

FURTHER NOTES ON FRIULIAN

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During the past 100 years or so the Romance languages have been extensively studied. For the most part, however, this study was concerned mainly with French, Italian, and Spanish. There was little attention paid to the so-called minor Romance languages and there was even less emphasis on their study.

Today we recognize the importance of the minor languages in the study of Romance in general, and of themselves in particular. We find that often these little studied languages contain many interesting and unique elements that may set them apart from the other Romance languages.

This paper is concerned with Friulian, one of the minor languages. Friulian is spoken in the northeastern corner of Italy, in the area known as Friuli-Venezia-Giulia. This particular language has undergone a small revival in study during the past ten years. There are many features of the language that are decidedly uncharacteristic of the modern Romance languages. This paper will examine two of these characteristics.

The first of the two phenomena that is to be discussed is called the pleonastic pronoun. This is a grammatical peculiarity that is native to some of the dialects of southern and eastern France [for both French and Provençal] and northern Italy.

Very little is known about pleonasm in the Romance languages. There seem to have been no pan-Romance studies on this subject. There is also very little, if anything, written about pleonasm for any of the languages singularly. What studies do exist are for the most part concerned with Friulian.

The dictionary defines pleonasm as the usage of redundancy, that is, the usage of extra or needless words. This paper will show that this is not the case in Friulian. It will be shown that in fact it is the subject pronoun that is redundant rather than the pleonastic pronoun.

There have been two very interesting comments on the subject of pleonasm in Friulian. The first is by Marchetti who stated that the pleonastic pronoun, in Friulian, is a special class of pronoun.

" A noteworthy characteristic of Friulian is to double the subject in unison with the verbal inflection." (Marchetti 1952 :142)

Doubling of the subject pronoun is not quite the case in Friulian, although Marchetti seemed otherwise to be close to what was happening. The other relevant comment concerning the pleonastic pronoun comes from Iliescu, with the statement that the pleonastic pronoun is used whenever

"...one, two, or even three pairs of verb forms are identical in the same tense. They are distinguished exclusively by the use of the pleonastic pronoun...it is the carrier of very important information, by indicating the subject of the sentence." (Iliescu 1964 :320)

We have then, it seems, an independent morph, one that is neither bound to the subject or the verb, but one that functions rather as a second subject of the sentence.

Traditionally we have used the necessity or nonnecessity of the subject pronoun as a means of classifying languages. For example, languages such as French or English require the use of the subject pronoun because a large number of the verbal inflections have merged together.

(1) FRENCH		ENGLISH	
je marche	nous marchons	I walk	we walk
tu marches	vous marchez	you walk	you walk
il marche	ils marchent	he walks	they walk

In a language such as Spanish, however, the differentiation of the verb endings often means that the subject pronouns are not required.

(2) SPANISH		
(yo) amo	(nosotros) amamos	
(tú) amas	(vosotros) amais	
(él) ama	(ellos) aman	

In Friulian, the subject pronoun is grammatically optional. It is therefore expected that the verbal inflections will be differentiated. Contrary to what is expected, this is not the case. There are several sets of verbal inflections that seem to have merged. The first person and third person plural are the same for each of the conjugations in the imperfect, as they are for the simple past, the conditional, and the imperfect subjunctive as well. We find a similar situation with the second person singular and the second person plural in the conditional and the imperfect subjunctive, as are the first person and the third person singular.

(3) Friulian /cakara/ 'to speak'

Conditional

/(io) ĉakarares/ 'I would speak'
 /(lui) ĉakarares/ 'he would speak'

/(tu) ĉakararesis 'you would speak'
 /(vualtris) ĉakararesis/ 'you would speak'

Imperfect

/(no) ĉakaravin/ 'we were speaking'
 /(lor) ĉakaravin/ 'they were speaking'

An obvious question arises here. How can these verb forms be differentiated if the subject pronoun is not necessary?

The answer, as may be expected, is the pleonastic pronoun. The pleonastic pronoun seems to serve as a marker here to distinguish grammatical person. The pleonastic pronoun is not the subject, as the subject is optional in most cases. It is not part of the verb, as verb paradigms were elicited without reference to the pleonastic pronoun.

