

Chapter 8: Two instances of a broken cycle: sentential particles in Old Italian

Cecilia Poletto

University of Venice Ca' Foscari

In this work I analyze two cases of Old Italian sentential particles, whose usage has changed in unexpected ways. I claim that this process has not occurred because the particles have undergone a reanalysis of their categorial properties, but because a major change, the loss of V2, came about. Given that the CP is not obligatorily activated in Modern Italian, the two particles have restricted their usage to cases where the relevant CP projection is still available. If the analysis is correct, it shows that reanalysis of single functional items does not depend on the item itself, but can be the consequence of major syntactic changes, to which the item readjusts. Once again, linguistic change is confirmed to derive from the complex interplay of various factors.

1. Introduction¹

In this work I intend to examine two examples of reduction of a diachronic cycle in Old Italian (OI) adopting the framework of diachronic cycle outlined in van Gelderen (2004). The first case is the particle *e*, which is a topic marker whose distribution has been radically reduced in modern Italian, (where it still plays the role of a topic marker only in very restricted contexts). The second case is the one of the marker *sì*, which, contrary to what several people have claimed (including myself) is not a real expletive for the SpecFocus position, but an anaphor referring to the previous context which sets the sentence inside the context as a prosecution of what has been just mentioned. In other words, *sì* marks the fact that there is no correction in the common assumptions between speaker and addressee, but simply that the sentence has to be added to the previous scenario. Modern Italian *sì* has lost this usage acquiring a new one, still related to Focus, but indicating contrast to the

¹ I thank the whole Paduan group for the common fruitful work during these last years, without Paola Benincà, Davide Bertocci, Federico Damonte, Jacopo Garzonio, Nicoletta Penello, Diego Pescarini and Laura Vanelli my research life would have been much less interesting and exciting and my personal life much less rich. I also thank Lorenzo Renzi for pointing out to me the etymology of the particle *sì*, which put me on the right track in the analysis of the modern particle. The abbreviations I use here are the standard ones used in the OVI project (see below footnote)

aforementioned context by correction. I claim that in both cases the reduction/change of the particle is due to a very major change in sentence structure, namely the loss of the V2 property, i.e. movement of the inflected verb to a Focus projection in the CP layer.

I adopt here the view on OI proposed by Adams (1987), Vanelli et al. (1984/5), and Benincà (1984). The CP layer contains the following projections in the most recent version proposed by Benincà (2006):

(1) [HT [SceneSett. [Leftdisl. ...[ListP [[CONTR.CP1 adv/obj, [CONTR.CP2 circ.adv. [INFORM.CP]]]
 | _____ | | _____ | | _____ |
 | FRAME | | THEME | | FOCUS |

In OI, the verb is forced to move to one of the projections located in the Focus field, (i.e. at least to Information Focus, when an XP is located higher, than the verb moves to the respective head as well) the projections above Focus occurring in the theme and frame fields can be filled and give rise to V3, V4 etc. If only the Focus layer is realized, the linear order is V2. Therefore, although OI does not respect the linear restriction of V2, it is nonetheless a “hidden” V2 language, where the inflected verb moves to the CP domain (more precisely at least to the Information Focus projection). The two particles examined are located at the two extremes of the CP layer, *e* is a particle in the Frame field, while *sì* is located in the Focus field.

It is well known that Italian has lost the V2 property after the medieval period: this means that every main declarative clause does not necessarily have to be a whole CP, main clauses can be simple IPs. Furthermore, the inflected verb does not need to raise to the Information Focus head but can stay in the IP domain. Modern Italian goes even further in the loss of access to the CP domain, as the Information Focus position is blocked and only the Contrastive Focus projection remains available.² Given this change, we could wonder what happens then of elements which originally marked the CP layer: they could either disappear or change into a marker of something else. The particle *sì*, which was originally an Information Focus marker, is reanalyzed as a Contrastive Focus marker, which is the closest projection still available in Modern Italian. Therefore, the particle has only undergone a minimal change, which is not due to its reanalysis as something new, but is forced onto the particle by the unavailability of the Information Focus projection. The development of the

² As I discuss in section 4, not all languages that have lost V2 have also lost access to the Information Focus projection. This is a further development whose origin still remains obscure.

particle *e* is somewhat different: in Modern Italian it can still be used as a Continuation Topic marker, but only in those contexts in which the clause is an entire CP (for instance interrogatives or exclamatives). In a way, the particle has not changed at all, it is the linguistic environment around the particle that has changed.

