

A Comparison of Northern Romance and Occitan 'Subject' Clitic Systems

The Null Subject Parameter and the Residues of V2 as V-to-C

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Abstract Romance languages have complement clitic pronouns that replace the arguments of a verb. Only a sub-area of Romance, extending from France to Northern Italy, also has subject clitics connected to the syntactic subject of an inflected verb. Even though the subject clitic grammar of Northern Romance is extremely varied, a series of absolute and implicational generalizations tells us that the variation is within a single complex system. Inside this sub-area of Romance, the Occitan varieties of Western Piedmont and Southern France at first sight seem to represent another variation of the same system. The aim of this paper is to show that they are radically different from Northern Italian or Northern Romance varieties. The main pieces of evidence are the following: their forms cannot be traced back to corresponding Latin pronouns; the 1st sg. enclitic will be shown to be derived from the grammaticalisation of the complementiser /ke/ 'that'; these elements are optional, violating the solid implicational generalisations on subject clitics of Northern Romance. Their optionality is consistent with the fact that they appear perform pragmatic functions, connected with [speaker] features. I will propose that Occitan dialects are in fact *pro*-drop languages with residues of V2 syntax in the form of pragmatic features to check in the left periphery. To meet these V2 requirements, Occitan languages have developed particles; due to the influence of Northern Romance varieties with which they have always been in contact, these particles have been disguised as subject clitics.

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1 Introduction¹

Nearly all Romance languages² have complement clitics, expressing the direct and indirect object of a verb; some also have locative and partitive clitics (see Benincà, Poletto 2005). A geographically continuous area of Romance languages, including France and Northern Italy, also have subject clitics, whose function varies in a way that is only apparently chaotic (see Poletto 2000).

The characteristics of this area, together with the fact that it has been studied since the 19th century in a highly sophisticated way – in particular from the point of view of diachronic phonology and morphology – make it an exceptionally interesting area. The syntax of Northern Italian Dialects (NIDs) has been the object of very detailed analyses and comparisons, following inspiring works such as Haiman (1974), on Romance dialects, and Kayne (1975), on French, which started a programme of comparative syntax. Dialectal systems of France have generally not been studied as much, due primarily to the differing status of the local dialects in the two countries.

The study I shall present aims to take a small step into the vast territory of a long-awaited syntactic comparison of NIDs with the dialects of France.³

As often happens in scientific research, a systematic study is triggered by certain findings that turn out to be useful, sometimes just by chance, or for reasons not directly connected to their scientific relevance.

I took the opportunity to compare a variety from France with NIDs while I was studying the Occitan of Piedmont, which, at first sight, seems consistent with NID systems, but on closer examination appears in fact to be substantially different. To understand its basic characteristics, it seemed to me necessary and useful to compare the Piedmont Occitan (POccit) area with a variety that again apparently belongs to the French dialectal

1 I am grateful first of all to Matteo Rivoira, dialectologist and native speaker of the Piedmontese Occitan variety of Rorà, and to Jean Sibille, expert of both Piedmontese and French Occitan grammars; their works and their suggestions have been invaluable sources of insights on the varieties I have been dealing with. Thanks to Massimo Cerruti, Riccardo Regis, Massimo Vai, for helping me to understand more about these varieties. Thanks to Mair Parry, Laura Vanelli, Jan Casalicchio, Mariachiara Berizzi, Guglielmo Cinque, Nicola Munaro, Christoph Schwarze, Nicol(ett)a Swinburne, and two very helpful reviewers, who posed relevant questions and provided insightful and encouraging comments.

In this article, I develop and modify the analysis outlined in Benincà 2014, which the reader is referred to for more detailed data.

2 A very few exceptions are found in limited areas in the Dolomites: see Paoli 2009, 2014 for a detailed description and an interesting synchronic and diachronic analysis.

3 From this perspective, the SYMILA project, developed at the University of Toulouse and coordinated by Patrick Sauzet, is very exciting and promising (URL <http://www.agence-nationale-recherche.fr/?Project=ANR-12-CORP-0014,2017-09-02>).

systems (but in fact does not) namely the Occitan of Southern France (FrOccit). The comparison of these varieties showed that they are both eccentric and particular with respect to the general 'system of systems' of their respective areas, namely French and Northern Italian, and yet they are surprisingly consistent with each other.

In fact, this is not surprising if we remember that linguistic analyses of the 19th and 20th century have demonstrated that, from the point of view of diachronic phonology and morphology, these two areas, Occitan of Piedmont and Occitan of Southern France, are linked by parallel diachronic phonological rules. It is interesting that their morphology and syntax too are more strictly linked to one another than to the Northern Romance system of their respective countries. In Benincà (2014) I proposed a first account of some grammatical characteristics of the languages of this area, and here I will try to push the analysis and refine some hypotheses.

I will begin by resuming some relevant properties of subject clitic pronouns of NIDs, in order to define aspects that highlight the differences from the POccit and the similarities with colloquial French.

2 A Synthesis of NID Subject Clitic Properties

On the basis of diachronic and synchronic data and analyses (cf. Renzi, Vanelli 1983; Rizzi 1986; Poletto 2000⁴), the apparently chaotic variation of subject clitic morphology and syntax permits us to recognize a simpler, unitary system, which includes also colloquial French (as will appear from the glosses, in French and English). This system presently survives only in some dialects; in other dialects, the same system has evolved rapidly from the 16th-17th century. Most dialects show a strong tendency towards a generalised requirement for an inflected verb to be accompanied by the subject clitic. In this situation, the clitic has been generally considered the realisation of different portions of verbal subject agreement (since Rizzi 1986 to, for example, Ciarlo 2010). More recently, many dialects have also lost subject clitic inversion in interrogatives. The most conservative area is central Veneto (Padua, Vicenza, Rovigo). I will use Paduan, my mother tongue, as the representative of the system ideally shared by the whole area, as it is attested in all of them at distinct diachronic stages.

4 For Piedmontese dialects, which are particularly relevant for our topic, see the synchronic and diachronic analyses of Piedmontese subject clitics in Parry 1994, 1998. Parry 2005, ch. 4 is an excellent description of the syntax of the dialect of Cairo Montenotte, a variety spoken on the Piedmontese-Ligurian border, compared with mainstream Piedmontese and Ligurian dialects.

The characteristics that I will list were shared by all NIDs, as clearly appears from historical data.⁵

- i) Subject clitics have an evident etymological relation with Latin subject pronouns, and have different properties depending on the person:

Table A. Proclitic and enclitic subjects of modern Paduan

	1	2	3
Singular			
procl.	∅	<i>te</i>	m. (e)l, f. <i>la</i>
encl.	<i>-i</i>	<i>-to</i>	m. <i>-lo</i> , f. <i>-la</i>
Plural			
procl.	1 ∅	∅	m. <i>i</i> , f. <i>le</i>
encl.	1 <i>-i</i>	<i>-u</i>	m. <i>-li</i> , f. <i>-le</i>
Impersonal			
procl.			∅
encl.			∅

Leaving aside the phonological details involving case-loss and grammaticalisation processes, it appears that the 1st sg. enclitic *-i* is one of the possible outcomes of Lat. *ĒGO* > *ieo*, as is 2nd sg. *tu*, *te* from Lat. *TU*, and 3rd sg. forms, which all derive from Lat. *ĪLL-* with number and gender distinctions. The 2nd pl. *-u* is from Lat. *UOS*. Interestingly, the 1st pl. enclitic is an extension of the 1st sg. enclitic; the same extension can be observed in French varieties for the proclitic 1st sg. *je*, which extends to the 1st pl. proclitic form.

- ii) 3rd sg. and pl. subject clitics form a subsystem of non-deictic subject clitics, with nominal Agreement (Benincà, Poletto 2006). They are obligatory if the inflected verb has no subject, either lexical (a DP, a strong pronoun) or virtual (a subject *wh*-trace); the same clitics are optional (with pragmatic differences) if a lexical subject is present (see (1)), but are ungrammatical if the subject is an interrogative or a relative pronoun, an operator, or a postposed subject (as in (2)) (capital letters indicate that the item is focalized):

- (1)
- | | | |
|----|---------------------|---------------------|
| a. | *canta / el canta | |
| | *chante / il chante | 'sings / he sings' |
| b. | Toni (el) canta | |
| | Antoine (il) chante | 'A. (he) sings' |
| c. | ela (la) canta | |
| | elle (elle) chante | 'she (she) sings' |
| d. | lori (i) canta | |
| | eux (ils) chantent | 'they (they) sings' |

⁵ I am providing a very simplified scheme, giving just what is relevant for the argumentation. See a very accurate and insightful reconstruction in Vanelli 1987, 1996.

- (2)
- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| a. | nissuni (*el) canta
personne (*il) chante | 'nobody (he) sings' |
| b. | MARIO / LU (*el) canta, (no so fradèò)!
MARIO /LUI (il) chante, (pas son frère)! | 'M. / HE (he) sings, (not his brother)!' |
| c. | chi canta (*lo)? / Chi canta?
qui chante-t-(*il)? / qui chante? | who sings? 'who is singing?' |
| d. | el tozo che (*el) canta doman...
le garçon qui (*il) chante demain... | 'the boy who (he) sings tomorrow...' |
| e. | (*i) vien tre tozi
(*ils) vient trois garçons | 'there come three boys' |

In the subsystem of 3rd persons, the 3rd sg. expletive-impersonal clitic is the most likely to be missing in a paradigm. If a dialect has a 3rd sg. impersonal clitic, it also has the other 3rd person clitics (sg. and pl.).