We find further evidence for the importance of the pleonastic pronoun, as well as evidence that it is not redundant, from a neighboring dialect. In Veneto Italian, as in Friulian, the subject pronoun is optional. If we consider the present tense, we find that the second person singular and the third person singular, as well as the third person plural all have the same verbal endings. In the imperfect, all of the endings are identical, except for the first person singular. The same phenomenon occurs in the future. Similar patterns are shown in other tenses.

(4) Veneto Italian /parlar/ 'to speak'

Present tense

/(ti) parla/ 'you speak'
 /(lu) parla/ 'he speaks'
 /(lori) parla/ 'they speak'

Imperfect tense

/(mi) parlavo/ 'I was speaking' /nuealtri) parlava/ 'we...'
 /(ti) parlava/ 'you were speaking' /vuealtri) parlava/
 'you...'
 /(lu) parlava/ 'he was speaking' /(lori) parlava/ 'they....'

We could reasonably expect, then, that the pleonastic pronoun is necessary in order to disambiguate the various grammatical persons when the person markers are not present or have been collapsed. Such is the case in Friulian. The pleonastic pronoun occurs with the second person the third person singular and the third person plural. It was reported, however, that the subject pronoun is often used for the first person and the second person plural in order to distinguish them.

We find three uses for the pleonastic pronoun. These are obligatory, optional, and forbidden. In affirmative sentences, we find that the pleonastic pronoun is obligatory. [For ease of reading, the pleonastic pronoun is indicated by underlining.]

- (5) /(io) i çakari furlan/ 'I speak Friulian'
 /(lui) al a un çan/ 'He has a dog'
 /(tu) tu vas a çaze/ 'You are going home'
 /(i) a e skolare/ 'She is a student'

We also find that the pleonastic pronoun is obligatory in affirmative questions.

- (6) /(lor) a son fiofs/ 'Are they new?'
 /(v.) i çalais tivi/ 'Are you watching tv?'
 /dula a e so mari/ 'Where is her mother?'
 /tse (tu) tu fas/ 'How are you doing?'

We see one other case in which the pleonastic pronoun is obligatory. This occurs in third person singular impersonal constructions.

- (7) /a plof/ 'it's raining'
 /al e umit/ 'it's humid'
 /al e çalt/ 'it's hot'.
 /a neve/ 'it's snowing'

In this particular case, we see that the pleonastic pronoun has virtually the same function as for example the es in German or the il in French in the same type of constructions.

We find that there is only one case in which the use of the pleonastic pronoun is optional. This occurs in negative statements.

- (8) /(io) no (i) çakari franses/ 'I don't speak French'
 /(lui) no (al) a un çan/ 'He doesn't have a dog'
 /(tu) no (tu) vas a çaze/ 'You aren't going home'
 /i no (a) e skolare/ 'He isn't a student'

As far as can be determined, there is absolutely no difference, semantically, in the sentences with and without the pleonastic pronoun. We see only one case of possible ambiguity. This could occur with the homophone pair /no/. /no/ is the first person plural subject pronoun as well as the negative particle. A statement such as /no i sin ki/ can be glossed as 'we are here' and 'we aren't here'. In order to not maintain this ambiguity, speakers will say /no no i sin ki/ 'we aren't here', making the subject pronoun obligatory for this particular case.

We find as well, one case in which the use of the pleonastic pronoun is forbidden. In negative questions, the pleonastic pronoun does not occur.

- (9) /(lɔr) no son ^vnofs/ 'Aren't they new?'
 /(v.) no al ^včalais tivi/ 'Aren't you watching tv?'
 /(partʒe so mari (i) no e ki/ 'Why isn't her mother here?'

There is one other matter that we will discuss insofar as the pleonastic pronoun is concerned. The placement of the pleonastic pronoun depends on several matters.

In affirmative sentences, assuming a nominal object, the pleonastic pronoun precedes the verb directly.

