

Phrasal verbs in Trentino-South Tyrol and Veneto

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This paper examines the areal distribution of phrasal verbs in the Italian dialects and minority languages spoken in the autonomous region of Trentino-South Tyrol and the region of Veneto. It provides a descriptive account of the attestations of locative and aspectual phrasal verbs in the (Rhaeto-)Romance and Germanic varieties spoken in these regions and aims to document the occurrence of phrasal verbs in a wide sample of locations, language varieties, and age groups. The data was collected via an online questionnaire composed of translation tasks, targeted at the dialects and minority languages spoken in the regions of Veneto and Trentino-South Tyrol. In total 764 participants across 10 different language varieties responded to the questionnaire, allowing for a fine-mazed analysis of the distribution of phrasal verbs across this area. Most of the sample is formed by participants speaking a Venetan dialect, a smaller percentage represents the Ladin varieties (Anpezan, Badiot, Fassan, Fodom, or Gardenese), and a handful of participants are speakers of the Cimbrian and Mòcheno minority languages. The average age of participants was 45,2 and 58% were female.

Phrasal verbs are a well-known phenomenon found both in German(ic) languages and in northern Italian varieties. While phrasal verbs in Germanic and Romance varieties have superficial similarities, the Italo-Romance phrasal verb construction is the result of a language development internal to Romance, and not the result of German calques (e.g. Cordin 2011; Bidese et al. 2016; Iacobini 2009). Phrasal verbs exist on a continuum from transparent constructions, e.g. *andare su* ‘to go up’, to aspectual phrasal verbs, e.g. *bere su* ‘to drink up’, to opaque or idiomatic expressions, e.g. *magnar fora* ‘to spend all your money, lit. to eat out’ (cf. White 2012). Traditionally phrasal verbs are characteristic of dialect, but there is productive transfer of transparent Venetan phrasal verbs into Veneto regional Italian and the lower stylistic registers of Standard Italian (Benincà and Poletto 2005). Despite the relatively high prestige of the Venetan dialect and the regional Italian variety, the younger generation is not learning dialect to the same degree that older generations were. Since transfer to regional and standard Italian is primarily reserved for transparent phrasal verbs, this begs the question of to what degree aspectual phrasal verbs are acquired by younger generation speakers, especially as compared to phrasal verbs with a more transparent locative meaning (1a). Not only age but also location is a relevant factor. In the historic contact zone between the German and Italian dialects, e.g., Trentino-South Tyrol, there are phrasal verbs present in the local Venetan dialects that have been acquired through calquing from the neighboring Tyrolean varieties. This borrowing is often attested with aspectual constructions, like for example (Trentino) Venetan *lavare su* derived from Tyrolean *owaschen* ‘to wash up/clean the dishes’ (Casalicchio and Cordin 2020), see examples (1b) and (1c) respectively. In locations of long-term language contact, maintenance of these phrasal verbs is expected due to structural support from the Tyrolean pattern.

- (1) a. *Domam i operai va su su=l coèrto.*¹
Tomorrow DEF.ART.PL.M workers go:3 up up=DEF.ART.SG.M roof
‘Tomorrow the workers go up on the roof.’
(Venetan (Carano, TN), Rabanus et al. 2022, S0126_tre_U0624)
- b. *Chi lava zó i piatti stasera?*
who wash:3 off DEF.ART.PL.M plates tonight
‘Who doing the washing up/cleaning the dishes tonight?’
(Venetan (Carano, TN), Rabanus et al. 2022, S0117_tre_U0085)
- c. *Es Wasch-en lei die Madlen die Teller oo.*
EXPL wash-3PL only DEF.ART.PL girls DEF.ART.PL dishes off
‘Only the girls clean the dishes/do the washing up.’

¹ Abbreviations: 3 third person, ART article, DEF definite, EXPL expletive, M masculine, PL plural, SG singular.

(Tyrolean (Meran, BZ); Rabanus et al. 2022, S116_cim_U0055)

The sample of Venetan data shows that age is not a significant indicator of the use of phrasal verbs, neither aspectual nor locative, but that location does play a role. Aspectual phrasal verbs are attested in higher percentages along the border with Tyrolean speaking areas, meaning the provinces of Trento and Belluno, and historically Cimbrian speaking areas, e.g. the Asiago high plateau in the province of Vicenza. Higher attestations are also found in rural communities in contrast to urban centres (e.g. the cities of Trento and Belluno). Locative phrasal verbs in contrast are produced in much higher numbers overall and they are found across the entire Venetan-speaking area.

Aside from investigation into internal language variation, the sample allows for a comparative approach to phrasal verbs across language family boundaries. This is of specific interest for the minority languages of Mòcheno and Cimbrian, which are endangered language varieties seeing strong influence from the neighbouring Italian dialects. In these cases, phrasal verbs provide valuable insight into the effects of language contact and language obsolescence. For example, in Cimbrian spoken in the location of Lusérn (Trento), the phrasal verb *auspüaln* ‘to wash up’ is still actively in use, whereas in the Cimbrian spoken in the Seven Municipalities, it has been reduced to a simple verb *waschen* ‘to wash’ (see examples [2a] and [2b] respectively).

- (2) a. *Di diarnan spüal-n au di piattn*
DEF.ART.PL girls wash-3PL off DEF.ART.PL plates
‘The girls are washing the dishes.’

(Lusérn Cimbrian, Rabanus et al. 2022; S0116_cim_U0056)

- b. *Ber wasch-et di täller haint?*
who wash-3SG DEF.ART.PL plates today
‘Who washes the dishes today?’

(Seven Municipalities Cimbrian, Rabanus et al. 2022; S0119_cim_U1025)

To conclude, phrasal verbs are attested in all the dialects and minority languages spoken in the regions of Veneto and Trentino-South Tyrol. While both aspectual and locative phrasal verbs are commonly used, there are indications that locative phrasal verbs are more productive and more likely to be produced by speakers than aspectual phrasal verbs.

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