# Covert Nouns and Definiteness in Superlatives

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# Abstract

The Italian definite superlative phrase la/il più found in predicate superlative constructions is analyzed in the light of parallels to Syrian Arabic superlative constructions. The counterpart phrase in Arabic has an overt noun that shows a threeway morphological contrast: *aktar waħd-e* 'most one-FEM', *aktar wāħid* 'most one<sub>MASC</sub>', and *aktar fi* 'most thing'. We postulate an analogous distinction in Italian involving a covert noun: *la più ONE<sub>FEM</sub>*, *il più ONE<sub>MASC</sub>*, and *il più THING*, and show that the choice of noun regulates the scope possibilities for the degree quantifier so formed in the same ways in the two languages. Morphological covariation between the noun and the target of comparison indicate that the noun denotes the contrast set with respective to which the superlative is evaluated. We claim that Italian and Arabic are identical modulo the distinct lexicalization pattern above and a parameter of variation dictating that *più* may enter into a licensing configuration at LF that must hold in the surface structure in Arabic.

Keywords: Superlative constructions, Italian, Arabic, degree quantifiers, parameters.

## 1. Introduction

In this chapter, we investigate parallels between Italian and Arabic superlative constructions and their consequences for syntactic and semantic puzzles discussed by Matushansky (2008) and Loccioni (2018). Matushansky finds that cross linguistically, superlatives morphemes tend to occur in a nominal environment, often in combination with a definite article. Loccioni finds that the superlative interpretation of Italian *più* 'more/most' is possible in relative clauses with definite heads, but without an article of their own. We claim that the comparison between Italian and Arabic shows that Matushansky's observation is syntactic, not semantic, and Loccioni's data show that the relevant syntactic condition may be met at LF in Italian.

# 2. Matushansky (2008)

Matushansky (2008) shows that cross linguistically, superlative adjectives have an affinity for definiteness, even in non-argument positions, such as when they function as adverbs or predicate adjectives. The paradigm in (1) demonstrates this affinity in German, extending Matushansky's examples (32) and (34). The argument superlative *die schönste Schlange* 'the prettiest snake' in (1a) is obligatorily definite, as is the predicate nominal in (1 b) and the same construction with ellipsis of the noun in (1c). The definite article in these cases makes sense if these superlative DPs are referential. (1d) shows that the superlative adjective cannot occur as a bare predicate, which in German is uninflected in predicate position; compare (1d) with the uninflected comparative predicate adjective in (1e) and its uninflected positive counterpart in (1f). Matushansky concludes that a superlative adjective cannot function as a predicate.

(1)	a.	Maria hob die schön-st-e Schlange auf.		
		Maria picked the pretty-est-NOM.FS snake up		
		'Maria picked up the prettiest snake.'		
	b.	Das ist die schön-st-e Schlange.		
		that is the pretty-est-NOM.FS snake		
		'That is the prettiest snake.'		
	c.	Das ist die schön-st-e.		
	•••	that is the pretty-est-NOM.FS		
		'That one is the prettiest.'		
	d.	*Das ist schön-st.		
		that is pretty-est		
		'That one is prettiest.'		
	e.	Das ist schön-er.		
		that is pretty-er		
		'That one is prettier.'		
	f.	Das ist schön.		
		that is pretty		
		'That one is pretty.'		

Matushansky cites a variety of data from a variety of languages in support of the point that superlative adjectives only ever occur attributively, in construct with a noun (1a-c), never predicatively (1d), in contrast to comparative and ordinary positive adjectives (1e-f). She proposes an explanation for the gap in (1d) in the form of the definition for the superlative morpheme *est* in (2). We use the nomenclature 'EST' to refer to the superlative morpheme cross-linguistically.

(2) 
$$[[EST]] = \lambda R_{\langle d, \langle e, t \rangle} \lambda C_{\langle e, t \rangle} \lambda x_d : \exists d R(x, d) \& \forall z \in C [z \neq x \rightarrow \neg R(z, d)]$$

According to this definition, the morpheme EST combines with a degree relation, syntactically an adjective phrase (AP), and a set of individuals, syntactically a noun phrase (NP) and finally an individual, to which it attributes the property that there is a degree to which it bears R and to which nothing else in the the NP denotation bears R. The definite article in superlatives closes the NP, as the tree in (3) for *die schönste Schlange* 'the prettiest snake' illustrates.



This analysis has two important consequences. First, it dictates that the superlative morpheme always occurs in combination with an AP, denoting R, and an NP, denoting C. That is, superlative adjectives must always occur together with a noun. If no overt noun follows the superlative adjective, then a covert noun must. Such an analysis for (1c) is supported by the fact that 1) a definite article is present in (1c), which implicates an implicit noun, 2) the article in this case is feminine, which concords with the feminine grammatical gender of the German noun *Schlange* 'snake', and 3) the superlative adjective itself bears the inflection *-e* required of attributive adjectives. Here, the inflection indicates that the following (covert) noun is nominative feminine singular. (1d) is ungrammatical because there *est* is missing its C argument.

The other important consequence is that there can be no variation in the scope of EST. Suppose *est* moves out of the tree in (3) to a VP-level position, a possibility motivated in detail by Szabolcsi (1986), Heim (1999, 2001) and many others.

Lambda abstraction over its degree variable-denoting trace will derive a degree relation that will satisfy its R argument in that position, but no noun will be available to satisfy its C argument. This structure is therefore uninterpretable, even if we admit cancellation of definiteness, as movement analyses of semantic ambiguities in the superlative require (see references above).

These two consequences of Matushansky's analysis are crucial as we turn to Italian in section 3.

#### 3. Loccioni (2018)

In Italian, the elative particle  $pi\hat{u}$  is interpreted as superlative in a nominal context (5a) and comparative otherwise, for example in predicate position in (5b) (Loccioni 2018, p. 1). The nominal construction in (5a) is obligatorily definite. Unlike German, Italian does not morphologically distinguish the superlative from the comparative—both surface in the form of  $pi\hat{u}$ —but like German, the superlative interpretation of  $pi\hat{u}$  requires a nominal argument, as Matushansky's proposal leads us to expect. Following Loccioni's convention, I gloss  $pi\hat{u}$  as 'more', though it has a superlative reading in some contexts, as reflected in the translation.

