

Infinitive reduction in Corfiot Italian: a case of areal convergence?

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Abstract

“Infinitive loss” has been described as a major feature of the Southeast European (or Balkan) linguistic area. Yet, the Balkan languages differ significantly in the extent to which they exhibit this feature (cf. Joseph 1983: 242). Furthermore, there are languages spoken in Southeast Europe which are not always included into the linguistic area, such as Balkan Judezmo (cf. Friedman & Joseph 2014) or Balkan Turkish varieties (cf. Matras & Tufan 2007), and dialects of South Italy (cf. Rohlfs 1922, 1969, 1997), that also show similar patterns of syntactical re-structuring to a certain extent. Another idiom that shows a reduction of infinitival complementation is the Italian variety spoken in Corfu. In this paper older and more recent data of Corfiot Italian will be compared in order to contribute to the research on infinitive reduction and to discuss the question, if this pattern could be interpreted as a case of areal convergence in Southeast Europe.

Keywords: Corfu, Italian, language contact, infinitive reduction, areal convergence, Southeast Europe

1. Areal convergence and infinitive reduction in Southeast Europe

Convergence – in a linguistic sense – is a “process through which two or more languages in contact change to become more like each other”, the term is “often used to refer to changes in (or changes that create) linguistic areas” (Thomason 2001: 262). In this perspective, a linguistic area can also be called “convergence area” (Campbell et al. 1986: 531). Structural convergences resulting from language contact usually involve pattern replication or grammatical borrowing via intense bilingualism (see Matras 2011 for a discussion of further implications of the term “convergence”). Regarding the linguistic area of Southeast Europe, Joseph (2010) distinguishes local convergence phenomena from broader convergence. Local convergence may involve only two neighbouring languages, which develop common structural (phonological, morphological or syntactical) or lexical features. Some of these features may be shared with other surrounding languages, leading to broader convergence or clusters. A linguistic area – or *sprachbund* – may then be a result of “clusters of such clusters” (Joseph 2010: 629) in a given geographical region. This does not mean that every language spoken in this region must show every areal feature or that all features must be present in all involved languages or dialects (cf. Joseph 2010: 629).

The linguistic area of Southeast Europe (or Balkan *sprachbund*) was one of the first areas under intense linguistic investigation. Also, in terms of the history of linguistics, the similarities between some of the languages of the Balkans were observed very early

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and triggered the study of language contact in general and the areal relationship of languages in particular (see Friedman 2006: 659 for a very short overview). Yet, not all languages spoken in Southeast Europe are Balkan languages. Joseph (2010: 619, quoting Schaller 1975: 29-31) differentiates between the “Languages of the Balkans” as a “purely geographic designation” and the “Balkan Languages”, the latter forming a subset of the first, that show “considerable structural and lexical convergence due to centuries of intense, intimate, and sustained contact involving multilaterally bilingual speakers” (Joseph 2010: 619). It may be “convenient”, as Joseph (2010: 620) adds, to speak of “Balkan varieties” of these languages to clarify that not all varieties of these languages must show some convergence features.

The “loss of the infinitive” or “infinitival loss” is a well-established feature of the Southeast European linguistic area. It has been included since the earliest observations and descriptions of the parallel structures in the Balkan languages (cf. Friedman 2006: 659). Joseph (2010: 622, cf. Joseph 1983) defines this feature as “the reduction in use of a nonfinite verbal complement (generally called an ‘infinitive’ in traditional grammar) and its replacement by fully finite complement clauses”.

In this paper, the use of finite complement clauses in cases of subject coreference in an Italian variety spoken in Corfu will be examined. This phenomenon resembles the infinitival loss of the Balkan languages and is not common in Standard Italian. For example, in Standard Modern Greek (SMG), an argument of the matrix verb in the main clause is expressed by a finite verb in a subordinated clause, often introduced by the particle *na*, functioning here as a subordination marker (SM) (cf. Holton et al. 2016:196-199). Both verbs refer to the same subject, which is why the construction is called subject coreferential. In contrast, in Standard Italian, the argument is expressed by an infinitive, as illustrated in the following examples:²

- (1) a. Modern Greek
 thélo *na* *yrápsō*
 want.IND.PRS.1SG SM write.SBJV.PRS.1SG
- b. Standard Italian
 voglio *scriv-ere*
 want.IND.PRS.1SG write-INF
 ‘I want to write’

This construction in (1) a. with a finite clause argument is also to be found in Balkan Slavic, Balkan Romance and Albanian varieties. Friedman (2006: 665-666, 2018) interprets this trait as “analytic subjunctives”:

All the Indo-European Balkan languages have analytic subjunctives that replaced earlier infinitives. These analytic subjunctives, which are formed by means of a native particle (Balkan Slavic *da*, Albanian *të*, Romani *te*, Balkan Romance *să*,

² Abbreviations in glosses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules. Used abbreviations here are: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, ACC = accusative, AOR = aorist, COMP = complementizer, DEF = definite article, FUT = future, IND = indicative, INF = infinitive, LOC = locative, LV = linking vowel, NEG = negation, PL = plural, PROG = progressive, PRS = present, PST = past, PTCP = participle, REL = relative, SBJV = subjunctive, SG = singular, SM = subordination marker.

si, *s*, 'Greek *na*) plus a finite verb, are used as complements, but can also stand alone as optatives or desideratives. Moreover, in the West Rumelian Turkish dialects, the optative is often used as a calque on such usage, where standard Turkish would require an infinitive. (Friedman 2018, *Italics in the original*)

However, two restrictions need to be made. On the one hand “the Balkan languages differ rather dramatically in the extent to which they show the loss of the infinitive” (Joseph 1983: 242). For example, Balkan Judezmo, which is not always included into the Southeast European linguistic area (cf. Friedman & Joseph 2014: 4), also “has subjunctive usages with *ke* that are Balkan rather than Spanish” (Friedman 2018) while still having preserved the inherited Romance infinitive. On the other hand, this feature is widespread not only in the languages of Southeast Europe. Mayerthaler et al. (1993, 1995) have shown that there is a gradual shading of the use of infinitives as verbal arguments (complements) in Europe. Especially the South Italian dialects are notorious for a constricted use of infinitives and the use of subordinated clauses (cf. Rohlfs 1922; 1969, 1997; Ledgeway 2013; De Angelis 2013).

Thus, in this paper the term “infinitive reduction” is used instead of “infinitival loss” (following Joseph 2010: 622; Friedman & Joseph 2014: 10), since the loss or replacement of the infinitive is a gradual feature. “In general”, to quote Joseph (1983: 251), “among Balkan languages with non-Balkan dialects or ‘relatives’, one finds that the more Balkan the dialect is geographically, the greater the degree of infinitive-loss.” Hence, it might be reasonable to speak of a reduced use of infinitive complements not only for those Balkan varieties in the geographical periphery of the Balkan area, but also for those varieties spoken by groups that arrived later in the area. Such ‘newcomers’³ are Balkan Judezmo, whose speakers entered the Balkan peninsula after their expulsion from Spain in 1492, or the Balkan Turkish varieties spoken by groups arriving in Southeast Europe during the Ottoman expansion since the 14th/15th century onwards.