This system is substantially different from standard French (as first shown by Rizzi 1986), but appears parallel with colloquial French (*français avancé*, see Renzi 1992). In the corpus of spontaneous conversation collected by Freddi (1997), it appears that a lexical subject is very naturally accompanied by a clitic copy:

- (3)
- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------|
| a. | les gamins de dix ans ils sont super contents
10-year-old kids they are very happy | (Freddi 1997, 237) |
| b. | ta petite sœur elle va morfler
your little sister she will suffer | (Freddi 1997, 228) |
| c. | que l'autre personne elle est à côté de toi
that the other person she is near you | (Freddi 1997, 228) |
| d. | eux ils ont douze ans
them they have twelve years | (Freddi 1997, 228) |
| e. | moi je fume un paquet
me I smoke a packet | (Freddi 1997, 156) |

In colloquial French, as in standard French, a subject clitic is not admitted if the subject is an operator (indefinite pronoun, *wh*-trace, etc.; see (2a)).

Conversely, the first clitic to be omitted in this subsystem is the 3rd sg. impersonal, primarily of *falloir* (*il faut* 'it is necessary') and *y avoir* (*il y a* 'there is'). In the corpus collected by Lucia Freddi, these verbs never have a subject clitic:

- (4)
- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------|
| a. | où j'étais, y avait un clan
where I was, there.had (was) a clan | (Freddi 1997, 234) |
| b. | faut vraiment le vouloir
is-necessary really it.to-want 'it is necessary to really want it' | (Freddi 1997, 156) |
| c. | y a autant de français que d'Arabes
there.has (is) as-much of French-people as of Arabs | (Freddi 1997, 171) |

Apparently, in colloquial French – but also in very formal, literary style – it is also possible to omit the subject clitic of 1st and 2nd pl., the persons that in many NIDs don't have a clitic form (see Sandfeld 1970, Renzi 1992):

- (5) Nous, Osmanlis, sommes d'un avis différent
We Osmanlis are of a different opinion

The strong subject pronoun *nous* in (5) is left dislocated, as such in standard French it should have a clitic copy: *nous, Osmanlis, nous sommes...*

The aspects of subject clitic syntax of NIDs, shown in (1-2) with Paduan examples, are, then, parallel to colloquial French (as also appears from the glosses in French).

- iii) In most varieties, 1st sg., 1st pl. (and sometimes also 2nd pl.) proclitic forms have either \emptyset or a vowel (very often the same vowel), but the enclitic forms, which appear in main interrogatives and in other constructions, always have a richer, often a complete, paradigm (as shown in Table A and exemplified in (6)):

- (6) a. \emptyset canto ben / canto-*i* ben? 'I sing well / do I sing well?'
chante bien / chante-*i* bien?
b. \emptyset cantemo ben / cantemo-*i* ben? 'we sing well / do we sing well?'
chantons bien / chantons-*i* bien?
c. \emptyset cantè ben / cantè-*u* ben?
chantez bien / chantez-*u* bien?

Some dialects (Friulian being a particularly clear example) have subject clitics that seem to be a cluster formed from the proper subject clitic and a preceding vowel *a*. However, when a preverbal negation is inserted, *a* appears between the vowel and the proper clitic, as in (7b). In some varieties of Friulian, in main interrogatives, the vowel *a* appears twice: in enclisis with the subject clitic and in proclisis alone (7c):

- (7) a. **a**l ven / **a**l cjante 'he comes / he sings'
il vient / il chante
b. **a** no **l** ven / **a** no **l** cjante 'he does not come / he does not sing'
a ne il vient / *a* ne il chante pas
c. **a** venj-**a**l? / **a** cjantj-**a**l? 'does he come? / does he sing?'
a vient-*a*-il? *a* chante-*a*-il?

Paduan has a clitic vowel *a*, whose insertion is determined by pragmatics (mainly with exclamative, or 'mirative', force); it always appears first in a sequence of clitics and is incompatible with a Focus or a *wh*:

Il pleut / pleut-il?

It rains / rains it?

'it is raining / is it raining?'

I anticipate an apparently contrasting datum concerning 2nd sg., which has to be taken into account when dealing with POccit. It has been observed that the 2nd sg. clitic, generally the 'most obligatory' of all subject clitics, in some scattered dialects (Milanese, Alpine Lombard, Dolomitic Ladin) disappears when locally governed by the verb, typically in main questions (see more below, fn. 9).

In the following section I will compare the characteristics (i-iv), that we have illustrated with respect to NIDs and marginally to French, with an Occitan dialect of Piedmont, to show the discrepancies with the system we have just seen.

3 A Synthesis of POccit Properties

To illustrate the POccit I have chosen the dialect of Rorà, in the Pellice Valley (province of Turin), which has been investigated for the ASIt,⁶ the Italian Dialect Syntax Database, and checked in detail with the help of native-speaker linguists, in particular Dr Matteo Rivoira, University of Turin. I have compared my generalizations with excellent descriptions and analyses by Genre (1997), Genre, Rivoira (2007), Regis (2006), Ceruti, Regis (2007), Sibille (2012), Zörner (2008), Amaro-Peguy (2014), dedicated to other varieties of the area. I have chosen Rorà because its system is consistent with those of the varieties described in these works, yet also has significant differences (as I have shown in part in Benincà 2014), but most of all because I could have precious judgments about Rorà from Dr Rivoira.

Table B. Proclitic and enclitic subjects in the dialect of Rorà

Singular	1	2	3
procl. encl.	∅ -ke	t -ty	m. a(l), f. i m. -lu, f. -li
Plural procl. encl.	∅ -ke	u(z) -u	m. f. i(*l) m. f. -li / -(ke)
Impersonal procl. encl.			la -la

6 *Atlante Sintattico d'Italia* [online]. URL <http://asit.maldura.unipd.it/> (2017-09-02).

The 3rd sg. m. clitic *a* is variably followed by *-l*, the only trace of a possible development from the Latin demonstrative *ILL-*. The other 3rd persons (f. sg., m. and f. pl.) have a clitic *i*, never followed by *-l* (the same pattern found with Friulian clitics, and in German strong subject pronouns); the relation with Latin is unclear. However, the clitic *la*, which most resembles a f. sg., is instead the non-argumental clitic.⁷ The 2nd pl. *u(z)* is a continuation of Latin *vos*.⁸

- (11) a. **la** 'pares k 'pjero ariva're du'maŋ
il semble que P. arrivera demain 'it seems that P. will arrive tomorrow'
b. **la** pjøu
il pleut 'it rains'

1st sg. and pl. lack a subject clitic; 2nd pl. has a clitic *u* (*uz* in *liaison* contexts):

- (12) a. mindzu lu pum
mange la pomme 'I eat the apple'
b. ŋkœj 'mindzɛn a l 'ostu
aujourd'hui mangeons au restaurant 'today we-eat at the restaurant'
c. parké **u** vu'le 'parte?
porquoi vous voulez partir? 'why you want to-leave?'
d. (**uz**) a've dry'mi
vous avez dormi 'you have slept'

In unaccusative structures we have the non-argumental clitic *la*, followed by a locative if the verb has the appropriate semantic content. In main interrogatives, the non-argumental clitic is optionally repeated in enclisis (13c):

- (13) a. **la i** 'riva əŋ fi'jet
il y arrive un garçon
b. də 'dʒɛnt pa'rei **la i** n'e 'gro
de gens comme-ça il y en est beaucoup
c. ki **la i** veŋ (**la**) a tua ləa?
qui il y vient-il à ta place?

7 The feminine pronoun used as expletive characterises Celtic languages, and even regional English of Great Britain and United States, presumably as a substratum phenomenon. It is possible that also It. *la* in verbal forms such as *smetter-la* 'to stop something', *smetti-la!* 'stop it!', and in Northern Italian Romance *la ze vera* 'she (=it) is true' are the reflex of a similar property, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer. Others, though, have proposed that the feminine agreement depends on a silent *storia* 'story'.

8 I have maintained the transcription used by the collector(s) of the data.

In main clauses, and, with one exception (see below § 3.1), also in dependent clauses, the proclitics in table B are optional, except the non-argumental *la*. This aspect decidedly contrasts with the NIDs where the subject clitics, in particular and more clearly 3rd person clitics, represent the realisation of arguments of the verb. As mentioned above, many NIDs don't even have a morpheme for the impersonal subject, and we have seen that in colloquial French the non-argumental subject clitic is normally omitted. In POccit the impersonal subject clitic is instead the only one which is obligatory. All NIDs, as well as French, have subject clitics that share with complement clitics a clear relation to thematic arguments, but in POccit only a clitic without a thematic role is obligatory. This makes us think that subject clitics have a completely different function here.