(5)	a.	Maria è la più felice
		Maria is the more happy
		'Maria is the happiest.'
	b.	Maria è più felice (di Lenuccia)
		Maria is more happy (than Lenuccia)
		'Maria is happier (than Lenuccia).'

These facts seem to recommend Matushansky's analysis of EST for superlative più. However, Loccioni observes that when più occurs in a relative clause with a definite head (6a), the superlative reading is available without the determiner, as (6b) shows, contrary to the basic German/Italian pattern in (1)/(5). Further, the presence or absence of the determiner correlates with a facet of its interpretation. The DP in (6a) preferentially denotes the year in which Maria was the happiest person in a certain set of people. Another reading is available in which (6a) refers to the year in which Maria was happier than she herself was in any other year in a certain set of years. This interpretation is less salient, presumably because it is preferentially expressed by the structure in (6b). Example (6b), where più occurs without a determiner, refers exclusively to the the year in which Maria was happier than she was in any other year. (6b) cannot refer to a year in which Maria was the happiest among a certain group of people. The fact that *più* can occur without a determiner in (6b) stands in contrast to the generalization exemplified by (5) that a determiner is required for the superlative reading, which in turn makes (6b) an exception, at least at face value, to Matushansky's generalization that superlatives need a nominal environment.

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(6)	a.	l' anno in cui Maria fu la più felice	
		the year in which Maria was the more happy	
		$\checkmark$ 'the year when Maria was happier than any other relevant person'	
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'	
	b.	l' anno in cui Maria fu più felice	
		the year in which Maria was more happy	
		✗ 'the year when Maria was happier than any other relevant person'	
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'	

Loccioni analyses (6a) as a predicate nominal construction with the structure in (7a) but attributes to (6b) the structure in (7b), with a null article ' $Ø_D$ ' and a covert head 'DEGREE'. These components form a degree quantifier with the label DegP that modifies the AP *felice* 'happy'. That adjective is predicative; it does not modify a noun. The null determiner is licensed by the c-commanding determiner of *anno* 'year', as represented by the arrow in (7b).



Loccioni does not directly address the matter of how the licensing of the null article is connected to the obligatory year-oriented reading for più that (6b) displays. It is also unclear why licensing of a null determiner is limited to the structure in (7b), and is not possible in (7a), even though the determiner there is in the same environment that licenses the null determiner in (7b), that is, c-command by the determiner associated with the head of the relative clause. We can tell that the determiner in (7a) cannot be dropped under licensing by the higher determiner because (6b), where the determiner is missing, does not have the Maria-oriented reading available to (6a), in which we compare Maria to other people in terms of

how happy they were in the year in question. The structure in (6a) that has that reading therefore does not admit a covert determiner. Consequently, Loccioni's analysis does not does not tell us why licensing of the null determiner is only possible in the structure in (7b) and how this licensing relation is related to the obligatory wide scope reading of più in (6b). In section 4, we claim that an analogous pattern in Arabic sheds some light on these issues.

Before turning to the Arabic facts, we mention an additional data point in the Italian paradigm. In addition to the example in (6a) with *la più* and (6b) with bare *più*, it is possible to replace the feminine article *la* with default masculine article *il*, as seen in (8). (8) is judged as grammatical but not fully natural. It has been variously described to us as 'stilted', 'bookish' and 'dispreferred' relative to the examples in (6). We discuss the reasons for its unnaturalness in more detail in section 6. For the time being, the significant thing about (8) is that to the extent it is acceptable, it shares the interpretation of the article-less example in (6b). It refers to the year when Maria was happier than she was in any other year, and cannot be interpreted on par with (6a) as naming the year in which Maria was happier than any other person in a tacit comparison class.

(8) l' anno in cui Maria fu il più felice the year in which Maria was the<sub>M</sub> more happy
✗ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other relevant person'
✓ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

This pattern raises the question: What connects the presence of the determiner ((6a) vs. (6b)/(8)), and, when present, its form (feminine (6a) vs. masculine (8)) with the scope of più? We suggest that Arabic is revealing.

### 4. Arabic superlatives

The data cited below comes from contemporary Syrian Arabic, though the pattern reported here is widespread in the Arabic dialects. Whether it is universal is not known to us at present. Therefore, references to 'Arabic' in what follows are intended to be construed as 'Syrian Arabic', specifically the dialect of the capital Damascus, where all our consultants are from. The data reported here were judged by five native speakers of Damascus Arabic for both grammaticality (ves/no) and for meaning (synonymy with an unambiguous paraphrase in Arabic). Our transcription follows the International Phonetic Alphabet (International Phonetic Association 1999) except for our notation of long vowels with a macron, i.e.  $\bar{a}$  for [a:]. As in Italian, the comparative and superlative are expressed by the same morpheme in Arabic, often referred to as the 'elative' morpheme. The morpheme is the prosodic template  $aC_1C_2aC_3$ , in which 'C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>3</sub>' are placeholders for the (usually) three consonants comprising the root of the elativized adjective. On this pattern, atwal 'taller/tallest' is derived from tawil 'tall', abrad 'colder/coldest' from barid 'cold', assab 'more/most difficult' from sasb 'difficult', ayla (<aylaj) 'more/most expensive' from yāli (<yāglij) 'expensive', etc. (Cowell 1964).

The interpretation of an elative adjective is contingent on word order. Adjectives canonically follow the noun they modify in Arabic. If the elative

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adjective follows an indefinite noun, its interpretation is comparative and it optionally introduces a standard phrase headed by the preposition *min* 'from', as in (9) (Cowell 1964).

 mārija iſtar-it bisklēt aɣla min bisklēt līna. Maria bought-3FS bicycle more.expensive from bicycle Lina 'Maria bought a more expensive bicycle than Lina's bicycle.

If the elative adjective is placed before the noun it modifies, as seen in (10), it receives a superlative interpretation (Cowell 1964). I continue here to abide by Loccioni's practice of glossing the elative morpheme (più in Italian) as *more*. When it has a superlative interpretation, this is reflected in the translation. In Arabic, the pre-nominal elative adjective stands in the 'construct state' configuration to the following noun, which suppresses definiteness on the first member of the configuration (Ritter 1988, Fassi Fehri 1993, Benmamoun 2006). We would therefore not expect to have a definite article in (10) even if the construction is semantically definite. We postulate a null determiner in the analysis to follow, based primarily on the parallel to Italian we wish to pursue.

