

Grammaticalization in northern Italo-Romance: some considerations

Grammaticalization is a diachronic process originally formulated by Meillet (1912), by which an item moves from a lexical category into a grammatical one or from a grammatical one into an even more grammaticalized one (Heine & Traugott 1991, Hopper & Traugott 1993). Northern Italian varieties display some interesting constructions, which can be considered as partially or totally grammaticalized. In this work, we aim to provide an accurate description of the status of grammaticalization in the expression of sentential negation in two northern Italo-Romance varieties, namely Veronese and Bresciano.

In Standard Italian, the negative particle *mica* progressively underwent the loss of its original lexical meaning and nowadays it only maintains its presuppositional feature, supporting negation, as in the following example:

- 1) *Metti il cappotto se esci.* (Standard Italian)
Put on the coat if you go outside.
Ma non fa mica freddo!
but not make.3SG.Pres NEG.part cold
'But it is not cold!'

However, in some north-eastern varieties, *mica* is gradually losing its pragmatic aspect, by going through a higher degree of grammaticalization. In the example 2, *mica* behaves as a proper negative marker (cf. Jespersen 1917), replacing the standard form *non* when expressing sentential negation.

- 2) *El piöf mia.* (Bresciano)
it rain.3SG.Pres NEG.part
'It doesn't rain'

This process of grammaticalization is not homogeneously distributed across north-eastern Italo-Romance dialects, as it displays a high degree of variation within and across both Veronese and Bresciano (data extracted from the *AIS Atlas*).

- 3) *Nane nol magna mia pasta.* (Veronese)
Giovanni not+CL.3SG eat.3SG.Pres NEG.part pasta
'Giovanni does not eat pasta'

In this talk, we will present the results of two corpora, a synchronic corpus, built from fieldwork data gathered in 4 central and peripheral areas (Lumezzane (BS), Brescia, San Giovanni Lupatoto (VR) and Nogara (VR)), and a diachronic one based on literary data pulled out from Biondelli (1853). The overall outcome tells us whether synchronic data is a result of a grammaticalization process and illustrate variation across different areas, with respect to the current degree of this process. Specifically, the Veronese peripheral data displays the particle *mia* as a reinforcing negative element, for instance:

- 4) *Lu nol saria mia contento*
he NEG be.COND.3SG NEG happy
'He would not be happy'

- 5) *No cascar!*
NEG fall.INF
'Don't fall!'

On the other hand, central Bresciano shows a homogeneous pattern of post-verbal negation, whereas Lumezzanese shows a complete grammaticalization of the negative particle *mia* as in 6.

- 6) *Mia burla ado*
NEG fall.IMP.2SG down
'Don't fall down'

Our talk will illustrate into detail the diatopic and diastratic variation of the grammaticalization of negation in the Veronese and Bresciano area. The analysis of different linguistic contexts in which sentential negation is realized will allow us to draw relevant conclusions on the stage of grammaticalization reached by the different dialectal varieties in examination.

Selected references: AIS = Jaberg, K., Jud, J. (1928-1940). *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz*, vol.8, Zofingen.; Biondelli, B. (1853). *Saggio sui dialetti gallo-italici Bernardino Biondelli*. Bernardoni.; Jespersen, O. (1917). *Negation in English and other languages*. Kobenhavn: Host.; Cinque Guglielmo (1976) "Mica". *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Padova*, 1, pp. 101-112 (ristampato in *Teoria linguistica e sintassi italiana*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 311-323); Kuteva, T. (2004). *Auxiliation: An enquiry into the nature of grammaticalization*. Oxford University Press on Demand.; Lehmann, C. (2008). Grammaticalization. *Theoretical and empirical issues in grammaticalization*, 77, 207.; Penello, N., & Pescarini, D. (2008). Osservazioni su mica in italiano e alcuni dialetti veneti. *Quaderni di lavoro dell'ASIt*, 8, 43-56.; Pescarini, D., & Donzelli, G. (2018). La negazione nei dialetti della Svizzera italiana. *Vox Romanica*, 74-96.; Squartini, M. (2011). *Verbal periphrases in Romance: aspect, actionality, and grammaticalization* (Vol. 21). Walter de Gruyter.; Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, & Bernd Heine (eds.). (1991). *Approaches to Grammaticalization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.; Van der Auwera, J. (2009). The Jespersen Cycles. *Cyclical change*, 35-71.