

CONSERVATIVE AND INNOVATIVE TENDENCIES IN GRIKO INFINITIVE COMPLEMENTS*

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In this paper Griko infinitive complements are compared to those in the Romance dialects of Southern Italy and in Medieval Greek, in order to give a general outline of diatopic and diachronic variation. New data about the contexts of occurrence of infinitive complements in Griko are presented. The second purpose, which deals with a wider topic, is to suggest a possible line of investigation about a well-known and well-described phenomenon, namely, the replacement of infinitive in the Balkan languages. An analysis in terms of restructuring is proposed in order to account for cross-linguistic correspondences in the retention of infinitive.

1 Introduction

Peripheral dialects of standard languages are often considered as a source of information about past stages of the evolution of those languages. That is indeed correct, provided that we take into account the fact that those dialects, once cut off from the main language, often do not develop as totally isolated ones, but rather in contact with other languages. The case of Griko is emblematic. As its origins from Ancient or Medieval Greek has been a controversial issue for many years, many of its features were analyzed as conservative ones, not sufficiently taking into account the possibility of results of the long term contact with neighboring Romance dialects. As I try to show for the case of infinitive retention, below the surface of a conservative feature often instances of innovative tendencies possibly due to language contact can be observed.

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This paper is organized as follows: the first section gives a general outline of the contexts of occurrence of infinitive complements in Griko, presenting new data which are notably different from those usually mentioned in literature. Griko infinitives are compared with those in the other languages of Southern Italy, namely Calabrian Greek and two Romance dialects which share the Balkan phenomenon of infinitive replacement (southern Calabrian and Salentino). In the second section a possible line of investigation is suggested as an account for infinitive replacement, based on the hypothesis that all restructuring predicates retaining infinitive complements are functional heads (Cinque, 2004).

1.1 Griko linguistic data

Linguistic data of Griko used in this research are based on three different sources:

1. Data from the Syntactic Atlas of Italy of the University of Padua. These data were 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 (LMGD).
3. Data collected during two periods of fieldwork led in 2011 in three Griko-speaking villages in Puglia, Italy (Calimera, Sternatia and Castrignano de' Greci).

2 Contexts of retention of infinitive complements

2.1 Griko

As it is known from literature, Modern Greek has lost the infinitive and replaced it with *na*-complements. Italiot and Pontic¹ Greek are the only peripheral Modern Greek dialects which have retained infinitive as a productive verb form, even though in very limited contexts.

Griko deploys infinitive as a complement of the verbs *sòzzo* 'I can' (1) and *spiccèò* 'I finish' (2).

(1) *Sòzzome* *polemìsi* *òle* *tes* *emère*
 can-1PL work-INF all-ACC.PL. the-ACC.PL. days
 "We can work every day"

(2) *Spiccetsa* *tse* *polemìsi* *stes* *ètse*
 finish-1SG.PST of work-INF at six
 "I finished working at six"

Infinitive is obligatory after the verb *sòzzo*, while after *spiccèò* a *na*-complement is available as well (3).

¹ See Mackdrige, 1996.

- (3) *Spiccetsa* *na* *polemiso*² *stes* *ètse*
 finish-1SG.PST COMP at-PRS.PFV at six

As seen in (2), the infinitive complements of the verb *spiccèò* are introduced by the prepositional complementizer (*a*)*tse*. Reasonably, this is to be considered as a loan translation from Salentino, which shows the same pattern of prepositional infinitive with the equivalent predicate *spicciare*.

- (4) *Aggiu* *spicciatu* *te* *faticare* (Salentino)
 Have-1SG.AUX finished-PTCP to work-INF
 “I have finished working”

Moreover, *spiccèò* is the only aspectual predicate selecting an infinitive in Griko. Other aspectual verbs such as ‘I continue’, ‘I start’ etc. can select only *na*-complements.

- (5) *kulusa* *n-i* *fonaso* *risso-pu* *en* *èttase*
 Continue-1SG.PST COMP-her call-1SG until-COMP NEG arrive-3SG.PST
 “I went on calling her until she arrived”

- (6) *ntsignume* *na* *polemosome* *stes* *ennea* (Calimera)
 Start-1PL COMP work-1PL at nine
 “We start working at nine”

Whenever *sòzzo* gets interpreted with a capacity reading, its selection requires a *na*-complement rather than an infinitive. In this case the meaning of the modal verb is slightly different, since as it means ‘I don’t have the strength to’ (7).