(10) mārija iſtar-it aɣla bisklēt b-d-dukkān. Maria bought-3FS more.expensive bicycle in-the-store 'Maria bought the most expensive bicycle in the store.

In (10), it is evidently the elative template  $aC_1C_2aC_3$  that occurs prenominally and attracts the adjectival associate forward into the pre-nominal position, where the two undergo phonological fusion. This is clear because the fusion of the template and the underlying adjective is optional for both the pre-nominal superlative use and the post-nominal comparative use of the template. Instead, the elative template can be pronounced with the root consonants of the adjective *ktīr* 'much/many', deriving *aktar* 'more/most', while the associated adjective occurs in its canonical position, which, as mentioned above, is post-nominal in Arabic (Hallman 2016). The base *ktīr* appears to be functioning here as a pleonastic base employed for the purpose of making the elative template pronouncible when its scalar associate is elsewhere. (11a) shows this 'analytic' comparative (cf. (9)) and (11b) the analytic counterpart of the pre-nominal superlative (cf. (10))

- (11) a. mārija iſtar-it bisklēt yālj-e aktar min bisklēt līna. Maria bought-3FS bicycle expensive-FS more from bicycle Lina 'Maria bought a more expensive bicycle than Lina' bicycle.'
  - b. mārija iſtar-it aktar bisklēt yālj-e b-d-dukkān. Maria bought-3FS more bicycle expensive-FS in-the-shop 'Maria bought the most expensive bicycle in the shop.'

The analytic construction must be resorted to in some cases, where the base adjective is itself morphologically complex and resists being decomposed into its root consonants. It so happens that the adjective meaning 'happy' *mabsūt* (=*felice*) does not have a synthetic elative form, and is made comparative or superlative by combining it with elative *aktar*, as the examples below illustrate. When it comes to

predicate adjectives, Arabic supports Matushansky's generalization. An elative adjective in predicate position gets only a comparative interpretation (12). Note the copula is dropped in the present tense.

(12) mārija mabsūț-a aktar min līna. Maria happy-Fs more (=più) from Lina 'Maria is happier than Lina.'

Superlative predicate nominals with a covert noun are possible in Arabic, on analogy to Italian (5a) and German (1c). Since the elative adjective is not in construct with an (overt) noun, a definite article appears, as in Italian and German, as seen in (13a). Without the article, (13a) would have the same comparative interpretation seen in (12). The analytic superlative construction is available for predicate adjectives, but since the superlative interpretation for the elative requires the elative morpheme, here in the form of *aktar*, to occur prenominally, a noun is inserted for this purpose, as shown in (13b). Since here again the elative adjective is in construct with a noun, the definite article is supressed. (13b) is not as natural as the more parsimonious (13a), but an adjective like *mabsūt* 'happy', which, as mentioned above, does not admit a synthetic form and therefore must occur with *aktar*, only admits a superlative interpretation for *aktar* when a noun is inserted that *aktar* is prenominal with respect to, as shown in (13c).

(13)	a.	mārija 1-aṭwal.
		Maria the-taller
		'Maria is the tallest.'
	b.	mārija aktar waħd-e ṭawīl-e.
		Maria more one-F tall-F
		'Maria is the tallest.'
	c.	mārija aktar waħd-e mabsūṭ-a
		Maria more one-F happy-F
		'Maria is (the) happiest.'

The string *aktar waħde* displays some flexibility in placement, illustrated in (14), indicating that it represents a constituent that excludes its scalar associate, the predicate adjective. This optionality is general and applies in all the examples that follow.

(14) mārija mabsūṭ-a aktar waħd-e. Maria happy-F more one-F 'Maria is (the) happiest.'

For now, we consider *waħde* in (13b-c) to be a pleonastic noun inserted for the syntactic purpose of signaling superlativity, and return shortly to the matter of what it might semantically contribute. It is significant for what follows that *waħde* agrees with the term that we are contrasting with an implicit comparison class, what we call the 'target' of comparison *Maria* in (13). If we change the target to a masculine name, we get masculine waħid (feminine waħde is underlyingly waħid-e 'one-F').

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(15) nizār aktar wāħid mabsūţ. Nizar more one happy 'Nizar is (the) happiest.'

Since the gender morphology of  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)$  tracks the target, it may disambiguate in cases where more than one potential target is available. The examples below also illustrate that *aktar*  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)$  does not have to be linearly adjacent to the scalar associate (here *yadbāne* 'angry'), as we already saw for prenominal *aktar* in (11b).

(16)	a.	mārija yadbān-e Sala nizār aktar waħd-e.
		Maria angry-F at Nizar more one-F
		'Maria is angriest at Nizar.'
		(Maria is more angry at him than anyone else is)
	b.	mārija yadbān-e Sala nizār aktar wāħid.
		Maria angry-F at Nizar more one
		'Maria is angriest at Nizar.'
		(Maria is more angry at him than she is at anyone else)
		•••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••

If the target is a non-human term, the pleonastic noun fi 'thing' is employed. Example (17) compares the beach with other things Maria misses (from her vacation, for example).

(17) mārija muſtā?-e la-ſ-ſaṭṭ aktar ſi.
Maria missing-F to-the-beach more thing 'Maria misses the beach the most.'
(the thing she misses the most is the beach)

Arabic therefore presents us with a situation in which the elative template  $aC_1C_2aC_3$ , here in the form *aktar*, must combine with a pleonastic noun in order to take a predicate adjective as a scalar associate. That noun agrees with the target of comparison in gender (masc. *wāhid* 'one', fem. *waħd-e* 'one-F') and humanness (non-human *fi* 'thing'), though we refine this generalization below.

Turning to the Arabic counterparts of the Italian examples that are of special interest, we find that here, too, the choice of  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)$  vs. *fi* varies with the target of comparison. The examples in (18) show a predicate adjective construction (*be happy*) with a superlative degree quantifier (*aktar waħde/fi*) embedded in a relative clause headed by  $S\bar{a}m$  'year'. The choice of  $wa\hbar de$  'one-F' strongly favors the interpretation in which we compare Maria with other people in terms of how happy they were in the year in question. A year-oriented interpretation is dispreferred in (18a) but not excluded, much like in the interpretation of *la più* in (6a). The choice of *fi* 'thing' restricts the interpretation strictly to one in which we compare years in terms of how happy Maria was in that year. A Maria-oriented reading is not available in (18b), as in the interpretation of *il più* in (8).

