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Models of language variation and change: new evidence from language contact

Reports on major dialectal areas in Southern Italy

Puglia

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0. In a nutshell

By the label “dialects of Puglia” we refer to the dialects spoken in the northern and central areas of the administrative region of Puglia, exclude Salento. The major areas are Capitanata (in the north), Terra di Bari (central area) and Arco Ionico Tarantino (closer to Salento).



Map adapted from Pellegrini 1977

1. History

1.1. Ancient era

Ancient Apulia (Apulia is the Latin name of modern Puglia) was inhabited by different populations. Only few information is available about an ancient Iapigio-Illiric-Messapic ethnic substratum. From the IX century B.C. onwards, the so-called Japigian culture (Parlangèli 1960) split into three ethnic subgroups: Dauni (north), Peucezi (central area) and Messapi (south). The Greek colony of Taranto was founded in the VIII century (706-705 B.C.); its power progressively increased, to the point that, especially from the VII century onwards, the whole southern area of Apulia was under the influence of the Greeks.

Among the local ethnic groups/populations, Messapi had close economic and cultural relations with Taranto, though not always conflict-free. By the time of the Roman conquest of Taranto, Peucezi had been heavily subject to the cultural hegemony of the Greeks; by contrast, Messapi preserved their linguistic and cultural autonomy until the Imperial Age (although it must be remarked that some Greek influence had penetrated in their cultural system: for instance, they used a Greek-like alphabet).

Romanization came along Via Appia (built around IV - III century b.C.) and, later, along Via Traiana (II century A.D.), but it never managed to eliminate the differences between the central-northern area (*Apulia*) and the southern one (i.e. the modern Salento, actually called *Calabria* by Romans).

1.2. *Midde Ages*

The ancient territorial and linguistic separation was kept during the Middle Ages. According to Parlangèli (1972), the preservation of such a separation was also due to the fact that the original administrative partitions were kept by the Roman Church and ultimately ended up coincide with the modern dialectal groups.

In the Middle Ages, two major powers were dominated the whole area: the Byzantines permanently controlled Salento (especially the central-southern part), whereas the northern and central areas were under the jurisdiction of the Lombards of the Duchy of Benevento, who sometimes managed to penetrate south of a Taranto-Brindisi line. As a matter of fact, the Byzantine-Lombard border of Puglia was not clear-cut. Even if nowadays Taranto is part of that area of Puglia where the Greek influence is not so pervasive as in Salento, Greek was spoken in the city at least until the 13th century (Fanciullo 2001).

When the Normans took control over Puglia (1050-1190) the vitality of Greek decreased rapidly. The Norman dynasty promoted the unification of the whole Southern Italy under their rule. This allowed Puglia to enjoy a period of *grandeur*. From this moment on, its history is strictly dependent on that of the rest of Southern Italy.

Foreign dominations in the following centuries did not change the linguistic facet of the region (Valente 1975:7).

2. **Major dialectal features**

2.1 *Vowel system*

Concerning stressed vowels, the dialects of Puglia have the common Romance heptavocalic system. Yet, several modifications induced by the prosody and the syllabic structure which have intervened across time have dramatically changed its phonetic surface.¹ According to Lausberg (1971: 216ff) these phenomena, though in various forms, are found in a vast strip of Romània, stretching from northern France (encompassing Franco-Provençal, Rhaeto-Romanic area, several Northern Italian dialects) to some Adriatic dialects of Italy, including some dialects of Abruzzo and Puglia.

In Puglia, three major phenomena of such vowel alternations can be observed. One well-known phenomenon of this kind can be found in the surrounding area of Bari (Loporcaro 1997: 340). Here, Latin short mid vowels, which were originally pronounced as low-mid, are realized as high-mid in stressed open syllables:

¹ For further examples and a detailed discussion of other local differences see Valente (1975), Stehl (1980), Loporcaro (1997), a. o.