- (7) *en* *sòzzo* *na* *pao* (Castrignano)
 NEG can-1SG COMP go-1SG
 ‘I don’t have the strength to go’

The data presented here are notably different from those usually mentioned about Griko, where the contexts of occurrence of infinitive complements in Griko are supposed to be slightly wider. More specifically, two of the contexts of retention of infinitive in Griko which were mentioned by Gerhard Rohlfs in his grammar of Italiot Greek, i.e. after perceptive and causative verbs, are not available according to our data (Rohlfs, 2001). Perceptive and causative predicates only select *na*-complements, as in (8) and (9), at least in the area I considered during my fieldwork. It is also highly probable that the same process has been completed also in the rest of the Griko area.

- (8) a. *On itane* *na’ rti* *fèonta* (Calimera)
 Him see-3PL.PST COMP come-1SG running-PTCP

² Note that the perfective non-past (PNP) is the only available dependent tense in Griko, even as complement of aspectual predicates such as ‘I finish’. As a matter of fact, there is no aspectual opposition (perfective vs. imperfective) in any Griko *na*-complement.

- b. **on itane èrti fèonta*
 Him see-3PL.PST come-INF running-PTCP
 “They saw him come running”
- (9) *o Màssimo mas kànni na jelàsome* (LMGD)
 the Massimo us-ACC make-3SG COMP laugh-1PL
 “Massimo makes us laugh”

Since Rohlfs’s collection dates back to the beginning of 20th century, it is therefore reasonable to suppose that the language has changed following the path of infinitive replacement. However, the fact that infinitive after causative and perceptive predicates is in Griko hardly ever documented elsewhere leads us to consider more appropriate not to include those two predicates in the contexts of retention of infinitive in Griko.

2.2 Southern Italy

Nevertheless, the set of predicates selecting an infinitive complement is wider in Calabrian Greek and in two Romance dialects of Southern Italy which share the phenomenon of replacement of infinitive, namely, Salentino and southern Calabrian, and it includes precisely those two predicates that we have excluded in today’s Griko, i.e. causatives and perceptives.

The Modal predicate ‘I can’ requires infinitive in southern Calabrian (10), Salentino (11) and Calabrian Greek (12).

- (10) *u pozzu hara* (Chillà 2011: 35)
 it.ACC can-1SG do-INF.
 “I can do it”
- (11) *la Maria pote inire* (Calabrese 1995: 30)
 the Maria can-3SG come-INF
 “Mary can come”
- (12) *mu to sonnise ferì avri* (Remberger 2011: 22)
 me.GEN it-1.Acc. can-2SG bring-INF tomorrow
 “You can bring it to me tomorrow”

Note that Calabrian Greek has infinitive also after the ability modal *scèro* ‘(lit.) I know, I am able to’.

- (13) *eyo en iscera blatessi taliano* (Katsoyannou 1992:457)
 I-NOM NEG can-1SG.PST speak-INF Italian
 “I couldn’t speak Italian”

Moreover, Salentino and a large part of Calabrian dialects employ infinitive after all aspectual verbs and as complement of predicates of deontic modality, causative and perception verbs.

- (14) *lu aggiu ncignatu a ffare* (Calabrese 1995: 30)
 cl.Acc. have-1sg. start-part. a do-inf.
 “I have started to do it”

As seen in (7), when a *na*-complement after the predicate ‘I can’ is attested, the meaning of the matrix verb is not a root modal. The same phenomenon can be found in southern Calabrian (15-16).

(15) *Porria mu chiovi!* (Trumper-Rizzi 1985: 70)
 Can COMP rain-3SG
 “Could it rain!”

(16) *pozzu u l-a cercu sa cosa secundu tia?* (Chillà 2011: 36)
 Can-1SG PRT him-it ask-1SG this thing according to you
 “Do you think I can ask him this question?”

Note that the verb *potere* ‘I can’ in (15) and (16) has to be analyzed as two different predicates: (15) has an optative meaning and actually it is not a modal predicate, while (16) is a permission modal predicate.