More generally, the analysis of these two sentential particles I examine shows that elements which are already functional in the structure can cease to mark a given projection in the CP layer because of independent reasons. This means that at least some of the cases of an interruption of a grammaticalization cycle do not crucially depend on the properties of the element itself but on general properties of the language, namely the loss of the V2 property, as I will argue. This work can be read as a confirmation of the idea that it is the whole system that changes, not a single item or construction. The article is organized as follows: in section 2 I analyze the particle *e* and propose an analysis which links the behavior of the particle to the fact that it is the coordination head and more specifically to the property that it takes a specifier and a complement of the same category. In section 3 I show what the distribution of the second particle *si* is, and analyze it as a marker linking the sentence to the previous context. In section 4 I discuss the reason why modern Italian has drastically reduced the usage of the two particles and derive it from the fact that the CP layer is “less active” in a sense which will be made more precise. Section 5 concludes the article and briefly hints at some research perspectives.

2. E as a Topic marker

As in modern Italian, in Old Italian (from now on OI) the particle *e* is the conjunction head, which can conjoin sentences or phrases. However, it occurs in a number of contexts, where it is clearly does not have this function:³

- (2) *e quando avea forbiti i piedi ed elli tornava fuori e rinfangavalisi vie più*
and when had cleaned the feet and he came.back outside *and* got.muddled more

³ All examples are taken from the online OVI (Opera del Vocabolario Italiano) data base of the CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche ‘National Research Council’) available at the following website <http://www.ovi.cnr.it/index.php?page=banchedati> which contains all Old Italian texts from 1215 to 1350. Under Old Italian I mean the language of the Florentine texts from 1200 to 1315 approximately, following the standard usage. I use here the standard abbreviation of the Old Italian grammar (to appear): FF means Fiori di Filosafi’ and Nov. Novellino. The sources are indicated in the references.

e tornava a ricalpitare il letto. (FF 124)

and came.back to step.on the bed.

‘When he had cleaned his feet, he went back outside, covered them with mud, came back and went up onto the bed.’

A case like (2) cannot be interpreted as a conjunction, as the first sentence is an adverbial embedded clause, while the second is the main clause. The occurrence of *e* in these cases must be due to some other reason. If *e* were the conjunction particle, OI would have the peculiar property of conjoining embedded with main clauses, which is in general not an option in the most well studied Romance and Germanic languages:

- (3) *Stando lo 'mperadore Federigo e facea dare l' acqua alle mani*
Being the emperor Federigo and let give the water to.the hands
‘While the emperor F. was standing there, he commanded to bring water for the people to clean their hands.’ (Nov. 177)

Although punctuation is not a very reliable test in older stages of languages, it is interesting to note that *e* can occur at the very beginning of a sentence preceded by a full stop:

- (4) a. *Plauto fue uno grande savio, cortese in parlare. E scrisse queste sentenze*
P. was a great wise, kind in talking. And wrote these sayings
‘P. was a great wise man, who spoke very kindly. He wrote these sayings.’ (F.F. 104)
- b. *Scipio Africano fue consolo di Roma e fue tagliato di corpo a la madre*
Scipio Africano was console of Rome and was cut of body from the mother
e per ciò fue chiamato Cesare. E dice uno filosafo che quelli che nascono in
and therefore was called C. And says a philosopher that those that are.born in
quel modo son più aventurati
that way are more lucky
‘S. A. was console in Rome, he was born through a caesarean and for this reason he was named Caesar. Philosophers say that people who are born like this are luckier.’
(F.F. 140)

A further argument showing that in the cases above *e* is not a conjunction but a different sort of marker is its translation into MI: the first *e* in (5) is perfectly grammatical also in MI, while the second is completely excluded:

- (5) *e poi, quando tutto ebbe dato, et elli si fece vendere,*
 and then, when all had given, and he himself made sell
 ‘And then when he had given everything he let himself be sold.’(Nov. 162)

If *e* is not a conjunction here, what is it then? In Poletto (2006) I proposed that it is a Topic marker. Here I would like to further refine this idea and claim that it is a marker located in the head of the HT projection and licensing a null Hanging Topic, and more precisely the one referring back to the whole previous context.⁴ The effect of this null Hanging Topic is a sort of “continuation of the same discourse configuration” (henceforth CDC). Put it bluntly, we can say that *e* is a continuity marker signalling the fact that the sentence has to be added to the established universe of discourse without further modifications of the scenario.