- (1) a. [peʃə] < Lat. PĔIUS (expected outcome [ɛ]) ‘worse’
 b. [rotə] < Lat. RŎTA (expected outcome [ɔ]) ‘wheel’
 c. [pɛʃə] < Lat. PĪCE(M) (expected outcome [e]) ‘pitch’
 d. [sɔlə] < Lat. SŎLE(M) (expected outcome [o]) ‘sun’

In some other dialects of the area, two further phenomena are found. One is the diphthongization of all vowels when in penultimate stressed open syllable. We provide some sketchy examples in the variety of Altamura (Loporcaro 1988: §§ 23-48):

- (2) a. jadd[ɪi]nə < Lat. GALLĪNA (expected outcome [i]) ‘hen’
 b. t[ai]lə < Lat. TĒLA (expected outcome [e]) ‘canvas’
 c. k[ɛi]nə < Lat. CANEM (expected outcome [a]) ‘dog’
 d. v[au]ʃə < Lat. VŎCE (expected outcome [o]) ‘voice’

These diphthongization, however, can be blocked if the word does not occur prepausally: in (3) we show some examples from Bisceglie (Loporcaro 2011: 76):

- (3) prepausal position non-prepausal position
 a. *i. čoimə* ‘top’ ii. *čimə də reip* ‘turnip green’

The other is the realization of medium vowels as tense in open syllable and as lax in checked syllable (example from Aprile et al. 2002: 681, from Bitonto):

- (4) a. p[e]ʃə < Lat. PEIUS (expected outcome ɛ) ‘worse’
 b. p[ɛ]ʃə < Lat. PĪCEM (expected outcome e) ‘fish’

2.2 Metaphony

Like in most upper southern Italo-Romance dialects, metaphony is widespread also in the dialects of Puglia, with few exceptions in the northernmost part of the region². Metaphony originates as a phonetic phenomenon of vowel harmony triggered by final unstressed vowels and affecting stressed root vowels (Fanciullo 1994, Maiden 1991, Savoia and Maiden 1997, among many others). In the dialects of southern Italy, metaphony is triggered by the continuers of the Latin final vowels -I and -U and affects middle root vowels /e, ɛ/ and /ɔ, o/. The effect of metaphony is a partial recovery of some gender (5) and number (6) distinctions, which are no more realized through suffixation due to the generalized centralization in [-ə] (7) of all non-stressed final vowels (Examples from Valente 1975, 30-32, Bari):

² For an up-to-date detailed description of the dialects with scarce or null examples of metaphony, see Carosella (2016)

- (5) a. /e/ → /I/ tesə < Lat. TĒNSA ‘tense.F’ tisə < Lat. TĒNSU ‘tense.M’
 b. /ə/ → /ue/ bonə < Lat. BŎNA ‘good.F’ bu(e)nə < Lat. BŎNU ‘good.M’
- (6) a. /e/ → /i/ mesə < Lat. MENSE ‘month’ misə < Lat. *MENSI ‘months’
 b. /o/ → /u/ nəpotə < Lat. NEPŎTE ‘nephew’ nəputə < Lat. *NEPŎTI ‘nephews’
 c. /ɛ/ → /je/ pɛtə < Lat. PĚDE ‘foot’ pitə < Lat. PĚDI ‘feet’
- (7) figgjə < Lat. FILIUM, FILIAM, FILI, FLIAE ‘son/s, daughter/s’

2.3 Consonantism

As far as consonantism is concerned, we do not find any particular differences compared to the rest of central-southern dialects. These dialects display the post-tonic unvoicing of /-d/ → [-t] (7, from Loporcaro 1988:118, Altamura), the outcome [ʃ] < lat. -DJ- -J- and G^{ei} (8, from Aprile et alii 2002:683, Bari), and the palatalization of labio-velars in (9, from Loporcaro 1997: 342, Altamura).

- (8) /pedə/ < PĚDE(M) → [peɪt] ‘foot’
- (9) i. [fúʃə] < FUGIS ‘run away’,
 ii. [‘jɔʃ] < HODJE ‘today’
 iii. [ʃə‘nukkjə] < *GENUCULUM ‘knee’.
- (10) i. [‘çi] < QUI ‘who’
 ii. [čə] < QUID ‘what’

3. Some morphological notes

As shown in (7), the centralization of all final vowels blurred the morphosyntactic distinctions between singular and plural interpretation on nouns and adjectives, only partially retrieved through metaphony (as shown in (5) and (6)). Here we list two phenomena that allow to retrieve some other morphological distinctions, involving the realization of word-initial consonants when preceded by some determiners. These phenomena are also found in Campania and some parts of Basilicata (Rohlf's 1966-69: §§ 377, 418).