Additionally, speakers of Italo-Romance idioms coming from the Apennine Peninsula arrived in Southeast Europe during the late Middle Ages, particularly since the 13th century after the Fourth Crusade and the disintegration of the Byzantine Empire. The varieties spoken especially by those inhabiting the Venetian maritime empire along the coasts and islands of Dalmatia, the Ionian and the Aegean (the *stato da mar*) later came to be called Colonial Venetian or *veneto de là da mar* (Bidwell 1967, Folena 1973, Cortelazzo 2000). Another significant group entering Southeast Europe were the Jews of South Italy which were expelled from the Kingdom of Naples during 1510 and 1541 (cf. Ferorelli 1966) and left for the Ottoman empire. Some groups – mainly from Apulia – settled in Corfu, which was then under Venetian dominion. An Apulian section of the Jewish community in Corfu existed until the 20th century.

Still today, a variety of Italian is spoken in the Jewish community of Corfu (henceforth Corfiot Italian or Corfioto), which seems to display a reduction of infinitival complementation in cases of subject coreference similar to example (1) a. An illustration is given here in the bold part of example (2) from recent data:⁴

³ The term used here is inspired by Bakker (2006), who speaks of the ‘newcomers’ Portuguese and Malay in the Sri Lanka Sprachbund.

⁴ Examples taken from recent data collected by the author of this article are written in a broad phonemic transcription in //...//. Interview identifier and time-code hh.mm.ss are given in [...].

(1) Corfiot Italian [2016-11-17, EKM 00:30:39]

//e	lu m=a	'	deto	ke	lu
and	heme=have.IND.PRS.3SG		say.PTCP	that	he
'skriv-e	le pa'role		ke non	vɔl	
write-IND.PRS.3SG	the words		REL NEG	want.IND.PRS.3SG	
ke	diz'mendɛg-a//				
that	forget- IND.PRS.3SG				

'and he said to me that he writes down the words which he does not want to forget'

The scope of this paper is to investigate this pattern of infinitive reduction and to discuss, if this could be a case of areal convergence, since Italian usually does not show any finite complementation in cases of subject coreference as in (2) but uses the infinitive as in example (1) b. (cf. Skytte et al. 1991: 525; Bertinetto 1991: 129-130, Mayerthaler et al. 1993: 37-38) and Venetian dialects only to a very limited extent (cf. Mayerthaler 1993: 77-79), or if it is a pattern brought with the dialects of South Italy which was then adopted by the speakers of Italian (and Venetian) in Corfu.

The paper is structured as follows: In section (2) an outline is given on the current status of Corfiot Italian, followed by some historical information on the different Italian varieties used in Corfu. Additionally, an overview on sources and previous work is provided. In section (3) the data collection for the present paper is described. After illustrating examples of subject coreferential infinitive reduction in Corfiot Italian in section (4), the data is compared with cases of infinitive reduction in South Italian dialects, Balkan Judezmo, and Balkan Turkish in section (5). In section (6), the question is discussed if and how this characteristic could be interpreted as a case of areal convergence.

2. Corfiot Italian: sketch overview and historical sources

Corfiot Italian (autoglossonym Corfioto) is a highly endangered variety still remembered and partially spoken by a few people belonging to the Jewish community in Corfu, Greece, that was nearly extinguished by the Nazi regime in the course of the deportation during the German occupation 1944. Today, the Jewish community has less than 50 members (while having around 2,000 before the Second World War, cf. Marcus & Kerem 2007). The Corfiot Italian variety originated in the context of the century-long Venetian domination of the island (from 1387 until 1797) and the immigration of Apulian Jews after their expulsion from Southern Italy after 1492 and 1541 (Belleli 1905; Cortelazzo 1946, 1947, 1948; Levi 1961). Corfioto displays several Venetian (and, to some extent, also Apulian) dialectal features, lexical and grammatical borrowings from Standard Modern Greek and Hebrew loanwords. Language usage is in decline and the few speakers are shifting to Modern Greek, being the dominant language of all community members. Spoken language data shows a continuum between modern Italian and dialectal speech, indicating ongoing standardization, i.e. Italianization processes.

Corfu was part of the "Heptanese", a number of Western Greek islands that were part of the Venetian dominion until 1797, and later became part of the the "United

States of the Seven Islands”, 1814-1864 as British protectorate, before the islands were united with the Kingdom of Greece in 1864. Until the middle of the 19th century, Italian was still used as an official language of administration (for its subsequent abolishment during the British protectorate see Mackridge 2014). It seems as if especially Corfu had a considerable large Italian speaking minority. For the time of the British protectorate, Ralli (2012: 116, quoting Soldatos 1967) speaks of 6,000 Greek/Italian bilinguals, 1,000 “Venetian and/or Italian” speakers with “some knowledge of Greek”, and 100 “Venetian/Italian” speaking monolinguals in 1849. It is not at all clear, what this spoken Italian/Venetian looked like. In an entry in his *Dizionario estetico*, Tommaseo (1852: 117-122) calls the spoken Italian variety “dialetto corcirese” and compiled a list of 153 lemmata which he judged to be particularly emblematic for the variety. In an updated version of that article (*Dizionario d'estetica*, Tommaseo 1860, 161-168), the list contains 190 lemmata. Of these lexical items, only about 10% indicate a relationship of that idiom with the Venetian dialects, the rest is of Tuscan-Italian origin (Eufe 2006: 83), but one can only speculate if this mirrors the ratio of Tuscan-Italian and Venetian elements in the spoken language.

For the times of the Kingdom of Greece, censuses give some further information regarding the use of Italian in Corfu. In the census published in 1924, data is given in combination for religious affiliation and language in the Department of Corfu (which seems to include the Island of Corfu). An extraction of “Tableau 34” (République Hellénique 1924: λζ') concerning only Greek/Italian and Catholics, Jews, and Orthodox Christians is presented here in Table 1.

Language	Catholics	Jews	Orthodox
Greek	2,008	1,126	218,038
Italian	1,009	305	79

Table 1: Census data regarding religion and language in the Department of Corfu, 1924.

It is interesting to note that Italian (or an Italian variety) was also still spoken in the Catholic community at these times. In a later census published in 1935 (with data from 1928), still 635 Italian speaking inhabitants are reported for the town of Corfu, with 510 being Catholic and 112 being of Jewish religion (République Hellénique 1935: 370). Nevertheless, the census does not indicate, if the language was spoken as first or second language or to what extent bilingualism was usual in both communities. Furthermore, these figures do not tell anything about the nature of the languages or dialects actually spoken in the communities.

