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Torcolacci, G.

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Author: Torcolacci, Giuseppe

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Giuseppe Torcolacci

Marking the Default

Auxiliary selection in Southern Italian dialects

This dissertation focuses on the overt marking of ϕ features encoded on perfective active auxiliaries in a group of Southern Italian dialects. In the geolinguistic area that stretches from central Apulia-Campania to northern Calabria, present perfect and pluperfect auxiliaries generally exhibit different strategies as far as the overt marking of ϕ features is concerned. In these dialects, 1st and 3rd person present perfect auxiliaries are morpho-phonologically more marked than those expressing 2nd person. Conversely, pluperfect auxiliaries expressing 2nd person are morpho-phonologically more marked than those endowed with 1st and 3rd person.

Our assumption is that these types of ϕ marking strategies depend on the application of a post-syntactic mechanism called *Default Marking*, according to which ϕ features encoded on perfective active auxiliaries get overtly marked only if their grade of markedness is the same as that expressed by the feature Tense.

We propose that the *Default Marking* operation is at play also with definite determiners and demonstratives, as well as with modals. This is due to the fact that *Default Marking* is active only with (a subset of) functional heads that license periphrastic constructions. On the contrary, the uniformity of markedness between Tense and ϕ is not the trigger for *Default Marking* in the case of lexical verbs, which, in the present dissertation, are considered to license marked syntactic configurations.

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