3.1 2nd Person Singular: Asymmetry Main / Dependent Clauses

I mentioned that the optionality of 'subject clitics' has an exception. In fact, this exception apparently distinguishes the POccit area from the rest of NIDs (see Renzi, Vanelli 1983). It concerns the 2nd sg. clitic, which in NIDs is always obligatory, while here it is completely optional in main clauses, as in (14), but obligatory in some dependent clauses (see (15) and (16)):

- (14) a. (t) lu 'leze e l ar'leze 'tut lu 'tamp
(tu) le lis et le relis continuellement
b. (t) 'kate pa 'mai d 'pum
(tu) achètes jamais de pommes

The clitic is obligatory in dependent clauses (completives, as (15), interrogatives (16a-b), relative clauses (16c)):

- (15) i m aŋ dit kə *(t) 'stydje 'sampe.
ils m'on dit que tu étudies toujours
(16) a. i m aŋ tʃa'ma sə *(t) 'kate lu paŋ.
ils m'ont demandé si tu achète le pain
b. i m aŋ tʃamà ke libre *(t) vøle leze
ils m'ont demandé quel livre (tu) veux acheter
c. lu fij k *(t) vu'lis nna-li lu libbre al e par'ti
le garçon que tu voulais donner.lui le livre il est parti

Younger speakers, or more generally innovative speakers, can also omit the clitic in dependent *wh*-interrogatives.

A main / dependent clause asymmetry is usually taken as evidence that the phenomenon involves movement of the verb to the left periphery in main clauses. In dependent clauses, the left periphery hosts complemen-

tisers and features that limit the movement of the inflected verb (as is clearly visible in German and in Medieval Romance). The *wh*- 'why' is located very high in the structure, so it does not necessarily block the movement of the verb (Rizzi 1997, 2001; Benincà 2006; Munaro 2010). See below in (17) for a simplified map of the left periphery.⁹

This type of asymmetry is consistent with that found in Medieval Romance languages, which are *pro*-drop in main clauses and non-*pro*-drop in dependent clauses. It has been proposed that a *pro* subject is licensed by a governing inflected verb that has moved to C; this configuration is either impossible or very limited in dependent clauses. In medieval Romance V movement to C was obligatory in main clauses, and limited or blocked in dependent clauses. In this framework we should conclude that Occitan also has V movement to C in main clauses, optionally triggered to check pragmatic features in CP. When the inflected Verb moves upward, the clitic is omitted.

With a detailed theory of functional heads, we see that a *pro* subject can be licensed in dependent clauses that engage projections located high in the functional map of CP (such as the completive and relative *que*, but not Focus or *wh*- projections, which are plausibly lower).

(17) A simplified map of the Left periphery (Rizzi 1997; Benincà 2001, 2006)

[Subrd. *che* | Relat. *che*, ***why* Interr°** . | [_{Topic} HTopic | LD Top **Top°** [_{Focus} Focus/**Wh°** | IP/AgRS I°

9 The *pro*-drop asymmetry between main / dependent clauses can also be the origin of a few exceptions to the general obligatoriness of 2nd sg. clitic in NIDs. In a few scattered varieties of Trentino and Lombardy the proclitic 2nd sg. pronoun is not obligatory, or does not exist at all (Jan Casalicchio, personal communication; see Adami 2008; Cerruti 2009, 81 the first cases reported). Looking, for example, at Map 821 of AIS *Dove vai?* (Where do you go?) (<http://www3.pd.istc.cnr.it/navigais-web/?map=1401>) we can see, distributed in the geographical space, the various possibilities and diachronic steps of the evolution. For example, in Milan and related varieties nearby, we have: 285 *ndoua ve te* 'where go you?', 263 *ndo ta vet?* 'where you go-t', 254 *ndo et* 'where go-t'. The varieties where the proclitic is missing all have the agglutinate pronoun of 2nd sg. *t*. Where the interrogative is formed with the insertion of the complementiser, the proclitic pronoun is always present. The clitic disappears when the verb locally governs the subject position in main interrogatives, a condition that is impossible if the verb is blocked by the lexical complementiser, as in dependent clauses. The morphologisation of the pronoun has presumably stabilized in the passage from V2 to SVO stage. It appears that the pronominal value of the enclitic has been preserved until recently. For ex, in Milanese we (used to) have:

- (i) a. *(te) magnet un pom 'you eat-t an apple'
b. sa magnet? 'what (you) eat-t?'

Varieties of the Val di Non such as the one studied by Adami have maintained the pronominal value of the morphology derived from the grammaticalisation of the enclitic probably also thanks to a phonological rule that cancelled (only superficially) the old 2nd sg. inflection -s, maintaining -t with pronominal value. This is suggested by Adami herself, and the same

Other features find their location in the Left Periphery, such as those 'making reference to the Speaker' (to which we will refer briefly below), those marking 'exclamative' (or 'mirative', i.e. 'surprise') force, or other presuppositions; I will not identify a more precise position for these elements, since the evidence for this is necessarily still vague and currently inconclusive.

The different behaviour of *wh*-interrogatives with respect to other interrogatives is consistent with the map of syntactic positions in the left periphery. While the other *wh*-pronouns have a very low position at the right boundary of the left periphery and therefore block access to the area, it has been independently shown that *why* (Rizzi 2001) is very high, leaving the access to the periphery open for other elements to move in. Therefore, this kind of dependent clause behaves in certain respects like a main clause.

The asymmetry pointed out above suggests that V movement is involved in the optionality of 2nd sg. clitic in the dialect of Rorà. The V movement that allows optionality of subject clitics is not limited to questions, but is possible in all main clauses in connection with pragmatic markedness. In main clauses, then, the clitic is omitted when the verb moves to a pragmatic head in the left periphery, so that it governs locally the position in which the pronoun would emerge in the surface.

We have again a special behaviour of the 2nd sg. clitic, even if apparently the opposite of what has been observed for the other NIDs: in NID it is the 'most obligatory', in POccit it is completely optional (in main clauses). I would hold that the obligatory / optional nature of *tu* does not concern this element as a subject pronoun, but as a particle.

A possible line of reasoning is the hypothesis that the particle - in this case as in others - has a function that cannot be performed by the verb, unless it moves up to enable itself the pragmatic head; if the verb cannot move, the particle is inserted to perform the same function.

The comparison I have tried to sketch so far should show clearly enough that POccit does not belong to the NIDs system, nor to the colloquial French one; in fact, colloquial French and NIDs both appear much nearer to each other than to POccit.

phonological phenomenon in Lombard varieties and an analogous context is described by Rührlinger (2008).

3.2 1st Person Singular Enclitic Pronoun

The piece of data that built the narrow bridge that took me from Piedmont to France was the 1st sg. enclitic of Rorà, illustrated by the following pairs of sentences:

- | | | |
|---------|--|-----------------------|
| (18) a. | 'mindʒu
mange | 'I eat' |
| b. | 'ko(za) 'mindʒu-ke?
quoi mange-ke? | 'what do/can I eat?' |
| (19) a. | 'katu lu pan
achète le pain | 'I buy the bread' |
| b. | 'katu-ke lu pan?
achète-ke le pain? | 'do I buy the bread?' |

The enclitic *ke* is homophonous with the complementiser 'that' (in many dialects also with the *wh*-pronoun and determiner 'what').¹⁰

Various hypotheses have been proposed about the origin of *ke*, to avoid considering it as a complementiser; the functions of the homophonous elements do not seem to provide a viable hypothesis, and a complementiser that becomes enclitic on a verb would be unique – at least in the domain of Romance – as a strategy for question formation.

Phonological hypotheses:

- 1) *-ke* is the output of the 'hardening' of final *-j* (*Verschärfung*); *j* itself the result of enclisis of the subject pronoun E(G)O > **eo* > *jo* > *j*. This process is attested in Swiss Rhaeto-Romance (Gartner 1883, 48; Kamprath 1986), but has never been described in this area, nor in Piedmont. An apparently similar hardening in dialects of Piedmont affects only nasals (ex. > /paŋ/ > /pak/ 'bread').
- 2) *-ke* derives from the 1st sg. Latin pronoun EGO, which evolved in enclitic position with the loss of the final vowel and consequent devoic-

¹⁰ Miola (2013) presents an apparently related phenomenon, namely the use of the morpheme *kje* as a 1st sg. subject pronoun in varieties of southern Piedmont. Widmer (1959) also deals with subject pronouns with a *k*-initial. Thanks to Mair Parry and Massimo Vai for calling my attention to the interesting affinities of the systems described in these contributions with the phenomenon I am dealing with. I would say, though, that, despite appearances, the two cases are not directly comparable with POccit *-k*: at this stage, in both cases the subject pronouns are not clitics but full pronouns, derived from a demonstrative and not a personal pronoun. The dialect studied by Miola more interestingly shows an extension from 3rd pers. to 1st sg, a process that recalls phenomena attested in some slang or jargon. Notice that this extension is the opposite of that observed in POccit, where the extension starts from 1st sg, and is motivated by the special status of 1st sg. questions. In order to take position a specific study would be necessary.

ing of the word-final consonant; subsequently, in order to syllabify the consonant, an epenthetic vowel was added. The mechanism is quite complex: *kanto-eg* > *kantu-(e)k* > *kantu-k* > *kantu-ke*, with all the steps resorting to very specific, ad hoc processes. However, what seems to me a serious, more general, objection concerns the first step: Latin EGO passed in all the Romance area through a common stage where the voiced intervocalic consonant dropped, namely EGO > *eo* (Rohlf's 1968, § 434).