3.1. Rafforzamento Fonosintattico with feminine plural and neuter determiners

Compared to the impoverishment of the flexive system of nouns and adjectives, determiners display richer morphology in upper southern dialects (Manzini and Savoia 2005 III: 637ff). Broadly speaking, in the dialects of Puglia, we find a determiner /u/ for masculine singular, /a/ or for feminine singular, /lə/ for both masculine and feminine plural (see Valente 1975: 29ff).

However, in the central-northern area of the region, between the Gulf of Manfredonia and Bari, there is a crucial difference between masculine plural and feminine plural determiners, in that the latter trigger *Rafforzamento Fonostintattico* (=RF) as shown (11). Rohlfs (1966-69, § 418) argues that in those cases we should postulate a plural feminine determiner *ILLAES, with final -S triggering RF after the fall of the final consonants.

- (11) a. i kuzuprinə ~ i kkuzuprinə ‘the cousins, M vs. F’
 b. i mulə ~ i mmulə ‘the mules, M vs. F’

Mattinata (Granatiero 1987, cited in Aprile et alii 2002:684)

RF is also triggered by determinants that give the noun a mass (or abstract) interpretation, like in (12). These phenomena connect this part of Apulia with Campania and north-eastern Lucanian dialects.

- (12) a. u russə ‘the red’
 b. u ppənə ‘the bread’

Mattinata (Granatiero 1987, cited in Aprile et alii 2002:684)

Despite the superficial similarity between masculine /u/ with countable interpretation (e.g.: *u patrə* ‘the father’) and “neuter” /u/ with uncountable interpretation in (12), they have different etymologies. Indeed, the masculine /u/ < Lat. ILLUM, with final -M falling without triggering RF, whereas the neuter /u/ < Lat. ILLUD, with the final -D that, after being deleted, triggers RF on the following noun (Rohlfs 1966-69: § 419). Notice that there are dialects, though, where the neuter determiner is phonologically different from the masculine one:

- (13) Spinazzola, Loporcaro (2017:153)
 a. lə mmi:rə ‘the wine’
 b. u kurtiddə ‘the knife’

4. Some remarks on nominal syntax

4.1. Number morphology and bare nouns

Delfitto and Schrotten (1991) argue that the possibility for a language to license bare nouns in argument position is a consequence of the morphological exponence of Number on nouns. A robust Number exponence on nouns allows for bare noun, since the correct quantificational interpretation of DP can be retrieved through the raising of number affixes to D at LF (Delfitto and Schrotten 1991: 162).

In the dialects of Puglia, as in many other Southern Italian dialects, number exponence on nouns is not as much robust as in Italian, due to the centralization of final vowels as shown in (7). Yet, some distinctions are partially retrieved through metaphony (5-6). Therefore, one might wonder if such reduced Number exponence on nouns is sufficient to license bare nouns in argument position. In Guardiano et al. (2022) it has been shown that in Puglia bare nouns were accepted until recent times, as shown for example in (16) and (17), from Lacalendola (1972: 22), cited in Andriani (2017: 76).

(16) jì accàttə sèmbə còsə mərəcàtə
 I buy.1SG always things cheap
 ‘I always buy cheap stuff’

(17) u cùddə c’ avànzə tərri:sə, tə préchə la vitə
 the that.M that exceeds money to-you praises the life
 ‘he who is owed (by you), will praise your life’

However, current speakers do not accept bare nouns in Bari (19) and Barletta (20), whereas speakers from Taranto (18) seem to accept bare nouns more easily:

(18) aggjə vənnutə patànə pə ttrendə annə
 have.1S sold potato for thirty year
 ‘I have been sold potatoes for thirty years’

(19) ddzuannə vennə *(lə) patanə
 Giovanni sell the.PL potato
 ‘Giovanni sells potatoes’

(20) kə ffè a salsə e akkattatə *(i) pəmədurə matourə
 with do the.F.S sauce have.1S bought the.PL tomato ripen
 ‘I bought ripen tomatoes to make the sauce’

