Dissertation Summaries

The Griko Dialect of Salento: Balkan Features and Linguistic Contact
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Abstract

In this contribution, I offer a summary of my 2013 Ph.D. dissertation from the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice on Griko dialect.

Keywords

syntax – complementizer – Griko – Balkan languages – infinitive

1 Introduction

This study presents the results of the documentation and analysis of some aspects of the grammar of Griko, a Modern Greek dialect spoken in Southern

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Italy. In spite of the huge literature on Griko currently available, we are far from having a complete knowledge of this dialect. Even though the lexicon of the language has been collected and noun and verb morphology have been described, dictionaries and grammars offer only limited information on syntax, for which it is still necessary to consult with speakers. It is therefore necessary to reconsider the available linguistic information and, in particular, to collect new data about those levels of linguistic analysis that have not been investigated yet.

2 The Study

2.1 Aims of the Thesis

The present study aims at offering an analysis of some features of Griko that have not been described yet, such as the ones defined by its complementizer system. Secondly, some well-studied phenomena, such as the loss of the infinitive, are analyzed in light of recent linguistic theories and on the basis of new linguistic data. Finally, the study offers an analysis of the “Balkan” profile of Griko and describes some effects of linguistic contact in Southern Italy. In addition, the research also aims at contributing to the study of the history of Greek language. In particular, I focus on the phenomenon of the ‘loss’ of Infinitive and on historical changes in the domain of modality.

2.2 Structure of the Thesis and Main Proposals

The thesis comprises four parts and a final chapter which summarizes the discussion and points out the main topics of interest for future research.

2.2.1 Griko: The Language and the Studies

Chapter 1 describes the linguistic situation in the Griko area and offers a summary of previous studies on Griko, focusing on the issue of the origin of Italo-Greek.

Griko is a Modern Greek dialect spoken in Southern Italy, in the Salento area (province of Lecce). Griko constitutes one of the two Greek-speaking communities in Italy; the other one is Greko, or Calabrian Greek. In 1999, Griko and Greko were recognized as ethnic and linguistic minorities by the Italian Parliament. Although updated data on the number of speakers of Griko are not available, it has been classified by UNESCO as a critically endangered language.

The second part of Chapter 1 offers a description of the methodology and empirical basis of this research. Three different sources form the basis for the linguistic data on Griko as they are used in this research:
1. Data from the Syntactic Atlas of Italy of the University of Padua. These data have been collected by means of questionnaires and fieldwork in 2001.
2. Data from the speech corpus of the Laboratory of Modern Greek Dialects of the Department of Philology of the University of Patras.
3. Data collected during the two periods of fieldwork in 2011 in three Griko-speaking villages in Puglia, Italy (Calimera, Sternatia and Castrignano de’ Greci).

2.2.2 Balkan and Romance Features in Griko
Chapter 2 investigates the issue of linguistic contact between Griko, the Balkan languages and the Romance context of Southern Italy. Griko, although sharing some linguistic features characteristic of the Balkan Sprachbund, is generally not considered part of this linguistic grouping. I propose to interpret the position of Griko with regard to the common features developed by the other Balkan languages in terms of ‘periphery’ of the Balkan Sprachbund. The concept of ‘periphery’, which is proposed here, can be applied to those languages spoken in peripheral areas that were partially involved in the historical phenomena leading to the creation of the Balkan Sprachbund. Consequently, those peripheral languages only partially share the properties of the Balkan languages. The extent of Balkan features in Griko is described following the list of Balkan properties generally proposed in literature (see, among others, Sandfeld 1930; Schaller 1975; Banfi 1985; Lindstedt 2000): Genitive-Dative syncretism, prepositional phrases replacing case forms, analytic futures, infinitive replacement, dual complementizer systems, and clitic doubling. Griko exhibits only those Balkan features which can be argued to be of a more ancient origin (i.e. infinitive replacement, a dual complementizer system, ‘have’ future), while Balkan features of more recent formation are absent (i.e., a ‘want’ future and counterfactuals). As argued by Joseph (1983), the ‘centrally-located’ Balkan languages exhibit the infinitive loss at the highest degree, while infinitive replacement in Griko has not affected all linguistic contexts. Partial retention of the infinitive in Griko, obligatory clitic climbing with complex ‘restructuring’ predicates and ‘have’ futures, i.e., phenomena that can be found in Medieval Greek as well, can be explained as reinforcement of the conservative tendency due to contact with the neighboring Romance varieties.