(18) a. al-Sām illi kān-it mārija aktar waħd-e mabsūṭ-a fī-h. the-year which was-3FS Maria more one-F happy-F in-it ✓ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other relevant person'
 ✓ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

b. al-Sām illi kān-it mārija aktar ∫i mabsūţ-a fī-h.
the-year which was- 3FS Maria more thing happy-F in-it
✗ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other relevant person'
✓ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

The noun following *aktar*, then, plays a role in determining the target of comparison. Matushansky's analysis of the superlative presents a way of accommodating this interaction. Specifically, it accommodates the possibility that the nouns  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)$  and fi denote the contrast set, and the contrast set that  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)$  and fi denote is determined in relation to a syntactic antecedent with which it agrees. We investigate some nuances of the agreement relation shortly, but first spell out the details of the analysis we are proposing.

Matushansky proposes the definition for EST in (2), according to which the superlative morpheme combines first with a degree relation, which is a bare adjective in (3), and then with a nominal constituent denoting the contrast set. In the examples in (18) on the other hand, *aktar* bears a closer syntactic relation to the noun  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)$  or *fi* than to the following adjective, and the constituent *aktar*  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)/fi$  can even be linearly separated from its scalar associate, as the examples in (16) and (17) show. We propose, therefore, the superlative morpheme has the definition in (19), which is the same as Matushansky's except that the order of combination between *R* and *C* is reversed (as per Heim 1999).

#### (19) $[[EST]] = \lambda C_{\langle e,t \rangle} \lambda R_{\langle d, \langle e,t \rangle} \lambda x_e . \exists d R(x,d) \& \forall z \in C [z \neq x \rightarrow \neg R(z,d)]$

We follow Szabolcsi (1986), Heim (1999), Rullmann(1995) and others in claiming that the superlative quantifier derived by combining the superlative morpheme with its contrast set argument is interpreted in a scope position potentially different from its surface position. In the case of (18b), aktar wahde raises to a position subjacent to mārija, as illustrated in (20). This structure is in turn embedded in the relative clause in (18a) (not shown). We assume that the phrase aktar  $w\bar{a}hid(e)/(i)$  is a DP in which aktar is in construct with NP and D is both phonologically empty and semantically vacuous. Only the analogy to Italian to come in section 5 provides indirect evidence for a DP layer in *aktar*  $w\bar{a}\hbar id(e)/(i)$ . Due to its vacuous D, this DP has the meaning of aktar together with an explicit specification of its contrast set contributed by the NP. This DP is semantically a degree quantifier like *aktar*. We propose that  $w\bar{a}hid(e)$  and *f* denote the contrast set  $C_i$ . The contrast set is contextually determined by the index *i* but restricted by the morphological form of the NP ( $w\bar{a}hid \sim wahde \sim hi$ ) in ways described below. The index '1' is an abstraction index inserted in consequence of movement of the degree quantificational DP (Heim and Kratzer 1998).



In (18b), the superlative degree quantifier *aktar fi* in (18b) raises further, to a position adjoined to the head of the relative clause *fam* 'year', as illustrated in (21). This structure is also available to *aktar waħde* in (18a). Here we sidestep the issue of how temporal adverbs are integrated into the predicate and write 'happy( $\mathbf{m}$ , d, x)' for 'Maria is *d*-happy in interval x'.



Purely structurally speaking, both scope positions are syntactically accessible to the degree quantifier *aktar NP*, but the choice of *waħde* vs. *fi* restricts the scope possibilities available to the quantifier, which in turn determines the target of comparison. The conditions on the relation between the noun following *aktar* and the target of comparison are somewhat more nuanced than they appear at first glance, and are not as simple as agreement with the target in gender and humanness. First of all, we have already seen that the noun *waħde* in (18a) does not fully rule out a construal in which *Gām* 'year' functions as target of comparison, that is, a construal in which we compare years in terms of how happy Maria was in the respective year. That is, we can in principle attribute the wide scope structure in (21) to example (18a) with *waħde*. If *waħde* 'one-F' is really functioning as the contrast set here, then we must admit the possibility that it may denote a set of years, in spite of its human feminine morphology. Further, *fi* may associate with a human target if that target is non-local, that is, if a closer potential target is available. For example, (22) refers, on analogy to (18b), to the person with whom Maria is happiest.

(22) ∫-faxs illi mārija aktar ∫i mabsūṭ-a mas-u the-person who Maria more thing happy-F with-him 'the person who Maria is happiest with.'

The only reading available to (22) is one in which we compare the person in question to other individuals in terms of how happy Maria is around them. But fi 'thing' does not, of course, agree with *faxs*, literally 'person'. What the use of fi

seems to be indicating in (22) is that the target of comparison is not Maria, that is, that the target is not the local DP. In (18a), *waħde* agrees with the most local potential antecedent Maria, and that antecedent may function as the target of comparison. As mentioned above, a non-local target is also accessible in that case, though dispreferred in favor of unambiguous (18b), which admits only the non-local reading. (22), like (18b), admits only the non-local reading where we are comparing the person in question to other people in terms of how happy Maria is around them, just as (18b) compares only years in terms of how happy Maria was in them. This pattern implicates the following generalization:

(23) If the target of comparison for *aktar* NP is local, NP must agree with the target in humanness and, if human, gender. fi functions as a default non-agreeing NP.

This generalization means that if we want to compare Maria with other people in terms of how happy they were in the specific year in question in (18a), we must use waħde. This structure is compatible with a reading in which we compare years in terms of how happy Maria was in the respective year. If we pick default *fi* instead of agreeing waħde, then we cannot get the local reading where we compare Maria with others in terms of how happy they were in the specific year in question, because (23) dictates that we should have used waħde in that circumstance. *fi* therefore indicates a non-local target of comparison. The principle in (23) characterizes the contingency between wāħid(e)/fi and the target of comparison. Further, the generalization extends to Italian when adjusted for the different morphology of the Italian case. We discuss the relevant parallels in the following section, where we introduce an additional syntactic option in Arabic that we claim corresponds to the use of bare *più* in Italian (6b).

