

The syntax of postverbal subjects in a heritage Trentino variety

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Introduction. In this paper we discuss clitic selection and (un)agreement patterns in existential and unaccusative constructions of Stivorian, an Eastern Trentino dialect spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We show that Stivorian uses two different types of clitic in these constructions, and we suggest that the choice between the two is determined by deixis.

The village of Štivor was founded by a group of emigrants from Trentino (Valsugana) in 1882/83. Today, there is a small community of third generation heritage speakers that are all bilinguals. Despite having undergone an intensive contact with Serbian, in general Stivorian has retained the Trentino agreement pattern described in Brandi & Cordin (1981, 1989). It has obligatory subject clitics ('SCLs') agreeing for person, number and gender with the subject (1).

(1) *Le ragazze le era come anca noi.*
the girls they.SCL were like too we 'The girls were also like us.'

Data. In this paper we discuss clitic selection in Stivorian existential and unaccusative constructions with post-verbal subjects, basing the discussion on spontaneous data collected in our fieldwork. As other Trentino varieties, Stivorian uses the locative clitic *ghe* in **existential** constructions (2a). However, unlike Trentino, in the same constructions we also find the SCL *l'* (2b). The use of this clitic in existential constructions is unexpected in Trentino, but it is attested in some other Northern Italian varieties (e.g. Friulian, Ladin and northern Venetan varieties) that, unlike Stivorian, generally lack the clitic *ghe* in their inventory.

(2a) *Gh'è tanti ucraini qua ncora.*
LOC.CL=is many Ukrainians here still 'There are still many Ukrainians here.'

(2b) *Su quele tere l'è i serbi.*
on those lands SCL=is the Serbs 'The Serbs are on those lands.'

The clitic *ghe* is also used in **unaccusative** constructions with a postverbal subject (3a). In this case it alternates with an agreeing SCL that triggers agreement on the verb (3b). Note that Trentino has no SCLs and default agreement in cases like (3), Brandi & Cordin (1981, 1989):

(3a) *Gh'è vegnuo todeschi.*
LOC.CL=is come.3SGM Germans 'Germans came.'

(3b) *Ntel 1883 i è rivai i primi italiani.*
In.the 1883 they.SCL are arrived.3PLM the first Italians 'The first Italians came in 1883.'

At first sight, the choice of the clitic in (2) and (3) could be explained by means of the Definiteness Effect, which affects existential sentences in English and a number of Romance varieties (Milsark 1974; Belletti 1988, 2006; Manzini & Savoia 2005; Belletti & Bianchi 2016). If this hypothesis applied to Stivorian, *ghe* would be restricted to indefinite, *l'* and the personal clitics to definite subjects. However, this hypothesis is contradicted by (4a,b), where *ghe* is used with definite subjects, and by (4c), where *l'* occurs with indefinite subjects:

(4a) *Quando che gh'è stà la libartà.*
when that LOC.CL=is been.3SGM the freedom 'When we became free.'

(4b) *Gh'è vegnuo el presidente dela comuna, qua Šibovska.*
LOC.CL=is come.3SGM the president of the municipality here Šibovska.
'The mayor came here, to Sibovska.'

(4c) *No l'era islamici.*
not SCL=was Muslims 'There were no Muslims [there].' (NB: not "They were not M.")

Instead, a close inspection of the data lead us to propose that the choice between *ghe* and a SCL depends on the deixis of the verb. In fact, *ghe* occurs when the event or state is located, implicitly or explicitly, close to the deictic center (represented by the speaker). When it is not, then a SCL is used – an expletive in existentials and a person clitic with unaccusative verbs. Example (5) clearly shows this contrast: the expletive form changes together with the deixis.

(5) [...] *a Srbac, che gh'è un paese qua. L'è la Sava là.*
 in Srbac that LOC.CL=is a village here SCL=is the Sava there
 '... in Srbac, where there is a village. The Sava is there.'

