

Modeling syntactic change under contact

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In this paper, we investigate patterns of persistence and change affecting the syntax of DPs in Italo-Greek (henceforth IG) in comparison to Modern and Ancient Greek, and we explore the role of Southern Italo-Romance as a potential source of interference.

Data collection. The data we examine were collected in Grecia Salentina and Bovesia, and were gathered from native speakers and from a selection of written records. By “written records” we refer to collections of texts originally transmitted orally, which were gathered and put down in written form by local experts around the middle of the 20th century, so they were preserved. We believe that these texts offer a (partial) window on the language as it was when it was more productive and used for everyday needs. We included them in our research data, in combination with the speakers’ judgements (and the grammars), in order to obtain a more complete overview of the language. The comparison between these sources reveals important differences which allowed us to identify different steps of changes in progress.

Empirical evidence. We focus on four subdomains, which we analyze using current theories about the structure of the nominal domain in Greek and Romance: adjectives (Stavrou 2012, 2013, Guardiano & Stavrou 2014, 2019a/b), adnominal demonstratives (Horrocks & Stavrou 1987, Stavrou & Horrocks 1989, Guardiano 2012, 2014, Guardiano & Michelioudakis 2019, Guardiano and Stavrou 2020), pronominal possessives (Guardiano et al. 2016) and genitives (Longobardi & Silvestri 2013). In at least two such domains (demonstratives and adjectives), IG has undergone important changes which made it superficially diverge from Greek and converge with Romance. Concerning demonstratives and adjectives, we explore two major aspects: their linearization with respect to other DP-constituents and their co-occurrence with the definite article (a phenomenon broadly known as ‘polydefiniteness’). As far as position is concerned, in IG demonstratives and adjectives are in complementary distribution, as shown by comparing (1) and (2).

- (1) a. *ida tu(tt)o/cino (*ton) antrepo*
saw.1S this/that the man
‘I saw this/that man’
b. * *ida ton antrepo tu(tt)o/cino*
- (2) a. *ida ton antrepo gioveno/makreo*
saw.1S the man young
‘I saw the young man’
b. * *ida (ton) gioveno/makreo ton antrepo*

Demonstratives are never found postnominally, a position that is the preferred (even the only possible) one for most adjectives; also, demonstratives cannot occur after numerals and before the noun, where speaker-oriented adjectives are found (Guardiano & Stavrou 2014, 2019a and b); conversely, adjectives are never found DP-initially, a position that is the only one accessible to demonstratives. The uniform behavior of demonstratives in IG contrasts with Modern Greek (and also Ancient Greek), where they are found in different positions (Alexiadou et al. 2007, Manolessou & Panagiotidis 1999, Panagiotidis 2000, Grohmann & Panagiotidis 2004, Alexiadou 2014 a.o.) and exhibit a distribution very similar to that of postnominal adjectives. As far as the co-occurrence with the definite article is concerned, it is well-known that, in Modern Greek, “polydefinite” DPs are the rule both with demonstratives (which systematically co-occur with the definite article, no matter of their position) and with postnominal adjectives. On the contrary, in the currently spoken varieties of IG, polydefinite

DPs are unattested with both adjectives and demonstratives: residual instances in the written sources suggest that the phenomenon was active in the past and has recently disappeared. As far as demonstratives are specifically concerned, sometimes speakers use contracted forms obtained from morphophonological fusion with the definite article (3). Such forms seem to freely alternate with non-contracted (non-articulated) ones.

- (3) cittin (= *cini tin*) imera
 that.the day
 ‘that day’

Our hypothesis concerning (3) is that speakers do not analyze the contracted forms as [Dem+Art], i.e. that their grammar does not accept polydefinite DPs. More particularly, we claim that the actual deeper cause of the changes observed in the domain of adjectives and demonstratives is the loss of the specific structural configuration that generates polydefinite DPs (Stavrou 2012, 2013, 2019), which is in turn probably due to reasons independent to contact with Romance, perhaps related to phenomena emerged from the weakening of morphological case. As a consequence of the structure responsible for polydefiniteness, the linear patterns which were generated by such a structure either disappeared or were reanalyzed as resulting from different structure(s), originally unavailable in Greek but crucially available in the neighboring Romance dialects. Significantly, such a reanalysis only happened to the linear patterns which were identical to those found in (Southern Italo-)Romance. The empirical consequence of these processes is that the distribution of demonstratives and adjectives in IG ended up identical to that of the neighboring Extreme Southern Italo-Romance dialects, where demonstratives are systematically DP-initial and never co-occur with articles, and adjectives are overwhelmingly postnominal, with very few lexical exceptions.

No such phenomena are detected in the domains of pronominal possessives and genitives, which do not manifest any difference with respect to Modern Greek, nor any convergence with Romance. As far as pronominal possessives are concerned, in IG they are phonologically enclitic, do not exhibit adjectival agreement features, and are in the genitive case (4), precisely as in Standard Modern Greek, and unlike the neighboring Southern Italo-Romance varieties, which feature (various types of) adjectival pronominal possessives (Guardiano et al. 2016, Guardiano et al 2018). In IG, a further type of possessive is attested, namely *dikommu/dikossu/...*, which corresponds to Standard Modern Greek *dikos mu* (‘my/mine’), and, again, has no parallel in Romance. Hence, the preliminary conclusion seems to be that, at least in this domain, the absence of changes internal to the system, combined with the unavailability in IG of linear patterns superficially similar to Romance which could trigger structural reanalysis, acted as a barrier for structural interference.

- (4) libbrommu / libbrossu
 book.my book.your ‘my/your book’

Similarly, IG converges with Modern Greek in displaying only one type of adnominal genitive, which has the following properties: (i) inflected and non-prepositional; (ii) not iterable (i.e. a DP cannot contain multiple nominal genitives modifying one and the same head noun); (iii) linearized after pronominal adjectives (and also after the noun) (Guardiano 2011, Guardiano & Longobardi 2018). On the contrary, the neighboring Southern Italo-Romance varieties (with limited exceptions, apparently independent of contact with Greek: Guardiano et al 2016) only display prepositional genitives (“free” genitives). We hypothesize that the lack of interference in this domain may be due to the fact that IG has never had any string

with the distribution of Romance prepositional free genitive. In other words, as it is the case with possessives, in IG there was no linear pattern convergent with Romance which could prompt itself to phenomena of structural reanalysis as those hypothesized for demonstratives and adjectives. In both domains, IG preserves the connection between syntactic (genitive) case and a specific morphological realization, in spite of the already mentioned general weakening of morphological realization of case in the language.

Hypotheses. It is quite clear that interference with Romance, coupled with the endangered status of the language in the relevant area(s), has played a role in the changes identified in IG. Yet, the data which we collected lead us to the conclusion that changes crucially happened only in those subdomains where the conditions triggering them were independently available in Greek. These observations support the hypothesis (reflecting Guardiano et al.'s 2016 *resistance principle*) that syntactic convergence under the influence of interference data cannot just be the byproduct of mere borrowing of word order patterns (or lexical items), but is rather the consequence of the interplay between specific structural conditions (most crucially the availability in the “interfered” grammar of linear patterns compatible with those generated by the “interfering” one) and external pressures, mostly consisting in massive exposure to the linear patterns which generate/favor structural reanalysis.