

# AxPart prepositions in Trentino varieties and dialectal classification \*

*Martina Cremonini*

(Università degli Studi di Padova)

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyse the syntactic behaviour of prepositional phrases (PPs) in the Romance dialects of Trentino, in Northern Italy, and verify if the traditional dialectal classification based on phonological and morpho-syntactic isoglosses holds also from the point of view of the syntax of PPs. The data I present were collected for my M.A. thesis work and come from different points of inquiry in Trentino (Primiero, Val di Fassa, Valsugana, Val Rendena, Val di Sole, Val di Fiemme, Alto Garda, Val di Non, Valli Giudicarie, Val di Cembra, Altopiano di Pinè, Altopiano della Paganella). In order to build a classification of the varieties from the point of view of the prepositional syntax I refer mainly to the work by Garzonio and Rossi (2016; 2019). The two authors have proposed that the variation observed in the Italo-Romance domain is based on the way languages encode the possessive/inclusion relation between the Ground of the PP and a silent DPPlace in complex PPs (Terzi 2008; Cinque 2010). By ‘complex PPs’ I intend PPs introduced by lexical Ps, like *under* or *inside*, which are labelled Axial Parts (or AxParts) in the formal literature (see Svenonius 2006). The subtle semantic differences emerging from the data can be seen as a by-product of a different underlying structure, analysed through the following syntactic representation:

(1) [PPDir [PPStat [RelViewPP [DPPlace [AxPart] [ $\subseteq$ P [DP *Ground* ] ] [PLACE]...]

After a presentation of the traditional isoglosses used for the classification of this area, I analyse each sub-group taking into exam specific data, and compare them according to the classical subdivisions. Finally, I take into exam the particular behaviour of Ps corresponding to *in/inside* in complex PPs, assigning them a precise role in the structure mentioned above.

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## 2. The dialects of Trentino: a linguistic overview

Trentino-Alto Adige is located at the boundary between the Romance and the Germanic linguistic areas. Due to its complex political history, there is a high degree of linguistic variation. The province of Bolzano, or Alto Adige, is predominantly German/Tyrolean, with the exception of dolomitic Ladin areas, where Rhaeto-Romance varieties are spoken. The presence of Italian speakers is relatively recent and there is no local Italo-Romance variety different from the regional variant of Standard Italian. The province of Trento, on the other hand, displays a complex picture and it is not possible to identify a unique Italo-Romance type spoken within its boundaries.

In the literature (cf. Cordin 1997; 2002; Loporcaro 2009: 101-102), it is acknowledged that the province of Trento, unlike other Italian regions, is not uniform from a linguistic point of view. More precisely, it is a zone of transition, where varieties can be grouped in four different types; the North and the West of Trentino have been influenced by Lombard varieties. The South-central area has many features in common with the Veneto dialects. The areas of Val di Cembra and Altopiano di Pinè represent the more peculiar transition area, where dialects are of a mixed type. Finally, there is an Eastern area, where Ladin dialects are predominant. All the dialects spoken in Trentino share many features with other Northern Italian varieties. It is possible to identify the following phonological and morpho-syntactic phenomena:

- a) degemination of consonants: *bela* ‘beautiful (fem.)’ (cf. Italian *bella*);
- b) voicing of intervocalic consonants: *rivada* ‘arrived (fem., past part.)’ (cf. Italian *arrivata*);
- c) nominative clitic pronouns (the so-called “subject clitics”) for the second, third and sixth person: *te vai, el va, la va, i va, le va* ‘you go, he goes, she goes, they (masc.) go, they (fem.) go’;
- d) enclisis of subject clitics in interrogative clauses: *vat?* ‘are you going?’, opposed to *te vai* ‘you go’;
- e) auxiliary HAVE in more contexts than other Italo-Romance domains, like the reflexive:

(2) el s’ha sposà  
he= REFL=has married  
‘He has married.’

f) obligatory dative doubling:

- (3) al Mario non \*(ghe=) pias sta musica  
to-the Mario not to-him pleases this music  
'Mario does not like this music.'

g) *wh*-Complementizer structures: *quando che* 'when', *chi che* 'who';

h) relative clauses with the complementizer and a resumptive clitic:

- (4) na putela che el Mario ghe va ensema...  
a girl that the Mario to-her= goes together  
'A girl with whom Mario has an affair...'

i) Cleft structures in interrogative clauses: *chi è che te manda?* 'who sent you?'