A morphological hypothesis:

- 3) A third proposal based on analogy posits a process starting with athematic verbs (*dire* 'say', *dare* 'give', *stare* 'stay', *andare* 'go') which would have extended the final *-k* of *dik* (< DICO), interpreted as 1st sg. inflection, first to all athematic verbs, then to all verbs. The conclusive objection against this hypothesis has been made by Lotte Zörner (2008, 128), with a simple and crucial fact: the dialects of the Po Valley, where interrogative 1 sg. *-ke* exists in various forms, never developed the analogical extension of 1st sg. *-k* to athematic verbs, which is the first and necessary step that could have initiated the analogical process.

A fundamental objection to the etymologies listed above is that an explanation of the form should account not only for the etymological origin of *ke* but also for the fact that the supposed evolutionary pathways happened precisely with verbs appearing in the interrogative context. Anyway, none of these and other alternatives proposed appears straightforward or convincing.¹¹

I have chosen to pursue what seems the more natural interpretation: *-ke* is the result of a grammaticalisation of the complementiser, which has maintained its relation with the left periphery but has lost its function of subordinator and has become a feature checker of a functional head in the left periphery. We can suppose that *ke* 'that', originally and still a complementiser, has also evolved into a grammaticalised particle, which has assumed other functions, but maintained its location in CP. Its new functions must have to do with this functional area.

This solution is consistent with the fact that questions involve movement of the verb into CP, the area where complementisers are primarily realised. It is also consistent with the fact that it originates in 1st sg., interrogatives, a special type of question.

11 See also Sibille 2003 for other arguments in favour of a pronominal or analogical origin of this element.

3.2.1 Specificity of 1st sg. Questions

Let us consider the procedure of question formation. Basing ourselves on Rizzi (1997, 2001), Munaro (2010, 126-31), we can say that subject-verb inversion (in questions as in other structures) first of all includes the insertion of a specific feature in a head in CP. In the case of interrogatives, as the cartography of CP shows, the relevant head is very low (perhaps, the lowest one). The verb moves to the relevant C head to check the feature, and on its way it collects and incorporates the subject clitic and produces subject clitic inversion. In the dialects we are considering, the process involves merging of *-ke* in the interrogative *wh*-head in C and incorporation of *ke* by the verb moved to CP. *Ke*, originally a complementiser, is then a particle that checks the *wh*-interrogative head in CP. An obvious question to pose is why this happens only with 1st sg. interrogative form, or, more precisely, the use of this form starts from 1st sg. person. In fact, many dialects of the POccit area – including Rorà – extend the enclitic particle first of all to 1st pl., then only in younger speakers, also to 3rd pl. (see Benincà 2014 for more details). This pattern of extension is presumably based on the fact that 1st sg. and pl., both lacking a subject clitic, include a feature that refers to the speaker (see Benincà, Poletto 2006).¹² Moreover, 1st sg. interrogative forms appear in questions posed to oneself, typical non-standard questions (in the sense illustrated by Hans Obenauer 1994, 2004), whose illocutionary force is not that of asking for information but of communicating or expressing a judgment, an evaluation, and the like. A question posed to oneself is obviously a typical non-standard question. Questions of this kind very often display an ‘alternative checker’, a particle devoid of semantic content (in many cases deriving from the grammaticalisation of the interrogative pronoun *what*: Munaro, Obenauer 1999), which is located very high in the left periphery. Independently of this theory, Giorgi (2010) has identified a function of heads in the left periphery having to do with the ‘speaker’s attitude’. These two approaches are not, as it may seem, redundant, but are just different points of view, capturing complementary aspects of the relationship of the speaker with respect to the hearer, the propositional content of the assertion, etc., in these as in other constructions.

A more general possible remark concerns the fact that in Romance languages, as far as is currently known, there are no other cases of a complementiser incorporated into a Verb¹³ and I am unable to provide a

12 Notice that 2nd sg. and pl. are never included in this extension pattern. We will see that a similar pattern appears in FrOccit as well.

13 There are many cases of a sort of complementary phenomenon, namely the verbal inflection incorporating into a complementiser, in particular in dialects spoken in Southern Germany: see Bayer 1984, 2012 for Bavarian, Cognola 2013 for Mòcheno cases and further references. On the other hand, Damonte (2010) has analysed the behaviour of complementisers in

simple explanation of this fact. To support my analyses, I can only recall other cases of exceptional incorporation of grammaticalised words, such as that of the Lombard dialect of Sonogno (Ticino, Switzerland), where the adverb *bene* 'well' became a particle *ba* and incorporated in enclisis in all verbs in the *irrealis* mood (Benincà 1999). Another case is presented by a dialect of a neighbouring area of Lombardy, province of Biella, where a particle with presumably the same origin marks the interrogative 1st sg. of any tense (thanks once again to Ed Tuttle, who sent this piece of information to me many years ago):

- | | | | |
|------|----|----------------------------|------------------------|
| (20) | a. | qui fach-be? | |
| | | what do <i>be</i> ? | 'what do I do?' |
| | b. | qui faru-bbe? | |
| | | what will-do <i>be</i> | 'what will I do?' |
| | c. | ant i vach-be? | |
| | | where there.go <i>be</i> ? | 'where do I go?', etc. |

In the light of what we are seeing, this particular phenomenon becomes clear: we have a construction that involves again the enclisis of a grammaticalised particle that happens only in 1st sg. main questions, and cliticises to the verb in CP, as the enclitic *ke* of Rorà.

We are hypothesizing that a complementiser in Occitan has progressively weakened its function of subordinator (or pro-sentence, as Kayne 2010 has more recently proposed) to become a particle and check features in the same area, the left periphery. We can try to find support for the hypothesis by looking for other cases in which a complementiser has an analogous evolution. We can reasonably hope to find something relevant in a strictly related language, namely the Occitan of Southern France.

Sicilian and Calabrese, apparently derived from a cluster of object clitics. This can be again a residue of the Romance V2 stage, with clitics appearing in the CP area and interacting with Focus in main clauses. In the cases studied by Damonte, object clitics in main clauses revealed their precise location in CP immediately above Focus (as in Medieval Romance: see Benincà 2006). To assume the functions of a complementiser, they must become particles.

Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) have shown that pronouns have to be subdivided into three classes: strong, weak, and clitic, with different properties. This classification is probably to be further refined, considering the behaviour and the varied syntactic characteristics of 'subject' clitic pronouns, as Cardinaletti and Repetti do in Cardinaletti, Repetti 2010 and other recent works.

4 The Complementiser *que* in Southern France Occitan

Given that we are dealing with an enclitic *-ke* in 1st sg. in a given area, we may hope to find in related varieties a corresponding proclitic *ke* with comparable functions. If we find it, this can be used as further evidence against the etymological hypotheses, which all concern processes in word final position. Following the dialectological classification, based on the geographic distribution of morpho-phonological rules, we can now turn to the Occitan of Southern France, systematically documented in the *Atlas Linguistique de la France* (ALF¹⁴), and in excellent grammatical descriptions.¹⁵

Looking at map 465 of ALF, entitled “j’entends” ‘I hear’, we find a large area in SW France occupied by the form *k entendi* with neighboring varieties having either *je* or \emptyset . Here *ke* is exclusively preverbal, it appears in assertive and relative clauses, in the left periphery, in some varieties apparently as a 1st sg. subject pronoun; we can safely locate it in the left periphery. It corresponds to what we were looking for: an apparent 1st sg. pronoun which is not enclitic but only proclitic (or perhaps weak). The grammaticalisation process appears at an earlier stage: the complementiser has assumed a function of feature checker in CP but does not have the status of an enclitic.

In the area of *k entendi* (Landes and Basses Pyrénées, part of Gers and Hautes Pyrénées), we can observe other relevant data. In particular, map 83A of ALF presents three syntactic contexts together (listed in (21)), which appear to have been specifically chosen to determine the real nature of *ke* by inserting it in a syntactic context that can reveal its nature, whether pronominal or functional:

- | | | | |
|------|----|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (21) | a. | les deux que j’ai achetés | ‘the two that I have bought’ |
| | b. | j’en ai plein la tête | ‘I.of-it have full the head’ |
| | c. | je l’ai déjà entendu | ‘I.it have already heard’ |

The first sentence (see (21a)) proposes *ke “je”* in a relative clause, which puts it directly adjacent to the relative complementiser; the second (21b)

14 Gilliéron, Jules; Edmont, Edmond (éds.) (1902-12). *Atlas Linguistique de la France*. Paris: Champion. URL <http://cartodialect.imag.fr/cartodialect/> (2017-09-02).