(5) shows that both clitics have a deictic interpretation. This is different from the northern Venetan varieties mentioned above, where the *l'* might not presuppose any location at all (Bentley 2015). Indeed, it seems that in Stivorian *l'* matches the features of the distal adverb. Note that these rules apply to temporal deixis as well (6a,b): the proximal or distal interpretation can refer to an event that is respectively closer or further away from the utterance time:

(6a) *Deso gh'è i ucraïni.*
 now LOC.CL=is the Ukrainians 'The Ukrainians are here now.'

(6b) [...] *ndel 1943, co l'era la guera.*
 in-the1943 when SCL=was the war '... in 1943, when there was war.'

Note that similar selection mechanisms are found in Borgomanerese (Tortora 1997) and in Campidanese (Bentley et al. 2015). Tortora (1997) shows that the Borgomanerese weak locative clitic *ngh* is used in default agreement unaccusative structures when the location targeted by the motion verb includes the speaker, otherwise full agreement is chosen. Tortora (1997) proposes that *ngh* occupies the same position as the agreeing SCL. While the agreeing clitic functions as an agreement marker with a referential *pro* in Spec,IP, *ngh* marks the agreement with a locative *pro* in Spec,IP (7a,b):

(7a) [_{IP} *pro-loc_i* [_{I'} *ngh_i'è* [_{VP} ...]]] (adapted from Tortora 1997: 55-56)

(7b) [_{IP} *pro_i* [_{I'} *l_i'è* [_{VP} ...]]]

Analysis. We suggest that in Stivorian the clitic *ghe* also occurs when deixis is [+proximal]. If it is [-proximal], *ghe* is ruled out and Stivorian resorts to a full agreement pattern in VS sentences and to a default clitic form in existentials. First of all, we note that *ghe* and SCLs are in complementary distribution in the contexts examined here. We thus propose that *ghe* has been reanalyzed in Stivorian as a marker of a 'matching' between the time or place in which the sentence is uttered (the *hic et nunc* of the speaker) and the time or place in which the event happens. In more formal terms, as a first approximation we propose that Utterance Time ('UT') is codified in C (see Giorgi & Pianesi 1997, 2000; Bianchi 2000; Giorgi 2010), and that it contains not only a temporal, but also a spatial anchoring of the uttering. If UT matches with the time/place in which the event takes place, the clitic *ghe* is used. If, on the other hand, there is a mismatch, *ghe* is ruled out and Stivorian resorts to a subject clitic, which is necessary to recover the sentence – recall that Stivorian always requires a clitic when the subject is postverbal. In these cases, the verbal (un)agreement with the subject is parasitic on the type of clitic used: with *ghe* and *l'* it is a default 3sg.m., with agreeing SCLs it matches the ϕ -features of the clitic – as can be seen by the form of the past participle.

Conclusions. Summing up, Stivorian shows two innovations with respect to Trentino: i) reanalysis of *ghe*, whose use is extended to VS sentences, but at the same time restricted to cases of proximal deixis; ii) when *ghe* is ruled out, a subject clitic must be used; the choice between an expletive and an agreeing SCL depends on the sentence type. The exact formulation of the formal rules governing the selection of *ghe* vs. SCLs will be the topic of future research.

Selected Literature: A. Belletti & V. Bianchi. 2016. Definiteness Effect and unaccusative subjects: An Overview and some new thoughts. In S. Fischer et al. (eds), *Definiteness effects: Bilingual, typological and diachronic variation*. Cambridge: CSP, 14-65. Ch. Tortora. 1997. *The Syntax and the Semantics of the Weak Locative*. PhD thesis: Univ. of Delaware. D. Bentley, F.M. Ciconte & S. Cruschina. 2015. *Existentials and Locatives in Romance Dialects of Italy*. Oxford: OUP. V. Bianchi. 2000. On finiteness and Nominative Case licensing. *Quaderni del laboratorio di linguistica*, 145-67. A. Giorgi & F. Pianesi. 2000. Sequence of Tense phenomena in Italian: a morphosyntactic analysis. *Probus* 1-32.