# 5. A unified analysis of Italian and Arabic

It is at this point difficult to overlook the parallel between *aktar waħde* in (18a) and *la più* in (6a), and between *aktar fi* in (18b) and *il più* in (8). These examples are aligned in (24) and (25) in accordance with the parallelism proposed here.

(24)	a.	al-Sām illi kān-it mārija aktar wahd-e mabsūt-a fī-h
		the-year which was-3FS Maria more one-F happy-F in-it
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other person'
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'
	b.	l' anno in cui Maria fu la più felice
		the year in which Maria was the more happy
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other person'
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'
(25)	a.	al-Sām illi kān-it mārija aktar li mabsūt-a fī-h
(20)		the-year which was-3FS Maria more thing happy-FS in-it
		$\mathbf{X}$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other person'
		, the year where mana was happier than any other person

 $\checkmark$  'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

b. l' anno in cui Maria fu il più felice
the year in which Maria was the<sub>M</sub> more happy
✗ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other person'
✓ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

The Arabic examples in (24a) and (25a) display a noun whose gender and humanness is contingent on the target of comparison, while the Italian examples in (&Db) and (25b) display a definite article whose gender and humanness is contingent on the target of comparison (where non-human collapses morphologically with masculine *il*). We suggest that the definite article in the Italian examples reflects the occurrence of a hidden noun in the predicate superlative construction corresponding to the overt noun in the parallel Arabic example. While there is no article in Arabic, this appears to be connected less to the superlative construction per se as to the construct state relation between *aktar* and the following noun, which is incompatible with the expression of definiteness, as mentioned previously. We propose on the basis of the analogy in (24) and (25) that the feminine definite article in Italian (24b) signals a covert feminine noun ONE<sub>F</sub> corresponding to Arabic wahde 'one-F' in (24a), and that the masculine article *il* in (25b) signals the presence of a covert nonhuman noun THING corresponding to Arabic *fi* in (24a), as illustrated in (26a-b). Recall again that some force is at work making (26b) less than fully colloquial, even on its one available reading, a matter to which we return in section 6.

(26)	a.	l'anno in cui Maria fu [la più ONE] felice	
		the year in which Maria was the <sub>F</sub> more ONE <sub>F</sub> happy	
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other relevant person'	
$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'			
	b.	l'anno in cui Maria fu [il più THING] felice	
		the year in which Maria was the <sub>M</sub> more THING happy	
		✗ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other relevant person'	
		$\checkmark$ 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'	

According to this proposal, both Arabic and Italian employ a degree quantificational DP with a shared structure and minimally different lexicalization. La più  $ONE_F$  is parallel to *aktar waħde* and *il piu THING* is parallel to *aktar fi* (or to *aktar wāħid* as discussed below), as illustrated in (27).



The hidden nouns ONE and THING restrict the interpretation of the Italian examples in (26) in the same way as their Arabic counterparts in (24a) and (25a). (26a) is most saliently interpreted as comparing Maria with other people in terms of

how happy they were in the particular year in question, though a year-oriented reading is marginally available as well, in which we compare years in terms of how happy Maria was in the respective year. On the other hand, example (26b), in which the noun THING fails to agree with the local antecedent, has only a reading in which we compare years in terms of how happy Maria was in the respective year. The choice of THING for the value of NP in D più NP (which in turn triggers the value *il* for D), signals that the target of comparison is non-local. This generalization about agreement holds even when the non-local target of comparison is human, as in (28) (cf. Arabic (22)), though (28) is no more colloquial than (25b).

(28) la persona con cui Maria è il più felice. the<sub>F</sub> person with whom Maria is the<sub>M</sub> more happy 'the person with whom Maria is happiest'

These facts imply the generalization in (29) for Italian, parallel to (23) for Arabic. In Italian, NP is covert but reflected on D.

(29) If the target of comparison for *D più NP* is local, NP must agree with the target in humanness and, if human, gender. THING functions as a default non-agreeing NP.

As a result, the superlative degree quantifier *la più*  $ONE_F$  preferentially moves to a local scope position which provides it with a target of comparison that accords with its human feminine morphological specification, the position that the counterpart phrase *aktar waħde* occupies in (20). The quantifier *il più THING* is blocked from that scope position and must find a higher scope position, parallel to the behavior of *aktar fi* in (21). The Italian and Arabic syntactic structures and the corresponding logical forms are, we claim, fully parallel, differing only lexically, capturing the interpretational parallels between *aktar waħde* and *la più* on the one hand and *aktar fi* and *il più* on the other.

Before moving on, we note that Italian does not morphologically make the distinction that Arabic makes between *aktar waħde* 'more one-F' and *aktar wāħid* 'more one'; the latter is masculine by virtue of the lack of feminine marking. We assume that Italian employs a covert masculine noun  $ONE_M$  parallel to wāħid which triggers the masculine determiner *il*, like THING does. This completion of the parallel between Arabic and Italian accounts for the ambiguity in (30) with a masculine name *Mario*. The string *il più* may be interpreted as [il più  $ONE_M$ ], which is already ambiguous between the a local reading where we compare Mario with other people in terms of how happy they were in the year in question and a less salient non-local reading where we compare years in terms of how happy Mario was in them. Alternatively, the string *il più* may be interpreted as [il più THING], which has only the non-local reading. As a result, neither scopal configuration is disadvantaged in (30).

(30) l' anno in cui Mario fu il più felice the year in which Mario was the<sub>M</sub> more happy
✓ 'the year where Mario was happier than any other relevant person'
✓ 'the year where Mario was happier than any other year' This analysis has not yet addressed the most interesting aspect of the Italian paradigm that Loccioni discusses, namely the possibility for più to occur without a determiner if the predicate adjective it modifies occurs in a relative clause, in which case only the wide scope reading is available where the superlative scopes over the head of the relative clause (*anno* 'year' in (6b)), the interpretation otherwise expressed by *il più* in Italian and *aktar fi* in Arabic. It turns out that in Arabic, the relevant reading may be expressed by *aktar* alone without *fi*, but this correlates with a different placement for *aktar*.