Turning to the Jewish community, there are sources of an Apulian dialect written in Hebrew characters (prayers, ritual or paraliturgical texts, cf. the editions in Sermoneta 1990a, 1990b) and of written Tuscan-Italian (e.g. the petitions of the Jewish community to the Doge of Venice, cf. the edition in Steiner 1946) preserved from the 17th and 18th century. These documents do not tell a lot about the features of the spoken varieties of Corfu, since they depict the *written* language usage (but see for linguistic analysis Ryzhik 2013). In contrast, meta-linguistic statements about a spoken Italian variety specifically ascribed to the Jewish community of Corfu do not date further back than to the 19th century. An early reference of a “mixed language” is given by Papageorgios (1881: 228):

So entstand eine eigenthümliche Sprache, ein Gemisch von Griechisch und Apulisch, hie und da versetzt mit hebräischen Wörtern und Phrasen, eine Sprache, welche seitdem bei den Juden der Insel die übliche ist.

(So, a peculiar language arose, a mixture of Greek and Apulian, here and there enriched by Hebrew words and phrases, a language which since then has been the usual one of the island's Jews. – Transl. JM)

Later, Romanos (1891: 68) adds the observation that this mixed idiom apparently was different enough from spoken Italian and spoken Greek to cause misunderstanding. He notes that the use of an Apulian dialect mixed with Greek words “produced a jargon difficult to understand both for the Italians and the Greeks” (“a produit un jargon difficile à comprendre et par les Italiens et par les Grecs”, transl. JM).⁵

Another reference is given by Bartoli (1912: 986–987) in an article programmatically entitled ‘România e Πορμανία’. While mentioning places like Zadar and Krk in the Dalmatian coastal area that were still – to some extent – Venetian-speaking at this time, he writes, that Venetian is also spoken “a little bit” (“un po”) in Corfu. In a footnote Bartoli (1912: 986 [footnote 5, p. 985–986]) acknowledges, that “one part of the Jewish community of Corfu has been speaking an Apulian dialect for centuries” (“una parte della Comunità israelitica di Corfù parla da secoli un dialetto pugliese”, transl. JM).

More information about the usage of different Italian varieties in and outside the Jewish community are given by Belleli (1905)⁶. He distinguishes two Venetian varieties spoken in Corfu:

The better class of the [Jewish, JM] Community speaks the Venetian dialect with some modifications caused by the influence of the Greek, which was the only means of communication among the first Jewish settlers of the island. The constant solution of the infinitive (*che digo* = *và 'πώ*, *che ti vegna* = *và ῥθεῖς*) is the most important phenomenon due to such influence, and mainly by it the Venetian of the Corfiot Jews differs from the same dialect as spoken by the non-Jews in the same town. (Belleli 1905: 4)

This is not only the first mention of two different Venetian varieties spoken in Corfu, but also the first attempt to differentiate both varieties by a specific linguistic feature (the “constant solution of the infinitive”), which is claimed to be caused by contact with the Greek language. However, Belleli also includes the Apulian dialect into the picture:

Corfu gave permanent residence to the Apulians, who brought from the Italian coast a few specimens, still preserved, of literature, and the vernacular which is

⁵ Another early testimony is Adler (1901: 115), who notes that the members of the Italian section of the Jewish community in Corfu and “many other Corfiotes [...] speak a bastard Italian called ‘Pugliese’”. Furthermore, Armando Perotti notices about the Apulian section of the community in 1909 and 1910, who speaks of “a hybrid idiom, made of Venetian, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, and Apulia”, the latter being predominant (“un ibrido idioma, fatto di veneziano, di greco di ebraico di spagnuolo e di pugliese”, quoted in Colafemmina 2006: 82, transl. JM).

⁶ The text was also published (with minor modifications) in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (cf. Belleli 2002 [1904]).

now spoken there by the lower-class section of the Community. [...] The Apulian dialect in supplanting the Greek of the original settlers took from it more material than its fellow conqueror, the Venetian, did. (Belleli 1905: 5-6)

It is interesting to note that there is also some kind of socio-linguistic information included, meaning that the social stratification (“better class”, “lower-class section of the community”) is mirrored by the use of the Venetian or Apulian dialect.

The next pieces of evidence are given in a series of articles by Manlio Cortelazzo (1946, 1947, 1948). He distinguishes three groups of people speaking Italian in Corfu:

- (i) gli Ebrei, per i quali un dialetto italiano, nella sua sostanza veneto, suppure con coloriture straniere e cristallizzazioni arcaiche, costitutiva la lingua materna;
 - (ii) molte persone colte, che l'avevano appreso direttamente in Italia, dove avevano compiute i loro studi superiori, e che, in caso di bisogno, parlavano un italiano molto corretto;
 - (iii) la passata generazione della nobiltà e della borghesia benestante ed e popolani (poco numerosi questi), che, per l'età, lo ricordavano ancora – sebbene in maniera imperfetta – dalla loro giovinezza. (Cortelazzo 1948: 29-30)
- (First, the Jews, [who speak] an Italian dialect, in its substance Venetian, though with strange colorations and archaic crystallizations, being their mother tongue; second a lot of educated persons who learned it directly in Italy, where they finished their higher education; third, the past generation of the nobility and of the wealthy middle-class population (those not very numerous) who, because of their age, still remember it, albeit imperfectly, from their youth. – Transl. JM)

The Italian linguist makes a difference between the Italian variety spoken by the Jews, which he also calls “dialetto corfiota”, and the one spoken by the former Venetian upper class, when he writes, reporting “the discourse of a Corfiot Jew” could not give “an exact idea of the *dialetto corcirese*” (“il discorso *italiano* di un Ebreo corfiota [...] un'idea esatta del *dialetto corcirese*”, Cortelazzo 1948: 33, emphasis in the original). But since the latter usually was not spoken anymore at his times, he acknowledges that “the sole approximating documentation of its *living and current structure* can offer only the Jews” (“l'unica documentazione approssimativa della sua *struttura vivente e attuale* la possono offrire soltanto gli Ebrei”, Cortelazzo 1948: 33, emphasis in the original). Cortelazzo mentions also the infinitive reduction in much more detail than Belleli (see section 4.1 for his examples) and observes the similarity of the phenomenon not only to the Balkan languages, but also to the South Italian dialects (Cortelazzo 1948: 31). However, he describes the occurrences of the phenomenon as “syntactic calques with Modern Greek” (“calchi sintattici neoellenici”, Cortelazzo 1948: 33).⁷

The later status of the Corfiot Italian of the post-war period is sketched by the musicologist Leo Levi (1961), who mentions a Venetian-Apulian “koiné” which was

⁷ Short references in Birnbaum (1951: 421, 424) dedicated to the Jewish communities in Corfu introduce the term “Italkians” for them and state that “[n]o investigations have yet been made into the dialects of the Italkians in Corfu”.

used by all sections of the Jewish community, but without going into any further linguistic detail of that notion (Levi 1961: 29, footnote). Levi notes also, that Cortelazzo does not take any notice of the “many and very interesting *Apulian* relics” in the dialect spoken by the Jews in Corfu (“i molti e interessantissimi relitti *pugliesi*”, Levi 1961, *Italics in the original*).⁸ From Levi’s investigation, the – to the author’s knowledge – oldest audio recordings of an Italian variety used in the Corfiot Jewish community are still preserved at the *Accademia Nazionale Santa Cecilia* in Rome, Italy. The recordings mostly contain Hebrew liturgical and paraliturgical singings, but some songs have also Italian lyrics (cf. Levi 1961, cf. the catalogue of the recordings, Centro nazionale studi di musica popolare 1963).

