Revisiting syntactic microvariation and diachrony in USID dual complementiser systems

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As is well known, many USIDs and Sardinian varieties present a dual complementiser system with an opposition between *ca* and *che/chi* (Rohlfs 1969; Ledgeway 2000: 70–75; 2003; 2005; 2006; Manzini & Savoia 2005; Mensching & Remberger 2016; Mensching 2017):

(1) a. *Ji cregə* **ca** *tu no stasə buənə.*
    I believe.1SG that you.SG NEG stay.2SG good
    'I believe you are mad.'

  b. *Libero vulwera* **cchə** *Ccarmela vənerədə a Bbrəvəcarə.*
    Libero want.COND.3SG that Carmela come.COND.3SG to Verbicaro
    'Libero would like Carmela to Verbicaro.' (Verbicaro (CS), Groothuis 2019:12)

Even though USID complementisers have been widely studied, both in synchrony and diachrony (Rohlfs 1983; Leone 1995; Ledgeway 2000; 2009a; 2009b; 2012a; Manzini & Savoia 2005; Ledgeway & Lombardi 2014; Colasanti 2018), some open questions remain, which this study seeks to address. In particular, we propose a plausible diachronic pathway of the developments of these complementiser systems that incorporates new data indicating a wider microvariation than has been previously documented.

Using Rizzi's (1997) split-CP as a theoretical framework, early SID complementisers *ca* and *che* have ultimately been localized in Fin, with *ca* introducing exclusively realis complements (2) and *che* introducing both realis and irrealis complements. The complementisers are also sensitive to the activation of the left periphery inasmuch as this triggers both movement through the CP (from Fin to Force) and allomorphic change (i.e. the complementiser is realised invariably as *che*, independently of the selecting verb, cf. (3)).

(2) *Conubbe* **ca** *re Ruberto [...] era iettato per la fortuna.*
    know.PRET.3SG that king Robert be.IPFV.3SG thrown for the fortune
    'He knew that King Robert was damned by ill-fortune.' (OSIDs, Ledgeway 2005: 348)

(3) *Conoscerao* **che** *llo ditto de Salamone ène vero.*
    know.FUT.3SG that the said of Solomon be.3SG true
    'He will discover the truth of Solomon's words.' (OSIDs, Ledgeway 2005: 348)

In a later stage, generalisation of one of the two complementisers (usually *ca*) occurred in many central and southern modern varieties (Rohlfs 1983: 147–54; Ledgeway 2012b; Ledgeway 2016; Ledgeway & Lombardi 2014; Colasanti 2018). Although the complementisers are formally identical, some of these varieties seem to maintain split systems, as can be seen by their different syntactic behaviour (Ledgeway 2009, Ledgeway & Lombardi 2014): only the realis *ca* (4a) can be followed by left-peripheral elements, whereas irrealis *ca* cannot (4b).

(4) a. *Dicia* **ca** *Mariu unn'u parra cchiù nullu.*
    say.3SG that Mariu not him=speak.3SG no.more nobody
    'He said that Mario, nobody talks to him anymore.'

  b. **Vuogliu* **ca** *Mariu unn'u parra cchiù nullu.*
    want.1SG that Mario NEG=him talk.3SG more nobody
    'I want that Mario, nobody talks to him anymore.' (Ledgeway & Lombardi 2014: 44)

Recently collected data indicate this does not seem to be the case in all modern USIDs. Some varieties allow both complementisers (*ca* and *che*) to occur in Force, generalising one syntactic position but present two formally distinct shapes, as e.g. Verbicarese (5):

(5) *M'ajə* *cumbwinda* **cchə** U VRƏVƏCARISƏ *ama parlà no u talianə.*

REFL=have.1SG convinced that the Verbicarese must.1PL speak.INF NEG the Italian
'I decided that we speak Verbicarese, not Italian.' (Verbicarese, Groothuis 2019: 59)

Several Sicilian varieties show similar if not identical systems to these two types of modern USIDs: Mussomelese patterns like Cosentino (4), Eoliano patterns like Verbicarese (5) (Ledgeway & Lombardi 2014; Cardullo 2019). What precise diachronic steps must be postulated to account for the syntactic microvariation documented in these modern varieties? There are (at least) the following structural possibilities:

A. [ForceP CHE$_{realis/irrealis}$ [TopP [FocP [FinP CA$_{realis}$/CHE$_{irrealis}$ [IP …]]]]] (OSIDs)
B. [ForceP CA [TopP [FocP [FinP CHE [IP …]]]]] (archaising Cosentino)
C1. [ForceP CA [TopP [FocP [FinP CA [IP …]]]]] (modern Cosentino, Mussomelese)
C2. [ForceP CA/CHE [TopP [FocP [FinP [IP …]]]]] (Verbicarese, Eoliano)

In this paper, we argue that these diverse reflexes can be interpreted as two parallel pathways of diachronic development. Starting from the early SID situation as described by Ledgeway (2005) (pattern A), dialects can generalise the morphological form and maintain a syntactic alternation (pattern C1) or keep the morphological distinction and generalise one syntactic position (pattern C2). At least one (C1) of these developments entails an intermediate stage similar to archaising Cosentino (pattern B), in which each complementiser is hosted in a different position in the CP (*ca* in Force, *che* in Fin). These outcomes reflect different reorganizations of the early SID complementiser system which nonetheless confirm Ledgeway & Lombardi's (2014) conclusion that the realis-irrealis opposition be marked either morphologically or syntactically (within either the complementizer or verbal systems).

Focusing on the different intermediate steps of the development of Italo-Romance complementisers, it becomes clear that although initial grammaticalisation is usually upwards (Roberts & Roussou 2003), further developments of grammatical elements such as complementisers are not restricted in a similar way (cf. Munaro 2016, Groothuis 2019: ch.3). Instead, the directionality of change correlates with the syntactic/semantic features that a specific head becomes associated with (such as modality).

Selected references

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