

Deictic expletives in southern Italo-Romance: A case-study from some inner Cilento dialects

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In this talk we investigate the distribution of deictic expletives in some southern Italo-Romance varieties from inner Cilento, in Campania (Felitto, Laurino, Piaggine, Valle dell'Angelo), in the light of the current debate on expletives in Italo-Romance, their morphosyntax, semantics, pragmatics and diachrony (Benincà 1984; Manzini & Savoia 2005, I: 172-196; Bernini 2012; Parry 2013; Pescarini 2012, 2019; Bentley, Ciconte & Cruschina 2015; Poletto 2016, *int.al.*, and references therein). A preliminary investigation (conducted through the recording of spontaneous speech and guided interviews), reveals the existence of two types of (optional) expletives, the deictic neuter singular pronoun *keru* 'that' and the masculine singular deictic pronoun *kiru* 'that', displaying an interesting different syntactic distribution.

The neuter deictic expletive *keru* only occurs in (all types of) existential sentences with the copula HAVE (displaying lack of agreement with the pivot nominal) (Cennamo & Cerullo 2021: 270-271) (1), and in raising (2) and extraposition contexts (3):

- (1) ['keru nu 'avɛ 'gas]
EXPL not has gas
'There is a shortage of gas'
- (2) ['keru 'pare ka ndʒ 'era]
EXPL seems that there was
'It seemed that he was there'
- (3) ['keru ɛ b'bwone ka 'veni]
EXPL is good that come.2SG
'It's good that you come'

In contrast, the masculine singular deictic expletive *kiru* occurs with BE existentials (4) (always displaying agreement of the pivot with the copula), presentative constructions (with optionality of agreement with the postverbal nominal, i.e., \pm subjectization) (5a-5b) and weather verbs (6):

- (4) a. ['kiru ndʒ ɛ na 'temba 'renne]
EXPL PF is a hill there
'There is a hill there'
- b. ['kiru ndʒi so 'tanda kri'stjani ka 'vanu aŋgɔra ku li 'makine]
ESPL PF are many people who vanno still with the cars
'There are still many people who go by car'
- (5) a. ['kiru a ka'rutu pa'rekki d'da] (-agr)
EXPL has fallen.MSG many there
'Many people have fallen down there (lit. that has fallen down many (sc. people))'

b. ['kuru ne 'ana ka'ruti ri kri'stjani] (+agr)
EXPL of-them have fallen.MSG of people
'Many people have fallen down there '(lit. that of-them have fallen down of people)

c. ['kuru 'ana ve'nuti 'fratiti] (+agr)
EXPL have come.M.PL your-brothers
'Your brothers have come (lit. that have come your brothers)

(6) ['kuru kju'via]
EXPL rained
'It rained'

The distribution of the neuter and masculine deictic expletives reflects their different functions.

Whereas the neuter form *keru* appears to have only a pragmatic function, realizing the 'silent argument of predication', an 'implicit spatio-temporal domain '(Cruschina 2016: 122) (1)-(3), the masculine deictic *kuru* signals not only the spatio-temporal frame of predication, as in its existential uses (albeit occurring only with the proform *ngi*, etymologically a locative adverb, 'there') (4), but it also conveys a syntactic function, 'flagging up a forthcoming informationally new element 'when the subject occurs post-verbally (Biberauer & van der Wal 2012: 2), as well as a semantic one, as with weather verbs, where the expletive has argument status (Levin & Krejci 2019: 5).

Thus, deictic expletives in the southern Italo-Romance varieties investigated appear to bring interesting new data and insights on the status, typology and function of expletives, showing a major division between a pragmatic only neuter expletive and a syntactico-semantic masculine expletive, whose pragmatic function is a more recent development.

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