

# Modality, antiveridicality and complementation: The Romeyka infinitive as a negative polarity item



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## Abstract

In this paper I examine the syntax–semantics of the Romeyka infinitive, still to be found in an endangered Greek variety uninterruptedly spoken in the historical region of Pontus, Turkey. It is shown that the infinitive is found: (a) as a complement to negated past tense modals; (b) in *before*-clauses; (c) in counterfactuals. My proposal is that the Romeyka infinitive is licensed as a NPI. It is argued that antiveridicality (in the sense of Giannakidou, 1998 *et seq.*) licenses the infinitive and therefore explains the unavailability of the Romeyka infinitive in other nonveridical contexts such as: (i) questions, (ii) nonveridical conditionals, (iii) present and imperfect tense negated modals. The analysis set out here (i) proposes a new type of NPI, namely an infinitive; (ii) reinforces the disengagement between morphological negation and antiveridicality; (iii) highlights parallels with Romance polarity subjunctives, which, like the infinitive, also share a T-C dependency; the latter may have rendered the Romeyka infinitive diachronically more prone to developing a neg-dependency too (Sitaridou, 2014).

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## 1. Survival against all odds: the Romeyka infinitive

The present article constitutes a first attempt at analysing complementation strategies in Pontic Greek (but cf. also Drettas, 1997; Mackridge, 1987, 1995), an understudied syntactic area of Pontic Greek and a relatively under-explored area in the study of Greek dialects in general (but cf. Nicholas, 2001; Ralli, 2007). Drawing data from two different varieties of Pontic Greek, namely Northern Pontic Greek (NPG) and Romeyka, the latter a Greek variety on which little is known (but cf. Parcharidis, 1880; Deffner, 1878; Dawkins, 1937; Mackridge, 1995, 1996; Sitaridou, 2013, 2014), we focus on the Romeyka infinitive.

Romeyka is still spoken in north-eastern Turkey, in the area traditionally known as Pontus (Sitaridou, 2013), and displays a plethora of archaic features – the *pièce de résistance* being the infinitive. Consider (1) where the infinitive surfaces as a complement to a *negated past tense modal*:

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- (1) Utš eporesa mairepsini.<sup>1</sup> (Romeyka)  
 not can.PP.1SG cook.INFIN  
 'I could not cook.'

As is well-known, neither Standard Modern Greek (SMG) (presumably as a result of Balkan Sprachbund, see Joseph, 1983) nor NPG have an infinitive, as shown in (2):

- (2) a. ðen boresa na kimiθo. (SMG)  
 not can.PP.1SG PRT.SUBJ sleep.PNP.1SG  
 'I could not sleep.'  
 b. K<sup>h</sup> eporesa na kimume.<sup>2</sup> (NPG)  
 not can.PP.1SG PRT.SUBJ sleep.1SG  
 'I could not sleep.'

Instead both SMG and NPG employ finite complementation (cf. Roussou, 2009 and references therein); in particular, SMG uses *oti-*, *pu-* and *na-* complements which roughly correspond to declarative (3), factive (4) and subjunctive complements (5):

- (3) Nomizo oti o θoðoris majirevi kala. (SMG)  
 think.1SG that the theodore.NOM cook.3SG well  
 'I think that Theodore cooks well.'  
 (4) Lipame pu o θoðoris ðen majirevi kala. (SMG)  
 regret.1SG COMP the theodore.NOM not cook.3SG well  
 'I'm sorry to say that Theodore doesn't cook well.'  
 (5) O θoðoris bori na majirevi kala. (SMG)  
 the theodore.NOM may.3SG PRT.SUBJ cook.INP.3SG well  
 'John may cook well.'

It is considered, trivially, that subjunctive complements replaced infinitives (Joseph, 1983:49–55). According to Giannakidou (1998, 2009), *na*-complements are found with: (i) *nonveridical* predicates (6), that is, predicates whose truth value is unknown or as yet undefined (Giannakidou, 2009:1889), whereas (ii) perception, emotive, epistemic, verbs of saying and knowing may take a *na*-complement under certain conditions (cf. Roussou, 2007):

- (6) *Nonveridical* predicates (see Giannakidou, 1998, 2009)  
 a. Volitionals: *θelo* 'I want', *elpizo* 'I hope', *skopevo* 'I plan'  
 b. Directives: *ðiatazo* 'I order', *simvulevo* 'I advise', *protino* 'I suggest'  
 c. Modals: (invariant) *prepi* 'must', *bori* 'may'  
 d. Permissives: *epitrepo* 'I allow', *apayorevo* 'I forbid'

Curiously, the Romeyka infinitive is not found in all nonveridical contexts in (6), in which *na*-clauses are found in SMG – consider the contexts of positive past tense modals in (7a), negated present tense modal in (7b), and modals in questions in (7c), all of which do not allow an infinitive:

- (7) a. \*eporesa tšimiθini. (Romeyka)  
 can.PP.1SG sleep.INFIN  
 'I was able to sleep.'

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations: ACC, accusative; COMP, complementiser; EPP, Extended Projection Principle; ENUN, enunciative; GEN, genitive; IMPER, imperative; INFIN, infinitive; INP, imperfective non-past; IP, past imperfect; m-negation, morphological negation; NEG, negator; neg-agreement, negative agreement; NOC, non-obligatory control; NOM, nominative; NPG, Northern Pontic Greek; NPI, negative polarity item; OC, obligatory control; OPT, optative; PL, plural; PNP, perfective non-past; PP, past perfect; PRT, particle; ROF, Romeyka of Of; SG, singular; SMG, Standard Modern Greek; SUBJ, subjunctive; FUT, Future.

<sup>2</sup> In the Romeyka and NPG glosses *na*-complements are not marked with either INP or PNP since the distinction does not hold.

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