For his documentary *Shoah* (Lanzmann 1985), Claude Lanzmann also recorded some film interviews in Corfu with Corfiot Jews. In addition to the footage actually used in the film, the outtakes, which are archived at the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (USHMM) in Washington D.C., USA, contain more material (around 76 min. in Italian). Also archived and made available online by the USHMM are the oral history interviews conducted in 1996 by Jaša Almulì, a researcher commissioned by the museum. Of these interviews, three are in Italian (ca. 270 min.). To conclude this overview, in 2001 Jenny Nachtmann conducted 6 interviews in Italian (ca. 120 min.) in Corfu for her master’s thesis on Corfiot Italian (Nachtmann 2002). Her data and analysis are still the best groundwork for a description of the contemporarily spoken Italian in Corfu.⁹

3. Data collection

Spoken language data are drawn from the author’s own interviews conducted during his ongoing PhD project at the University of Graz, Austria, funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The recordings used for this paper comprise three interviews conducted in 2016 (in Italian and Greek, with two consultants, OSF1 and EKM, in total ca. 170 min). The interviews were semi-structured by questions about the consultant’s linguistic biography, following the narrative approach outlined in Franceschini (2004, cf. Franceschini 2001). A linguistic biography is an autobiographical narration, focusing on language acquisition and language use, experiences of multilingualism, and can contain also language attitudes and underlying language ideologies (cf. Franceschini 2004: 123-124, Bochmann 2005: 47-48).

Consultants were asked about childhood memories, languages spoken in different domains (at home, in the public sphere, at school) as well as by different persons (parents, siblings), and about specific lexical fields (e.g. “kitchen, cooking, recipes”). The aim of this methodology was not only to gather free narrative speech, but also to document information about the use and status of the Italian variety in Corfu in the Jewish community as witnessed by the consultants’ own experiences.

⁸ Cortelazzo later wrote in reaction, that “the contact with ‘Venetianized Corfiot Jews did not reveal to me the survival of Apulian elements in their dialect’ (“il contatto con Ebrei corfioti ‘venezianeggianti’ non mi aveva fatto rilevare la sopravvivenza degli elementi pugliesi nel loro dialetto”, Cortelazzo 1963).

⁹ The investigation of these materials is still ongoing. Data from the USHMM oral history interviews, the *Shoah* Outtakes and the Nachtmann corpus are not included in this paper.

4. Infinitive reduction in Corfiot Italian

4.1 Descriptions and examples in older sources

Though it can be noted that in Corfioto the usage of the infinitive in general is in accordance with Standard Italian and with Veneto dialects, the data show some variation regarding the arguments of certain verbs with coreferential subjects. The phenomenon has been mentioned already in older sources. Belleli, who speaks of the “constant solution of the infinitive” (1905: 4), gives only two examples of subordinate finite clauses but without indicating any verbal context: *che digo* and *che ti vegna*. While this is not sufficient to draw any structural conclusion, Cortelazzo (1948) has quite few examples and longer transcribed paragraphs of (as it seems) spoken language (but without giving any further reference). Levi (1961) gives only four examples. The examples given by Cortelazzo and Levi contain only constructions with the verbs *andare* (‘to go’), *potere* (‘to be able to’, ‘can’), *volere* (‘to want to’), *cominciare* (‘to begin’), and *sapere* (‘to know’).¹⁰

In some cases, Cortelazzo gives the corresponding structures in Italian and Greek in his examples (cf. Cortelazzo 1948: 32), as can be seen in (3) a. – c.:¹¹

- (3) a. Corfiot Italian
vado *che* *lo* *dico*
 go.IND.PRS.1SG that it say.IND.PRS.1SG
- b. Italian
vado *a* *dir-gli-e-lo*
 go.IND.PRS.1SG to say.INF-him/her-LV-it
- c. Modern Greek
páo *na* *to* *po*
 go.IND.PRS.1SG SM it say.SBJV.PRS.1SG
 ‘I go to tell it (to him/her)’

In (3) a., the verbal argument of the matrix verb *vado* (‘I go’) is expressed by *dico* (‘I say’), a form of *dire* (‘to say’) which is coreferential to the subject of the verb form used in the first part of the sentence. According to Cortelazzo (1948: 32), the sentence is also an example of a reduced use of enclitic pronouns, if compared to the corresponding Italian construction in (3) b., where the indirect object pronoun *gli* as well as the direct object *lo* are cliticized. When compared to the corresponding structure in Modern Greek given in (3) c. (Cortelazzo 1948: 31), the structural parallelism of the Corfioto example becomes clear. But note that in the Greek example the subordinate clause verb is coreferential but not entirely congruent with the verb in the main clause, since it uses the subjunctive mood and the subordination marker *na*.

¹⁰ Verbs are cited here generally in their Italian infinitive form (if not related to a particular source or example).

¹¹ The following examples are quoted from the sources preserving the original orthography (Italian) and transcription (Corfiot Italian) or are transliterated from Greek (cf. the system used by Arvaniti 1999). Morpheme boundaries (-), glosses and English translations are done by the author of this paper.

This kind of structural reorganization was also observed with the verb *potere* ('to be able to') by Cortelazzo (1948: 31), who gives an example of an interrogative sentence:

- (4) a. Corfiot Italian
cosa posso che fatso?
 what can.IND.PRS.1SG that do. IND.PRS.1SG
- b. Italian
cosa posso fare?
 what can.IND.PRS.1SG do.INF
- c. Modern Greek
ti bor-ó na kán-o?
 what can-IND.PRS.1SG SM do-SBJV.PRS.1SG
 'what can I do?'

Again, the argument is constructed in a subordinate clause with a coreferential verb form and not with an infinitive as it would have been the case in Italian, see (4) b. The corresponding example of Modern Greek in (4) c. (according to Cortelazzo 1948: 31) shows the same structure as (4) a. with the exception of *káno* being a subjunctive form.