This hypothesis explains why in these cases it always occurs sentence initially: although OI tolerates several Topics in front of Focus, nonetheless, *e* is always the first element, which can be followed by Topics, but never preceded. If it is a particle licensing a null Hanging Topic, this is exactly what we expect, as Hanging Topics are the highest type of Topics there can be (see Benincà and Poletto (2004) for arguments distinguishing Hanging Topics and Scene Setting elements which occupy a “Frame field” on top of Left Dislocated Topics).

The second phenomenon this analysis explains is the fact that *e* always triggers enclisis (if it is immediately followed by the verb).

- (6) a. *e tenerlo* (F.F. 135)
 and keep.it
 b. *e bevenne* (F.F. 134)
 and drank.of.it

⁴ Notice that there are other languages where sentential particles mark exactly the continuation of a Topic. This is for instance the case of Chinese, where the particle *ne* indicates the continuation of the same discourse configuration. (see Li Boya 2006).

In old and recent work, Benincà observes that that enclisis is not only found when the inflected verb is in first position (according to the well known Tobler-Mussafia law) but more generally when the Focus position is empty, even if there are one or more Topics. She analyzes enclisis as a result of verb movement to a Topic position, probably a position in the Theme field (crucially, notice that *e* is located further up in the Frame field). However enclisis is to be analyzed, the empirical observation (known as Tobler Mussafia law to traditional philologists) remains that the marker *e* behaves like other types of Topics.

The idea that *e* can be a Hanging Topic marker of the CDC type also explains the fact noted above, namely that *e* can occur in front of both main and embedded clauses (giving the impression of a strange coordination structure between a main and an embedded infinitival or gerundive clause as in (7)):

- (7) *quando entrò nella chiesa, et uno parlò e disse:*
 when got into.the church, and one spoke and said:
 ‘when he entered the church, one of them spoke and said...’ (Nov. 189)

Moreover, the CDC particle *e* can cooccur with the conjunction head *e* (thus giving the impression of “conjunction doubling”):

- (8) *e, innebriato il pane dell' odore che n' uscia, del mangiare, e quelli*
 and, putting the bread in.the smoke that of.it.came.out of.the food, and he
lo mordea, e così, il consumò di mangiare, ricevendo il fumo e mordendolo.
 it bit and so, it finished of eating, getting the smoke and biting.it
 ‘He was putting the bread close to the smell which came out of the meat and then he
 ate the bread up biting it.’ (Nov. 177)

In the example above, the first *e* is the conjunction element followed by an embedded clause, while the second is the Hanging Topic marker.

We can conclude that *e* is not only the conjunction marker, but can also serve as a particle marking a Continuity (CDC) Topic. However, it is a striking fact that the element is one and the same for both cases. Obviously, I would not like to add to the complexity of the lexical entries of OI and postulate that there are two homophonous *e* elements in the lexicon,

but I will rather put forth the idea that there is a link between the two in the sense that there is only one lexical item *e*, which can be used either as a conjunction or as a CDC marker due to its categorial properties. The structure I assume for coordination is the one proposed by Kayne (1994) which has by now become standard:

(9) [CoordP XP [coord° e [XP]]

The conjunction head has two properties: a) its specifier and its complement must be of the same category and b) it can take whole CPs as specifier and complement. What I propose for the particle is the following structure:

(10) [TopicP ContextCP [Topic° e [[CP]]]

The Topic marker *e* has a specifier and a complement of the same type: in the specifier there is the whole previous context, which is a CP, in the complement position there is also a whole CP.

From the structural point of view, the only difference between (9) and (10) is in the labels. Thus, *e* maintains the property of taking a specifier and a complement which are of the same category in all its usages. From this point of view, the fact that the coordination head is used also as CDC Topic marker is not surprising at all. Some authors have already proposed that HTs can be a whole independent clause with partial deletion of the lexical material inside it (see Garzonio (2005) on this). According to this analysis, the fact that *e* can function as a Topic marker is not a mere coincidence but depends on its original formal property, namely the necessity of taking a specifier and a complement which must have the same categorial status, not only on its semantics or on some other independent mechanism which “creates” new particles.

