The functional structure of Italo-Romance *tough*-constructions

Leonardo Russo Cardona
University of Cambridge
lr548@cam.ac.uk

Italian *tough*-constructions (TCs), which display an A-dependency between the matrix subject and the infinitival internal argument (IA) (Rizzi 1982, Giurgea & Soare 2010), typically involve the introductory element *da* (1).

1) *Questi   libri$_i$ sono   difficili   da   leggere   t$_i$.*
   these   books   are   tough   DA   to.read

Many dialects of Italy seem to employ a very similar structure for TCs:

2) *Sti   libbri   so   difficili   di   leggiri.*   (Sicilian, CT)
3) *Sti   libri   zè   duri   da   lezer.*   (Trevisan)
   these   books   are   tough   DA/DI   to.read

In TCs of this kind (which I shall call Type 1), the infinitival clause consistently lacks a left periphery (4-5), nor does it accept many restructuring verbs and functional adverbs from Cinque's (1999 *et seq.*) hierarchy (6-7) (cf. Cinque and Benincà, 2018).

4) **Queste   calze   sono   facili   A UNA RAGAZZA   da   regalare.* (Italian)
5) **Ste   quasette   so   facili   A UNA CARUSA   di   regalare.* (Sicilian, CT)
   these   socks   are   easy   to a girl   DI   to.gift
6) **Quest'errore   è   facile   da   tendere   a   fare.*   (Italian)
   this=mistake   is   easy   DA   to.tend   A   to.make
7) **Ste   piere   zè   rare   da   poder   conprar.*   (Trevisan)
   these   stones   are   rare   DA   to.be-able   to.buy

Moreover, these properties seem to correlate with the unacceptability of copular passives and resumptive object clitics (whereas causatives and mediopassive *si* are sometimes fine).

I show that this evidence can be accounted for if the introductory element of Type 1 TCs is not analysed as a complementiser, but rather as a low head in Cinque's hierarchy encoding a modal and a non-active Voice feature. A derivation relying on *da/di* checking non-active Voice can also explain how the IA can escape accusative assignment and move to the matrix subject position without violating locality (as there is an implicit external argument in the embedded clause), as happens in other types of passives (e.g. Collins 2005).

This proposal is corroborated by the fact that many varieties also have a different kind of TCs (Type 2) which involve genuine (finite and non-finite) complementisers: in this case, the embedded clause can sometimes have a left periphery (8) and accepts restructuring verbs (9-10), while obligatorily requiring either overt passivisation/mediopassive *si* (so that the IA can be controlled by the matrix subject) (11-12 respectively) or a resumptive object clitic (8-10).

8) *Custu   vasu   el   fazile,   a   Mario,   a   *(bilu)   dare.*   (Logudorese)
   this   vase   is   easy   to   Mario   A   to.him=it   to.give
9) *Sti panni   su bbilli   a *(lli) fa   mett'   a figlia tua.*   (Calabrian, CS)
   these clothes   are nice   A them to.make to.wear to daughter your
10) *Sta   cas'   è   'mpussibbil'   a   *('a)   puté   accattà*   (Neapolitan)
   this   house   is   impossible   A   it   to.be-able   to.buy
11) *Sti   libbri   so   precisi   pe   esse   letti   dai   frichi.*   (Maceratese)
   these   books   are   good   PE   to.be   read   by=the   kids
12) *St'arburu   è   difficili   non   mi   si   vidi.*   (Calabrian, RC)
   this=tree   is   tough   NEG   MI   SI   it.sees

In conclusion, Type 2 TCs employ an embedded CP, whereas in Type 1 TCs the functional structure of embedded clause is inherently non-active and only projects up to a lower T head.

References: Cinque, G. (1999). *Adverbs and functional heads: A cross-linguistic perspective.* OUP * Cinque, G., & Benincà, P. (2018). Notes on infinitival relatives in Italian. In *Structuring Variation in Romance Linguistics and Beyond*. John Benjamins * Collins, C. (2005). A smuggling approach to the passive in English. Syntax, 8(2), 81–120. * Giurgea, I., & Soare, E. (2010). Modal non-finite relatives in Romance. In *Modality and Mood in Romance*. De Gruyter Mouton. * Rizzi, L. (1982). *Issues in Italian Syntax*. De Gruyter Mouton.