

On the diachrony of the ‘present perfect’ in Sicilian. Insights from resultatives
Sara N. Cardullo, *University of Cambridge*

This talk aims to draw attention to the diachronic significance of the morphosyntactic strategies used for codifying resultative aspectual value – defined as the present result of a past action – in some Sicilian dialects. By juxtaposing existing research on the distribution of the present perfect (hereafter, ‘analytic form’) with novel data on the strategies used to codify resultative value, it is argued that theories on the diachronic evolution of the analytic form in Sicilian should be revisited.

We take as a starting point Harris’ (1982) description of Sicilian (and southern Calabrian) for which the resultative is said to be the only value conveyed by the analytic form. The author takes this to be the most conservative of four synchronic patterns across Romance, which he interprets as stages along a single diachronic pathway in the development from the late Latin resultative periphrasis (HABEO FACTUM). While Harris’ account does not accurately represent the distribution of the analytic form in these extreme southern Italian varieties, we maintain that there is some truth to his assertion that this verb form may be used with resultative value.

In particular, many scholars have observed that the analytic form is used with functions such as the so-called *inclusive* value (1), defined as “durative or iterative situations encompassing the Speech Time” (Squartini & Bertinetto 2000), and the so-called *experiential* value (2), used for situation types “that ha[ve] held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present” (Dahl & Hedin 2000) (cf. Skubic 1973-5, Mocciaro 1978, Alfonzetti 1997, *inter alia*).

- (1) Aguannu un **a chiuvutu** (Inclusive value)
this.year NEG AUX rain.PTP
‘This year it hasn’t rained’
- (2) Un c’**aiu statu** mai a Palermu (Experiential value)
NEG loc=AUX stay.PTP never to Palermo
‘I’ve never been to Palermo’ (Mocciaro 1978:346-7)

While the experiential value may be semantically connected to the resultative value (i.e. with ‘experience’ understood as the result of a past action), the resultative value proper is apparently not amongst the values codified by the analytic form: counterexamples have been argued to fall under either the inclusive or experiential values (Squartini & Bertinetto 2000). The resultative value, Alfonzetti (1997) observes, may actually be codified by the preterite (hereafter, ‘synthetic form’): in (3) it may be used to signal the enduring result of the arrival of/reaching the new year.

- (3) Annu novu **vinisti** finalmenti (Resultative value)
year new come.2SG.PST finally
‘New year, you’re here at last’ (Skubic 1973-5:391)

The data presented in this talk confirms the use of this strategy (4-5) (cf. the adverbial ‘for/since three hours’), and further adds, as an option for transitive verbs, the use of *aviri* ‘have’ + PTP (6).

- (4) U jattu un è vivu, **uriu** (Resultative value)
the cat NEG be.3SG.PRES.IND. alive die.3.SG.PST
‘The cat isn’t alive, it’s dead’
- (5) U jattu **uriu** javi tri uri (Resultative value)
The cat die.3.SG.PST have.3SG.PRS.IND three hours
‘The cat has been dead for three hours’

(6) **Jaju** i mani **arruvinati** (Resultative value)
 have.1SG.PRS.IND the hands ruin.PTP.PL
 ‘My hands are ruined’

While this latter form (6) is intimately tied to the Sicilian analytic form, it shows some important differences. Similarly to Amaral & Howe (2012:§3.1) for Portuguese, it will be argued that there are *two* ‘have + past participle’ structures in Sicilian varieties, which are used with different aspectual values, and crucially, which have different morphosyntactic characteristics. One type is used with the inclusive and experiential values (1-2), and the other, with the resultative value (5). Among their deep-seated morphosyntactic differences, this latter type shows (a) (adjectival) past participle agreement with the direct object (in this case, of ‘have’), and (b) freer word order, with the possibility of the direct object occurring between the past participle and ‘have’ (which here is arguably less an auxiliary, and more a copula with possessive value). These characteristics, both absent from the first type – which is clearly more grammaticalized than the second – are instead reminiscent of the late Latin resultative periphrasis from which both types derive (cf. Ramat 1982, Vincent 1982, Ledgeway 2012:130ff, 317ff, *inter alia*).

These observations imply that despite its limitations, there are important insights in Harris’ account: Sicilian indeed has a resultative periphrasis *aviri* + PTP, and it is a highly conservative form mirroring late Latin (though not unique to Sicilian, cf. Squartini & Bertinetto 2000, Amaral & Howe 2012). We argue that the productive use of this structure was flanked by the rise of a further grammaticalized version presenting (a) morphosyntactic changes (cf. above); and (b) aspectual specialization, i.e. acquisition of inclusive and experiential values. As in other cases, grammaticalization of verb forms does not necessarily lead to the loss of the structures they derive from (cf. Adams 2013:648 fn.8). Finally, we suggest that the productive use of the synthetic form with the resultative value is conservative, in line with the aspectual, stative value of the Latin *perfectum* it derives from (cf. Ramat 1987:§8.4.2).

In conclusion, this topic would greatly benefit from an in-depth diatopic study on the specific aspectual values and morphosyntactic characteristics of the *aviri* periphrases in Sicily, which would surely reveal more variation than has been described thus far. However, we think the proposal put forth here, which unites two different approaches (Harris 1982 vs. many scholars of the Sicilian past tense distribution, cf. above), are a step in the right direction, and can shed light on the much-studied development of the ‘present perfect’ in Romance, and especially in Sicilian.

REFERENCES

- Alfonzetti, G. 1997. “Ora la luna si nascose, ma prima era bellissima”. *Passato prossimo e passato remoto nell’italiano di Sicilia.* *Aspetti della variabilità. ricerche linguistiche siciliane*, 11–48. Palermo: CSFLS.
- Amaral, P. & C. Howe. 2012. “Nominal and verbal plurality in the diachrony of the Portuguese present perfect.” In *Verbal Plurality and Distributivity*, ed. by P. C. Hofherr & B. Laca, 25–54. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Dahl, Ö. & E. Hedin. 2000. “Current relevance and event reference.” In *Tense and Aspect in the Languages of Europe*, ed. by Ö. Dahl, 385–401. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Harris, M. 1982. “The ‘Past Simple’ and the ‘Present Perfect’ in Romance.” In *Studies in the Romance verb. Essays offered to Joe Cremona*, ed. by N. Vincent & M. Harris, 42–70. London/Canberra: Croom Helm.
- Ledgeway, A. 2012. *From Latin to Romance Morphosyntactic Typology and Change*. Oxford: OUP.
- Mocciaro, A. 1978. “Passato prossimo e passato remoto in siciliano. I risultati di un’inchiesta.” *La ricerca dialettale*, 2: 343–49.
- Ramat, P. 1982. “Ein Beispiel von ‘REANALYSIS’, Typologisch Betrachtet.” *Folia Linguistica*, 16 (1–4): 365–84.
- Skubic, M. 1973. “Le due forme del preterito nell’area Siciliana.” In *Atti della accademia di scienze, lettere e arti di Palermo*, 4 (33, 34): 225–93; 353–427.
- Squartini, M., & P. M. Bertinetto. 2000. “The simple and compound past in Romance languages.” In *Tense and Aspect in the Languages of Europe*, ed. by Ö. Dahl, 403–39. New York/Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Vincent, N. 1982. “The development of the auxiliaries HABERE and ESSE in Romance.” In *Studies in the Romance Verb. Essays Offered to Joe Cremona*, ed. by N. Vincent & M. Harris, 71–96. London/Canberra: Croom Helm.