

Abstract

Daniela Guglielmo

Ph.D. Thesis in Linguistics

The following doctoral thesis, titled “A particle-centred approach on Italian Verb Particle Constructions” (hereinafter VPCs) aims at showing that the particle characterizing Italian Phrasal verbs such as *su* (up), *giù* (down), *fuori* (out), *dentro* (in/inside) and so on plays a key role in the constructions both syntactically and semantically.

The framework adopted is based on the main syntactic theories developed by Z.Harris (1976) as well as on the Lexicon Grammar Method as pointed out by M. Gross (1981). I will suggest, gradually during the dissertation, that the spatial, aspectual and metaphorical meaning of a large portion of Italian VPCs such as *scappare fuori di casa* (to escape out of the house), *tirare via un chiodo* (to pull out the nail from the wall), *mettere dentro il ladro* (to put the thief inside), *portare avanti un progetto* (to carry out a project), *tagliare fuori qualcuno da un discorso* (to cut sb.out from a discussion) - are embedded only into the particle slot as the head verb can vary into a finite range of possibilities or it not occur at all. The head verb is in other words ‘weak’ while the particle represents the powerful element (or ‘operator’ in lexicon-grammar terms) so that it cannot be considered a small added element (lat. ‘particula’): the particle affects the argument structure of the verb and carries the aspectual or spatial or idiomatic meaning.

Moreover its syntactic autonomy is demonstrated by the fact that it can also occur without the head verb, in sentences such as *su le mani* (hand up), *via di qui* (away from here), *fuori i soldi* (money out), *giù il governo* (down with the government), *Lazio avanti* (Lazio ahead) that are defined “verbless particle constructions”.

The thesis provides an in depth syntactic and semantic analysis of Italian VPCs, with interesting evidence from dictionaries and corpora, stressing the need to substitute the traditional “Verbocentrism” with an original Particle-Centred Approach.

Finally the theoretical and applicative implications of such a change of perspective are pointed out.