15 Among many other outstanding documents, I only quote Ronjat 1937, one of the best grammatical description of a Romance variety; Bec 1963, 1973; Lafont 1967, 1991; Rohlf 1970; very interesting texts appeared in the *Revue des Patois Gallo-Romans* (1887-1892). The generalisations that I draw on clitics and particles in FrOccit are consistent with data and analyses presented in more recent, extremely interesting works. I have consulted in particular Sibille 2015, Marcus 2010, Olivieri et al. 2015, Floricic 2014. My analysis is largely compatible with the hypothesis presented by Morin (2005, 2006) for some particles in Gascon, Innu and Québec French. A very clear and detailed analysis, framed in the cartography of the left periphery, is developed in Lahne 2005.

has *ke* accompanied by the partitive clitic, the third by an object clitic. The strategy produces an interesting result: we see that we never find two *ke*, even if they would have two distinct functions, a complementiser and a subject pronoun. This could be reduced to the aim of avoiding homophonous words, but responses from Point 664 Luxei (Sore, Landes) reported in (22) show us that the reason is more abstract: the complementiser in this variety is not *ke* but *dun* (< *dont* 'whose'); nevertheless 'subject' *ke* is not inserted; in other words, both complementisers – *ke* in Artix (see (23)) and *dun* in Luxei (see (22)) – are incompatible with 'subject' *ke* because they would perform the same function as 'subject' *ke*, and not because they are homophonous with it:

Table D. Particle *ke* and clitics

Map 83A, P. 664: Luxei (Landes)			Map 83A, P. 685: Artix (Arthez, B Pyrénées)		
(22) a.	dun ey	"... que j'ai " (rel. cl.)	(23) a.	kè	"... que j'ai " (rel. cl.)
b.	ke n ey	"... j'en ai "	b.	ke n'ey	"... j'en ai "
c.	ke ley	"... je l'ai "	c.	ke lè	"... je l'ai "

In the POccit area, the enclitic *ke* extends from the 1st sg. to other persons, and precisely first to 1st pl., then 3rd sg. and pl. Looking at the ALF data, it is possible to postulate the same kind of extensions in Gascon: some varieties (Landes) extend *ke* from the 1st sg. to all the other persons.

Leaving aside other very interesting (and puzzling) properties (dealt with in more details in Benincà 2014), we can see FrOccit *que* as a particle, inserted in CP for purposes that have only indirect relations with the agreement of the inflected verb.

4.1 Some Properties of *que* in FrOccit

The particular usage of *que* in Occitan of Southern France has been the object of attention since the early studies on Romance grammar. Meyer-Lübke (1900, § 564) underlines the wide usage of *ke* in sentence initial position – or more precisely, after a Topic – in main clauses. Very frequently, it follows a lexical subject and precedes the verb. It is never found with an imperative or in a negative sentence. Meyer-Lübke reports a passage of a contemporary version of the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* and a 1387 text:

- (24) U òmi *qu'*abè dus hilhs; lou mei youen *que* disou au son pai...
a man *que* had two sons; the younger *que* said to his father...

Ronjat's (1937, § 774) comments are more subtle. He compares three

4.2 Possible Interpretations of the Properties of *que*

In previous analyses (Benincà 2014), I was inclined to interpret the function of *que* as similar to that of a subject clitic, also interpreting in this sense a descriptive note by Ronjat (1937, 536) about *que*: he says that “il se place entre le sujet et le verbe, et ne peut être séparé du verbe que par un pronom régime”. This is literally the way clitics have been defined for many decades, but in fact this is not the only possible description. In a *pro-drop* language it could also mean that *que* marks a position in CP, where it is followed by any clitic and by the V, moved to C. This hypothesis entails the possibility that FrOccit preserves residues of V2 grammar, which this variety shared with the other Romance languages in the Middle Ages (see Vanelli, Renzi, Benincà 1996 and the recent important article by Bryan Donaldson 2016 on Old Occitan syntax). It seems to me now that the picture becomes more consistent if we interpret *que* as a particle that performs more than one function in CP and consequently occupies different ‘micro-positions’ in this layer. Its frequent appearance with 1st sg. verbs follows from the fact that sentences in the 1st sg. person are very likely to convey pragmatic contents (presuppositions, performative functions, and the like). As hinted at above, Giorgi (2010) presents clear evidence of ‘speaker’ features encoded at the left border of the left periphery and illustrates their syntactic and semantic properties. In a certain sense, the Speaker / Hearer pair integrates with Topic / Focus forming two articulated super-fields.

5 A First Summary

To resume the thread of a somewhat rambling discussion, let us point out some basic concepts regarding the syntax of clitics, in particular pronominal clitics of 3rd sg. and pl.¹⁶ All Romance languages – with the few exceptions mentioned above – have pronominal clitics expressing direct and indirect objects. They also share some long-standing constellations of phenomena concerning the argument functions of these elements: if a direct object is not in its basic position but in the left periphery with the function of Topic, it *must* have a clitic copy; if it is an operator, it *cannot* have a clitic copy because an operator cannot be a Topic. These properties are valid for all Romance languages since their earliest documentation.¹⁷ A sub-part of Romance, forming a contiguous area from France to Northern

¹⁶ As I briefly pointed out above, the necessity of keeping 3rd person sg. and pl. pronouns separate from 1st and 2nd person ones (the deictic persons) emerges from various pieces of evidence.

¹⁷ As pointed out to me by Jan Casalicchio, in Gardnese and Badiotto (Dolomitic Ladin) apparently a preposed object can be a Topic even without a clitic copy. One can observe that

Italy, also has subject clitics, whose argument status is the same as direct object clitics at a certain point of their diachronic evolution in that the subject clitic and the lexical subject are in complementary distribution unless the lexical subject is left-dislocated. A few varieties have preserved this state of affairs till modern times, but most varieties have evolved so that a subject clitic is no longer in complementary distribution with a lexical subject. The path of evolution tends towards a generalized obligatoriness of subject clitics, which, for example in Friulian, accompany an inflected verb as a sort of complement of inflection, even though the Friulian verb is morphologically very rich in distinctions. A subject clitic in Friulian is then obligatory even when the lexical subject is an operator.

5.1 Occitan Languages Between Northern and Southern Romance

We have seen above the profile of an Occitan variety of Piedmont representative of its area, the dialect of Rorà, which shows phenomena that point in the opposite direction. Elements that appear to be subject clitics (due to their position with respect to the inflected verb, and a few phonological traces that connect them to the subject clitics of NIDs and French), are completely optional, with two exceptions: 1) the 2nd sg. clitic, that is obligatory in dependent clauses; 2) the expletive 3rd sg. clitic, obligatory with impersonal and meteorological verbs, and in unaccusative structures with a postposed subject (see (13)). This requirement has an interesting and puzzling exception: the expletive clitic *la* is totally impossible with the verb *nta* 'it is necessary', which expresses (like *bisogna* in Italian, perhaps also *faut* in colloquial French) the 'pure necessity' root modal.

These properties not only contrast sharply with what has been described and generalized for NIDs, as we have pointed out above, but are also internally inconsistent: if the obligatoriness of the expletive depended on the semantic/thematic poverty of the impersonal verbs, why is it impossible with the poorest verb, namely *nta*? We have to separate *la* from the other clitics, assuming that all apparently personal clitics are in fact particles, and these perform the function of checking pragmatic features optionally inserted in the left periphery. The 2nd sg. clitic is obligatory in dependent clauses, with the exception of *wh*-interrogatives, and completely optional in main clauses. In main clauses the checking of features can be done either by the verb moving to C, or by the particle *tu* itself; in dependent clauses only by the particle *tu*. The asymmetry main / dependent clauses is well known

the same happens in Old Italian and in German: an argument moved in CP can be a so-called 'informational Focus', not necessarily a contrastive Focus; as such, it is not clearly distinct from a topic. This aspect, which appears to me typically associated with V2 languages, must be deepened with a specific detailed description and analysis.

in V2 languages, German and old Romance. In German the V2 structure, produced by V movement to C, is blocked in dependent clauses except with complements of verbs of thinking, which permit the omission of the complementiser and consequently the movement of the verb to the left periphery producing the V2 configuration. Something similar can be posited for Rorà dependent clauses: the checking of the features in CP cannot be done by the verb, as in main clauses, but only by the particle, except in the case of *wh*-interrogatives, which does not block the verb from accessing CP.¹⁸

5.2 The Position of Particles and Clitics in the Functional Structure

It is tempting to try to establish the precise positions of particles in CP. I have mentioned above (e.g. in (8)) the characteristics of *a* in Paduan, a particle that corresponds to a subject pronoun in other Northern Italian dialects (and in Old Paduan). If we look at this element concentrating on Paduan, modern and old, the parallelism and the differences with POccit are even more interesting.

In modern Paduan, *a* is clearly not a subject clitic. Paduan has a typical Northern Italian series of subject clitics, with three pronouns that appear either enclitic or proclitic depending on the position of the verb and the content of CP (Munaro 2010), and three pronouns that appear only in enclitic positions. The element *a* appears to be clearly a particle because, not only it is optional, but it co-exists with a subject clitic, and does not interfere with its syntactic conditions. Moreover, *a* is sensitive to the content of CP and incompatible with syntactic Focus and *wh* operators, but is compatible with total questions and V movement to C. Pragmatically, it marks a 'surprise' force by licensing an empty Topic (more probably a Theme) which is recoverable from the context and taken for given and known to the hearer. The particle *a* is obligatorily before all the other clitics – subject, negation, direct and indirect object, and partitive –, strictly in this order. All these elements, minutes but very clear, tell us that *a* is a particle in C, and the features it checks are in CP and have a pragmatic nature.¹⁹

18 The fact that this happens with 2nd sg. only is not clear, but must have to do with the role of 2nd sg. in pragmatics and its features endowment (see Benincà, Poletto 2006). In a certain sense, this behaviour must derive from the same property that obliges the 2nd sg. subject clitic to be always present in all the languages of the Romania Continua (Renzi, Vanelli's 1983 generalisation). I will briefly resume this issue in the conclusive section.

