

On Stability and Change in Talian

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1. Grammar stability and language contact. In this talk we address the question of grammar stability in (micro-)contact environments. Our empirical domain are Talian varieties spoken in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Caterina in Brazil. We will show how the grammar of these varieties is for the most part stable with respect to the Venetan varieties they stem from. However, the grammar of Talian also shows interesting divergences, which we argue to be of two different types: on the one hand, there is a clear impact of language contact with Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP), for instance in the word order or in analytical morphology. On the other hand, there are also clear traces of independent innovations, which are often in line with the more general trends of linguistic development of Venetan and Northern Italian varieties spoken in Italy. Our main goal is to show that contact can shape the grammar, but only if the innovation was already a synchronic or diachronic option in the language.

2. Methodology. The data we consider were collected as written translations of a BP version of the main questionnaire of the ASIIt project (Atlante Sintattico d'Italia 'Syntactic Atlas of Italy'). The informants are 12, both males and females, born in Brazil (in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Caterina) between 1939 and 1962. They are all grandchildren of immigrants from Veneto (from the provinces of Belluno, Treviso, Padova and Vicenza) without any knowledge of Standard Italian.

3. What remains stable. The data clearly show that elements and phenomena absent in BP are maintained. The paradigm of subject clitics is the same found in Central Venetan varieties, with a richer system of enclitic forms as expected under Renzi & Vanelli (1983) generalization.

	Proclitics		Enclitics	
	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	∅	∅	∅	∅, (=i?)
2	te=	∅	=to, =tu	=o, =u
3	el= / (l)a=	i= / (l)e=	=lo/=la	=(l)i

Table 1: Talian subject clitics

The presence of referential proclitic subjects is robustly attested. In many cases all 12 informants or most of them have used the proclitic, as in (1)

- (1) *Lo hanno rubato. (O roubaram)*
 I lo gâ robà.
 they= it= has stolen 'They stole it.'

In a similar way, the existential clitic *ghe*, or *ghen/ghin*, is always present:

- (2) *C'è un bambino. (Há uma criança)*
 a. Ghè un toseto.
 there=is a child
 b. Guinë un tosatel.
 there=is a child 'There is a child'

A phenomenon absent in BP and regularly maintained in Talian is *wh in situ* in main interrogatives (a Northern Venetan feature found not only in Talian but also in Venetan varieties spoken in Mexico, like Chipilegno: MacKay 2002; Corrà 2001; 2003). Crucially, the distribution of *wh* items corresponds to what is observed in Northern Venetan varieties (cf. Munaro 1999): *cosa* 'what', complex *whs* and Special Question *whs*, appear before the verb, while all the other bare *whs* are found *in situ* (cf. the a./b. oppositions in (3) and (4)):

- (3) *Che cosa ha fatto? (O que ele fez?)*
 a. Cossa galo fat?
 what has=he done
 b. Galo fato su che?
 has=he done up what ‘What has he done?’
- (4) *Cosa facciamo adesso? (O que fazemos agora?)*
 a. Cossa femmo adesso?
 what do.1pl now
 b. Femo che, adesso?
 do.1pl what now ‘What do we do now?’
- (5) *Chi viene al tuo posto? (Quem ven no teu lugar?)*
 Vegnelo chi en tel to posto?
 comes=he who in the your place ‘Who comes in your place?’

4. Two types of innovations.

A) The data also show that in some cases BP clearly is the source of innovation in the system. Notice however that normally the change exploits options already present in the language. For instance, postverbal subjects are used very rarely even in cases where they are the most natural variant in Venetan:

- (5) *Non è arrivato nessuno. (Ninguém chegou)*
 a. Nissuni i è rivadi.
 nobody they=is come
 b. Nissun zè riva.
 nobody is come ‘Nobody came.’

There are also morphological innovations, like the analytical future: *i vâ inviter* ‘they will invite’ (lit. ‘they go to invite’, like in BP).

B) The most interesting innovations, however, are those that cannot be the direct product of contact with BP, like the loss of expletive subject clitics or the reduction of enclisis in questions. These processes parallel the development of Venetan varieties spoken in Italy, and of other Northern Italian varieties. Furthermore, there are innovations which appear to be completely independent. For instance, we observe cases of resumptive enclitics of (null) topics:

- (6) *I tuoi figli, che studiano sempre, vanno volentieri a scuola. (Seus filhos, que estudam sempre, vão com prazer para a escola)*
 To fioi, que studia sempre, vali scola com piachere.
 your sons that studies always goes=they school with joy
- (7) *Tu mangi e bevi tutto il giorno. (Vocé come e bebe o dia todo)*
 a. Manhito e bevito tuto el jorno.
 eat=you and drink=you all the day
 b. Ti te magne e te beve tuto el dì.
 you you=eat and you=drink all the day

We will argue that these cases are independent developments, where the role of the contact language is only indirect.

Selected references

•ASIt: <http://asit.maldura.unipd.it/>; •MacKay. C.J. (2002) *Il dialetto Veneto di Segusino e Chipilo*, Treviso, Comune di Segusino.; •Munaro, N. (1999) *Sintagmi interrogativi nei dialetti italiani settentrionali*, Padova, Unipress.; •Renzi, L. & L. Vanelli (1983) “I pronomi soggetto in alcune varietà romanze”, reprint in L. Vanelli, *I dialetti italiani settentrionali nel panorama romanzo*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1989, pp. 23-49.