

*Intra-writer variation and the Italo-Romance “philological problem”.*  
*A case study of Old Sicilian syntax.*

An Intra-Writer variational (Henceforth “IaW variational”; Cf. Bell 2014, Hernández-Campoy 2016) approach could prove very interesting when it comes to the study of Old Italo-Romance languages like Old Veneto, Old Neapolitan and Old Sicilian. A lot of these languages, or at least the texts written and classified under them, have known a major influence from Old Tuscan (the literary language of the Italian mainland) and show a high frequency of so called “tuscanisms” (Vincent 2019). As of consequence, establishing a comparative analysis between the Old and Modern varieties proves to be highly problematic: which linguistic features were inherent for their Old (spoken) varieties and which were only present in the literary language, due to Tuscan influence (Varvaro 1984, 1986, 1988a, 1988b; Vincent 2019)?

However, an IaW variational approach might shed some light on the matter. Whereas Inter-Writer variation proves to be almost impossible to analyse, an IaW variational approach would give us a clear overview of all variables present within the work(s) of one author. In this regard we will discuss the high frequency of infinitives in Old Sicilian (Núñez-Román 2006, 2007, 2011; Bentley 2014), argued to be another consequence of Old Tuscan influence and possible language contact.

We will combine the framework of Giusti’s “protocol linguistics” (2011) with our IaW variational analysis in order to classify the various variables in an authors work as either being more Tuscan, more Sicilian or as corresponding to even another (influential) language variety or diachronic stadium. With this analysis we would also like to show how an IaW based analysis might help to establish an “Italo-Romance language history from below” as to promote further research on these languages within the current frameworks.

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