The reduction of the infinitive in subject coreferential constructions was also described with other tenses and grammatical persons. The instances of the verb *volere* ('to want') demonstrate this variety. Levi (1961: 31) gives an example for the second person singular:

- (5) a. Corfiot Italian
ti vol ke te bev-a 'na
 you want.IND.PRS.2SG that you drink-IND/SBJV.PRS.2SG a
kupa [...] de acqua?
 cup of water
- b. Italian
vuoi bere un bicchiere d'acqua?
 want. IND.PRS.2SG drink.INF a glass of=water
 'do you want to drink a glass (lit.: cup) of water?'

The example contains also the subject pronouns *ti* and *te* which are obligatory in the Venetian dialects (cf. Zamboni 1974: 20-21). These pronouns allow to identify the verb forms here as coreferential, since the inflected forms *vol* and *beva* could otherwise be interpreted as third person singular.¹² The corresponding Italian construction given by Levi (1961: 31) is shown in (5)b.

While the verb in both the main clause and the subordinate clause is inflected for the same grammatical person (since both refer to the same subject), the used tense of both verbs is not identical. An example of the infinitive reduction in past tense (*imperfetto*) with the verb *volere* is presented by Cortelazzo (1948: 33):

¹² Note that in Italian the form *beva* is the subjunctive presence of the verb *bere* ('to drink') for all three persons singular (SBJV.PRS.1SG, SBJV.PRS.2SG, SBJV.PRS.3SG). The Venetian verb *bevar/bever* is variable with regard to its inflection, therefore, the form *beva* could be analysed as both subjunctive or indicative.

- (6) a. Corfiot Italian
vole-va *che* *torn-o*
 want-IND.PST.1SG that return-IND.PRS.1SG
- b. Italian
vole-vo *torn-are*
 want-IND.PST.1SG return-INF
 ‘I wanted to return’

The form *voleva* is an archaism in Tosco-Italian (Old Tuscan, Maiden 1995: 19) and Venetian (Zamponi 1974: 22). It is formally identical with the third person singular imperfect suffix /-va/, so that only the corresponding structure of Italian in (6) b. given by Cortelazzo (1948: 33) supports the analytic glosses given in (6) a. Yet, the verb in the subordinate clause does not show the same tense as the matrix verb (no *consecutio temporum*). A similar case is given by Cortelazzo (1948: 32) with the verb *cominciare* (‘to begin’) in the future tense (*futuro semplice*):

- (7) a. Corfiot Italian
scominsi-eremo *che* *port-emo* *paja*
 start-IND.FUT.1PL that carry-IND.PRS.1PL straw
- b. Italian
cominc-eremo *a* *port-are la* *paglia*
 start-IND.FUT.1PL to carry-INF the straw
 ‘we will begin to carry the straw’

Both verb forms are subject coreferential as they refer to the same group of speakers. Yet, *portemo* is the Venetian form of the present indicative with the typical suffix of the first-person plural /-emo/ (the Italian variant would be *portiamo*), so this example does not show a *consecutio temporum* either and is the only future tense attested within the sources. The Italian form with an infinitive argument can be seen in (7) b. (given by Cortelazzo 1948: 32). Finally, also the verb *sapere* appears with a (subject coreferential) finite clause argument in Levi (1961: 31), as can be observed in (8) a., while (8) b. shows the corresponding Italian sentence (given by Levi 1961: 31):

- (8) a. Corfiot Italian
no *sa* *ke* *parl-a* *greco*
 NEG know.IND.PRS.3SG that speak-IND.PRS.3SG Greek
- b. Italian
non sa *parl-are* *greco*
 NEG know.IND.PRS.3SG speak-INF Greek
 ‘s/he doesn’t know how to speak Greek’, ‘s/he can’t speak Greek’

At this point, some questions arise: First, what is the grammatical status of these forms of reduced infinitival complementation? And second, is the (possible) subject coreferential finite complementation of these verbs a stable feature of the Corfioto in a diachronic perspective? Only based on the examples by Cortelazzo (1948) and Levi (1961) shown here, one cannot draw any conclusion regarding the grammatical status of finite complementation. Note, however, that of all verbs with finite complements given

in the sources, *volere* is the only one that also occurs with an infinitive complement (cf. Cortelazzo 1948: 33):

- (9) Corfiot Italian
volio *bas-ar la terra*
 want.IND.PRS.1SG kiss-INF the earth
 ‘I want to kiss the earth’

This might be a hint that infinitival complement variants could have been possible for the other verbs as well, but this remains speculation. Furthermore, there is no possibility to estimate which variant would be used more frequently. But if one investigates the recent data, one can confirm that while the subject coreferential infinitival reduction pattern itself is a more or less stable phenomenon in Corfiot Italian, a high degree of alternation between the infinitival and the finite complementation can be observed.

4.2 Subject coreferential infinitive reduction in recent data

With regard to the data collected in 2016, subject coreferential infinitive reduction can be noticed with the verbs *andare*, *volere*, *potere*, *venire* (‘to come’), and *imparare* (‘to learn’). While the first three of these verbs are described in the older sources, both *venire* and *imparare* have not been observed previously with finite arguments in the Italian spoken in Corfu. Examples of these verbs are given in (9) and (10).

- (10) Corfiot Italian [2016-11-15, OSF1 00:28:01]
 //per'ke 'venjo ke ti s- ke ti
 because come.IND.PRS.1SG that you [?] that you
 do di (n)'drio il 'skjafo//
 give.IND.PRS.1SG of behind the slap
 ‘because I come to give you (back) a slap’

Example (10) displays the structure already described in the previous section. The verb forms //per'ke/ and //do/ both refer to the subject of the sentence and both of them are inflected for the first person singular. An Italian version would be “perché vengo a darti uno schiaffo indietro”, where the argument needs to be expressed via an infinitival complement (*dare*) in a prepositional phrase dependent on the matrix verb *vengo*.

Example (11) is structured in a different way, since it shows the use of the synthetic *passato prossimo*, which here consists of an inflected form of the auxiliary verb *avere* and a past participle of the main verb, here with a shortened participle form typical for Venetian dialects (Venetian *a imparà*, cf. Italian *ha imparato*):

- (1) Corfiot Italian [2016-11-17, OSF1 00:47:58]
 //la S[...] a impa'ra ke
 the S[...] have.IND.PRS.3SG learn.PTCP that
 'parl-a e'braiko//
 speak-IND.PRS.3SG Hebrew
 ‘the S[...] (has) learned to speak Hebrew’

While both verb forms refer to the same subject and are congruent with regard to person and number (3sg), there is no *consecutio temporum*, as the verb of the subordinate clause is always inflected for the indicative present tense and is not adapted to the tense used in the main clause.

