The contact-induced emergence of new constituents in Molisean Romani
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Post-posed third person subject clitics are an Early Romani legacy common in many present day Romani varieties. On the other hand, partial cliticisation of reduced forms of the first and second person object pronouns (ma, tu) is a more recent phenomenon attested in a minority of dialects (Elšik 2000, Matras 2002: 101). Soravia (1977) documents the most extreme development of this phenomenon in Abbruzzian Romani, where clitics have fused with the verb to give rise to object agreement markers: dikkēmo < dikhel-ma ‘s/he sees me’. Looking at data collected for the Romani Morpho-syntax Database, I will show how the development identified by Soravia can also be found in a further Southern Italian Romani dialect, Molisean Romani (IT-007 and IT-010). The emergence of object clitics is part of a more extended series of contact influences which have also led to a restructuring of constituent order in Moliseran Romani. In particular, the position of noun modifiers such as adjectives and possessive pronouns no longer matches the common Romani order (modifier + noun), but rather follows dialectal Italian norms (noun + modifier). While the restructuring of constituent order can be regarded as an example of convergence, the emergence of object clitics can be regarded as a process of fusion, the wholesale, class-specific non-separation of two systems (Matras 2009). Both processes are clear indicators of long and sustained contact between Romani and dialectal Italian and can be linked to the settlement patterns of the Roma in southern Italy which will also be briefly discussed.

Keywords: Romani, dialectal Italian, object clitics, noun modifiers, convergence, fusion

REFERENCES