19 Chinellato (2002, 2003) has performed a very interesting research on aphasic subjects from Venetan areas where the particle *a* is present; in these speakers, all the area of clitics pronouns appears to be damaged and impaired, while the particle *a* is generally preserved with its correct function. This means at least that this apparent clitic involves a specific area of functional structure, distinct from that of proper subject clitic pronouns.

While the particle *a* in the left periphery co-exists with a negation (possibly itself a particle, in this case), FrOccit *que* cannot appear in a negative sentence, nor with an imperative verb.

FrOccit *que* can possibly correspond to the so-called 'quotative *que*' of Northern Spain hinted at below (fn. 23). This *que* is in CP and occupies a high position in the functional structure, preceding operators and *wh*- in main and dependent interrogatives.

Paduan *a* and FrOccit *que* never appear in enclitic position, while in POcc the particle *ke* only appears enclitic to the verb; this can be related to the fact that Paduan and FrOccit are merged where they are required, namely in the head of Topic. In POccit, instead, the verb has to move quite high to reach the position dedicated to non-standard questions; *ke* is merged in CP and attracts the verb, which takes it on as an enclitic to the projection of non-standard questions.

The above observations, even though largely inconclusive in certain respects, have led me to suppose that 'subject clitics' in Occitan, both of western Piedmont and Southern France, are particles that perform functions having to do with residual V2 phenomena, a subset of the contexts that in medieval Romance used to cause the obligatory movement of the V to the left periphery in main clause.

In the first studies on Old Romance syntax the evidence of V-second syntax came from the 'asymmetric *pro*-drop': the subject can be omitted only when the verb has moved to a head in the left periphery, higher than the subject position. The asymmetries observed in Occitan varieties concern Topic-drop: the Topic is obligatory; it can be silent, and recovered from the context, only if a particle checks the corresponding features in CP. These languages have been always *pro*-drop languages, but - in a certain sense - have still an asymmetric Topic-drop.

It would be interesting to collect and review other particular phenomena of Romance relating to pragmatics and the left periphery, which would become clearer if viewed as a residue of V2 syntax. I present some cases in the following section.

this language contains clitics and particles, enclitic of the first word; they resume elements of the contexts or introduce the arguments present in the sentence. Particles and pronouns are strictly ordered and articulated in two sequences: on the left the ones 'looking outside', on the right those 'looking inside'.

6 Romance V2, or V-to-C, and its Residual Traces in Modern Romance. The Tobler-Mussafia Law

The syntactic contexts that account for the enclitic or proclitic position of object clitics in Medieval Romance, known as the ‘Tobler and Mussafia law’, when interpreted in the light of the ‘fine structure’ theory, appears to be strictly dependent on the details of the left periphery in a frame of V-second syntax. The relevant aspects can be summarized as follows:

- 1) in main clauses, the inflected verb has to move to the left periphery;
- 2) in this context, complement clitics are obligatorily enclitic if the Spec of Focus is empty, and obligatorily proclitic if the Spec of Focus contains overt or abstract elements (Benincà 2006).

The simplified structure of the left periphery given above in (17), and repeated here, can be sufficient to have an idea of the phenomenon:

(17) [Sub. *che* | Relat. *che*, ***why*** Interr°. | [HTopic | LD Top **Top°** [_{Focus} Focus/**Wh°** | IP/AgrS I°

The relevant heads are in bold. In main clauses the verb moves upward to I, where it acquires inflections, then to Focus/Wh: if this position contains an operator, *wh* pronoun or trace, the verb stops in Foc°; if the position is empty, the verb moves to the upper head, Top°. This hypothesis is sufficient to properly describe the position of clitic pronouns: the clitics appear obligatorily proclitic if the verb stops in Foc°, and they appear enclitic if the verb moves to Top°. The hypothesis that there exists a dedicated area in CP for clitics can explain this variation: the area for clitics in CP is between the projections Focus and Topic; if the Spec of Focus contains material, the Verbs stops in the head of the projection with the clitics on the left; if the Spec of Focus is empty, the verb moves further up to Top° and the clitics in enclisis on its right. This movement of V to the CP, in the left periphery is the origin of the V2 phenomena. In subordinate clauses, V2 phenomena are more or less reduced because of the presence of subordinators and other elements that occupy heads in CP; the variation is due to the relevance of the position of these blocking heads in the single languages. As we have seen above, the interrogatives with the *wh*- “*why*” can behave as a main clause because *why* involve a head in a very high position in CP; in other languages, even a very high head can block the access to CP.

Accurate observations of modern Romance languages show that, in various Romance varieties, residues of medieval syntax still survive.

6.1 V-Subj. Inversion: Dolomitic Ladin

Rhaeto-Romance varieties, limitedly to the Dolomitic section (Benincà 1988), show very clear characteristics of V2 syntax. Given the proximity to German speaking areas, these have been taken as due to an influx of Germanic V2. In Benincà (1988) I proposed they be considered residues of medieval syntax, possibly maintained because of the support of nearby populations speaking Germanic V2 varieties. More recently, in Poletto (2000), Benincà, Poletto (2004) the description has been refined, in the framework of the Cartographic programme.

Rhaeto-Romance is a non-null subject language and it has clitic subject pronouns. In the dialect of San Leonardo, in the Badia Valley the subject clitic pronoun precedes the inflected verb, but if a constituent precedes the verb the subject pronoun has to be postverbal, as in the following examples:

- (28) a. t vas gonoot a ciasa sua S. Leonardo, Badia
 you go often at his home
 b. gonoot vas-t a ciasa sua
 often go you at his home
 c. *Gonoot t vas a ciasa sua
 d. *Giani, duman l vaiges-t
 Gianni, domani lo vedi-tu

Notice that, differently from most Medieval Romance, more than one constituent before the Verb is generally not admitted (see (28c-d)). It is possible only in very restricted contexts, for example, in main questions, where we can have a left-dislocated argument followed by a *wh*-pronoun and then V3 (see Benincà, Poletto 2004, § 2.1 fn. 7). More contexts that permit V3 or even V4 in Dolomitic Ladin are analysed in Casalicchio, Cognola (forthcoming).

Subject inversion is possible in some dependent clauses too, but only if the complementiser engages a high position in the left periphery, thus leaving open access to V-to-C movement to the left periphery.

In San Leonardo, subject-verb inversion is only possible if the subject is a clitic pronoun, while in other dialects inversion is possible (obligatory, in the relevant contexts) with a lexical subject too. In the data collected for Benincà (1994) in San Leonardo dialect, we find, for example, structures such as the following:

- (29) l liber a Tone cumpré inžer.
 'the book has Anthony bought yesterday.'

If we conceive of the left periphery as a very detailed functional structure, this variation is not surprising; since we expect to find subtle differences

for what concerns the possibility of multiple access to this section of the structure in V2 languages.

6.2 The Tobler-Mussafia Law: Portuguese Galician, Asturian

In the western Iberian peninsula – in Portuguese, Galician, Asturian, an area with null subjects and without subject clitics – we find another phenomenon that can be taken as a residue of medieval syntax, namely the Tobler-Mussafia Law, which determines the position of clitics with respect to the verb on the basis of V movement to C and the content of the left periphery (see Benincà 2006, 2013; Anòè 2014; Fernández Rubiera 2009, 2010).²¹

In Old Portuguese we have, for example, contrasts such as the following, both with a preposed direct object, the first one followed by proclitic pronoun, the second one by the verb with an enclitic pronoun:

- (30) a. [tal service] lhe pode fazer hûn homen pequeno
 ‘such service to-him can do a man small’
 b. O trigo que eu como, guanço-o per meu trabalho
 ‘the wheat that I eat I-gain.it by my work’

The crucial difference between the two sentences is that in the first sentence the preposed direct object has no clitic copy, and so must be localised in the Focus projection, while the second one has a clitic copy and is then in the Topic projection, followed by an empty Focus.²² As shown in Benincà (2006), this is a strong piece of evidence in favour of the V2 structure of medieval Romance; Donaldson (2016) successfully tests this theory for Old Occitan showing, on the basis of the Tobler-Mussafia Law, that it shared the same structure. I am proposing that it preserves – as other Romance languages that I will briefly point out below – some residual V2 characteristics in terms of the activation of features in CP that are checked by particles that result from the grammaticalisation of subject clitics or complementisers.

²¹ Data of the same kind, in a different framework, are provided by González López (2008, ch. 7).