The second part of Chapter 2 focuses on Griko in the Romance context. Relevant bibliographic sources are reviewed and new linguistic data are brought in in order to outline the cluster of those properties of Griko which are notably different from SMG (Standard Modern Greek) and the other Modern Greek dialects. These features are the following:
(a) auxiliary selection of perfect (‘be' vs. ‘have');
(b) the formation of non-active voice;
(c) loss of aspectual opposition in ‘dependent’ tenses as only Perfective Non-Past is selected in na-clauses;
(d) the creation of an analytic present ‘continuous’;
(e) the particular structure of noun phrase.

An analysis is offered of these features as contact-induced phenomena in the Greek-Romance contact area of Southern Italy.

2.2.3 The Infinitive: Features and Distribution
Chapters 3 presents an analysis of infinitival complements in Griko compared to those found in the Balkan languages, Medieval Greek, SMG (Standard Modern Greek) and some Modern Greek dialects (Pontic and Calabrian Greek). Moreover, Griko infinitive complements are compared with those in two Romance dialects, which share the Balkan phenomenon of infinitive replacement: southern Calabrian and Salentino. Italiot and Pontic Greek are the only peripheral Modern Greek dialects which have retained the infinitive as a productive verb form, even though in very limited contexts. Griko employs the infinitive as a complement of the verbs sòzo ‘can’ and spiccèo ‘finish’. The replacement of the infinitive with finite complements introduced by a special complementizer is one of the most salient features of the Balkan Sprachbund. In Greek, Romanian and Balkan Slavic a gradual process of reduction of the contexts of occurrence of infinitive has been diachronically documented (see Joseph 1983). In some languages (Modern Greek and Macedonian), this process led to a total replacement of the infinitive complements with finite ones; in Bulgarian the replacement is almost total, with the infinitive used in very limited contexts (after ‘can’ and after negative imperative nedej ‘don’t’), while in Romanian and Serbo-Croatian this replacement is subject to a spatial variation, with the infinitive used in wider contexts in peripheral varieties and dialects rather than in the standard language. It is possible to observe a remarkable areal and diachronic correlation between synchronic contexts of infinitive retention and predicates which historically tend to retain the infinitive to a bigger extent. In the Balkan languages, predicates which show the tendency of infinitive retention basically feature the root modal ‘can’ and volitional predicates qua future auxiliaries. Moreover, the infinitive is attested after the aspectual predicate ‘start’ and, in Balkan Slavic, after ‘dare’ and predicates of deontic modality (Joseph 1983; Tomić 2004). The infinitive was still a living category in Medieval Greek, although in very limited contexts. In particular, infinitive complements can be found in (Later) Medieval texts after the fol-
lowing predicates: modal (ἡ)μπορῶ 'can', ἡθέλω as a future auxiliary, ἡθελά as a counterfactual one, as well as counterfactual ἔχω 'have' in the imperfect tense. In the Balkan languages, predicates retaining the infinitive belong to three main categories: auxiliaries (future, counterfactual, and perfect), modals (root modal and deontic), and aspectuals. Additionally, perceptive and causatives can resist longer to the loss of infinitive as well. All those predicates share a common property: they are restructuring predicates. In other words, the phenomenon of infinitive retention concerns restructuring predicates, although they do not trigger "restructuring" in the sense of Rizzi (1976), i.e., formation of a monoclusal configuration, since transparency effects are absent in Balkan infinitives. A possible account comes out if we follow the hypothesis developed in Cinque (2004): restructuring verbs are always functional, appearing in a monoclusal configuration with their infinitival complements whether or not they show transparency effects. The verbs that enter a restructuring construction correspond to distinct heads of a hierarchy of functional projections (1).