As observed before, the Western area has many linguistic features in common with Lombardy, i.e. with Gallo-Italic varieties, some of which are:

- a) loss of final nasals: *vi* 'wine' (cf. Italian *vino*);
- b) loss of final vowels except /a/: *bas* 'low' (cf. Italian *basso*);
- c) presence of rounded front vowels /y/ and /ø/ (traditionally called *vocali turbate*): /føk/ 'fire' (cf. Italian *fuoco* < *foco*);
- d) lowering of /e/ to /ɛ/ in closed syllables: /lep/ 'wood' (cf. Italian /lep:o/);
- e) outcome *u* or *ou* from proto-Romance /o/: *nevu/nevou* 'nephew' (cf. Italian *nipote*);
- f) outcome *i* from proto-Romance /e/: *tila* 'cloth' (cf. Italian *tela*);
- g) palatalization of final *-t* and *-n* in the plural: /asen/ 'donkey', /aseɲ/ 'donkeys';
- h) presence of the suffix *-er* from Latin *-ariu(s)*: *ferèr* 'smith';
- i) fourth person verbal ending *-om*.

The varieties of Southern Trentino share many features with the Venetan ones. In particular, the properties in common are the following:

- a) absence of rounded front vowels /y/ and /ø/;

- b) conservation of final vowels;
- c) conservation of final nasals;
- d) affricate consonants derived from liquid plus /j/ clusters;
- e) suffix *-o* for the first person: *tògo* ‘I take’ (opposed to /tøk/ in western varieties);
- f) suffix *-emo* for the fourth person: *semo* ‘we are’;
- g) suffix *-est-* for the past participle;
- h) endings in *-o/-a* (masc./fem.) for second class adjectives (*grando* ‘big’ instead of *grande*).

In Valle di Cembra and in Altopiano di Pinè, the so-called “mixed areas”, the features of Lombard dialects blend with the ones of Veneto’s dialects:

- a) loss of final vowels except /a/;
- b) presence of rounded front vowels /y/ and /ø/.

Finally, in the Eastern region there are Ladin varieties fully belonging to the Rhaeto-Romance area.

In this traditional classification, there are no isoglosses based on the status and the properties of PPs. In this paper I intend to test the validity of these subdivisions in relation to PPs and verify to what extent the analyses proposed for the PP structure in Italian can be applied to Trentino varieties.

### 3. PPs in Western Trentino dialects

As discussed in the previous section, the Trentino varieties can be divided into fairly homogeneous and distinct groups on the basis of several linguistic phenomena. However, when taking into consideration the P system, the picture is quite different, since the survey data show a significantly complex picture.

In fact, among the Trentino areas, only the Lombard and the mixed ones behave in a homogeneous way, quite consistently with the traditional subdivision. Looking at the Veneto and Ladin area instead, it is noticeable how the data I collected present a high degree of internal variation.

In this section I will analyse the Western area. Here the syntax of complex PPs and the selection of the functional P are similar to the standard Italian system, as already observed by Garzonio and Rossi (2019) for the Gallo-Italic variety of Dosolo, near Mantua.

A good example of the behavioural linearity of these varieties can be found in the translations of the adverbial usage of the preposition *addosso* ‘over; against’. For *Mi sono versato l’acqua addosso* ‘I spilt the water all over myself’ all the dialects use the same lexical form, without any following or preceding functional P.

- (5) a. M’o trat **ados** tua l’acqua (Val Rendena)  
 b. Em son petada **adoss** tutt l’acqua (Val di Sole)  
 c. Me sen reversà **adoss** tuta l’achja (Val di Non)  
 d. Me son reversada **ados** tuta l’acqua (Valli Giudicare)  
 e. Me son butada **ados** tuta l’acqua (Altopiano della Paganella)

Furthermore, taking into account *sotto* ‘under’ (*Gianni abita proprio sotto di lui* ‘Gianni lives exactly under him’) and *sopra* ‘on; over’ (*Gianni abita proprio sopra di lui* ‘Gianni lives exactly over him’) plus a pronominal Ground, the data show that all the varieties require a functional P after the lexical one. The form of this functional P varies depending on the dialect taken into account, but it is always related to the encoding of genitive and source relations. We will find then ‘on’/‘under’ with *di/de* ‘of’:

- (6) a. Giani el viu propri **sora de** el  
 b. Giani el viu propri **soto de** el (Val di Non)
- (7) a. El Giani l’abita propri **sora de** el  
 b. El Giani l’abita propri **sota de** el (Valli Giudicarie)
- (8) a. El Giani el abita propri **sora de** elo  
 b. El Giani el abita propri **sota de** elo (Altopiano della Paganella)

Alternatively, ‘on’/‘under’ are coupled with *da* ‘from’:

