected, this agreement is different from other gender agreement patterns, since the feminine RM2 is used with mixed gender conjuncts, which is not a typical resolution scenario for gender agreement in Italian⁴. The question is obviously why feminine and not masculine is used, if masculine is taken to be default elsewhere.

- (25) Lorenzo e Anna si sono abbracciati **l'un** **l'altra**
 Lorenzo and Anna si AUX_{BE} hugged the one_{M.SG} the other_{F.SG}
 ‘Lorenzo and Anna hugged each other’

The second issue concerns BRM’s number agreement. The status of plural BRMs in general is suspiciously unclear in literature. According to the standard, in PPs, plural forms are obligatory with plural antecedents. Some authors, however, point out that plural BRMs are rare, both with and without a preposition (Vezzosi, 2010, p. 352, Fn. 14). If plural

⁴ Irrespective of the order of conjuncts. *Anna e Lorenzo* would also give *l'un l'altra*;

BRMs are ‘bad reciprocals’, why are they then grammatical in the position where we only find the reduced *l’un l’altro*, which is a *bona fide* grammaticalized reciprocal? Sentences such as (26) might not be frequent in spontaneous speech, but they are acceptable and judged as grammatical.

- (26) I bambini si Sono abbracciati/baciati **gli uni gli altri**
 the children si AUX_{BE} hugged/kissed the ones the others
 ‘The children hugged/kissed each other’

However, not all plural antecedents can equally allow *gli uni gli altri*, as neither morphological nor semantic plurality of the antecedent is a sufficient condition for a plural BRM. Of the various ways plurality in Italian can be expressed on the antecedent, only plural DPs freely allow a plural BRM. The presence of the morphological singular (Sg & Sg; Sg, Sg & Sg), or the numeral *due* (‘two’) with plural nominals/pronouns strongly excludes the use of the plural BRM. Collective plural DPs also dislike plural BRMs, but interestingly singular BRMs are also not perfectly acceptable.

- (27) I poveri si Supportano ?*l’un l’altro* /??**gli uni gli altri**
 the poor_{M.PL} SI Support the one the other the ones the others
 ‘The poor support each other’

So, the plural BRM is eligible only with larger (3+) non-collective pluralities. The fact that the plural BRM does not operate on the plurality denotation – as plural predicates or pronominal anaphors do – indicates that BRM number agreement is, unsurprisingly, indeed special.

Larger pluralities have been known to allow weaker reciprocity. But, with respect to reciprocity strength, plural BRMs are equally ambiguous as singular BRMs (the strongest asymmetry contexts as (11) aside). Plural BRMs do not require super weak reciprocity. In a group hug context, which is minimally asymmetric, (28a) is perfectly acceptable, as is (28b), where the only asymmetry is in the body part involved (arm or leg), as each boy is kicking and is being kicked by the other two, simultaneously.

- (28) a. I ragazzi si sono abbracciati **gli uni gli altri**
 the boys SI AUX_{BE} hugged the ones_{M.PL} the others_{M.PL}
- b. I tre ragazzi si sono presi a calci e pugni **gli uni**
 the three boys SI AUX_{BE} taken to kicks and fists the ones_{M.PL}
- gli altri**
 the other_{M.PL}
 ‘The boys kicked each other with arms and legs’

Finally, there is an antecedent type which actually *requires* a plural BRM: conjoined plural DPs.

- (29) Gli Italiani e I Tedeschi si supportano **gli uni**
 the Italian_{M,PL} and The German_{M,PL} SI support the one_{M,PL}
gli altri
 the other_{M,PL}
 ‘The Italian (men) and German (men) support each other’

If the precondition for the use of the singular BRM with SI-monotransitives is loss of gender agreement on RM1, it is certainly puzzling why agreeing plural BRMs are possible there as well. Also, if *l’un* has collective, and not distributive force, it should fare much better with collective plural DPs.

Agreeing ‘l’uno l’altro’ in PPs

With prepositions, RM1 *must* agree with the antecedent, i.e., no reduced gender agreement (on RM2 only) is possible. This requirement holds irrespective of the PP’s syntactic status, complement (30), or adjunct, given earlier as (5a).

- (30) Marta e Marco Hanno votato **l’una** per **l’altro**
 Marta and Marco AUX_{HAVE} voted the one_{F,SG} for the other_{M,SG}
 ‘Marta and Marco voted for each other’

Unlike fully agreeing BRMs with SI-predicates (plural BRMs), the agreeing BRMs with Ps have no problem with mixed gender conjuncts. Even resolution successfully applies with 3 conjunct antecedents: the agreeing BRM simply ignores the gender features of the ‘middle’ conjunct.