(1) MoodP speech act > MoodP evaluative > MoodP evidential > ModP epistemic > TP (Past) > TP (Future) > MoodP irrealis > ModP alethic > AspP habitual > AspP repetitive (1) > AspP frequentative (1) > ModP volition > AspP celerative (1) > TP (Anterior) > AspP terminative > AspP continuous > AspP retrospective > AspP proximative > AspP durative > AspP generic/progressive > AspP prospective > ModP obligation > ModP permission/ability > AspP completive > VoiceP > AspP celerative (2) > AspP repetitive (2) > AspP frequentative (2).

Therefore, the replacement of the infinitive by a finite form should not be analyzed as loss of the morphological or syntactic category of ‘infinitive’, but can be accounted for as a process in which functional heads are gradually no longer lexicalized by full verbs. Crucially, this ‘gradualness’ of infinitive replacement, which in some languages such as Modern Greek eventually affects all the predicates, shows that we have to focus on the triggering effect of the matrix predicate rather than on the infinitive itself. If we assume that the category which is replaced is not the infinitive complement but the one lexicalized by the matrix predicate, this ‘gradualness’ of replacement is straightforward. Otherwise, the replacement of the infinitive would not be a gradual process, or at any case it would be hard to explain those cross-linguistic correspondences. The hierarchy of syntactic projections could account for the linguistic situation in Southern Italy and for the replacement of the infinitive, since it establishes a set of pred-
icates not only based on the type of predicate selecting for a complement (i.e. aspectual, modal etc.), but also on their fine specific meaning. Following this line of investigation, the next aim is to try to account for the individual steps of the process of infinitive replacement, i.e. ascertaining whether the same hierarchy of syntactic projections could shed light on infinitive replacement from a diachronic point of view as well. This would offer more information about some issues in the history of the Greek language, such as the formation of the future and the counterfactuals.

In addition, chapter 3 analyzes the phenomenon of clitic climbing. Griko infinitive complements are quite similar to those in Salentino and southern Calabrian dialects in terms of obligatory clitic climbing. In Griko, the only correct grammatical placement of the clitic is the one where it precedes the matrix verb; the clitic cannot surface in between the matrix verb and the infinitive, nor can it follow the infinitive. Obligatoriness of clitic climbing is not found in Medieval Greek infinitives, where clitics can be found either before the matrix verb and between the matrix predicate and the infinitive complement. However, an instance of clitic climbing can be found in SMG too, in the only form of ‘fossilized’ infinitive that has been preserved, i.e. the non-finite verb form in the perfect tense, which diachronically is an infinitive (*ego yrapsi ‘I have written it’). The Griko infinitive pattern can be directly compared to Salentino rather than to Medieval Greek. Given that clitic climbing with auxiliaries could actually be found in the last instances of Greek infinitives, we are probably dealing with reinforcement of a conservative tendency by contact with Romance dialects.

2.2.4 Complementizers and Modal Elements

Chapter 4 analyzes the dual complementizer system in Griko, compared to the complementizer system in SMG together with two Southern Italian dialects (Calabrese, Salentino). The analysis follows Rizzi’s (1997) split-CP framework. CP splits into two basic heads: the higher (Force) carries clause-typing properties, while the lower one (Fin) carries information about Finiteness. Force and Fin can be separated by the interpolation of topics and foci (2).

(2) \[
\text{[Force [Topic/Focus [Fin [IP ...]]]]}
\]

One of the most important features of the Balkan Sprachbund is the existence of a dual series of complementizers (SMG oti/na): as it is well-known, while the former typically heads clauses selected by declarative and epistemic predicates, the latter is employed in subjunctive constructions after predicates such as volitionals and in constructions with tensed verbs which have replaced infinitive
complements. As argued in Roussou (2000), several elements in SMG can be classified as complementizers (3).

