

## **Aspectual and thematic constraints on auxiliary selection and split intransitivity in southern Italo-Romance: synchronic and diachronic aspects**

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In this talk I will discuss the system of auxiliary selection and split intransitivity in some southern Italian (Campanian) varieties. In these varieties there are two subclasses of intransitive verbs distinguished through auxiliary selection in the perfect (respectively BE with unaccusatives and HAVE with unergatives). I will explore patterns of invariance and variation emerging from the synchronic analysis of the distribution of the auxiliaries, and then compare them with the (ir)regularities appearing in analogous data from 14th and 15th century Old Neapolitan texts.

The contemporary varieties examined show considerable fluctuation in auxiliary selection, with HAVE being the main auxiliary, and BE having a restricted range of occurrences, confined to some verb classes and some grammatical persons (Ledgeway 2000; Cennamo 2007). Variable auxiliary selection characterizes also the early vernacular, clearly revealing a change in progress, leading to the gradual spread of HAVE as a perfective auxiliary to the detriment of BE. This further led to elimination of the original distinction between two subclasses of intransitives (Cennamo 2007; forthc.).

I will show that, although auxiliary distribution does not clearly identify two distinct subclasses of intransitives, corresponding to the well-known distinction of unergatives-class  $S_A$  verbs versus unaccusatives-class  $S_O$  verbs, either synchronically or diachronically. The variation is nevertheless structured and neatly accountable within the gradient model of split intransitivity put forward by Sorace (2000; 2004). It is sensitive to the interplay of a number of aspectual and thematic parameters, instantiated by Sorace's Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy (ASH). More specifically, I will argue that a gradient approach to split intransitivity not only accounts in a principled manner for the synchronic and diachronic alternations in auxiliary selection, but also offers an explanation for the striking convergence between their synchronic distribution and the diachronic path of development.

### **References**

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