"Non-iconic" and non-concatenative feminine plurals in northern Gallo-Italic varieties: synchrony and diachrony.

Jessica Ivani, University of Zurich

Italian first class plurals are formed by inflecting the stem with a number morpheme: cf. [aˈmika] (friend.f.sg) ~ [aˈmike] (friend.f.sg), [aˈmiko] (friend.m.sg) ~ [aˈmitʃi] (friend.m.pl). A group of Gallo-Italic varieties rather shows a different structure, cf. Lugo dialect (Emilia Romagna; Maiden & Parry 1997: 21): [ˈspoza] 'bride', [spoz] 'brides', [spoz] 'groom', [spuz] 'grooms'. Here, masculine (second class) plurals are formed through a metaphony-induced stem change process (triggered by the final vowel, now disappeared), while feminine first class plurals are characterized by lack of inflection and opposed to fully inflected singulars, classifying these plurals as anti-iconic and typologically rare (Corbett 2000).

In this contribution, I focus on the structure of feminine first class plurals. Extracting data from Atlante Linguistico Italo-Svizzero (AIS), Atlante Linguistico Italiano (ALI), as well as dialectal dictionaries and descriptions, I identify a linguistic sub-area within northern Gallo-Italic varieties where this "non-iconic" strategy occurs. This area, that comprises Gallo-Italic varieties spoken in Switzerland and partially Lombardia, Emilia-Romagna and northern Marche regions, displays high diatopic variation with respect to this strategy, revealing different types: a) 'regular' anti-iconic strategy (e.g. Ticinese *gamb stort*); b) partial anti-iconic. e.g. Bolognese *gamb storti*; c) non-concatenative and partially substractive, e.g. Milanese *gam stort*, and d) inflected plurals with *-i*, cf. Parmense *gambi storti*.

I will illustrate how these inflected and partially inflected plurals in *-i*, such as types d) and b) might suggest possible diachronic processes that took place in the area. First, *-i* is the only inflectional morpheme allowed for first class feminine plurals; second, inflectional first class feminine plural *-i* is attested elsewhere only in the neighbouring varieties that include those of eastern Lombardy (Valtellinese) and western Piedmont (Alessandrino, Astigiano, Vercellese). I will argue, using Bolognese historical materials such as texts and poetry dating back to various phases between the XVI and XVIII century, that the inflected feminine plurals in *-i* are the result of a "restitution" process to originally inflected feminine inflected plural stems, and that this process originated on quantifiers and demonstratives to then spread to qualitative adjectives and finally nouns. I will conclude by outlining hypothetical scenarios behind the restitution process and describing the current synchronic context using recently first-hand collected data.

References

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