

The prepositional elements in the ‘have-to’ deontic periphrasis in southern Italian dialects: a case of emerging bound morpheme?

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Southern Italian dialects witness a periphrastic construction conveying deonticity and futurity which is formed through the conjugated verb ‘have’, a preposition and the infinitive of the lexical verb (1).

- (1) *Craja am- a ji alla posta.* (Northern Calabrese)
tomorrow have.1PL.PRS.IND to go.INF to.the.FSG post-office.FSG
‘Tomorrow we need to go/we will go to the post office.’

This periphrasis, whose historical origin is represented in (2), is the outcome of a diachronic process that involves several changes, which include the reanalysis of HABERE from lexical to functional verb and the restructuring of an erstwhile bi-clausal structure into a mono-clausal one (Ledgeway 2012:136-7; Adams 2013:655; Andriani et al. 2020:332-5).

- (2) HABERE (+DE/DE-AB/AD) + infinitive

In this paper I will focus on the morphosyntactic and morphological role of the preposition-like element of the ‘have-to’ periphrasis in a selection of southern Italian dialects (SIDs). In SIDs the infinitival clause of the ‘have-to’ periphrasis is mostly introduced by the prepositions ‘de’ < Lat. DE ‘of’, ‘a’ < AD ‘to’, ‘da’ < DE+AB ‘from’. See underscored *a* ‘to’ in (3).

- (3) *As- a fatigà stasira?* (Northern Calabrese)
have.2SG.IND.PRS to work.INF tonight
‘Will you (have to) work tonight?’

In the ‘have-to’ periphrasis the prepositions also underwent grammaticalization, as from prepositions typically which contribute to denoting directions and positions in space, they became non-finite prepositional complementisers. We can assume that, subsequently, the complementizer function was progressively weakened and eventually became redundant due to the structural change of the deontic periphrasis from from bi-clausal to mono-clausal structure.

Despite the in-depth investigations on the diachronic trajectory and the outcomes of the deontic periphrasis in SIDs, interest has been shown towards the function and the nature of the preposition-like elements which nowadays still frequently appear in the deontic/future periphrasis in SIDs.

I shall advance the hypothesis whereby the prepositional element like ‘a’ in (2) and (3) are no longer free morphosyntactic elements and, rather, exhibit properties that, from a morphological perspective, are typically displayed by clitics or affixes. In order to test this element’s morphological nature as well as its possible structural behavior of linker, I will discuss in this paper the results of phonological as well as syntactic tests inspired by Zwicky & Pullum (1983) and Spencer & Luís (2012), a.o.

I will also define the semantic value of the prepositional element *a* ‘to’ in conjunction with the verb ‘have’ which acts as the strong hosting element.

The data I discuss have been collected through in-loco fieldwork investigation in Calabria in July-August 2022.

References

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