- (9) a. Giani al sta propriu **sora da** ul  
 b. Giani al sta propriu **suta da** ul (Val Rendena)

- (10) a. El Giani el sta propi *su aot da* el  
 b. El Giani el sta propi *giò bass da* el (Val di Sole)

Finally, these varieties optionally display the structure with *a* ‘to’ as functional P when the Ground is not a bare pronoun (cf. Garzonio and Rossi 2019 on Dosolo). This can be observed in the translations of *La palla è caduta dentro al pozzo* ‘The ball fell into the well’ (11), *La palla è caduta dentro a questo* ‘The ball fell into this’ (12), *Ho guardato la classifica e sei sotto Gianni* ‘I looked at the chart and you are below Gianni’ (13). Notice that in the example (11c) from Val di Non the complex PP is formed by the lexical P and a functional P corresponding to ‘in’, *en t*. I will come back to these cases in section 7.

- (11) a. Al balòn l’è plumbà *dintru al* pozz (Val Rendena) +*a*  
 b. La bala la è crodada *en t*’ el pozz (Val di Sole) -*a*  
 c. La bala l’è crodada *enter en tel* pozz (Val di Non) -*a* (+‘in’)  
 d. La bala l’è crodada *dent al* pozz (Valli Giudicarie) +*a*  
 e. La bala l’è crodada *enter al* pozz (Altopiano della Paganella) +*a*
- (12) a. Al balòn l’è plumbà *dintru* stu laor (Val Rendena) -*a*  
 b. La bala l’è crodada *en te* sto (Val di Sole) -*a*  
 c. La bala l’è crodada *enter* chi (Val di Non) -*a*  
 d. La bala l’è crodada *dent a* sto laor (Valli Giudicarie) +*a*  
 e. La bala l’è crodada *enter a* jesto (Altopiano della Paganella) +*a*
- (13) a. Ho vardà la classifica e ti se *suta* Giani (Val Rendena) -*a*  
 b. Hai vardà la classifica e ti es *sott al* Giani (Val di Sole) +*a*  
 c. Hai vardà la classifica e es *sotta al* Giani (Val di Non) +*a*  
 d. Ho vardà la classifica e te se *sota al* Giani (Valli Giudicarie) +*a*  
 e. Ho vardà la clasifija e ses *sota al* Giani (Altopiano della Paganella) +*a*

Summarizing, these varieties behave as expected assuming that they belong to the Gallo-Italic domain, where complex PPs have the *0/a* alternation with DPs and the *di/a* alternation with pronominal Grounds.

#### 4. PPs in Venetan-type Trentino dialects

In general, the Venetan-like part of Trentino does not show the same homogeneity of the Lombard-like area regarding the structure of PPs. Only in few cases it can be said that the different varieties adopt the same behaviour.

More precisely, in all of them the item corresponding to *sopra* ‘on, over’ requires the functional P *de* ‘of’ when the Ground is pronominal.

*Gianni abita proprio sopra di lui* ‘Gianni lives exactly over him’

- (14) a. El Giani l’abita proprio *sora de* elo (Valsugana)  
b. El Giani l’abita propri *sora de* lu (Trento e Rovereto)

The same applies to the items corresponding to *sotto* ‘under’:

*Gianni abita proprio sotto di lui* ‘Gianni lives exactly under him’

- (15) a. El Giani l’abita propri *soto de* elo (Valsugana)  
b. El Giani l’abita propri *soto de* lu (Trento e Rovereto)

However, with items corresponding to standard Italian *addosso* in adverbial contexts, the variation appears to be significant. Trento and Rovereto display the lexical item *adoss*, without functional Ps, while the Valsugana variety is similar to varieties from the Ladin area (especially with Val di Fassa). This happens despite the fact that the two valleys are not adjacent, but a linguistic contact between the two dialectal types could have occurred in the past.

*Mi sono versato l’acqua addosso* ‘I spilt the water all over myself’

- (16) Me son butà *adoss* tuta l’acqua (Trento and Rovereto)

In the Valsugana variety, on the other hand, the adverb has a complex form, with a preceding functional P *per* ‘for’, combined with the particle *su* ‘on’:

- (17) Me son versà tuta l’acqua *su per ados* (Valsugana)

Crucially, there is a clear split concerning the *a*/0 alternation. The varieties like Trento and Rovereto strongly prefer the 0 variant with full DPs, while the varieties of Valsugana and Primiero display the *a* variant in the same contexts:

*Dentro ad una casa di quelle c'è una sala particolare* 'In one of those houses there is a peculiar room'

- (18) a. **Dento a** una de quele case ghe na sala particolare (Valsugana) +*a*  
 b. **Rento** una casa del quele ghe na sala particolare (Rovereto) -*a*