(3) \[ [c_{pu} [\text{Topic/Focus} \ [c_{Op} oti/an/na/as \ [\text{Neg} \ \deltaen/min \ [c_{M} \ \deltaa/t_{na}/as [\text{cl + v ...}]不在]})]]\]

Present day Griko deploys only two complementizers: the ‘declarative’ complementizer ka and the ‘modal’ complementizer na. Complementizer ti (= SMG oti) is well documented in Griko, but it has now become obsolete. While ka exhibits the properties of the structurally higher complementizer (Force), Griko na shares some properties with SMG na and Salentino cu, which could lead to consider it a low complementizer inside the complementizer phrase (Finiteness). However, a notable group of features of Griko na are shared neither by SMG na nor by Salentino low complementizer cu. Those properties are as follows:

(a) Griko na clusters with clitic pronouns;
(b) Griko na can co-occur in some contexts with higher complementizer ka;
(c) Griko na cannot be deleted;
(d) Griko na exclusively selects for Perfective Non-Past and cannot combine with other verbal forms.

I argue that the explanation for those syntactic microvariations lies in attributing to Griko na a different categorial status than SMG na and Salentino cu. While SMG na is the lowest modal complementizer in the complementizer phrase (Finiteness), Griko na is better analyzed as a modal head lexicalizing a position in the inflectional phrase and moving to Finiteness. Following the Mood Concord hypothesis in Damonte (2011), according to which subjunctive mood requires the activation of two functional heads, one inside IP, and the other in CP, I argue that the mood feature on the Finiteness head in CP is valued by a corresponding feature on a Mood head inside IP. This analysis accounts for the ‘double nature’ of Griko na, both modal marker and complementizer at the same time. The tendency in Griko seems to be that of limiting the role of na as a modal marker: hence the necessity, in some contexts, to use both the highest and the lowest complementizer (co-occurrence of ka and na). Griko complementizer system exhibits the effect of long-term linguistic contact with Romance: the most evident feature is the assimilation in Griko of the Salentino complementizer ca, which tends to be used in every context of subordination (factive, declarative, relative clauses, and modal contexts). That overextension of ka in Griko goes along with the tendency of the other complementizer, i.e. na, to turn into a modal marker.
Finally, Chapter 4 presents some preliminary considerations for a diachronic analysis of Griko relative clauses. According to the literature, Griko relative clauses can be introduced by the complementizer *pu* (< SMG *pou*), which is now obsolete, and by the complementizer *ka*. Relative clauses introduced by *pu* are well documented in Griko, but they are not truly used in Griko spoken language. An examination of Griko corpus shows that in previous stages of the language those complementizers were not in free variation since *ka* could be used in all contexts but *pu* was limited to restrictive relative clauses. However, available data are not sufficient for an exhaustive analysis, which is left for future research.

3 Conclusions

To summarize, the topics addressed in the thesis are as follows:

(a) Griko should be considered a ‘peripheral’ language of the Balkan Sprachbund.

(b) Several syntactic properties of Griko should be analyzed as the effect of long-term linguistic contact with Romance.

(c) The replacement of infinitive by a finite form in the Balkan languages should not be analyzed as loss of a morphological or syntactic category of ‘infinitive’, but can be accounted for as a process in which functional heads are gradually no longer lexicalized by matrix verbs.

(d) Several properties of Griko which SMG does not have, such as retention of the infinitive, clitic climbing in ‘restructuring’ predicates and ‘have’ future, can be found in Medieval Greek and can be explained as a result of reinforcement of the conservative tendency by contact with the neighboring Romance varieties.

(e) While Southern Italian dialects such as Calabrese and Salentino exhibit a ‘Balkan-style’ dual complementizer system, Griko complementizers exhibit the effect of long-term linguistic contact with Romance, as the assimilation of the highest complementizer *ka* shows.

(f) While *ka* exhibits the properties of the higher complementizer (Force), *na* is better analyzed as a modal head lexicalizing a position in the inflectional phrase and moving to Finiteness.

To conclude, although Griko has been investigated for centuries, in my work I aim to contribute to a better understanding of many aspects of its grammar that are still unknown. Moreover, other aspects are only documented descriptively
and left for a more extensive analysis. I also make available some new linguistic
data, which I hope will be useful for future research on Griko (and Greek) syntax.

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