How to account for these different distributions of bare nouns, notwithstanding the similar morphological conditions of these dialects? Although bare nouns might have been productive at older stages, as shown in (19) and (20), current speakers do not seem to recognize the role of /-ə/ as a morpheme expressing number. Therefore, they do not accept bare nouns. By contrast, by accepting bare nouns, the dialect of Taranto shows that «final -ə is not merely the “relic” of a phonetic change (weakening of final vowels): it has rather retained the morphological properties of a suffix expressing number information that, though, is not encoded overtly» (Guardiano et al 2022: 24). Therefore, when overt number alternations are realized through the stressed root vowel only, as the metaphonetic cases shown in (5) and (6), final -ə harmonically agrees (Manzini and Savoia 2016) in Number with metaphonetic number alternations, thus replicating number information “silently”.

4.2. *Demonstratives*

Like in Italian and most other dialects of southern Italy, demonstratives are DP-initial and D-checking, i.e. they do not co-occur with definite articles (Guardiano 2014). The same holds for Puglia

(21) cùddə (*u) pòvərə cànə tu zzèppə
 that the poor dog your cripple
 ‘That poor cripple dog of yours’

Bari (adapted from Andriani 2017:129)

Like several other dialects of southern Italy, most dialects of Puglia exhibit distinct forms of demonstratives according to whether they are used adnominally or pronominally; the former are normally morphologically “reduced”, at least in the proximate forms. Moreover, adnominal proximal demonstratives display morphological forms recalling those of articles. Indeed, they are inflected through suffixes that distinguish masculine singular, feminine singular and plural interpretation. Distal forms, instead, convey gender and number distinction through metaphonetic alternations, both in adnominal and pronominal forms. In Table 4 we provide the paradigm of demonstratives in Bari, adapted from Andriani (2017: 119):

	Proximal			Distal		
	M	F	PL	M	F	PL
Adnominal	stu	sta	sti	cuddə	cheddə	chiddə
Pronominal	cussə	chessə	chissə	cuddə	cheddə	chiddə

With respect to the syntax of pronominal demonstratives, Bari displays an interesting peculiarity. According to Andriani (2017: 131-135), definite articles can be used pronominally, i.e. they can select a prepositional complement (22), a relative clause (23), an adjective (24) or a possessive (25) only if they co-occur, in strict adjacency, with an item homophonous to the pronominal distal demonstrative (cuddə_M cheddə_F chiddə_{PL})

(22) la cheddə du pulpə jè na vita amarə
the that of.the octopus is a life.F bitter
‘that of the octopus is a tough life’

(23) lə cchiù struitə ndra llə chiddə ka stadièscənə chissə cósə
the more learned among the those that study.3PL these things
‘the most erudite among those who study these things’

(24) accattə u cuddə (chiù) gressə
buy.IMP.2SG the that.M more big
‘buy the big(gest) one!’

(25) la chedda me jè la megghiə
the that.f.sg my is the.f.s best
‘mine is the best’

Although they are not often found in the dialects of southern Italy, pronominal articles are quite common in Romance. For instance, in Spanish, articles are able to select prepositional phrases and relative clauses, as shown in (26) and (27).

(26) vi la foto de Maria. ¿ viste la de Juan?
 saw.1S the picture of Maria saw.2S the of Juan
 ‘I saw Maria’s picture. Did you see the one of Juan?’

(27) vi la foto en la mesa. ¿ viste la en la pared?
 saw.1S the picture in the table saw.2S the in the wall
 ‘I saw the picture on the table. Did you see the one on the wall?’

As mentioned in footnote 4, the “demonstrative-like” item can be omitted when the article selects an adjective or a possessive; by contrast, we have no data concerning prepositional phrases and relative clauses.

4.3. *Non-prepositional genitives*

Non-prepositional genitives with the properties of functional “Low” genitives (GenO in Longobardi and Silvestri 2013) are attested in several Romance languages (including Old French, Delfitto and Paradisi 2009, Old Spanish and Old Catalan, Guardiano et al 2016, Northern Calabrese, Silvestri 2012, 2013, 2016).