*Dentro a questa casa c'è una stanza particolare* 'In this house there is a peculiar room'

- (19) a. **Dento a** 'sta casa ghe na stanza particolare (Valsugana) +*a*  
 b. **Ende** sta casa ghe na stanza particolare (Trento) -*a*

*La palla è caduta dentro al pozzo* 'The ball fell into the well'

- (20) a. La bala l'è crodada **dentro al** poz (Valsugana) +*a*  
 b. La bala l'è cascada **endel** poz (Trento) -*a*

*Il gatto dorme dentro alla cuccia* 'The cat sleeps in the hideout'

- (21) a. El gate l dorme **dento ala** cucia (Valsugana) +*a*  
 b. El gate el dorme **en** la cucia (Trento) -*a*

This can be analysed assuming that Venetan-like varieties are at least of two different types: Trento and the other dialects which prefer the 0 variant behave exactly like the Venetan dialects considered by Garzonio and Rossi (2019), that is the Western Venetan variety of Gazzolo d'Arcole and the Central Venetan variety of Carmignano di Brenta. On the other hand, the varieties like Valsugana are more similar to the Gallo-Italic type. This is confirmed by dialectal dictionaries for this area. For instance, Biasetto's dictionary (1996) gives the following cases for the variety of Castello Tesino: *soto ai oci* 'under the eyes', *sora ai caèji* 'on the hair', *drio a le còtole* 'behind, after the skirts'. This shows that from this point of view the varieties of South-Eastern Trentino should be grouped with Gallo-Italic and Ladin varieties. Furthermore, this is in line with the Northern Venetan data discussed by Penello (2003), which display much more cases of *a* selection than Central Venetan varieties.



## 5. PPs in the mixed area

Even if traditionally put in the group of mixed varieties, the dialects of the Val di Cembra and the Altopiano di Pinè are quite cohesive in their behaviour regarding the syntax of PPs, and complex PPs in particular.

For example, Val di Cembra and Altopiano di Pinè have a form corresponding to Italian *addosso* very similar to the one displayed by Gallo-Italic varieties, with the lexical P alone, without the addition of functional Ps.

*Mi sono versato l'acqua addosso* 'I spilt the water all over myself'

- (22) a. Me son svoidada **ados** tuta l'acqua (Valle di Cembra)  
b. Me son svoidada **adoss** tuta l'acqua (Altopiano di Pinè)

Similarly, these dialects present items corresponding to *sotto* and *sopra* accompanied by *di* with pronominal grounds (compare with examples in (6)-(10)).

- (23) a. El Giani l'abita propio **sora de** elo  
b. El Giani l'abita propri **soto de** elo (Val di Cembra)

- (24) a. 'L Giani 'l abita propri **sora de** elo  
b. 'L Giani 'l abita propri **soto de** elo (Altopiano di Pinè)

Interestingly, in this area there appears to be some variation with the P corresponding to 'inside', since the variety of Val di Cembra seems to prefer the same structure observed above in some Lombard-type varieties, i.e. 'inside' plus a functional P corresponding to 'in'. On the other hand, the variety of Altopiano di Pinè has an *a*-variant, like other Lombard-type varieties.

*Dentro alla casa c'è una stanza particolare* 'In the house there is a peculiar room'

- (25) a. **Dent en** la ca' ghe na camera particolare (Val di Cembra) +*in*  
b. **Dent alla** casa ghe na camera particolare (Altopiano di Pinè) +*a*

*La palla è caduta dentro a questo* ‘The ball fell into this’

- (26) a. El balòn l’è cascà **dent en** sto chi (Val di Cembra) +*in*  
b. La bala l’ei crodada **dent a** questo (Altopiano di Pinè) +*a*

*La palla è caduta dentro al pozzo* ‘The ball fell into the well’

- (27) a. El balòn l’è cascà **en tel** poz (Val di Cembra) no lexical P  
b. La bala l’ei crodada **dent a** ‘n poz (Altopiano di Pinè) +*a*

*Ho guardato la classifica e sei sotto Gianni* ‘I looked at the chart and you are below Gianni’

- (28) a. Ho vardà la classifica e ses **soto del** Giani (Val di Cembra) +*de*  
b. Gò vardà la classifica e te sei **soto al** Giani (Altopiano di Pinè) +*a*

I propose to include in the mixed group also the variety of Alto Garda, despite other linguistic elements indicate an affinity with the Gallo-italic varieties. In fact, it can be observed that the functional P *a* is absent in complex PPs, a feature which makes this variety more similar to the Venetan-type dialects. This shows how linguistic influences from Venetan-like varieties can be detected also at the boundaries of the Gallo-italic area, at least in the PP system.