- (10) /(io) i ^včakarⁱ talian/ 'I speak Italian'
 /(lui) al ^včale tivi/ 'He watches tv'
 /(no) i vin un ^včan/ 'We have a dog'
 /(io) i viot mio pari/ 'I see my father'

If we replace the object with a pronoun, and if the pronoun comes before the verb, then the pleonastic pronoun may precede or follow the object pronoun.

- (11) /(io) i lui viot 'I see him'
 /(io) lui i viot/ 'I see him'
 /(no) i la vin/ 'We have it'
 /(no) la i vin/ 'We have it'

If we have an affirmative question, then the pleonastic pronoun can also precede or follow the verb, depending on what kind of question we have. If we have a question that uses statement word order, then the pleonastic pronoun precedes the verb.

- (12) /(tu) tu ^včakarⁱs furlan/ 'Do you speak Friulian?'
 /(lui) al ^včale tivi/ 'Is he watching tv?'
 /(no) i vin un can/ 'Do we have a dog?'
 /a a (i) une so:r/ 'Does she have a sister?'

However, when we have a question in which we have subject-verb inversion, the pleonastic pronoun generally follows the verb, that is, it comes between the verb and the subject pronoun.

- (13) /Ķakari ĭ (io) furlan/ 'Do I speak Friulian?'
 /Ķale al (lui) t^vivi/ 'Does he watch tv?'
 /vin ĭ (no) un Ķan/ 'Do we have a dog?'
 /a a (i) une so:r/ 'Does she have a sister?'

We find, however, that if we have negative statements, when the pleonastic pronoun is used, that it precedes the verb.

- (14) /(io) no (ĭ) Ķakari furlan/ 'I don't speak Friulian'
 /(no) no (ĭ) sin ki/ 'We aren't here'
 /(lui) no (a) a un Ķan/ 'He doesn't have a dog'
 /(tu) no (tu) viodis Ķan/ 'You don't see Johnny'

In Friulian, thus, the pleonastic pronoun is not a redundancy. Information normally carried by the subject is carried by the pleonastic pronoun, that is person and number information, as well as gender information for the third person singular. In most cases, the pleonastic pronoun is required while the subject pronoun is optional. Thus the subject pronoun rather than the pleonastic pronoun seems to be the redundant morph.

The second phenomenon to be discussed concerns one aspect of negation that doesn't seem to show up in any other studies of Romance. Negation in Friulian is fairly straightforward and follows the standard Romance patterns.

In general, the negative is formed by inserting /no/ in front of the pleonastic pronoun. We have already discussed the obligatoriness or optionality of the pleonastic pronoun. Again, in negatives, it is only used when there is a possible ambiguity as with the /no i sin stas ki/ 'we were here' 'we were not here' type sentences in which the subject pronoun /no/ and the negative particle /no/ are homophonous.

The negatives for 'never', 'not at all', 'no longer', and so forth are compound negatives as they are in French. They are formed by inserting /no/ in front of the pleonastic pronoun and the negative adverb after the first verb in the verb phrase.

What is interesting here is the so-called polite negative. My language aides for the Rivignano dialect of Friulian informed me that this type of negative is used in polite or formal speech. It is formed by inserting a second negative particle, /sta/, after the negative adverb /no/.

- (15) /(io) no (i) ti le dɔi/ informal
 'I don't give it to you'
 /(io) no sta (i) ti le dɔi/ formal
 'I don't give it to you'

I have not been able to trace this particular phenomenon other than in the Rivignano dialect. It does not appear in Standard Friulian nor in any of the other dialects of the language that were looked at. Further, it does not appear in any of the neighboring languages that were looked at. It seems to be dialect specific.

The study of the lesser known Romance languages often yields interesting information that takes its place in the overall picture of the history and development of the Modern Romance from its parent, Latin. In this paper, two noncharacteristic traits of Friulian were discussed. Friulian dialects contain a pleonastic subject pronoun. In this particular case, it appears that the pleonastic pronoun carries significantly more information than does the actual subject pronoun, thus promoting the possibility that it is the subject pronoun that is redundant rather than the pleonastic pronoun.

The other noncharacteristic trait that was looked at concerned a polite negative, that is, an extra negative particle that appears, dialect specifically in Rivignano, only in polite or formal conversation.

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