In addition to the examples given before, there is another type of clause combining present in the data, which looks like a mere sequence of finite verb forms, as illustrated in the following example:

- (2) Corfiot Italian [2016-11-15, EKM 00:53:53]
 //pju 'dʒɔvane di mɛ, 'pɔso d-'digo 'io//
 More young PREP me can. IND.PRS.1SG say.IND.PRS.1SG I
 'younger than me, I can say'

In these cases, the complementizer /ke/ resp. *che* does not appear. The examples are not very frequent (two instances in the corpus) and seem to be a case of variation or individual speech errors. However, in (12) a slight repetition of the initial voiced stop /d/ of the second verb form //digo// could possibly be interpreted as a contact assimilation and reduction of the subordinator //ke// (cf. section 5.1). Still, they are counted here as a different type of infinitive reduction.

By looking at the 2016 data as a whole corpus, it is possible to quantify the relation between finite and infinite complements in total and for every affected verb individually. Table 2 displays preliminary numbers of finite and infinite complements ordered by affected verb attested in the 2016 interview corpus. The fifth column shows the ratio of all three kinds of construction. Since the analysis of the data is still ongoing, the figures should be seen as an intermediate result.

Verb	Finite complements with complementizer	Finite complements without complementizer	Infinitival complements	Ratio
<i>potere</i>	9	2	15	9 : 2 : 15
<i>volere</i>	7	0	17	7 : 0 : 17
<i>andare</i>	2	0	0	2 : 0 : 0
<i>imparare</i>	1	0	0	1 : 0 : 0
<i>venire</i>	1	0	0	1 : 0 : 0

Table 2: Preliminary numbers of finite and infinite complements in the 2016 interview corpus

Since one cannot rule out the possibility of infinite complements of the less frequent verbs *andare*, *venire*, and *imparare* (especially as the infinitival complement is the grammatical option from the perspective of prescription), the only conclusion to draw here is that – regarding the verbs *potere* and *volere* – the reduction of the infinitive complement and its substitution by a subordinate clause seems to be a possible alternation. This does not answer the question concerning the grammatical status of a finite verb complement in a subordinated clause instead of an infinitival construction as argument of the matrix verb. Nevertheless, another reasonable assumption based on that data set seems to be that the occurrence of the finite complements with complementizer is quite frequent regarding the verbs *potere* and *volere*.

A few restrictions of this provisional overview need to be mentioned. First, the small number of verbal instances appearing in the corpus is a limitation of this analysis. Another shortcoming is the small number of interviewed speakers (two consultants). The qualitative setting of the data collection produced qualitative spoken language data, which are not easy to investigate in a quantitative manner. Moreover, natural language data can provide only positive data and cannot give information about what is not possible (see Rice 2018 for a discussion of these constraints regarding the analysis of language documentation data). These limitations could be overcome by the collection and investigation of more data produced by more consultants, and different kinds of data (for example by elicitation of sentences and collection of grammaticality/acceptability judgements of speakers/listeners). Yet, the present study could serve as a starting point for further investigations.

The given data is only a snapshot, and further studies will be necessary to complete the picture. Adamou (2016) has shown that even small-sized corpora of endangered languages can be analysed very well by using a corpus-driven methodology. In this spirit, the ongoing corpus-based investigation of the spoken language data of Nachtmann (2002), the video interviews of the USHMM, and the *Shoah* Outtakes will give more information regarding the stability of the pattern. This will eventually lead to a more representative data analysis - also regarding socio-linguistic variables.

4.3 Semantic aspects of subject coreferential infinitive reduction

What do the matrix verbs that seem to trigger a possible infinitive reduction have in common? If one puts together the verbs with attested subject coreferential finite arguments from the older sources and the 2016 data, a categorisation into four groups seems to be possible (as shown in Table 3).

modal verbs	ability verbs	motion verbs	aspectual verbs
<i>potere</i> <i>volere</i>	<i>sapere</i> ¹³ <i>imparare</i>	<i>andare</i> <i>venire</i>	<i>cominciare</i>

Table 3: Groups of verbs with attested forms of subject coreferential infinitive reduction

All these verbs can qualify the action expressed by a subsequent verb. Skytte et al. (1991: 514) refer to them as *verbi a ristrutturazione* ('restructuring verbs'). These verbs can modify each other, too. In one instance in the corpus, a procedure of sequencing two verbs in a finite subject coreferential structure is attested.

¹³ Skytte et al. (1991: 514) categorise *sapere* as a modal verb. Yet, in comparison with *potere*, it expresses always the capacity of an animate subject, while *potere* can also be used with non-animate subjects (Skytte et al. 1991: 521). In example (8), *sapere* implies a learnt ability, a *know-how*. Regarding animate subjects, "learnt and inherent (rather intellectual vs physical)" are distinguished by De Angelis (2013: 430). This "distinction is evident in those languages, as the main Romance languages, where it is lexicalized in two different ways (see respectively It. *sapere*, Fr. *savoir*, Sp. *saber* vs It. *potere*, Fr. *pouvoir*, Sp. *poder*)" (De Angelis 2013: 430). In this perspective, also *imparare* reflects the process of learning an ability in example (11), and therefore both verbs are grouped here in one category. Interestingly, both examples (8) and (11) refer to the ability of speaking a language, which of course could only be accidental.

- (13) Corfiot Italian [2016-11-17 OSF1 00:43:05]
 //’vo(l)jo ku ’vado ke ’trov-o
 want.IND.PRS.1SG SM go.IND.PRS.1SG that find-ND.PRS.1SG
 un kor’fjoto//
 a Corfiote
 ‘I want to go to find a Corfiote.’

Here, two finite verb complements are combined in an almost a serial construction. This example not only attests the possibility of a combination of coreferential finite complementation in more than one subordinate clause. Moreover, the first complementizer is *ku*, not *ke*, which is very striking, since it could be a relic of an Apulian dialect spoken in Corfu. In the Salentino dialects, *cu* has the function to subordinate clauses. This will be elaborated in the following section.