Recall that in attributive superlative constructions such as (10) and (11b) (where the superlative morpheme associates with an attributive adjective that rather than a predicate adjective) *aktar* (or more specifically, the underlying elative template) occurs pre-nominally, while its associated adjective occurs in its canonical post-nominal position, as (11b) illustrates. When *aktar* occurs pre-nominally, the scalar associate need not be a modifier of the noun it is prejacent to, but may be embedded in such a modifier, such as a relative clause or a prepositional phrase modifying that noun. (31) exemplifies this possibility. The superlative term *aktar* may precede the noun  $f\bar{a}m$  'year' and associate with the adjective *mabsūta* 'happy', which itself occurs as a predicate adjective in a relative clause modifying  $f\bar{a}m$ . As in (10) and (11b), the prenominal superlative morpheme *aktar* blocks any expression of definiteness on the adjacent noun. Note in this connection that relative clauses in Arabic are not introduced by a relative pronoun or any overt relativizing morphology when the head of the relative clause is lacks a definite article, as it does in (31), unlike the definite heads shown in (24a) and (25a).

(31) aktar Sām kān-it mārija mabsūț-a fī-h
 more year was-3FS Maria happy-F in-it
 'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

In this construction, the superlative morpheme *aktar* occurs at some distance from its scalar associate, the predicate adjective *mabsūta*. Assuming that the noun  $f\bar{a}m$  'year' and the relative clause  $k\bar{a}nit m\bar{a}rija mabs\bar{u}ta fih$  '[that] Maria was happy in it' stand in their usual relation in (31), that is, that the relative clause modifies the NP, then elative *aktar* appears to be adjoined to the NP so formed, as illustrated in (32). The meaning of *aktar* here is discussed below.



## year was Maria $d_1$ -happy in-x

The tree in (32) is not compatible with the definition for EST in (19), in which EST combines with an NP denoting the contrast set before combining with a degree relation. (32) depicts *aktar* combining directly with its degree relation argument. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that *aktar* is ambiguous between the Matushanskian interpretation in (19)—which, we claimed, underlies the interpretation of *aktar waħde/fi*—and the interpretation in (33), where the contrast set C is implicit and does not correspond to an overt syntactic argument of EST. Then, EST has the meaning in (19) in (24a) and (25a) but that in (33) in (31). This explanation makes EST ambiguous, albeit in a minor way, relating to whether an argument of EST is explicit or implicit.

$$(33) \quad [[est]]^C = \lambda R_{\langle d, \langle e, l \rangle \rangle} \lambda x_e \, : \, \exists d \, R(x, d) \, \& \, \forall z \in C \, [z \neq x \to \neg R(z, d)]$$

An alternative possibility is that *aktar* consistently has the interpretation in (19) but combines with a covert noun in (31)/(32). However, this idea does not provide a principled explanation for why the noun in question must be covert in (31) though it is obligatorily overt in (24a) and (25a) in the form of *waħde* and *fi* respectively.

A third, somewhat more plausible possibility is that is *aktar* in fact combines with the noun fam 'year' directly in (31), like it does with *wahde* and *fi* in (24a) and (25a), and only then combines with the relative clause, construed as a degree relation. This affords a uniform analysis of EST, that in (19). This would give (31) the constituency in (34a), and by extension, examples like (11b) the constituency in (34b).

(34)	a.	[[aktar ʕām] kān-it mārija mabsūṭ-a fī-h]
		more year was-3fs Maria happy-fs in-it
		'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'
	b.	mārija i∫tar-it [[aktar bisklēt] yālj-e] b-d-dukkān.
		Maria bought-3fs more bicycle expensive-fs in-the-shop
		'Maria bought the most expensive bicycle in the shop.'

This analysis is, first of all, somewhat suspicious because it characterizes as an argument of *aktar* just the things that can modify the NP argument of *aktar* independently. That is, *aktar* is optional in every string of the form *aktar* NP *Modifier*. This implicates the constituency [*aktar* [NP Modifier]] rather than [[*aktar* NP] Modifier]. More consequentially, though, this analysis predicts that the modifier that functions as the scalar associate of *aktar* will follow all other modifiers of NP, since those modifiers modify NP but the scalar associate is an argument of *aktar*. That this is not so is evident in (34b), where the PP *bi-d-dukkān* 'in the shop' follows the adjective  $y\bar{a}lje$  which functions as the scalar associate of *aktar*. Since we are comparing bicycles that are in the shop in terms of expensiveness, the hypothesis under consideration here predicts the constituency in (35a) (not, in fact, that in (34b)), contrary to fact. We appear to be looking at the constituency in (35b) for (11b) and, by extension, the constituency in (32) for (31).

(35)	a.	*[[aktar [bisklēt b-d-dukkān]] yālije]
		more bicycle in-the-shop expensive
	b.	[aktar [bisklēt yālije b-d-dukkān]]
		more bicycle expensive in-the-shop

We conclude that the most plausible explanation for the interpretation of (31) is the tree in (32) in concert with the denotation for EST in (33), and therefore that EST is ambiguous between the denotation in (33), with an implicit contrast set, and that in (19), with an explicit contrast set. We claim below that this conclusion extends naturally to Italian, which lends it further corroboration.

It is conceivable that the structure in (32) is base generated as such and Arabic has a covert degree-predicate abstraction process at its disposal that inserts the abstraction index '1'. Another, more conventional, possibility is that the structure in (32) is generated by movement of *aktar* from the position of the variable *d* to its surface position adjoined to the NP dominating that variable. What is intriguing about this second possibility is that the putative base stucture, with *aktar* in the degree argument position prejacent to the predicate adjective in the relative clause, looks exactly like the Italian example with bare *piu* in (6b). (36a) represents the putative base structure for Arabic (31)/(32) and (36b) repeats (6b).

(36)	a.	Hypothetical base structure for (32) (not grammatical as such):
		Sām kān-it mārija aktar mabsūṭ-a fī-h
		year was-3Fs Maria more happy-F in-it
		'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'
	b.	(6b):
		l' anno in cui Maria fu più felice
		the year in which Maria was more happy
		'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

Not only is the Italian example (36b) structurally identical to the putative base structure for Arabic (32) shown in (36a), it shares its interpretation. Both describe the year in which Maria was happier than she was in any other year, and neither may be interpreted as a description of the year in which Maria was happier than any other person was in that year. The attested interpretation corresponds exactly to the surface order found in Arabic given the composition in (32). In so far as the Arabic surface structure represents its logical form, and the Italian (36b) is synonymous with the Arabic counterpart, Italian (36b) has the logical form reflected in the surface order in Arabic, that in (32). Arabic and Italian differ, then, in whether *aktar/più* moves to its scope position in the surface structure (Arabic) or covertly at LF (Italian). If this is so, it again necessitates the denotation in (33) for EST, since just as the Arabic counterpart lacks fi, the Italian counterpart lacks the article *il* that points to the presence of a hidden noun. Bare *più* must be interpretable without a syntactically explicit contrast set, as the definition in (33) allows.