²² This conclusion is obtained first of all on a syntactic basis, but is also supported by semantic features and comparative generalisations. In (30a) the preposed direct object has an anaphoric determiner, which provides the object with an operator status. This is to be compared with modern Italian, in which the preposed syntactic Focus is always marked with contrastive intonation, unless it is a lexical operator; an anaphoric determiner such as ‘the same, similar’ and the like gives the direct object the status of operator (this means

Modern Portuguese at first sight has lost the relationship of enclisis/proclisis grammar with V2 properties, since enclisis is obligatory after a preverbal subject:

- (31) a. O João disse-nos 'Giovanni disse-ci' (old and modern Portuguese)
 b. (*) O João nos disse 'Giovanni ci disse' (ungrammatical only in modern Portuguese)

But a more accurate description permits us to conclude that in this language very little has been modified with respect to old Portuguese; namely, in modern Portuguese the unmarked position for a lexical subject is Topic. This conclusion is based on the fact that not all kinds of lexical subjects are followed by the enclisis of the pronoun. As the theoretical analysis of the T&M Law hypothesis predicts, if the lexical subject is obliged to occupy an Operator (Focus) position, it is obligatorily followed by proclisis of object clitics, as in the following examples:

- (32) a. Quem me chamou?
 who me called? 'who did call me?'
 b. *Quem chamou-me?
 who called me?
 c. Ninguém nos viu
 nobody us saw 'nobody saw us'
 d. *Ninguém viu-nos
 nobody saw us

The same happens in other cases where the preverbal constituent, because of its nature, has to be in Focus/Operator positions.

The Galician varieties show the same behaviour, with interesting peculiarities in the case of dependent clauses. In main clauses, a lexical subject immediately followed by the verb, requires enclisis of an object pronoun:

- (33) a. Eu tráio**che** / *che tráio da casa un saco cheo de galiñas
 I-take.to-you / to-you take from home a sack full of hens
 b. Os mozos achegáron**se** / *se achegaron ó home
 the boys approached themselves / themselves approached

that it refuses a clitic copy, which is otherwise obligatory; see Benincà 2001). In (30b) the preposed object contains a relative clause; this kind of preposed DP very naturally and frequently qualifies as a Topic in Old Italian and in general in medieval Romance (this means that it requires a clitic copy; see Vanelli 1986).

in CP, and the enclisis is permitted (as in (35a)), while complementisers that occupy low positions in CP, as *par excellence* dependent interrogatives, block the access to CP and consequently enclisis is impossible (35b).

- (35) a. O João disse que a Maria deu-**lhe** um beijo
The J. said that the M. gave.him a kiss
- b. Non sei cando **nos** veremos
not I-know when us we-will-see 'I don't know when we will see each other'

A careful examination of the behaviour of clitics in different kinds of subordinate clauses with subordinators located in different functional heads of the left periphery, will contribute to a detailed description of the fine structure of CP in a comparative perspective.

6.3 The Tobler-Mussafia Law Ruled by Pragmatics: San Valentino

The last case of V2 residues I wish to mention is found in San Valentino (Southern Abruzzo). This dialect displays a surprising variety of apparently optional collocations of complement clitics; the various possibilities can in fact be connected to precise syntactic and pragmatic factors.

In main clauses, with simple tenses clitics may occur as either proclitics or enclitics on the inflected verb:²⁴

- (36) a. **me lu** màgne nghe le mène.
To-myself.it.I-eat with the hands
- b. màgne.**me.lu** nghe le mène.
I-eat.to-myself.it with the hands 'I eat it with my hands'
- c. (Maria) nen **se lu** màgne mi
(M.) not herself.it eats never
- d. (Maria) nen màgne **se lu** mi
(M.) Not eat herself.it never 'M. never eats it'

The orders shown above seem not to produce perceptible semantic or pragmatic effects.

²⁴ Furthermore, with a compound tense, clitics stand either proclitic/enclitic to the auxiliary, as in (3), or proclitic/enclitic to the past participle. I will not deal here with this and other detailed aspects, which are described and analysed in Benincà, Pescarini 2014.

However, optionality is not always available. It appears that enclisis is not possible when the Left Periphery contains a LD Topic:

- (37) a. lu 'penə, l 'ajə 'detə a m'marəjə
the bread, it.I-have given to Mario
b. *lu 'penə, 'ajə **lu** detə a m'marəjə
the bread, I-have.it given to Mario

Enclisis is also impossible if the Left Periphery contains an operator, such as an indefinite pronoun, a contrastive Focus, or a *wh*-interrogative pronoun:

- (38) a. a ki l 'ajə 'detə?
To whom it.I-have given
b. *a ki 'ajə **lu** 'detə?
To whom I-have.it given 'Whom have I given it to?'
Who have I given it to?
- (39) a. 'sulə nu 'le'bbərə **m** i kum'pretə!
Only one book to-me.you-have bought 'You bought only one book for me'
b. nə'few nə 'maŋnə **sə** li
nobody eats to-him/herself.them 'Nobody eats them'

The analysis proposed in Benincà, Pescarini (2014) concludes that enclisis – in this dialect too – is the effect of Verb movement to a position above the location of clitics. In the case of San Valentino, Verb movement heads to a position of Topic to licence an empty Topic (or Subject of Predication), which has to be recovered from the context. This analysis accounts both for the optionality of enclisis, which derives from the intention of the speaker to specifically mark a Topic to be recovered, and for its impossibility when a Topic is already present.

The power of these markers to attract the verb and so produce enclisis seems to be a residue of the more systematic and effective activation of the left periphery in fully V2 medieval varieties.

These residual phenomena have been presented here to support the interpretation of elements that have so far been deemed Occitan subject clitics. Our study has shown that they have now lost their proper pronominal characteristics and have evolved to mark functional heads in the left periphery, whose activity is largely ruled by pragmatics.

7 Concluding Speculations: Clitics, Particles, and *Pro-Drop*

The behaviour of Occitan 'subject' clitics is then part of the general picture of Romance syntax outlined in the previous sections. 'Subject clitic pronouns', even if they appear instead to be particles cannot be directly compared with subject clitics from other Northern Romance varieties, which are considered to be either arguments or agreement markers.

A more general consequence of the assumption that subject clitics of Rorà and the other strictly related varieties are in fact particles, is that this language is a full-fledged *pro-drop* (or null-subject) language. This status has been proposed for NIDs, holding that pronominal clitics complete the pronominal endowment of verbal inflection for the licensing of a *pro* subject. More radically, in Occitan these elements, apparently subject pronouns, have in fact no pronominal features.

The most interesting and revealing case is that of the element *la* that accompanies impersonal verbs. It is not a particle with a pragmatic function, because it is obligatory. It cannot have any relation to the semantic content of the subject because by definition impersonals do not have a thematic subject. Clitic *la* of POccit cannot be an expletive pronoun either, on the basis of a well-supported implicative generalisation that the first subject clitic to be absent is the 3rd person impersonal, and if a Romance language has a 3rd person impersonal subject clitic it also has the other 3rd person clitics. The function of *la* could be a special pragmatic one, not dependent on the context and speakers intention. I am proposing that it responds to a general requirement of the language to check features in CP that license a Topic of the sentence.

On the other hand, *nta*, 'it is necessary', cannot have a 'subject' *la* and we must conclude, as has been concluded for the corresponding Italian verb *bisogna*, that this verb expresses 'pure necessity' and it is thematically too poor even to support *la*. More radically, we can say that *nta* '(is) necessary' is not a verb at all, but a functional head inserted in the Root ModalityP *Necessity*, without any thematic grid (see Benincà, Poletto 1994). As such, it has not even a verbal morphology – even a reduced morphology – that can support and license the particle *la* and consequently the obligatory topic.

One could object to this by arguing that *pro-drop* languages by definition have no need of expletives.²⁵ This is not completely true. To be more precise, they do not have expletive subject clitics, but some have expletive pronouns (strong or weak). In a clearly *pro-drop* language like Neapolitan, an optional expletive 'subject of predication' has been identified and described (Sornicola 1996, Ledgeway 2010). The distal demonstrative *chelle/*

²⁵ Recent, insightful syntheses of the many facets of *pro-drop* theory can be found in D'Alessandro 2015 and in Cognola, Casalicchio (forthcoming), who also present important descriptive generalisations on phenomena connected to the *pro-drop* property of a language.

chille 'that', located in the left periphery, refers cataphorically to an argument of the sentence or of the context as a Theme. Very similar to this is Sicilian, again a clearly *pro*-drop variety where the demonstrative *iddu*, 'that', appears optionally to realize a sort of 'subject' of meteorological verbs (as in *s (iddu) chiovi*, 'if it rains': S.C. Sgroi, personal communication), or mark a null Topic which resumes the preceding discourse as in (*iddu*) *av assài*, 'it is a long time' (*Vocabolario Siciliano*, s.v. "iddu").

The marking of a Topic to recover material in the discourse is optional in Neapolitan and Sicilian and is ruled by pragmatics. In Occitan of both Western Piedmont and Southern France the particle is introduced when a Topic has to be licensed and interpreted. In POccit data are more detailed and intriguing: the particle *la* is obligatory if the verb is impersonal or unaccusative with a postposed subject; on the other hand, it is impossible with *ntà* 'it-is-necessary'. This state of affairs is not clear, even though it seems to me to indicate a relationship between the licensing of a Topic and the thematic endowment of the main verb.