5 Comparison with other kinds of infinitive reduction

5.1 Infinitive reduction in South Italian dialects

It is well known that a similar pattern of restricted infinitival usage can be found in South Italian dialects, where the origin of the construction is ascribed to the influence of the autochthonous Greek dialects in Southern Italy (cf. Rohlfs 1922, 1969, 1997). This “unpopularity of the infinitive” (“impopolarità dell’infinito”, as it was called by Rohlfs 1969: 102) is present in the Salentino dialect. Here, the finite arguments appear almost always in the indicative mood and present tense, irregardless of the main clause verb (no *consecutio temporum*, but also no subjunctive, see Rohlfs 1969: 102-103):¹⁴

- (14) a. Salentino (Rohlfs 1969: 103)
 vulia *cu* *ssacciu*
 want.IND.PST.1SG SM know.IND.PRS.1SG
 b. Italian
 vole-vo *sap-ere*
 want-IND.PST.1SG know-INF
 ‘I wanted to know’

Note the subordination marker *cu* which strongly resembles the subordination marker *ku* in example (13). Rohlfs (1922: 218) interprets *cu* not only as a substitute for an infinitive construction, but also as “paraphrase of a subjunctive” (“Umschreibung eines Konjunktivs”), which corresponds well with the description of the phenomenon as “analytic subjunctive” for the Balkan languages by Friedman (2006: 665-666). Another noteworthy phenomenon is the phonetic assimilation of the subordination marker with the following finite verb in fast speech as described by Rohlfs (1997: 326, see also Mayerthaler et al. 1993: 100):

¹⁴ The following examples are quoted from the sources preserving the original orthography. Morpheme breaks (-), glosses and English translations are added by the author of this paper.

all varieties and, in some dialects, also after *hear*, *must*, *know* and *make*” (Ledgeway 2013: 201, Italics in the original). The situation, however, remains messy:

To sum up, diachronically there is extensive and largely unpredictable variation in the distribution of infinitival and finite complementation both across and within individual areas and dialects and, synchronically, even within the same speech community. (Ledgeway 2013: 204)

Could this variation have something in common with the Corfiot data presented above? De Angelis (2013) observes that not in Salentino, but in certain varieties of Calabrese “even the verb *potere* can head a finite subordinate clause instead of the bare infinitive” (De Angelis 2013: 429). He applies the concept of “participant-internal modality” developed by van der Auwera and Plungian (1998) to distinguish different types of *potere* complements and concludes that “the construction with a finite dependent clause occurs exclusively with the modality related to an *inherent* possibility” (De Angelis 2013: 433, Italics in the original), which means “cases where the subject, thanks to certain inherent properties (physical strength, physical or psychic state etc.) or more generally through a personal involvement in an epistemic event, participates in the SoA [state of affairs, J.M.] or in the event codified in the dependent clause” (De Angelis 2013: 434). This could also constitute a further direction of the qualitative investigation of the Corfioto data.

The “unpopularity of the infinitive” in South Italian dialects Salentino and Calabrese reflects their long-lasting and sustained language contact with the Italo-Greek dialects in Southern Italy. Moreover, other Colonial Venetian / Italian varieties spoken in Istria and Dalmatia do not seem to allow this kind of structure. However, Bidwell’s (1967) general investigation of the Colonial Venetian varieties does not mention the phenomenon. Also, if one takes a quick look on some research literature on one of the varieties, the Italian of Zadar (Zaratino), neither Wengler (1915), nor Chiarioni (1984, 1985) or Barbarić (2015) mention any kind of subject coreferential infinitive reduction either.

5.2 Infinitive reduction in Balkan Judezmo and Balkan Turkish

In general, Judezmo preserves the inherited Ibero-Romance infinitive (Friedman & Joseph 2014: 10). While Gabinski (1996, 1997: 243) claims that there is some kind of infinitival loss in certain constructions due to Balkan areal convergence, Sanchis i Ferrer and Vuletic (2008) show that these constructions were common in Aragonese before the expulsion of the Spanish Jews (cf. also Quintana Rodriguez 2017). Schmid (2016) clarifies, that the use of the infinitive in Judezmo is vital and frequent.

Still, Friedman and Joseph (2014: 10) argue that “there is some reduction in use of infinitive in favor of finite complementation, and this reduction involves the subjunctive mood forms, thus moving Judezmo in the direction of the usage of coteritorial Balkan languages.” This kind of syntactical re-structuring is shown in (16) a. – c. (quoted with original glosses [abbreviations slightly adapted] from Friedman & Joseph 2014: 10):

- (16) a. Balkan Judezmo
kwando ke te vengamoz a tom-ar?
 When that you.ACC we.come/SBJV to take-INF?
- b. Modern Greek
póte na 'rthúme na se párumē?
 when SM we.comeSM you.ACC we.take
- c. Modern Spanish
Cuándo quieres que vengamos a recog-er-te?
 When you.want that we.come to take-INF-you
 ‘When do you want us to come to get you?’

The crucial point is here that in the Judezmo construction in (16) a., a modal verb expressing volition is omitted compared to the Modern Spanish version in (16) c., thus making the Judezmo example – in a structural perspective – looking more similar to the Greek sentence in (16) b.¹⁶ “At issue here is not so much infinitive replacement”, Friedman and Joseph (2014: 10-11) state, “but rather the spread of the type of construction associated with infinitive replacement.” This kind of construction can be observed also in the Corfiot Italian data:

- (17) Corfiot Italian [2016-11-15, OSF1 01:06:09]
 //e 'koza ke 'fatfo 'tuto-l 'gjorno?//
 and what that do.IND.PRS.1SG whole=the day?
 ‘And what should I do the whole day?’

Example (17) looks like a calque from modern Greek, but – similar to the examples of finite complementation presented in section 4 – the Corfiot Italian uses the indicative, while in the Greek sentence the subjunctive mood is used. The similar Greek sentence in (18) was indeed uttered a few turns after (17), following passages of intra- and intersentential code-switching from Corfiot Italian to Greek:

- (18) Modern Greek [2016-11-15, OSF1 01:06:32]
 //ti na 'kano?//
 what SM do.SBJV.PRS.1SG
 ‘What should I do?’

Moreover, the construction as in (17) was already noticed by Cortelazzo (1948: 33), which indicates the recurrence of this pattern in Corfiot Italian:

- (19) Corfiot Italian
E adesso cosa che fasso?
 and now what that do.IND.PRS.1SG
 ‘And what should I do now?’

Again, there is no subjunctive mood in the second part of the sentence. A corresponding Italian version would be constructed with an inflected modal verb and an infinitive complement. These examples from Balkan Judezmo and Corfiot Italian demonstrate

¹⁶ Friedman and Joseph (2014: 10) give another very similar example from Macedonian.

once more that similar grammatical branches are affected in diverse settings of local convergence in the Balkan area.

