

The Inflected Construction in the dialects of Sicily: parameters of micro-variation

Vincenzo Nicolò Di Caro (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Most Sicilian dialects display a monoclausal construction with motion verbs (V1) followed by the connecting element *a* and a lexical verb (V2) that Cardinaletti and Giusti (2001) call Inflected Construction, henceforth IC (cf. Rohlfs 1969 for a previous attempt at describing this construction). Example (1a) shows 'go' with the transitive verb 'take' and (1b) shows 'come' with the intransitive verb 'eat' in Marsalese, the dialect spoken in Marsala (province of Trapani):

- (1) a. *Vaju a pigghiu u pani.* (Inflected Construction)
go.1sg *a* fetch.1sg the bread
'I go and fetch the bread'
b. *Veni a mangia ni mia.*
Come.3sg *a* eat.3sg at me
'He comes to eat at my place'

The IC can always be replaced by the competing Infinitival Construction, which is the only possible one in Italian, where the V2 is an infinitive:

- (2) a. *Vaju a pigghiari u pani.* (Infinitival Construction)
'I go to fetch the bread'
b. *Veni a mangiari ne mia.*
'He comes to eat at my place'

Cardinaletti and Giusti (2001) report that the person and tense restrictions found in the IC of Marsalese are parallel to the restrictions found in unrelated languages such as English (cf. Carden and Pesetsky 1977, Jaeggli and Hyams 1993) and Swedish (cf. Wiklund 1996). Only the 'defective' forms of the functional verb can appear. This amounts for the verb *iri* 'go' to a limitation to the forms constructed on the allomorph *v-* as opposed to the allomorph *i-*. Thus, the only tenses/moods that can feature the IC are the 1st, 2nd, 3rd sg. and 3rd pl. of the indicative present and in the 2nd sg. of the imperative:

- (3) *Va mangia!* *Vai a mangi.* **Emu a mangiamu.* **I a mangiai.*
go.IMP.2sg eat.IMP.2sg go.2sg *a* eat.2sg go.1pl *a* eat.1pl go.PAST.1sg *a* eat.PAST.1sg
'Go to eat!' 'You go to eat' 'We go to eat' 'I went to eat'

However, further studies on the IC in other dialects (cf. Manzini and Savoia 2005 and Cruschina 2013) show that these restrictions are not found in all varieties. Nevertheless, these reports are sporadic and up to now there is no clear picture of the possible variation found in this respect.

The aim of this paper is to present the results of an ongoing fieldwork in all the provinces of Sicily (with particular attention to the central provinces of Caltanissetta, Agrigento and Enna, together with the eastern province of Catania) that highlights a more fine grained distinction across (at least) the following 5 dimensions:

(i) restrictions to persons, tenses and moods. Example (4) shows the indicative imperfect and the subjunctive are not allowed in the IC in Deliano (see also (3) for Marsalese):

- (4) **Jiva a pigliava lu pani.* **Jissi a pigliassi lu pani.*
go.IMPERF.1sg *a* fetch.IMPERF.1sg the bread go.SUB.1sg *a* fetch.SUB.1sg the bread
'I used to go to buy the bread' 'I would go to buy the bread'

(ii) restrictions to functional motion verbs in V1. Verbs like 'go up', 'go down' and 'run' are not allowed in the IC of most Sicilian dialects. Example (5) is from Deliano:

(5) *Vaju / vjignu / passu / mannu / *acchjanu / *scinnu / *curru a pigliu lu pani.*
 go.1sg come.1sg come-by.1sg send.1sg go-up.1sg go-down.1sg run.1sg a fetch.1sg the bread
 ‘I go / come / come by / send someone / go up / go down / run to fetch the bread’

(iii) possible reduced forms of the functional verb in V1. The verb ‘go’ can be reduced to an indistinct prefix *vo-* or *o-* in some dialects of the eastern coast of Sicily:

(6) a. *Voppigghju u pani.* (Marina di Ragusa)
 go+a+fetch.1sg the bread
 ‘I go and fetch the bread’

b. *Oppigghjunu u pani.* (Catania)
 go+a+fetch.3pl the bread
 ‘They go and fetch the bread’

(iv) variation in the insertion of a restricted class of lexical verbs in V2. Some dialects allow for the IC to occur also in the preterite with lexical verbs deriving from Latin third conjugation (-*ĕre*):

(7) a. *Jivu a fici la spisa.* (Delia)
 go.PAST.1sg a do.PAST.1sg the shopping
 ‘I went to do the shopping’

b. *Jivu a *pigliavu lu pani.*
 go.PAST.1sg a fetch.PAST.1sg the bread
 ‘I went to fetch the bread’

(v) presence or absence of the connecting element *a* between V1 and V2. Dialects like Ennese can optionally drop the connecting element between V1 and V2 in the indicative present with ‘go’ and ‘come’ as V1 (cf. (8b)), while *a* is never found in the 2sg of the imperative with the same V1s (cf. (8a)):

(8) a. *Va (*a) piglia u pani!* (Enna)
 go.IMP.2sg a fetch.IMP.2sg the bread
 ‘Go and fetch the bread!’

b. *Vaju (a) pigliu u pani.*
 go.1sg to fetch.1sg the bread
 ‘I go and fetch the bread’

Selected references

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