- (31) a. *Marco*, Anna e *Nino* Hanno votato **l’uno** per **l’altro**
 Marco Anna and Nino AUX_{HAVE} voted the one_M for the other
 ‘Marco, Anna and Nino voted for each other’
 b. *Marco*, Nino e *Anna* **l’uno** per **l’altra**
 Marco Nino and Anna the one_M for the other
 c. *Maria*, Marco e *Anna*, **l’una** per **l’altra**
 Maria Marco and Anna the one_F for the other_F

Plural BRMs with Ps are also acceptable, as much as with SI-predicates (grammatical but not often produced).⁵

- (32) I bambini hanno contato **gli uni** su **gli altri**
 the children_{M,PL} AUX_{HAVE} counted the one_{M,PL} on the other_{M,PL}
 ‘The children counted on each other’

⁵ Plural mixed gender conjuncts also fare better with mixed gender plural BRMs – *gli uni le altre* with Ps is much better than with SI-predicates;

This indicates that the syntactic environment does not affect the use of fully agreeing plural BRMs. The asymmetry is present only in singular BRMs. And the question is why the singular RM1 must *not* gender agree with the antecedent outside PP contexts.

BRMs in Ditransitive Constructions

With ditransitive verbs, BRM is possible as the recipient argument (but not theme), and it can come (i) as a PP (headed by the preposition *a*), with a fully agreeing *l'uno a l'altro* (36), and (ii) as a reduced, DP-like, *l'un altro* with a SI-ditransitive verb (34). This alternation is not possible with regular nominals.

- (33) *Marta e Maria* hanno dato un regalo **l'una al l'altra**
 Marta and Maria AUX_{BE} given a present the one_F to the other_F
 'Marta and Maria gave a present to each other'
- (34) *Marta e Maria si* Sono date un regalo **l'un l'altra**
 Marta and Maria SI AUX_{BE} given a present the one the other_F
 'Marta and Maria gave each other a present'

The available literature suggests that *l'un l'altro* with SI-ditransitives emerged via the loss of the preposition and became a 'set expression' (cf. Vezzosi, 2010 and references there). And in that sense, it appears that the DP-like *l'un l'altro* with a SI-ditransitive is much alike *l'un l'altro* with SI-monotransitives. As the clitic *si* is often analyzed as an argument pronominal, the BRM is consequently assumed to be an intensifying or disambiguating adjunct.

This view is not without issues. If *l'un l'altro* is a disambiguator, it should be redundant in 'inherently' reflexive uses of the clitic *si*, such as grooming predicates. A predicate as 'wash' (*lavarsi*) should in principle rarely ever take *l'un l'altro* without contrastive focus (to eliminate the primary reflexive reading), contrary to fact. And, if *l'un l'altro* is an intensifier, then it should not 'intensify' strongly reciprocal predicates such as 'hit' or 'attack' (*colpirsi*, *attaccarsi*) – again, contrary to fact. SI-ditransitives open additional questions as they only have a reciprocal reading (never reflexive).

Finally, we remark that SI-ditransitives disallow plural BRMs if the antecedent DP has a 3+ numeral, unlike unergative ditransitives, and unlike SI-monotransitives. If we are to draw parallels between the two types of SI-predicates as licensors of the innovative *l'un l'altro*, this contrast should not be neglected.

The Distribution of Plural and Singular BRMs

In Tables 1 and 2 we give the distribution of *l'un l'altro* and *gli uni gli altri*, based on the antecedent type and the syntactic context. What

emerges rather clearly is that *l'un l'altro* is sensitive only to two antecedent types (collective plural and coordinated plurals). Unlike *gli uni gli altri*. As we have pointed out, plural BRM is not excluded from all SI-predicate contexts, and its acceptability is influenced by the antecedent type.

Table 1. Antecedent type and *l'un l'altro*

L'UN L'ALTRO	SI-monotransitive	SI-ditransitive
(*Det) PL	Ok	ok
(Det) 2 PL	Ok	ok
(Det) 3+ PL	Ok	ok
Collective PL	??	??
SG & SG	Ok	ok
SG, SG & SG	Ok	ok
PL & PL	??	*

Table 2. Antecedent type and *gli uni gli altri*

GLI UNI GLI ALTRI					
	SI-monotrans.	SI-ditrans.	HAVE-ditrans.	PP-compl.	Object antec. – PP compl.
(*Det) PL	(?)	?	ok	?	?
(Det) 2 PL	*	*	*	*	*
(Det) 3+ PL	?	??	ok	?	?
<i>Loro due</i>	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Loro tre</i>	??	??	?	?	?
Collective PL	??	??	?	ok	??
SG & SG	*	*	*	*	*
SG, SG & SG	*	*	*	*	*
PL & PL	ok	?	ok	ok	?

The strong ungrammaticality judgment of the plural BRM with the numeral 2 could be understood as a ban on plural BRMs in strong symmetric relations. But why multiple coordinated singulars semantically yielding 3+ participants equally exclude the plural BRM is a puzzle at this point.

