

**MICRO-VARIATION IN SUBJECT MARKEDNESS:
THE CASE OF INDE-CLITICISED PIVOTS IN ROMANCE**

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In this talk we consider the micro-variation in the morpho-syntactic behaviour of the pivot of Italo-Romance and Sardinian existential constructions. We focus on existential structures which exhibit an INDE-cliticised pivot (for INDE-cliticisation, see Bentley 2004, 2006, Burzio 1986, La Fauci & Loporcaro 1997, Perlmutter 1978, 1983, 1989, Rizzi & Belletti 1981, among others). Two examples of this are provided here.

1.a Viri quantu ova ci su/ ndavi nt o frigu. (Reggio C.)
 see how.many eggs PF are INDE.has in the fridge
 Criu ki ndavi ottu.
 I.believe that INDE.has eight
 ‘See how many eggs there are in the fridge.’ ‘I think there are eight.’

1. b A bba bitu quante oe nci stannu intra la ghiacciaia. (Lecce)
 PRT go see how.many eggs PF stay in the fridge
 Crisciu ca ci nd’ ete/ nde stannu uettu.
 I.believe that PF INDE is INDE stay eight
 ‘See how many eggs there are in the fridge.’ ‘I think there are eight.’

From the findings of extensive fieldwork on Italo-Romance and Sardinian there emerges a tendency for INDE-cliticised pivots to fail to trigger finite verb agreement on the copula. Notably, this agreement is not only missing in dialects with an invariant third person singular copula in existentials (for example, some dialects of Puglia), but also in dialects which otherwise exhibit agreement of the copula with the pivot. In the latter group of dialects, agreement with an INDE-cliticised pivot can be optional.

We propose that this micro-variation is to be analysed with reference to the dialect-specific tolerance of subject markedness. More specifically, given that the control of finite verb agreement is a subjecthood diagnostic in the dialects under investigation, we propose an analysis of these data that relies on Bentley’s (2010, 2012) theory of subject markedness, which, in turn, builds upon Beaver et al. (2006) and Mikkelsen (2002). We claim that INDE-cliticised pivots fail to control copula agreement if their encoding as controllers involves a more serious violation on the language-specific subject markedness constraint hierarchy than the lack of an agreement controller in the clause. We spell out the prediction of our account with respect to the behaviour of INDE-cliticised pivots across a number of Romance languages.