

The *a/di/Ø* alternation in Italian complex Ps: P selection or C selection?

Jacopo Garzonio – Silvia Rossi
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

1. In our talk we take into consideration the well-known phenomenon of simple-P selection under lexical Ps in Italian in cases like *sopra al tavolo* 'lit. on to.the table'. In particular, we investigate the distributional properties of the functional/grammatical Ps *a/di* 'to/of', and show that the selection of *a*, *di* or no preposition at all is syntactically driven. More precisely we argue that in complex P structures there is an *a/Ø* alternation based on the internal structure of the PP and at the same time a *di/Ø* alternation dependant on the structural status of the DP object of P. We subsequently extend our analysis to *a/di* used as prepositional complementizers.

2. Rizzi (1988) notices that Italian presents three groups of lexical Ps: group 1 Ps which obligatorily require a simple P (e. g. *davanti a* 'in front of'); group 2 Ps which optionally require *a* (*dietro (a)* 'behind (of)'); and group 3 Ps which never require a simple P (*verso* 'towards').

With this classification in mind, we concentrate on the following minimal pairs:

- (1) a. Andate **dietro** alla macchina
go behind *to*.the car 'Go after the car'
b. Andate **dietro** la macchina
go behind \emptyset the car 'Go and place yourself behind the car'
- (2) a. La macchina si muoveva **verso di** noi
The car refl move towards *of* us 'The car was moving towards us'
b. La macchina si muoveva **verso** il muro
The car refl moved towards \emptyset the wall 'The car was moving towards the wall'

The two alternations of (1)-(2) are blurred in a case like (3), where *a* seems to alternate with *di*:

- (3) a. L'aereo volava **sopra di** noi
The plane flew above *of* us 'The plane was flying above us'
b. L'aereo volava **sopra** alla chiesa
The plane flew above *to*.the church 'The plane was flying above the church'

However, since *sopra Ø noi* is ungrammatical in Italian, we argue that lexical Ps like *sopra* can appear in two different structures, one in which its complement is introduced by *a*, and another in which it selects a DP. In the latter case, some DPs require *di*, which we take to be the prepositional complementizer observable, for instance, with infinitives:

- (4) a. L'aereo volava sopra la chiesa
b. *L'aereo volava sopra noi
- (5) a. [PP *sopra* [XP *a/Ø* [YP \emptyset/di [DP]]]]

Accordingly, Rizzi's (1988) group 3 Ps never show a *a* vs. *di* alternation.

3. The *di/Ø* alternation is based on a bare/complex alternation of the noun selected by P. Rizzi (1988) points out that *di* is required by personal and reflexive pronouns (6a-b). Our data show that this property is shared also by demonstratives (6c), proper nouns (6d) and *wh* items (6e):

- (6) a. Correvo verso *(di) lui
run towards of him 'I was running towards him'
b. Rivolse l'arma verso *(di) sé
turned the weapon towards of refl 'He turned the weapon against himself'
c. Rivolse l'arma verso (di) quelli
turned the weapon towards of those 'He turned the weapon against those'
d. Correvo verso (di) Mario
run towards of Mario 'I was running towards M.'
e. Verso (di) chi ha rivolto l'arma?
towards of who has turned the weapon 'Against whom did he turn the weapon?'

