

Investigating the functional structure of the Sardinian inflected infinitival clause

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A number of Logudorese-Nuorese varieties of Sardinian feature an infinitive that can optionally inflect for person and number, on a par with other Romance languages such as Portuguese, Galician and Old Neapolitan (cf. Raposo 1987; Jones 1993; Ledgeway 1998; 2009; Vincent 1996; 1998; Mensching 2000; Sitaridou 2002; Pisano 2008; Ambar & Jiménez-Fernández 2017, a.o.). An example is given in (1), where the infinitive *cantare* ‘to sing’ agrees with its nominative subject (*tue* ‘you.SG’), marked with the morpheme –s:

- (1) *Non keljo a cantares tue.*
Not I.want to sing.INF.2.SG you.NOM.SG
‘I do not want you to sing.’

(Jones 1992: 297)

Inflected infinitives generally occur in adjunct clauses, as well as in complement clauses to desiderative and epistemic verbs. They are excluded from monoclausal structures such as complements to restructuring predicates or causative verbs.

Even though the main syntactic characteristics of the inflected infinitive have been described in the literature (cf. Jones 1993 a.o.), it is worth investigating the fine structure of the inflected infinitival clause more closely. For instance, it has been noted that the preverbal subject position is unavailable in Sardinian inflected infinitives, as can be concluded from the impossibility of inserting a subject between *a* and the inflected infinitive (2). This leads to a general VOS word order pattern (Groothuis 2019b). However, preverbal subjects seem to be acceptable for some speakers (cf. (3)):

- (2) **Non keljo a tue cantares.*
Not I.want to you.NOM sing.INF.2.SG
‘I do not want you to sing.’

(Jones 1992: 299)

- (3) %*Cherzo manedda a facheret su mandicu.*
I.want grandmother to make.INF.3.SG the meal
‘I want grandmother to prepare the meal.’

The fact that the subject precedes *a* might indicate that the subject has been moved to the left periphery. Two questions arise about the clausal structure of an inflected infinitive: i) why is [spec,TP] unavailable and ii) is the left periphery of an inflected infinitive accessible? This talk will address the more general question of how much functional structure is projected in an inflected infinitival clause; whether it is a full, phasal CP like a finite clause or whether it is in some way reduced, as certain other types of non-finite clauses.

Investigating this clausal structure more closely is interesting as the inflected infinitive is not easily classifiable as a finite or non-finite form; it shows properties of both finite clauses and non-finite clauses. The presence of agreement, the licensing of nominative subjects, high verb movement (as shown in (4), where both HAS and LAS adverbs must follow the infinitive, cf. Groothuis 2019a) and obviation (cf. (5)) are characteristic of finite clauses; other properties are instead typical of non-finite clauses, such as the obligatory presence of the infinitival complementisers *a* or *de*, the absence of tense marking and the possibility to occur in control contexts (cf. (6), taken from Jones (1993: 278)):

- (4) a. *Gloria cheriat a mandigaren sempre (*mandigaren) bene sos pizzinnos.*
Gloria wanted to eat.INF.3.PL always well the boys

- b. *Mannedda cheret a mandigaremus como (*mandigaremus).*
 Grandmother wants to eat.INF.1.PL now
 ‘Grandmother would like us to eat now.’
- (5) *Gianni_i cheret a andaret pro*_{ij} a domu.*
 Gianni wants to go.INF.3.SG to house
 ‘Gianni want that (s)he goes home.’
- (6) *Juane nos at natu a colaremus.*
 Juane us has told to call.INF.1.PL
 ‘John told us to come by.’

(Jones 1993: 278)

The question about the quantity of functional structure projected in an inflected infinitival clause might tell us more about the relationship between clausal structure and finiteness.

The proposed presentation will illustrate the fine structure of the inflected infinitival clause with data that have been collected from native speakers during fieldwork in April 2018, focusing on word order patterns, verb movement, and the left periphery of the inflected infinitive in Sardinian. It will be shown that the Sardinian inflected infinitival clause is a CP, although with a limited availability of the left periphery (subject to interspeaker variation). Like other less-finite verb forms, including personal and inflected infinitives in other Romance languages, the inflected infinitive moves very high in order to anchor the event to the main clause event (cf. Groothuis 2020, in prep.); in Sardinian, this high verb movement makes the usual [spec,TP] subject position unavailable, leading to VOS/VSO word orders (Groothuis 2019b).

Selected references

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