Additional ‘newcomers’ in Southeast Europe are the Balkan Turkish dialects. Matras and Tufan (2007) demonstrate that syntactical re-structuring occurs in Gostivar Turkish, a variety being “representative of the Turkish dialects spoken in the Republic of Macedonia [...] and to a considerable extent also of Rumelian or Balkan Turkish as a whole” (Matras & Tufan 2007: 215). A “characteristic feature” of Rumelian Turkish dialects is, that they have adopted “clause combining strategies that are similar to those employed in the surrounding Indo-European languages” (Matras & Tufan 2007: 222). In fact, these patterns of clause linking resemble the results of infinitive reduction shown in Corfiot Italian:

Essentially, these [clause combining strategies] are based on the juxtaposition of finite clauses, linked through independent semantic markers that introduce the subordinate clause (subordinating conjunctions). This system replaces almost entirely the Turkic system of converbs and nominal embedding. (Matras & Tufan 2007: 222)

Interestingly, these subordinating conjunctions are not used in the case of modal constructions. According to Matras and Tufan (2007: 222), “[m]odal complements are not introduced by a conjunction, but make use of the historical optative, which, now expressing dependency on the main verb, serves as a subjunctive”. Following the authors, the “finite embedded predicate in the subjunctive replaces the historical Turkish infinitive” (Matras & Tufan 2007: 223). An example given by the authors demonstrates that also in subject coreferential constructions this strategy is applied (examples, morpheme boundaries, glosses [abbreviations slightly adapted], and translation quoted directly from Matras & Tufan 2007: 222-223):¹⁷

- (20) a. Gostivar Turkish
Yarın ist-er-im oyna-(ya)-im düğün-de.
tomorrow want-AOR-1SG play-SBJV.1SG wedding-LOC
- b. Macedonian
Utre saka-m da igra-m na svadba-ta.
tomorrow want-1SG COMP play-1SG at wedding-DEF
- c. Standard Turkish
Yarın düğün-de oyna-mak isti-yor-um.
tomorrow wedding-LOC play-INF want-PROG-1SG
‘I want to dance at the wedding tomorrow.’

The phenomena sketched above from Balkan Judezmo and Balkan Turkish can be explained as results of grammatical borrowing from the surrounding neighbour languages. The syntactic structuring in Balkan Judezmo parallels similar constructions in Greek or Macedonian, whereas the clause combining strategies in Gostivar Turkish resemble structures in Macedonian and Albanian.

¹⁷ A further example of Albanian given by Matras and Tufan (2007: 222-223) shows a similar finite complementation as the Gostivar Turkish and the Macedonian example.

Nevertheless, the developments in both ‘newcomers’, Balkan Judezmo and Balkan Turkish, can be seen as “local convergences” (cf. Joseph 2010: 628-629), that add to the overall picture of syntactic restructuring in the Southeast European convergence area.

6. Discussion

Investigating the reduction of infinitival use in Corfioto and comparing the results of this process with similar phenomena in other genetically related Italo-Romance dialects on the one hand and other ‘newcomer’ languages in Southeast Europe on the other hand reveals no consistent scheme, but a rather unclear picture.

Does Corfioto participate in Balkan areal convergence? Regarding Balkan Judezmo, Friedman and Joseph (2014: 19) argue, that “‘membership’ in a Sprachbund is not defined by the accumulation of points, but by participation in processes of various types of convergence at various linguistic levels”. From this perspective, the reduction of infinitive uses and the increase of finite complementation in Corfiot Italian could be one of these convergence types. However, the striking resemblance of the Corfiot data with the dialects of the extreme South Italy, Calabrese and Salentino, suggest that this type of subject coreferential finite complementation could also be traces of the dialects spoken by the Apulian Jews who migrated to Corfu, inherited to the spoken Corfiot Italian through processes of dialect levelling and later processes of dialect-standard contact (or Italianization).

A third explanation would be, that both – origin of the phenomenon in South Italy and local convergence as part of a broader areal clustering – play a role in the production of these kinds of utterances in Corfiot Italian. As an attempt to explain the cause of the Balkan areal convergence, Friedman (2011: 283-284) proposes the model of feature selection (cf. Mufwene 2008), “in which a variety of individual preexisting tendencies produced complexly congruent outcomes owing to changes that resulted from, or were reinforced by, language contact.” Friedman and Joseph (2014) apply this approach to Balkan Judezmo and state:

[A]t issue is not so much a quantifiable ‘Balkanness’ in terms of the integration of contact-induced changes into the grammar but rather the strengthening of tendencies which, while they may have been brought with Judezmo from Spain in the fifteenth century, have increased in the direction of coterritorial languages while those same features have not been so strengthened elsewhere in Spanish. (Friedman & Joseph 2014: 11)

Could this feature selection model also be applicable to Corfiot Italian? The pattern of reduced use of infinitives could have been brought from Apulia, but it was subsequently altered due to language contact with Italian and Venetian on the one hand, and Modern Greek on the other hand. So, for example, the infinitival complementation of the verb *volere* was enforced due to contact with Italian and Venetian, and the strengthening of the finite complementation of the verb *potere* was a result of the contact with Modern Greek.

The strong variation found in the recent Corfiot Italian data could be linked to other processes as well. After the Shoah, many speakers decided not to use Corfioto in public anymore and not to transmit it to the younger generations. Since language attrition can

lead to the loss of marked features (Wolfram 2002: 773-775), this phenomenon could be avoided, if it is conceived as the marked option by the speakers. Wolfram (2002: 775) explicitly notes that “the reduction of subordinate clauses” is a manifestation of language attrition in many cases. The prolonged influence of Italian via written media, radio and television may function as amplification of this process in terms of dialect avoidance and Italianization of the dialect (cf. De Mauro 2002 [1963]). On the other hand, all remaining speakers are bi-lingual with Modern Greek as their dominant language and the predominant language in their surrounding environment. So, interference with Greek as dominant language could strengthen the production of finite complementation in subject coreferential constructions in natural speech.

7. Summary and Outlook

Corfiot Italian displays a pattern of finite complementation in subject coreferential constructions, which corresponds to the Modern Greek pattern, but which is not generally used. The reduced usage of infinitival complements seems to be verb-specific, therefore matching certain characteristics of dialects of extreme South Italy. Furthermore, this pattern resembles other results of syntactic restructuring in ‘newer’ Balkan varieties, whereas other varieties of Colonial Venetian in Southeast Europe do not seem to apply this pattern.

Regarding the question, whether the infinitive reduction in Corfiot Italian is a case of areal convergence, the answer is a firm and clear “perhaps”. On the one hand, the phenomena can be explained as a result of language contact between Italian / Venetian and Modern Greek. On the other hand, the structural branch of clause combining strategies is very often a target of convergence in the Balkan linguistic area, often by reinforcing existing strategies of the affected languages and dialects, which makes it reasonable to categorize the infinitive reduction in Corfiot Italian also as a process related to the areal convergence ongoing in Southeast Europe. Yet, standardization and language endangerment are two other (socio-)linguistic processes at work which may eventually lead to the dismantling of this phenomenon. These are processes ongoing in the whole linguistic area of Southeast Europe. Joseph (2010: 629) states that “the conditions that gave rise to the convergence, that created the sprachbund, are no longer present as far as the standard languages are concerned” and therefore makes a case for a dialectal research agenda in the Balkans: “Thus in the present just as in the past in the Balkans, the local dialects must be the main focus for the study of language contact, as they are, and have always been, where the action is” (Joseph 2010: 629). Likewise, Friedman (2011: 285) calls for “documentation and analysis” of endangered minority languages and dialects in Southeast Europe and underlines that “[l]arge corpora and integrated databases for nonstandard Balkan languages/dialects are needed”. The research presented here – as preliminary the conclusions may be – is a small step along this way.

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