- (29) a. **Dentro** la casa ghe un sito particolare no functional P  
b. La bala l’è cascà **dentro** chi no functional P  
c. La bala l’è cascà **dentro** el poz no functional P  
d. Ho vardà la classifica e te se **soto** el Giani (Alto Garda) no functional P

## 6. PPs in Rhaeto-Romance area

Ladin varieties have a high degree of variation among them. For example, Val di Fiemme has a simple form corresponding to *addosso*, while Val di Fassa has a complex form, with a preceding functional P *per* and the particle *ju* (cf. the Valsugana example in (17)).

*Mi sono versato l’acqua addosso* ‘I spilt the water all over myself’

- (30) a. M’ae soda tuta l’acqua **ados** (Val di Fiemme)  
b. Me é trat **ju per ados** duta l’èga (Val di Fassa)

The two varieties also differ regarding the selection of the P in contexts requiring a genitival functional P, since Val di Fiemme displays *de*, while Val di Fassa has *da*. Compare the following translations for *Gianni abita proprio sopra di lui* ‘Gianni lives exactly over him’ and *Gianni abita proprio sotto di lui* ‘Gianni lives exactly under him’.

- (31) a. Jan l stèsc giusta *sunaut da* el  
 b. Jan l stèsc giusta *jubas da* el (Val di Fassa)
- (32) a. L Giani l stà *sora de* el  
 b. L Giani l stà *soto de* el (Val di Fiemme)

As already observed in Gallo-Italic and mixed varieties, also the Ladin varieties have the structure where the complex P *ite/into* corresponding to ‘inside’ is followed by the functional P *te* corresponding to ‘in’.

*La palla è caduta dentro a questo* ‘The ball fell into this’

- (33) La bala l’è crodada *ite te* chest (Val di Fassa)

*Dentro a questa casa c’è una stanza particolare* ‘In this house there is a peculiar room’

- (34) *Into te* ‘sta casa ghè na certa stua (Val di Fiemme)

*Il gatto dorme dentro alla cuccia* ‘The cat sleeps in the hideout’

- (35) ‘L gato ‘l dorme *into te* la cucia (Val di Fiemme)

## 7 In and dentro: a specific case

In the previous sections, I have argued how the selection of the functional P in complex PP structures can be used as a syntactic isogloss to classify the varieties of Trentino. An interesting phenomenon emerged from the survey is the presence of a structure corresponding to ‘inside in’ in the Gallo-Italic, the mixed and the Ladin areas.

- (36) a. *Into te* ‘sta casa ghè na certa stua (Val di Fiemme) *into+te*  
 b. La bala l’è crodada *enter en tel* poz (Val di Non) *enter+en(t)*

This structure is not present in the typology of complex PPs considered by Garzonio and Rossi (2019). Interestingly, it shows that the relation between the Ground and the DPPlace or the noun PLACE can be encoded not only by dative or genitive Case markers but also by a true locative Case. As a tentative analysis, I would propose the following structure: the lexical P is moved from the AxPart position, where it is merged as a modifier of the silent noun PLACE, to the functional layer of the PP (PPDir or PPSStat). On the other hand, the functional P *en* encodes a Relative View Point relation, as proposed by Cinque (2010) for similar cases in other languages. In (37) the Relative View Point projection is located in the functional layer of the PP, as proposed by Cinque (2010), but it could also be in the internal structure of the DPPlace.

(37) Dent en el niòl ‘inside the nest’

[PPDir *dent* [PPStat (*dent*) [RelViewPP *en* [DPPlace [AxPart ~~*dent*~~] [DP *el niòl*] PLACE]]]]

## 8. Conclusive remarks

In this article I have argued that the analysis of the structure of PPs individuates slightly different isoglosses from those of the traditional subdivision. In general, the previous classification can be confirmed. However, the dialects of Venetan type are to be further subdivided in two groups:

- a) Venetan-type dialects similar to Central and Western Venetan varieties, that do not have the *a*-variant in complex PPs (*rento (\*a) una casa* ‘inside a house’);
- b) Venetan-type dialects similar to Northern Venetan or “Feltrino”, that, like Gallo-Italic ones, present the *a*-variant (*Dento a una de quele case* ‘inside one of those houses’).

Furthermore, I have discussed the presence of the special construction of complex PPs involving ‘inside’, with a functional P “agreeing” with the lexical one. The structure of ‘inside in’ provides both an additional type of representation for complex PPs and a syntactic isogloss, which could be used to detect contact situations.

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