

Language contact and particle verbs in two Walser German varieties

German particle verbs are a well-known case where the boundaries between components are difficult to draw as they have been treated with good arguments in syntax as well as in morphology (cf. Dehé et al. 2002, McIntyre 2015 for a general discussion). One argument in favor of a morphological analysis comes from the paradigmatic relations that the particle verbs entertain with bona fide prefixed verbs like *aufladen* ‘to load’ vs. *entladen* ‘to unload’, etc. On the other hand, they are difficult to analyze straightforwardly as morphological objects because they display the well-known syntactic separation in contrast to bona fide prefixes as shown by *Hans lädt das Heu auf* ‘Hans loads up the hay’ vs. *Hans entlädt das Heu* ‘Hans unloads the hay’. Such a syntactic separation is crucially combined with the displacement of the verbal complex insofar as its finite and the non-finite pieces are placed in two different sentence positions, respectively the second and the final position: *Hans hat das Heu aufgeladen / entladen* ‘Hans has loaded up / unloaded the hay’.

In the paper, these two properties – namely paradigmatic relations through the lexicon with other complex words and syntactic displacement – will be discussed on the basis of two Walser German varieties spoken in linguistic islands found in northern Italy, namely in Gressoney and Issime. Because of isolation and of long-standing contacts with Romance varieties, they display an interesting development insofar as in Titsch (1) spoken in Gressoney syntactic displacement is partially preserved, while in Töitschu (2) spoken in Issime it is completely lost (cf. Gaeta & Angster 2020):

- (1) *Noa där Mäsch heintsch d’Lammiene uf d’Gheimnesse verkantot*
after the mass have.they the=lamb[s] on the=myster[ies] auctioned.PSTPTCP
‘After the mass they have auctioned the lambs for the Mysteries’
- (2) *hentsch k’offurut as lamji däm heilege Chin*
have.they offered.PSTPTCP a.N lamb[N].DIM the.N.SG.DAT holy child[N]
‘they offered a little lamb to the holy child’

In concomitance with the loss of syntactic displacement, in Töitschu (3) particle verbs have disappeared in favor of phrasal verbs, while they are well preserved in Titsch (4):

- (3) *z bruat hescht gleit i / *igleit sua*
the bread have.2SG put.PSTPTCP in / *in.put.PSTPTCP so
‘You have put the bread inside in this way’
- (4) *heintsch demnoa Heilége mét dem water zéemegleit / *gleit zéeme*
have.3PL hence saints with the weather together.put.PSTPCP / *put.PSTPCP together
‘Hence they have combined the Saints with the weather’.

The reanalysis of particle verbs as phrasal verbs consisting of a verb immediately followed by a locative adverb is a generalized feature throughout the Töitschu lexicon, which stands in neat contrast with the conservative behavior of Titsch that resembles the rest of German varieties including Standard German. On the other hand, phrasal verbs are commonly found in Piedmontese and more in general in the Northern Italian contact varieties, as exemplified in the following table in which the paradigmatic relations centering on the base verb PUT are reported:

German	Titsch	Töitschu	Piedmontese	Italian	
<i>einlegen</i>	<i>élecke</i>	<i>lécken dri</i>	<i>büté 'ndrinta</i>	<i>mettere dentro</i>	(‘to put inside’)
<i>niederlegen</i>	<i>embrélecke</i>	–	<i>büté giü</i>	<i>mettere giù</i>	(‘to put down’)
<i>auflegen</i>	<i>uflecke</i>	<i>lécken ouf</i>	<i>büté sü</i>	<i>mettere su</i>	(‘to put up’)
<i>auslegen</i>	<i>uslecke</i>	<i>lécken ous</i>	<i>büté fora</i>	<i>metter fuori</i>	(‘to put out’)
<i>vorlegen</i>	<i>vorlecke</i>	<i>lécken viir</i>	–	–	(‘to put forward’)
<i>zulegen</i>	<i>zuelecke</i>	<i>lécken zu</i>	–	–	(‘to put to’)
<i>zusammenlegen</i>	<i>zéemelecke</i>	<i>lécken zseeme</i>	<i>büté 'nsema</i>	<i>mettere insieme</i>	(‘to put together’)

Tab. 1: Correspondence patterns of particle verbs

On the other hand, in Töitschu the model of the particle verbs did not completely disappear, as shown by verb pairs in which both possibilities are found: *brechen ous* ‘to escape, overflow’ vs. *ousbrechen* ‘to pierce (a wall)’, etc. Moreover, a number of true prefixed verbs is still attested in Töitschu like *ischissen* ‘to bake’, *ubergien* ‘to take over, overflow’, *ubersprinnhen* ‘to climb over’, etc. which are similar to their cognates found in Titsch: *ésschiesse* ‘to bake’, *òbergé* ‘to take over’, *òberspréngé* ‘to climb over, omit’, etc. Finally, in spite of the diffusion of the phrasal verbs, paradigmatic relations between verbs and corresponding abstract nouns still survive in Töitschu as shown by pairs like *brechen ab* ‘to dissuade, discourage, break off’ / *abpruch* ‘debris’, *voan an* ‘to begin’ / *anvanh* ‘beginn’, etc. which reflect the similar correspondences found in Titsch: *afoa* ‘to begin’ / *afang* ‘begin’, etc. It has to be added that Titsch does not simply reflect a conservative system similar to the Standard German variety. In fact, particle verbs in Titsch have also lost at least partially properties like the morphological separation (6a), while the subordinating particle *zu* has to be inserted between the particle and the base verb in Standard German (6b):

(6) a. *òn fer di häscht nit khät de förcht z'vorwerz goa*
and for those have.2SG not had.PSTPTCP the fear to=forward go
‘and for those you were not scared of going ahead’.

b. *und für die hast du keine Angst gehabt, vorwärts-zu-gehen / *zu vorwärtsgehen*
and for those have.2SG you NEG fear had.PSTPTCP forward-to-go / to forward.go
‘and for those you were not scared of going ahead’.

In the paper, both syntactic and morphological properties of particle verbs in Titsch and Töitschu will be systematically investigated showing similarities and differences with regard to each other as well as to Standard German, by paying particular attention to the impact of paradigmatic relations on their peculiar development.

References

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