The major syntactic properties of these genitives are the following: postadjectival, non-iterable and non-prepositional. Yet, unlike in languages where GenO is productive, in Old Romance this non-prepositional genitive was subject to restrictions concerning the type of head noun and the semantic relationship between the head and the genitival DP (only nouns denoting body parts, toponyms, kinship terms, inalienably possessed or so perceived items such as home, land, etc. seem to accept it). The parameter \pm partial GenL (PGL) distinguishes this type of lexically conditioned genitive from the fully productive GenL. (Guardiano et al 2018: 115-116). It must also be noted that in all the Romance languages explored so far, non-prepositional functional genitives are quite residual and have very low productivity.

In the dialects of Southern Italy, the existence of non-prepositional genitives has been known at least since Rohlf's (1966), that had noticed them in the Northern Calabrese variety of Morano.

Massaro (2019) found non-prepositional genitives in the Northern Apulian variety of San Marco in Lamis, whose properties are not too dissimilar from those listed above. First of all, they are subject to a definiteness constraint: both the head noun and the genitive DP must be definite (i.e. must be marked by a definite article) in these constructions (examples from Massaro 2019: 233 and 235).

- (28) a. la koda lu kanə
 the tail the dog
 ‘the tail of the dog’
 b. * la koda nu kanə
 the tail a dog
 ‘the tail of a dog’
 c. la koda də nu kanə
 the tail of a dog
 ‘the tail of a dog’

- (29) a. kwedda rōta dēlla makəna
 that wheel of.the car
 ‘that wheel of the car’
 b. * kwedda rōta la makəna
 that wheel the car
 ‘that wheel of the car’

The condition that the genitive must be introduced by a “definite-like” article also holds for proper names, which are only allowed as non-prepositional genitives if they are introduced by an expletive article:

- (30) a. * lu rətrattə Lelina
 the portrait Lelina
 b. lu rətrattə də Lelina
 the portrait of Lelina
 ‘Lelina’s picture’

- (31) la partita la Juventus
 the match the Juventus
 ‘Juventus match’

- (32) u koncertə li Metallica
 the concert the Metallica
 ‘Metallica’s concert’

The data in (31) and (32) show that the construction is quite productive, since it is used by young speakers as well. This seems to set a difference between this dialects and other contemporary dialects where similar

phenomena have been noticed, such as for instance Verbicaro (Silvestri 2013), where they are not particularly productive and often dubbed “archaic” by the speakers themselves.

Other constraints on the realization of genitives as non-prepositional are the following. First of all, there is a requirement of strict adjacency between the head noun and the genitive: if an adjective follows the head noun, the genitive cannot be realized as non-prepositional (see the ungrammaticality of (33)b). By contrast, prenominal adjectives do not affect the realization of non-prepositional genitives, as shown in (34)a. Similarly, adjectives modifying the head noun can occur after the non-prepositional genitive, as seen in (33)c. Finally, according to Massaro (2019: 237), a modified genitive cannot occur as non-prepositional, as shown in (34)b.

- (33) a. lu libbrə novə dəllu prəssorə
 the book new of.the professor
 ‘the new book of (assigned by) the professor’
- b. * lu libbrə novə lu prəssorə
 the book new the professor
 ‘the new book of (assigned by) the professor’
- c. lu libbrə lu prəssorə novə
 the book the professor new
 ‘the book of (assigned by) the new professor’

- (34) a. l atu figgiə lu rre
 the other son the king
 ‘the other son of the king’
- b. * lu figgiə l atu rre
 the son the other king
 ‘the son of the other king’

Finally, another important difference between the Apulian non-prepositional genitive and the one found in Verbicaro is that it can be embedded in non-prepositional constructions, as shown in (35), from Massaro 2019: 250.

- (35) la kasa lu figgiə lu skarparə
 the house the son the cobbler
 ‘the house of the cobbler’s son’

5. Desiderata for further research

All the phenomena concerning the internal syntax of the nominal domain which have already been spotted in the literature (and which are listed in Section 4) require further investigation, most notably the syntax of bare nouns, the syntactic nature of non-prepositional genitives and the pronominal articles that are reinforced by a demonstrative, as shown for the examples of Bari. At present, within the Parametric Comparison Method, the dialects that have received a first data collection and first attempts of analysis are: Bari, Barletta, Taranto and the Gargano dialect of San Marco in Lamis. We refer the reader to the link <http://www.parametriccomparison.unimore.it/site/home/projects/prin-2017/romance-and-greek-dialects-the-database.html> for further data and an up-to-date list of all the dialects that have been parametrized.

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