

## The syntax of Old Venetan complex PPs

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1. In this talk, we will consider Italo-Romance spatial complex PP structures in both a microcomparative and a diachronic perspective. The main intent behind our investigation of this rather neglected area of dialectal syntax is twofold: (i) to establish whether the morphosyntactic microvariation attested conforms to the major dialectal areas identified in the by-now traditional classifications; (ii) to establish if and how complex prepositional structures have evolved over the centuries. Our empirical domain is the prepositional system of the Venetan varieties as attested in the written texts between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, which will be compared with the system(s) of their modern counterparts, and of other old and modern Italo-Romance varieties. The main assumption on which our analysis is based is the complex internal structure of PPs as proposed by recent Cartographic studies such as Svenonius (2007, 2010), Cinque (2010) among many others. It will be shown that while the overall system has remained substantially stable, there are however interesting peculiarities from a micro-comparative and typological perspective in the form and syntactic distribution of lexical prepositions.

2. The data from Standard Italian and Italo-Romance varieties lend further support to what has been proposed for other languages (e.g. Modern Greek, Terzi 2008; Eastern Polynesian, Medeiros 2020; Hebrew, Botwinik-Rotem and Terzi 2008): in the structure of spatial complex prepositions corresponding to English *under*, *over*, *in front* etc. there is a possession relation between the lexical P(reposition) and its DP complement, its Ground, morphologically encoded by oblique markers. Yet, when compared with Standard Italian, in which the morphological encoding is rather complex, Italo-Romance varieties present slightly different but simplified systems with a high level of internal coherence (see Garzonio and Rossi 2020). For instance, Venetian and southern Venetan varieties tend to lack lexical Ps that dative-mark their DP Ground, even if their Italian counterparts obligatorily require dative marking (cf. *davanti a* ‘in front of’). This same Venetan Ps, however, always present genitive-marking with pronominal Grounds: *davanti (?\*a) la ciesa* ‘in front of the church’ vs. *davanti \*(de) mi* ‘in front of me’. By contrast, Intermediate Southern dialects like Neapolitan (see Ledgeway 2009: ch. 19) present dative marking with nearly every type of lexical P, and other dialects of this area mark with dative their pronominal Ground (Trani: *ret’o divanə* ‘lit. behind to-the sofa’, vs. *ret’a me* ‘behind to me’). Hence, although no Italo-Romance deviates markedly from the strategies found in Italian (zero, genitive or dative), it can be shown that each dialectal macro-area presents a favoured strategy for encoding the special type of possession within PPs. The traditional classification is indeed visible in this area of grammar.

3. The picture just described is, moreover, quite stable from a diachronic perspective. Despite some idiosyncrasies of specific texts, the written Venetan varieties from the areas of Venice, Padua and Verona present a rather coherent picture. The comparison of five Ps—the counterparts of Italian *davanti/dinnanzi* ‘in front of’, *appresso* ‘behind/after/close by’, *verso* ‘towards’, *dentro* ‘inside’ and *sotto* ‘under’—show that dative marking of the DP Ground is virtually absent in these texts, while zero marking and genitive marking are by and large the only strategy allowed, although the same text may present both strategies with the same Ps.

- (1) a. l’ospealo d(e) S. Iacomo dala Tomba **ap(re)so d(e)** Veron(a)... (*Doc. ver.*, p. 438)  
the hospital of S. Iacomo dala Tomba next of Verona

- b. fa sacrificio a Dio **apresso** uno poço (*BIP*, Gen. 46, 273)  
does sacrifice to God next a well

Pronominal Grounds are mostly introduced by *de/da*:

- (2) a. El me pareva vedere **denanço da** mi un vigna ... (*BIP* Gen. 245)  
it to.me seemed to.see before from me a vineyard
- b. ‘Que vole quisti homeni che si è vegnù e si è **apresso de** ti?’ (*BIP*, Nm. 22, 130)  
what want this men that so are come and so are next to you
- c. ch’elo aveva molti munesi **soto de** si (*Navigatio*, p. 34)  
that-he had many monks under of himself

It is easy to see how the emerging picture is comparable to the one described for the modern Venetan varieties. Moreover, in stark contrast to the rarity of dative-marking of Grounds found in these varieties, these very same Ps can be shown to present a strong preference for the dative marking of the Ground in both Old Florentine (Andreose 2010) and Old Neapolitan, thus further confirming the diachronic stability in this area of grammar, and the reliability of syntactic phenomena for the dialectal classification.

4. There are however some points of divergence between the modern systems and the medieval ones. One very interesting characteristic is that, although pronominal Grounds are introduced by *de* or *da*, there is a person split in some texts: beside the *de*-marking, third person pronouns can also appear without any apparent oblique marker, thus behaving like regular DPs. Furthermore, for the 3ps and only in Veronese and Venetian, there is an alternation between a nominative form *ello/ella* ‘he/she’ and a dative form *luy/lié*: the dative form is the one found under a P, and it is precisely this form that can appear without any intermediating P. We will discuss this distribution in relation to the shift from dative to accusative/nominative for form like *luy*.

Another aspect we will discuss is the relation between the (etymological) form of the lexical P and the marking of the Ground. For instance, the two variants *entro/intra* and *dentro* (< lat. *de intra*) can correspond to both ‘inside’ (like modern Italian *dentro*) and ‘between, among’. However, in the cases where the lexical P means ‘between, among’, the Ground is always introduced by *de* when the lexical form displays the initial dental, while forms like *entro/intra* usually display the zero marking:

- (3) a. partando li regni **dentro de** sí (*Cronica*, p. 218)  
splitting the realms among of themselves
- b. ch’eli se volesse partir et **entro** essi no se podhesse acordar (*Doc. Ven.*, p. 98)  
that they REFL wanted separate and among them not REFL could agree

We will analyze this distribution assuming that forms like *dentro* ‘between, among’ are still complex in Old Venetan (*de entro*) and they can encode separate features in the split PP structure proposed by Cinque (2010) (likely Relative View Point and Axial Part). More in general, we will propose a more fine-grained classification of lexical Ps, assuming that they are nominal modifiers lexicalizing different positions in the split-PP according to their grade of grammaticalization.

**Selected References:** • Cinque, Guglielmo. 2010. “Mapping Spatial PPs: an introduction”. In: Mapping Spatial PPs. The Cartography of Syntactic Structures. Vol. 6, Guglielmo Cinque, Luigi Rizzi (curr.), 3-25. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press. • Ledgeway, Adam. 2009. Grammatica diacronica del napoletano. Niemeyer: Tübingen.; • Terzi, Arhonto. 2008. “Locative prepositions as modifiers of an unpronounced place.” In: Proceedings of the 26th WCCFL, Charles B. Chang, Hanna J. Haynie (curr.), 471-479. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla.