

The prosodic features of pragmatic *chillo/quello* in Neapolitan and Campanian Italian: implications for syntax and diachrony

Kim Groothuis & Claudia Crocco (Ghent University)

Neapolitan features a pragmatic use of the third-person pronoun *chillo*, originally a distal demonstrative (*chillo, chella, chello* ‘that.M/F/N.SG’). This pronoun seems to function as an expletive subject of impersonal predicates (cf. (1)) and is also involved in certain topic constructions, where it doubles the semantic subject of the clause (2) [8,9,11,12]. In both cases, it has a clear – though hard to pin down exactly – function at the discourse level. Due to contact, a similar pragmatic use of the demonstrative *quello* percolates in informal or socially low varieties of the regional Italian of Campania (CI) [3]:

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|--|---|
| (1) a. <i>Chello chiove</i> (Neap., [12]) | (2) a. <i>Chella Marianna nun beve.</i> (Neap.) |
| that.N rain.3SG | that.F Marianna NEG drink.3SG |
| b. <i>Quello piove</i> (CI, [3]) | b. <i>Quella Marianna non beve.</i> (CI) |
| that.M rain.3SG | that.F Marianna NEG drink.3SG |
| ‘(that is because/the fact is that) It rains.’ | ‘Marianna does not drink.’ |

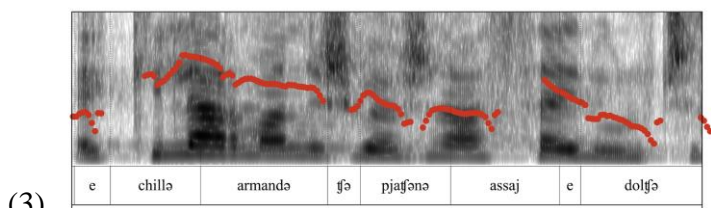
Although pragmatic *quello/chillo* has received considerable attention within the syntactic literature, its prosodic properties are still uncharted, despite their most likely relevance for syntactic and informational analysis. It has been claimed that *chillo/quello* in utterances such as (2) has “the intonational contour [...] of a canonical topic-comment structure” ([9], 262), and that *chillo/quello* and the following DP would not belong to one prosodic phrase and, accordingly not form one syntactic constituent [9,12]. Such intriguing observations, however, still need to be verified on corpus and experimental data. In this paper we explore the prosodic properties of *chillo/quello* in CI and Neapolitan, elaborating the above-mentioned observations concerning the overarching contour possibly including pragmatic *chillo/quello* and the agreeing DP. Moreover, we argue that the prosodic properties of pragmatic *chillo/quello o* can shed light on its development from demonstrative to pragmatic pronoun.

To this end, we use two different datasets for CI and Neapolitan. To collect a corpus of CI [2], we employed the *Pyrlato* pipeline [10] to extract natural data from YouTube videos, mainly movies, TV shows, and comedy sketches. As YouTube data are in lossy formats and often recorded in noisy conditions, the range of possible prosodic analyses they support is reduced compared to lab data. Since *Pyrlato* relies on YouTube subtitles, it can only scrape data in languages for which the automatic subtitling function is supported - which is not the case for Neapolitan. Therefore, Neapolitan data were collected using a consolidated paradigm for prosodic analysis, i.e. the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) [7]. The DCT allows the collection of prompted, semi-spontaneous speech. In this paper we focus for both varieties on f_0 , which is a relatively robust acoustic feature [6]. We aim at detecting the presence of a pitch accent occurring on *chillo/quello* and on the co-referent DP and verifying the presence of a boundary after *chillo/quello*. The data were auditorily and visually inspected in Praat [1], and manually annotated for the presence of pitch accents on *chillo/quello* and the co-referent DP.

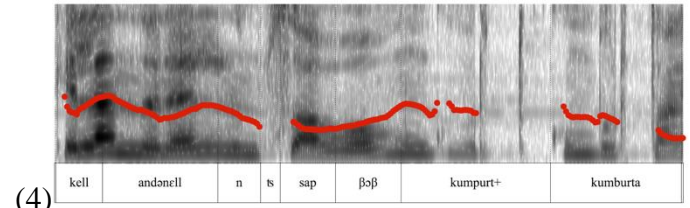
The current version of the CI corpus contains a total of 1397 scraped videos (ca. 550h), with 1775 instances of *quello*, of which 248 with a pragmatic value. These were subdivided into different groups according to: i) the presence of a co-referent DP in the sentence; ii) the linear syntactic position of *quello* and the co-referential DP; iii) the type of verb (copular/lexical). *Quello* appears marked by a high/rising pitch accent in 151 out of 248 occurrences across the different syntactic-pragmatic contexts [2]. For the Neapolitan dataset, we have collected ca. 320 utterances containing pragmatic *chillo*, produced by 4 F/M bilingual speakers of CI and Neapolitan, aged 20-30, with university-level education. Also in this dataset, pragmatic *chillo* is pitch accented with few exceptions (cf. (3-4)). As for the presence/absence of an overarching contour including *chillo/quello* and the following DP in CI, our preliminary results indicate that

prosodic phrasing can vary. When *chillo/quello* and the coreferent the DP are adjacent, speakers may insert a (weak) boundary (as in (4)), although they do not need to (cf. (3)).

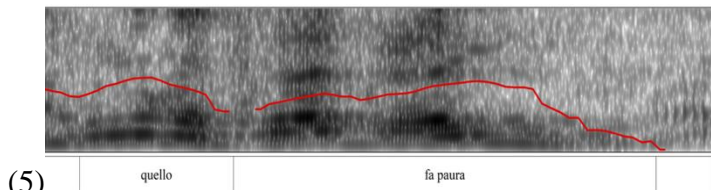
Interestingly, *chillo/quello* is consistently pitch accented in CI and Neapolitan also when it occurs as subject pronoun (cf. (5-6)), while it is not accented when it occurs as demonstrative determiner. *Chillo/quello* as a subject pronoun, while being neither expletive nor coreferent with a (topical/focal) DP shares two important properties with pragmatic *chillo/quello*: i) it has no exophoric deictic value, only endophoric (i.e. intralinguistic, cf. [4]), and ii) it is pitch accented. Based on this observation, we tentatively interpret this as a possible link between deictic and pragmatic uses of *chillo/quello* in Neapolitan and CI. It is the pronominal (and not pronominal) use of *chillo* which, when topicalized, has provided the context for the reanalysis as pragmatic pronoun located in the left periphery. This secondary grammaticalization, from subject pronoun in the IP to a specifier in the left periphery (in the topic subfield [9]), shows a type of semantic bleaching (whereby the anaphoric and cataphoric pronoun acquires a discourse deictic function, cf. [4]) but no phonological reduction. Synchronic prosodic data can thus shed light on the diachronic evolution of pragmatic *chillo/quello*.



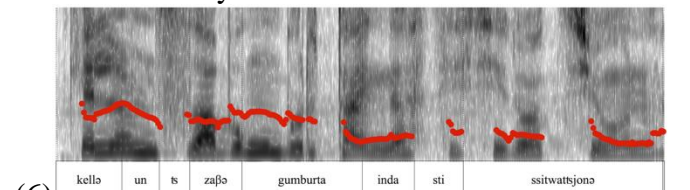
(3) and that.M Armando to.him=please.3PL the sweets
'Armando likes sweets.'



(4) that.F Antonella NEG REFL=know.3SG really behave
'Antonella really does not know how to behave.'



(5) that.M do.3SG fear
'That is scary.'



(6) that.F NEG REFL=know.3SG behave in these situations
'She doesn't know how to behave in those situations.'

References:

- [1] P. Boersma, D. Weenink, *Praat*: computer program, (2023). [2] C. Crocco, K. Groothuis, G. Leo & G. Magistro, Prosodic features of *quello* in Informal Neapolitan Italian: data from spontaneous speech. Paper presented at AISV 2023, Lecce (15-17/2/2023). [3] N. De Blasi, F. Fanciullo, La Campania, in: Cortelazzo, Marcato (Eds.), *I dialetti italiani. Storia, struttura, uso*, UTET, Turin, 2002: pp. 628–678. [4] H. Diessel, *Demonstratives: Form, Function, and Grammaticalization*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1999. [5] M. D'Imperio, Italian intonation: an overview and some questions, *Probus*. 14 (2002) 37–69. [6] R. Fuchs, O. Maxwell, The Effects of mp3 compression on acoustic measurements of fundamental frequency and pitch range, in: *Speech Prosody 2016*, ISCA, 2016: pp. 523–527. [7] Gili Fivela, B., C. Avesani, M. Barone, G. Bocci, C. Crocco, M. D'Imperio, R. Giordano, G. Marotta, M. Savino, P. Soriano. 2015. "Intonational Phonology of the Regional Varieties of Italian." In *Intonation in Romance*, edited by Sónia Frota and Pilar Prieto, 140–97. Oxford: Oxford University Press.. [8] A.N. Ledgeway, *Grammatica diacronica del napoletano*, Niemeyer, Tübingen, 2009. [9] A.N. Ledgeway, Subject licensing in CP: the Neapolitan double-subject construction, in: Benincà, Munaro (Eds.), *Mapping the left periphery*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010: pp. 257–296. [10] G. Magistro & C. Crocco, Scraping YouTube audio data with *Pyrlato*: an example with Italian *mica*, Paper presented at AISV 2023, Lecce (15-17/2/2023). [11] E. Radtke, *I dialetti della Campania*, Il Calamo, Roma, 1997. [12] R. Sornicola, Alcune strutture con pronome espletivo nei dialetti italiani meridionali, in: Benincà, Cinque, De Mauro, Vincent (Eds.), *Italiano e dialetti nel tempo*. Bulzoni, Rome, 1996: pp. 323–340.