This conclusion raises related questions for Italian and Arabic. In Italian, the question is: why may bare  $pi\hat{u}$  only occur in relative clauses, as the lack of a superlative interpretation for (5b) shows? This is presumably related to the question of why bare  $pi\hat{u}$  must have scope over the entire relative clause, that is, why the Maria-oriented reading that *la più* has in (5a) is not available to bare  $pi\hat{u}$  in (36b).

The same question manifests itself in a different guise for Arabic: why is (36a) ungrammatical? That is, if *aktar* can raise to a scope position overtly, why must it raise all the way to the head of the relative clause? Why can't it raise to a VP-adjoined position, yielding the Maria-oriented reading that is also unavailable for the Italian counterpart structure?

As an answer to these questions we return to Matushansky's original observation, albeit in the form of a purely syntactic principle. Matushansky claims that EST only occurs in a nominal environment, and she presents a semantic explanation for this observation: the nominal environment serves as the contrast set that plays an important role in the interpretation of the superlative. As appealing as it is, we have seen reasons to reject Matushansky's reduction of the observation to the argument structure of EST. As mentioned in section 1, this definition for EST does not admit movement of EST and gives us no way of capturing the meaning of (31) in terms of the structure in (32), which prevails over two alternatives discussed above and extends naturally to Italian. As a purely syntactic generalization, though, Arabic conforms very well to Matushansky's observation. The superlative morpheme aktar combines with the NP bisklet yalije bi-d-dukkan 'expensive bicycle in the shop' in (11b) and arguably in (10) as well, where, however, the adjective  $y\bar{a}lije$  has moved forward to fuse with the pre-nominal superlative morpheme. In (24a), aktar combines with the NP wahde, with fi in (25a), and with the NP sām kānit mārija mabsūța fīh 'year [that] Maria was happy in it' in (31). That is, we always find superlative aktar in construct with an NP, and we have claimed that Italian aligns with Arabic at LF at the latest. We claim therefore that Arabic and Italian are subject to the requirement in (37), modulo the parameters in (38). This licensing requirement applies to the superlative interpretation of aktar/più and not its comparative interpretation, which as Matushansky points out, is not restricted to a nominal environment.

- (37) EST is licensed in the configuration [EST [NP]].
- (38) Parameters:
  - a. In Arabic, EST must be licensed in the surface structure.
  - b. In Italian, EST must be licensed at some level of representation.

We have claimed that both interpretations (19) (where EST combines with a contrast set-denoting NP in the syntax) and (33) (where the contrast set is implicit) are possible denotations for EST. One way of satisfying the principle in (37), then, is to employ the definition in (19) and combine EST directly with an NP denoting its contrast set (Arabic  $w\bar{a}hid(e)/fi$  and Italian ONE/THING, in turn triggering the article la/il). The resulting constituent must then be combined with a degree relation argument, which may involve movement to a scope position, as in (20) and (21). Another way of satisfying the principle in (37) is to employ the definition in (33), according to which EST combines directly with a degree relation, and to ensure that that degree relation is categorially an NP, as in Arabic (31), which was argued to represent the LF for Italian (36b).

Italian tolerates bare  $pi\hat{u}$  in a non-nominal surface environment, as in (36b), when it can raise into a position adjoined to NP at LF, satisfying (37) covertly. Arabic is parametrically specified to not allow this option. In Arabic, *aktar* must combine with an NP in the surface structure, either the contrast set-denoting NP

 $w\bar{a}hid(e)$  or *fi* in concert with the definition in (19), or a degree relation-denoting NP, as in (31), in concert with the definition in (33). This analysis also captures the requirement that Italian bare *più* must occur in a relative clause. Consider the contrast in (39) (cf. (5) above). In (39a), *più* combines in the surface syntax with contrast set-denoting ONE, satisfying (37) in the surface structure. In (39b), *più* is not adjoined to an NP in the surface structure, nor is an LF landing site available where *più* could be adjoined to an NP. (39b) therefore provides no way for *più* to meet the condition in (37) at any level of representation. It is precisely the relative clause and its nominal modifyee in (36b) that provides the configuration in which *più* can meet the surface structure, given that Italian (unlike Arabic) allows the condition in (37) to be met at LF.

(39)	a.	Maria è [ la più ONE ] fel	lice
		Maria is the more $ONE_F$ h	appy
		'Maria is the happiest.'	
	b.	*Maria è più felice.	(ungrammatical as superlative,
		Maria is more happy	okay as comparative)
		('Maria is happiest.')	/

The data discussed above illustrate one additional parametric difference between Arabic and Italian. In Arabic (11b) and (31) show aktar preceding an NP that contains aktar's scalar associate (the modifier adjective yālije 'expensive' in (11b) and the predicate adjective mabsūta 'happy' in (31)). In these cases, aktar is not structurally adjacent to its scalar associate in the surface syntax. Even the complex degree quantifier *aktar*  $w\bar{a}hid(e)/(i)$  occurs at a distance from its scalar associate in examples like (16) and (17). In Italian, though, where bare *più* can occur, namely in a relative clause such as (6b), it necessarily occurs adjacent to its scalar associate there, the predicate adjective *felice*. Even the complex degree quantifiers la più ONE<sub>F</sub> and *il più THING* must occur adjacent to their scalar associate. In each case, the Italian degree quantifier occurs in the degree argument position of its scalar associate, while the Arabic degree quantifier occurs adjacent to an NP, potentially at a distance from its scalar associate. This points to the additional parameter distinguishing Arabic and Italian spelled out in (40). This is of course related to the parameter spelled out in (38). The fact that Arabic must be licensed in an NPadjoined position in the surface structure means that it must potentially be separated from its scalar associate in the surface structure, while Italian, where EST can be licensed at LF, needs to allow EST to be separated from its scalar associate at LF.