In the framework of the assumptions I have outlined here, these languages are *pro*-drop but they are not Topic-drop; features of a pragmatic nature are obligatorily inserted in CP and checked by the Verb or particles. It seems reasonable to see this requirement as a residue of V2 syntax, which characterised medieval Romance including Old Provençal too. In a very informal way, a V2 language has a grammar requiring the inflected verb to move to C due to features that are automatically inserted in CP and have to be checked. V-movement concerns first of all main clauses while in dependent clauses it is limited to a greater or lesser extent and depends on the complementiser's position in the Left Periphery according to the type of subordinate clause, as I have shown above.²⁶

This hypothesis, which involves V2 syntax, is indirectly supported by the presence of other scattered Romance phenomena, exemplified above, which can be understood as residues of V2.

The observation of very detailed phenomena is possible if we take the V2 character of a language as a complex of behaviours, all having to do with the left periphery and the features that have to be checked there, and not, as is the case in non-V2 languages, in lower parts of the structure. Indirectly, the facts that we are pointing out confirm, indirectly, an interpretation of the V2 character of a language as a set of phenomena; German V2 is an extreme, very rigid type of this 'parameter', which, in

²⁶ Munaro (2010) applies this type of research to the left periphery to determine the position and properties of subject clitics and complementisers in relation to their clause-typing function. Munaro suggests that subject clitics as particles (in particular inverted particles in main interrogatives) are directly inserted into CP. This specific issue is more widely dealt with in Munaro 2002.

the light of a theory that assumes a 'fine grained' structure of the left periphery, poses interesting problems that should be addressed.

I have tried to demonstrate that the presence of 'subject clitics' in Occitan is ruled by features that are of a pragmatic nature; this is consistent with the apparently irreducible variability of their presence. The interpretation of a subject as Topic, as well as the presence of a silent Topic to be licensed, are options open to the Speaker, except in the case of impersonal verbs. Obviously, it would be highly desirable to be able to be more precise about the specific pragmatic interpretation attributed to the various options and consequently the precise structural positions where the markers are located, but so far this has not been possible; I hope that native speaker linguists will deepen the exploration of this aspect.²⁷

It is also interesting to note that these particles, even though more distant from their Latin origins than in other Romance varieties, still preserve traces of the Latin pronouns. There are two kind of factors that combine to produce this effect. Firstly, diachrony is characterised by change but also by stasis. Vincent (2013, 21) underlined this aspect of diachronic morphosyntax, quoting the stability of causative constructions in Romance, and the stable structure of kind-defining relative clauses in the history of Italian. Other numerous examples come from morphology, such as the millennial persistence, with minimal simplifications, of verbal conjugations or nominal classes in Indo-European languages, which presumably used to have a semantic rationale but have now largely lost it, while maintaining many morphological differences. In the same way, Occitan subject pronouns can have changed their original functions, despite maintaining traces of the original form. Nevertheless, this can be synchronically motivated by the fact that their new functions have to do with the pragmatic features inserted in the left periphery, in projections linked to Speaker and Hearer attitudes, i.e. first of all to 1st and 2nd person.

For the analysis that I have presented here, more research based on specifically collected data is necessary. In particular Old Occitan/Provençal appears aligned with other Medieval Romance languages of the Romania

27 I must note, though, that as a native speaker of Paduan, I am not able to characterise the semantic or pragmatic difference between sentences containing a lexical subject with and without an argumental subject clitic copy:

- (i) a. Marieto ga magnà tuta la minestra
M. has eaten all the soup.
- b. Marieto el ga magnà tuta la minestra
 M. he has eaten all the soup.

It is very natural to consider (11b) as an instance of Left dislocation of the subject, which becomes a Topic. Possibly because the Topic status is a natural option for a subject, the difference between (i.a-b) is not perceptible.

continua (as shown in Vanelli, Renzi, Benincà 1995, and recently confirmed by Donaldson 2016). Old Occitan/Provençal, though, is also distinct from the other languages of the group, in particular regarding asymmetric *pro*-drop. As mentioned above, in Northern Romance languages a lexical subject was not obligatory in main clauses, but obligatory in dependent clauses). The system of medieval Occitan (Provençal), is not clear, as there appears to be many more cases of subordinate clauses without a lexical subject, i.e. null subject cases with respect to the other Romance languages. Old Occitan/Provençal undoubtedly offers a fascinating source of more evidence to support the hypothesis of a special *pro*-drop status for Occitan languages, and possibly enrich our theory of *pro*-drop.

In the light of the evidence given above, it appears that the *pro*-drop (or null-subject) parameter has very little to do with subject agreement and explicit distinctions of personal endings on the verb. The entire system of subject clitics and persons of the verb is in fact made of two sub-systems: the system of deictic pronouns and the system of distal pronouns. Deictic persons are positively marked either with [+speaker] or [+hearer] or [+ speaker, + hearer], while a distal pronoun is not positively marked by any deictic features. This fact predisposes the deictic pronouns to become particles that perform pragmatic functions.

We must now return to our point of departure and sum up the nature of Occitan /*ke*/, both enclitic POccit /*ke*/ and proclitic FrOccit /*ke*/. I have proposed that it derives from the grammaticalisation of the complementiser, by definition a head in the left periphery with various sentential functions (on which see Munaro 2010). The complementiser, in Romance as in Germanic languages, is itself the result of grammaticalisation of a pronoun, as is well known. This element appears enclitic to the 1st sg. verb in main questions. I proposed that it marks the head of a non-standard question, such as a question posed by the speaker about her/himself. In the formation of this kind of question, the verb normally moves to a high position in the periphery. In POccit it collects the particle, adjoining to it as happens for proper subject clitics in non-null subject languages (Munaro 2010). However we would expect that all questions activate an interrogative feature in a low head in CP, while the enclisis of the particle appears primarily in non-standard questions. We must therefore conclude that there is a specific projection dedicated to speaker-addressed questions, with features, when active, that have to be checked by *ke* and attract the verb. The position of this projection is consistent with that localized by Giorgi (2010) for the encoding of 'speaker's attitude'. The process is parallel to the case exemplified above in (20) from the dialect in the province of Biella.²⁸

28 Notice that the *wh*-pronoun itself moves to a high Spec, as its interpretation differs from that of a *wh*-pronoun in a standard question.

The particle *a* of Paduan, mentioned above, is also a relevant case: it used to be a subject clitic, again a 1st sg, and became a particle, inserted in CP to check a 'mirative' feature. The particle *a*, though, is never enclitic in Paduan, as is the case for FrOccit.

In FrOccit, instead, *que* marks the head of Topic, which can be empty and recoverable from the context. In both cases we get particles in the left periphery, deriving from a grammaticalisation of the complementiser, a functional element belonging by definition to the left periphery, itself the product of a grammaticalisation process that changed an inflected *wh*- pronoun into an element introducing (or possibly, as Kayne suggests, resuming) a whole dependent clause.

A further, more general, reflection is the following: the *pro*-drop nature of both Occitan dialectal areas must be very strong and abstract, considering the evolution of syntax outlined above. The Occitan areas were, and are, surrounded by varieties that, through a stage of asymmetric *pro*-drop, reached a stage in which subject clitics had a referential and argumental content, and were obligatory in precise syntactic contexts. In Occitan areas, subject pronouns reached clitic status without assuming or maintaining a referential or argumental status. This mixed grammar can be the result of the interaction of two competing factors: the influence of other Romance languages with clitic subjects that are obligatory to express the subject, and the strength of the original *pro*-drop property. Occitan of both areas kept the subject pronouns and used them for another function, that of expressing the topic of the sentence. This function is in some cases realised by a null topic, licensed by the verb moving to C, or by a particle inserted in C. When the Verb is in the 1st or 2nd sg. person, Speaker or Hearer features have to be checked in the left periphery, either by the verb in main clauses, or by a particle in other cases, namely in 1st sg. interrogatives and in subordinate clauses when the subject is the 2nd singular person. This produces some clear asymmetries, but all these aspects can be viewed as a consequence of V2 phenomenology, as the effect of the ECP principle, which can be active at the IP level (a predication has to have a Nominative subject), or the CP level (a predication has to have a Topic/Focus).

If the hypothesis I have outlined here is correct, it leads us to the conclusion that *pro*-drop, as well as the non-null subject property, is a highly abstract and strong characteristic, deeply rooted in the grammar. The languages that we have observed mimic some non-null-subject characteristics, using functional elements apparently corresponding to the Romance subject clitics of the languages with which they have been in strict contact, but giving them a function coherent with their status of null-subject languages.

Finally, I would like to highlight again the important fact that the Occitan area, which was first identified by 19th century dialectological re-

search on the basis of diachronic phonological and morphological phenomena, is also consistently characterised by specific morpho-syntactic phenomena.²⁹

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²⁹ In his final remarks, Sibille (2012) also stresses this fact; furthermore, he emphasises the relevance of the contact between Occitan varieties and French and Northern Italian dialects, languages with subject clitics. Occitan has preserved the morphemes that were subject pronouns, but used them with new functions.

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