Summary

In addition to the much-discussed reduced form *l'un l'altro*, Italian employs other forms of the BRM to express reciprocal relations. With SI-predicates, alongside the reduced *l'un l'altro*, plural BRMs are possible as well, their acceptability is affected by the type of plural antecedent only in SI-ditransitives. The reduced/grammaticalized *l'un l'altro* in SI-monotransitives and SI-ditransitives share gender agreement properties (e.g., resolution works the same way). But number marking in SI-predicates is obviously not fixed to the singular BRM.

CONCLUSION

The novel patterns in Serbian, unrecorded in literature so far, most evident in case agreement, suggest that the changes in many respects follow a typical scenario of grammaticalization. Case congruent and hybrid ‘default nominative’ BRMs indicate some amount of lexicalization (accompanied by syntactic context expansion). Some speakers generally gravitate to either case congruent or hybrid BRMs, while some use them interchangeably, so it is difficult to pinpoint if case congruent BRMs develop from hybrid ones. The emergence of non-agreeing masculine and neuter RM1 is also a novelty. As for number agreement, both singular and plural BRMs are used, their preference only roughly corresponding to the strength/weakness of reciprocity.

In Italian, *l’un l’altro* indeed shows symptoms of grammaticalization. The path of grammaticalization, however, is relatively unclear. The contexts licensing *l’un l’altro* do not completely dismiss non-reduced, agreeing forms (plural BRMs). Nor are plural BRMs ‘bad reciprocals’ – they are only sensitive to how the participant group in the antecedent is expressed. Syntactically, *l’un l’altro* is still a puzzle. It has its own agreement pattern, different from other constituents that enter agreement relations. Its status as an intensifying/disambiguating adjunct is also suspicious.

Grammaticalization of BRMs cannot be fully understood without solid insights into how number, gender, and case agreement/markings work independently of BRMs. Such insights might certainly be suggestive of the question of what actually motivates grammaticalization in the first place.

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БИНАРНИ РЕЦИПРОЧНИ МАРКЕР У СРПСКОМ И ИТАЛИЈАНСКОМ: НОВИ МОРФОСИНТАКСИЧКИ ОБЛИЦИ

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Резиме

У овом раду бавимо се варијацијом у морфосинтаксичким облицима бинарног реципрочног маркера (БРМ) у српском и италијанском језику (један другог и *l’un l’altro*), под претпоставком да нови модели слагања у роду, броју и падежу одражавају процес граматикализације. У српском, промене се најјасније виде у начину обележавања падежа, у ком се први елемент (PM1) више не слаже с антецедентом. Постоје два типа оваквих БРМ: (а) PM1 има исти падеж као PM2 (који PM2 добија у односу на то који падеж глагол или предлог додељују комплементу) и (б) PM1 се појављује у номинативу, који се не слаже са падежом антецедента. Промена је уочљива и у положају, јер БРМ постаје могућ као комплемент предлога (за разлику од стандардног облика где предлог обавезно раздваја PM1 и PM2) и комплемент недевербалних именица, где изражава присвојност. Неслагање с антецедентом примећује се и код обележја рода: мушки род се генерализује код координисаних антецедената мешовитог мушког и женског рода, а средњи род се јавља на PM1 код координисаних антецедента мушког рода. Што се броја тиче, делује да БРМ у једнини преузима улогу БРМ у множини, будући да постаје прихватљив у контекстима где би множина требало да буде боља (контексти са несиметричним односима, тзв. слаба реципрочност), и генерално је независан од фактора рода који утичу на прихватљивост БРМ у множини. Ове промене су у великој мери у складу са смером промене који се уочава у граматикализацији БРМ у другим језицима.

Италијански, с друге стране, већ има препознат граматикализовани облик БРМ, *l’un l’altro*, који има редуковану морфологију рода (PM1 је у непроменљивом мушком роду једнине, и само PM2 се слаже у роду са антецедентом), појављује се у врло одређеном контексту, искључиво са рефлексивним/реципрочним предикатом са клитиком *si* (*si*-предикат), и углавном у једнини. Испитивањем управо ових карактеристика код других, неграматикализованих облика

БРМ, највише облика у множини (*gli uni gli altri*) као и неграматикализованог (*l'uno l'altro*), покушавамо да утврдимо до које мере емпиријски подаци подржавају предложени смер граматикализације. Долазимо до закључка да начин изражавања плуралности антецедента утиче на прихватљивост БРМ у множини, који је генерално ипак доста прихватљив у контекстима који дозвољавају граматикализованни облик. Такође истичемо одређене нејасноће у анализи да граматикализованни облик у једнини има статус адјункта, чија је функција да појача реципрочно значење, или да га одвоји од рефлексивног значењу у случају двосмислености *si*-предиката.