(40) In Arabic, EST (in the form of *aktar* or *aktar* wāħid(e)/ʃi) may occur at a distance from its scalar associate in the surface structure.
 In Italian, EST (in the form of *più* or *la/il più* ONE/THING) must occur adjacent to its scalar associate in the surface structure.

## 6. Remarks on agreement

Recall that the Italian example in (8), repeated in (41a) below, is not fully colloquial, though its meaning is clear. In this respect, Italian differs from what we have claimed is the Arabic counterpart in (18b), repeated in (41b), which is completely ordinary.

(41) 1' anno in cui Maria fu il più felice a. the year in which Maria was the<sub>M</sub> more happy X 'the year where Maria was happier than any other relevant person'  $\checkmark$  'the year where Maria was happier than any other year' mārija aktar b. al-Sām illi kān-it ſi mabsūt-a fī-h the-year which was-3FS Maria more thing happy-FS in-it X 'the year where Maria was happier than any other relevant person'  $\checkmark$  'the year where Maria was happier than any other year'

The Italian adjective *felice* belongs to a class of adjectives that do not inflect for gender. If we replace it with a gender-inflecting adjective, the feminine inflection triggered by the feminine subject *Maria* is not compatible with the masculine gender on the superlative degree quantifier *il più*. In this case, the configuration in (41a) becomes outright ungrammatical, as (42) demonstrates.

(41) \*l' anno in cui Maria fu il più content-a the year in which Maria was the<sub>M</sub> more happy-FS

The configuration in (42), though, is exactly what we see in the natural Arabic example (41b), where the predicate adjective *mabsūt-a* 'happy-F' is explicitly marked feminine, and yet is compatible with non-human *aktar fi*. This indicates that above and beyond the agreement principle in (29), that connects agreement to the scope of *la/il più*, Italian is subject to an additional restriction spelled out out in (43).

(43) In Italian degree quantifiers of the form D più NP, the value of NP (ONE<sub>M</sub>/ONE<sub>F</sub>/THING, as reflected on the determiner) must not conflict with the inflection on its scalar associate.

In (42), the non-human gender of *il* (reflecting covert THING) conflicts with the feminine inflection on *contenta* 'happy-fs', while in (41a), the non-human gender of *il* fails to conflict with uninflected *felice*, where no overt gender marking occurs. Still, (41b) is not fully colloquial and is perceived as stilted. We suggest that the principle in (43) is responsible for this perception, since, although *felice* is not morphologically marked as feminine in (41a), it presumably bears a feminine grammatical feature, since its subject is feminine. The stiltedness of (41a), then, derives from the fact that *il più* conflicts with the feminine grammatical specification of *felice* there, but this conflict does not 'flare up' like it does in (42) because the feminine feature of *felice* is not overtly expressed. As a result, Italian speakers strongly prefer bare *più* to express the wide scope, year-oriented, reading of (41a), as in (6b), since bare *più* is not subject to the condition in (43). Yet at the same time, *il più* in (30) naturally has a wide scope, year-oriented reading, since it does not conflict with the masculine feature specification of the predicate adjective *felice* (whose subject is masculine in that case) and so satisfies (43). The principle in (43) does not hold in Arabic, and a potential explanation for this immediately announces itself. In Arabic, the degree quantifier does not need to be adjacent to its scalar associate. The requirement in (43) probably holds between a scalar term and a degree quantifier in its degree argument position. In Italian, degree quantifiers must occur in degree argument positions in the surface structure, but in Arabic, they may occur elsewhere and bind the degree argument of the scalar associate from a distance. If (43) holds only between structurally adjacent terms, then Arabic is expected to be exempt.

# 7. Conclusions

We have reviewed evidence that we claim supports the analysis summarized below. In both Italian and Arabic, the superlative morpheme  $pi\dot{u}/aktar$  (the latter actually the template  $aC_1C_2aC_3$ ) is ambiguous between the meanings in (19) and (33), repeated in (44). These differ in whether the contrast set *C* occurs explicitly in the syntax or is implicit.

(44)  $[[EST]] = \lambda C_{\langle e, f \rangle} \lambda R_{\langle d, \langle e, f \rangle \rangle} \lambda x_e . \exists d \ R(x, d) \& \forall z \in C \ [z \neq x \rightarrow \neg R(z, d)]$  $[[EST]]^C = \lambda R_{\langle d, \langle e, f \rangle \rangle} \lambda x_e . \exists d \ R(x, d) \& \forall z \in C \ [z \neq x \rightarrow \neg R(z, d)]$ 

Beyond this ambiguity, Italian and Arabic are subject to the condition that EST must occur adjoined to an NP (37)/(38), repeated in (45). In Italian this condition may be satisfied at any level of representation while in Arabic is must be satisfied in the surface structure. This principle captures Matushansky's (2008) observation that superlatives always occur in a nominal environment, but reconciles this observation with apparent counterexamples (e.g. 6b) by de-coupling the observation from the semantic explanation she proposes.

- (45) EST is licensed in the configuration [EST [NP]].
  - a. In Arabic, EST must be licensed in the surface structure.
  - b. In Italian, EST must be licensed at some level of representation.

Accordingly, as stated in (40), repeated in (46):

(46) In Arabic, EST may occur at a distance from its scalar associate in the surface structure.In Italian, EST must occur adjacent to its scalar associate in the surface structure.

For degree quantifiers in the DP format *D* EST NP, the choice of NP (which in Italian is reflected on D), restricts the scope of the degree quantifier in the way spelled out in (47), which amalgamates the Italian and Arabic generalizations in (29) and (23) respectively.

(47) If the target of comparison for *D* EST NP is local, NP must agree with the target in humanness and, if human, gender. THING (Arabic *fi*) functions as a default non-agreeing NP.

Italian is also subject to the morphological condition in (43), repeated in (48). Perhaps Arabic is too, but the effect is obviated by the lack of obligatory structural adjacency between the degree quantifier and the scalar associate in Arabic.

(48) In Italian degree quantifiers of the form D più NP, the value of NP (ONE<sub>M</sub>/ONE<sub>F</sub>/THING, as reflected on the determiner) must not conflict with the inflection on its scalar associate.

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