

Adjective-Noun combinations in the Greek of Italy. Polydefiniteness revisited

Cristina Guardiano (Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia)

Melita Stavrou (Aristotle University Thessaloniki)

1. Introduction and aim. This study investigates patterns of adjectival modification in the two Greek dialects spoken in *Grecia Salentina* (Salento, henceforth GR) and *Bovesia* (Southern Calabria, henceforth BO). We compare these dialects with some of the Romance dialects spoken in Southern Italy, i.e. *Sicilian* (SI), *Southern Calabrese* (SC), *Salentino* (SA) and *Northern Calabrese* (NC), along with (standard) Modern Greek (MG) and (standard) Italian (IT). Both GR and BO display strong constraints on prenominal adjectives, like the neighboring Romance dialects and unlike MG (where all adjectives can be placed prenominally). Postnominal adjectives, on the other hand, are part of a more complicated picture: while in BO (textual tradition) postnominal adjectives are articulated in definite DPs, like in MG, in GR they are never articulated, like in Romance.

One of the main targets of this study is re-consider the so-called polydefinite construction in MG (*to pedi to kalo/to kalo to pedi*, 'the child the good/the good the child'), whereby both the noun and the adjective are accompanied by the definite article. In particular, we try to detect whether the construction found in BO has all the interpretative effects that it has been claimed to have in MG.

2. Theoretical framework. 2.1 Dialects and syntactic change. The present study is placed within the framework of the *generative* approaches to dialectal variation (Black&Motapanyane 1996, Cornips 1998, Auer, Hinskens, Kerswill 2005, Barbiers&Cornips 2000, Adger&Trusdale 2007, a.o.). The phenomena inspected are likely to reveal interesting facets of language contact, which can be paralleled to similar situations featuring in the literature (Thomason&Kaufmann 1988; Barbiers&Cornips 2000; Bower 2006; Thomason 2001; Heine&Kuteva 2005; Hickey 2010, a.o.): they offer a convenient testing ground to explore the role that contact plays on syntactic change.

2.2 Polydefiniteness. In MG adjectives can occur postnominally only if accompanied by the definite article (in definite DPs). The phenomenon is called “determiner (or definiteness) spreading” (DS), and the noun phrase where articulated adjectives appear is dubbed “polydefinite” (Alexiadou *et al.* 2007 for discussion and references). Polydefinite noun phrases display a number of syntactic and interpretative properties not found in “monadic” DPs (Kolliakou 2004, Campos & Stavrou 2004, a.o.): adjectives in polydefinite DPs are interpreted restrictively, intersectively and usually as stage-level predicates. For these reasons, articulated adjectives in Greek have been claimed to instantiate indirect modification (Sproat&Shih 1991) and to correspond to postnominal adjectives in Romance (Alexiadou 2001, Alexiadou *et al.* 2007, Stavrou 2012).

3. Data collection and analysis. 3.1 Sources. All our data come from two types of sources: native speakers and written texts (grammars and mostly collections of traditional texts like tales, songs, etc). With only one exception, information collected from grammaticality judgments is consistent with that obtained from the literature. The exception is BO. Here, in particular concerning polydefinite DPs with postnominal adjectives, we noticed a discrepancy between the data collected from the literature (Caracausi&Rossi Taibi 1959, Falcone 1973, Crupi 1980, Condemi 1995), where polydefiniteness in argument nominal structures is regular and systematic (with very few exceptions) and those coming from the speakers, where postnominal adjectives are very rarely articulated, and polydefiniteness is assigned the label of an “archaism” by native speakers. In other words, texts seem to keep track of a pattern that has been removed from the actual speakers’ grammar, which, as a consequence, has become similar to GR and the rest of Romance. Written texts seem therefore to display a more conservative stage of the language, when that pattern was productive: speakers are today semi-speakers, since Greek in Bovesia is no more currently spoken as a real language nor learnt as a first language. With very few exceptions,

speakers practice it only in “artificial” contexts (such as interviews with linguists!). Here, we will examine the polydefinite pattern attested in written sources, as compared to postnominal unarticulated adjectives displayed in the rest of the area (BO speakers, GR and Romance).

3.2 Prenominal adjectives. In MG all adjectives and adjective types are prenominal with no exception. The common assumption is that the noun does not move, so that the order is always A<N. Greek also respects the hierarchies of adjectives that have been observed for languages in general (since Sproat and Shih 1991: *quantification* < *quality* < *size* < *shape/ color* < *provenance*). In IT, only some classes of adjectives (*quantification* < *quality* < *size*) go prenominally (*la prima bella piccola macchina blu tedesca*, ‘the first_(QUANT) nice_(QUAL) small_(SIZE) car blue_(COL) German_(PRO)’): the noun is assumed to move across the adjectival projections structurally merged prenominally (Longobardi 2001). The Romance dialects of Southern Italy explored here display stronger constraints: only *quantification* adjectives and a few *quality* adjectives (like *beautiful/good/bad* and their synonyms) can surface prenominally, while all the others are unexceptionally postnominal. This suggests that the noun raises across all prenominal adjectives but the highest ones. The same constraints operate on both GR and BO, which then appear to be more similar to Romance than to Greek.

3.3 Postnominal adjectives. In MG, postnominal adjectives are grammatical only in indefinite noun phrases and in polydefinites: there is agreement that postnominal adjectives are merged postnominally, and there is no evidence for noun movement. In GR, postnominal adjectives are never articulated: those that are not prenominal (cf. 3.2) are postnominal (with some doublets, having slightly different interpretation in pre and postN position: *melètisa ton orriò libro* / *melètisa ton libro orriò* ‘I read the beautiful book/I read the book beautiful’). In BO written texts, postnominal adjectives are articulated (in definite DPs, *ta cèrata ta makrìa* ‘the horns the long’), but are not articulated in oral speech (*i daskali cinùri* ‘the teachers young’). For IT (and the Romance dialects), postnominal position is attributed to noun (phrase) movement; some linguists also assume an original postnominal merge position, for instance inside a relative clause (Alexiadou 2001, Longobardi et al 2013 *supplementary material* a.o., *contra* Cinque 2010).

3.3. Analysis. We assume that in both GR and BO restrictions on prenominal adjectives are due to the movement of the noun to higher positions, like in the three neighboring Romance varieties, and unlike MG. The observed pattern was presumably introduced in the two Greek varieties as innovation under the pressure of contact (also massive lexical borrowing). Yet, BO appears to have preserved (as attested in textual tradition) a Greek pattern as well - that of postnominal articulated adjectives -, presumably as a consequence of the geographic and social isolation of the area. The fact that this pattern is no more preserved in today’s speakers language and BO is just like GR, simply points to a delayed contact effect, following from the “catastrophic” breaking of the isolation condition occurred over the past 40 years to the Greek-speaking communities in Bovesìa. This line of reasoning empirically supports two existing claims: (a) that pre- and postnominal adjectives are not reducible to the same pattern of modification in Greek (Alexiadou et al 2007) and Romance (Longobardi et al 2013 *supplementary material*) and, (b) that articulated adjectives in Greek are parallel (in interpretation basically) to (certain) postnominal adjectives in Romance. So, if the pattern of postnominal modification existed independently in the two language groups (Greek and Romance), then one of the two changes induced under the pressure of contact, namely the (gradual and, admittedly, uneven) abolition of the article before postnominal adjectives, turns out to be a surface (lexical) change, rather than a deep structural one. A more detailed exploration of the second change, i.e. the introduction of N-movement and the question whether postnominal adjectives emerge out of N-movement or are base-generated there (or both), is deferred to future research and to more illuminating empirical evidence.