To conclude, the degree of replacement of the infinitive in Southern Italy is not uniform. The set of predicates selecting an infinitive is wider in Salentino, Calabrian Greek and Southern Calabrian than in Griko. Griko actually has infinitive only after the verbs ‘I can’ and ‘I finish’. The semantic value of the modal verb seems to play a role in the type of complement (finite/infinitive) selected by the matrix verb in Griko and southern Calabrian dialects.

2.3 Medieval Greek

Since Griko infinitive is usually considered as a prosecution of Medieval Greek infinitive, let us briefly report the contexts of occurrence of infinitive complements attested in Medieval texts (Joseph, 1983; Mackridge, 1996; Horrocks, 1997).

Infinitive is 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 following predicates:

1. Modal (*ἦ*)*μπορῶ* ‘I can’. Competition with *na*-complements is also attested, with a preference of infinitive to be found when the matrix verb is negative (Mackridge, 1996).
2. Volitional *θέλω* as a future auxiliary and *ἤθελα* as a counterfactual one. A possible competition with *na*-complements is a vexed question (Joseph and Pappas, 2002).
3. Auxiliary *ἔχω* ‘have’ at the imperfect tense as a counterfactual. Perfect is a subsequent formation.

Sporadic use of infinitive is documented also after the following predicates:

4. Aspectual *ἀρχίζω/ἄρχω* ‘I start’;
5. *τολμῶ* and *θαρρῶ* ‘I dare’.

Actually, the only context of retention of the infinitive in Griko which can be considered a prosecution of Medieval Greek is after the modal ‘I can’. The other context of occurrence usually supposed to be a conservative feature of Griko, i.e. after aspectual predicates, is better analyzed as an innovation due to the language contact with Romance dialects. Predicates, though both aspectual, do not coincide (Griko ‘I finish’ vs. Medieval Greek ‘I start’) and the pattern of

complementation of Griko *spiccèò* shows that it has to be considered as a loan translation from Salentino.

2.4 Clitic climbing

Griko infinitive complements are closely 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 preceding the matrix verb, not separating the matrix verb and the infinitive, nor following the infinitive.

(17) a. *sa sozzane insultètsi* (LMGD)
 You-ACC can-3PL.PST insult-INF

b. *sozzane (*sa) insultetsi (*sa)*

“They could insult you”

The same pattern is shared by Southern Italy dialects (Salentino and Calabrese), which display obligatory clitic climbing.

(18) *lu pottsu (*lu) kkattare (*lu) krai* (Calabrese, 1995: 30)
 it-ACC can-1SG take-INF tomorrow
 “I can take it tomorrow”

Obligatoriness of clitic climbing is not found in Medieval Greek infinitives, where clitics can be found either before the matrix verb (19) and between the matrix predicate and infinitive complement (20).

(19) *ἄν σε εἶχαν εὔρει* (Digenis Akritas, 141)
 If you-ACC had-3PL.PST find-INF
 ‘If they found you’

(20) *οὐκ ἔμποροῦν τήν εὔρειν* (Digenis Akritas, 124)
 NEG can-3PL.PST her-ACC find-INF
 ‘They couldn’t find her’

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 (21).

(21) *to εχο γρapsi*
 It-ACC have-1SG write-INF/PTCP
 ‘I have written it’

Griko infinitive pattern can to be directly compared to Salentino rather than to Medieval Greek. However, if a tendency for clitic climbing with auxiliaries could actually be found in the last

instances of Greek infinitives, we were probably dealing with the reinforcement of a conservative tendency by contact with Romance dialects.

3 Restructuring and infinitive retention

The replacement of infinitive with finite complements introduced by a special complementizer is one of the most important features of the Balkan *Sprachbund*. In Greek, Romanian and Balkan Slavic a gradual process of reduction of the contexts of occurrence of infinitive is diachronically documented (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 infinitive used in very limited contexts (after ‘I can’ and after negative imperative *nedej*), while in Rumanian and Serbo-Croatian this replacement is subject to a spatial variation, with infinitive used in wider contexts in peripheral varieties and dialects rather than in the standard language.

A remarkable spatial and diachronic correspondence can be observed between the synchronic contexts of retention of infinitive and the predicates which tend to retain infinitive more (Cristofaro, 1998). In the Balkan languages, predicates which retain infinitive more are basically the root modal ‘I can’ and volitional predicates as future auxiliaries. Moreover, infinitive is attested more after the aspectual predicate ‘I start’ and, in Balkan Slavic, after ‘I dare’ and predicates of deontic modality (Joseph, 1983; Tomić, 2004).

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, as in Southern Italy. All those predicates share a common property: they are restructuring predicates.

However, it is not the case that all the predicates that retain infinitive are restructuring predicates. For example, the Bulgarian root modal ‘I can’ (22) does not allow clitic climbing even in the presence of selected infinitive.³

- (22) *ne možeš go nameri* (Tomić 2004: 288)
 NEG can-2PL him-ACC find-INF
 ‘You can’t find him’

In other words, the phenomenon of infinitive retention concerns restructuring predicates, but not in restructuring contexts (in the sense of Rizzi, 1976) since transparency effects are not shown in Balkan infinitives.

A possible account comes out if we follow the hypothesis in Cinque (2004): restructuring verbs are always functional, appearing in a monoclausal 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 (23).

- (23) MoodP speech act > MoodP evaluative > MoodP evidential > ModP
 epistemic > TP (Past) > TP (Future) > MoodP irrealis > ModP alethic

³ The only possible configuration of clitic climbing in Bulgarian is with the embedded verb when not introduced by the particle *da*, as it is sometimes found in dialects (Sobolev, 2004: 75).

> AspP habitual > AspP repetitive (1) > AspP frequentative (1) > ModP volition > AspP celerative (1) > TP (Anterior) > AspP terminative > AspP continuative > 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 the loss of a morphological or syntactic category of ‘infinitive’, but it can be accounted for as a process in which functional heads are gradually no longer lexicalized by verbs. Crucially, this ‘graduality’ of infinitive replacement, which in some languages such as Modern Greek eventually affects all the predicates, shows that we have to focus on the matrix predicates rather than on the infinitive itself. If we assume that the category which is replaced is not the infinitive but that one lexicalized by the matrix predicates, this ‘graduality’ of replacement is straightforward. Otherwise, the replacement of the infinitive would not be a gradual process, or in any case it would be hard to explain those cross-linguistic correspondences.

The hierarchy of syntactic projections can suggest an account for the linguistic situation in Southern Italy and for the replacement of infinitive, since it establishes a set of predicates not only based on the type of predicate selecting for a complement (i.e. aspectual, modal etc.), but also on their fine meaning. The differentiation of complementation (finite vs. infinitive) that was found in Griko and in southern Calabrian can be explained assuming that in those cases we are not dealing with the lexicalization of modal heads (15) or we are dealing with verbs whose fine meaning in that specific language is not lexicalized (anymore) by restructuring heads (16).

Following this line of investigation, the next aim is trying to account for the individual steps of the process of replacement of the infinitive, i.e. ascertaining whether this hierarchy of syntactic projections can shed light on infinitive replacement from a diachronic point of view as well.

However, as Griko infinitive shows, when we deal with Balkan phenomena, language contact can never be left out. The case of Griko infinitive after *spiccèò* ‘to finish’ suggests that every diachronic hierarchy we try to establish can be subject to exceptions due to unexpected and unpredictable factors.

4 Conclusions

Griko, as a peripheral dialect, is often considered as a source of information about past stages of the history of Greek language. That is indeed only partially correct, as the case of infinitive shows. Griko infinitive is usually considered as the prosecution of Medieval Greek infinitive, according to the opinion that they both feature infinitive after root modal and aspectual predicates. However, the aspectual predicates after which an infinitive is attested in Medieval Greek and in Griko do not coincide. Griko infinitive after ‘I finish’ has to be considered a loan translation from Salentino rather than a conservative property.

The process of replacement of infinitive by finite complements in Greek shows some striking similarities with the other Balkan languages, in that the predicate ‘be able’, alongside the future and the counterfactual auxiliaries are the last ones to still require an infinitive, even though it has become obsolete long ago elsewhere. As a possible line of investigation, I tried to account for

this spatial and diachronic parallelism assuming that the reason lies in the phenomenon of ‘restructuring’, even though clitic climbing is not involved in all Medieval Greek infinitive complements. Following Cinque (2004), the predicates that enter a restructuring configuration correspond to distinct heads of a hierarchy of functional projections: restructuring verbs are always functional, appearing in a monoclausal configuration with their infinitival complements, irrespective of whether or not they show transparency effects. Therefore, the replacement of the infinitive by a finite form can be accounted for as a process in which the respective functional heads are no longer lexicalized by verbs.

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