The proposal crucially relies on the existence of null Topics in OI, and indeed we have evidence of other types of null Topics in verb initial constructions as the following:

(11) *Uno cavaliere pregava un giorno una donna d' amore e diceale intra l'*
 A knight was.praying one day a woman of.love and told.her among the
altre parole com' elli era gentile e ricco e bello a dismisura, “e
 other things how he was kind and rich and handsome beyond measure “and

l' vostro marito è così laido come voi sapete"; e quel.cotal marito era dopo
 the your husband is so ugly as you know" and that husband was behind
la parete della camera. ∅ Parlò e disse: "Eh, messer, per cortesia: acconciate
 the wall of.the room Spoke and said: "Eh, sir, please, mind
li fatti vostri e non isconciate li altrui". (Nov. 231)
 the facts yours and do.not spoil the others

One day a knight was begging a woman for love and told her among other things that
 he was kind, rich and very handsome, while her husband was ugly. The husband, who
 was behind the wall, spoke and said please mind your own business and not that of
 others."

- (12) *"Iscrivi" disse quel re cortese "ch' io obbligo l' anima mia a perpetua pregione infino*
 Write, said that king kind "that I oblige the soul mine to eternal prison until
che voi pagati siate". ∅ Morì. Questi, dopo la morte, andaro al padre suo e
 that you paid are. Died. They, after the death, went to.the father his and
domandaro la moneta. (Nov. 171)

asked the money

"Write", said the kind king, "I oblige my soul to eternal prison until my debt is paid".
 The king died. After his death they went to his father and asked for their money back."

The whole context preceding the clause starting with the null topic has been added here to
 show that the V-initial clause indeed has a null element which must be recovered from the
 previous context. These sentences are not interpretable to modern Italian ears, therefore
 although both cases are subjects, the pro drop property is not enough to explain these cases.
 In cases like the above there must be a lexically realized tonic pronoun in modern Italian,
 which means that modern Italian does not have null Topics (at least not of this type). This
 fact can in turn explain why the Topic marker *e* is not found in the modern Italian counterpart
 of sentences as the ones illustrated in (1) to (7). However, it would be empirically false to
 assume that modern Italian has no case of null Topics of the CDC type at all. As a matter of
 fact, *e* can still be a Topic marker in modern Italian but only in the following constructions:

- a) In interrogative elliptical clauses:

- (13) a. *E io?*
 And I?

‘What about me?’

b. *E adesso?*

And now?

‘Now what?’

More generally, *e* acts as a Topic marker in cases of special questions (in the sense of Obenauer (2004), where the presence of *e* can (but need not) licence wh-element in situ:

(14) a. *E cosa potrebbe fare in un frangente simile?* RQ interpretation

And what could do in a case similar?

‘What the hell could he do in such a situation?’

b. *E viene quando, allora?*

Non echo wh in situ

And come when, then?

‘When on earth is he coming then?’

b) The second context in which *e* can be a topic marker are exclamative clauses:

(15) *E che vestito che ti sei comprato!*

And what dress that yourself are bought

‘What a dress you bought!’

A special construction known as anaphoric anteposition also tolerates *e* as a Topic marker (see Benincà (1988)):

(16) A: *Gianni voleva comprarsi un castello*

Gianni wanted to buy himself a castle

B: *E un castello si è comprato!*

And a castle himself is bought

‘He bought a castle indeed!’

This distribution seems to indicate that the Topic marker is parasitic on some sort of operator construction, however, this is not entirely correct, because the Topic marker is excluded in contrastive focalizations, which are also analyzed as involving an Operator projection in the CP layer:

(17)?? *E IL VESTITO ha comprato, non il cappello*
 And the dress has bought, not the hat

Therefore, the usage of *e* as a Hanging Topic marker cannot directly depend on any element being located in the CP layer, nor on any sort of Operator in Focus, but must be restricted to those cases where the context must be relevant and present. The three constructions where *e* is still used all imply reference to the previous discourse, and at least in the cases of special questions and exclamatives occupy positions in the CP which are higher than Focus (see Benincà (1997) and Portner and Zanuttini (2003) for exclamatives and Obenauer (2004) for special interrogatives). We can conclude that there are two conditions which must be met in order for *e* to function as a Topic marker in MI: a) its presence must be justified by reference to the immediate context b) projections higher than Focus must be activated in the CP layer. In section 4 I will come back on this second condition and try to make sense of it in terms of diachronic change.

3. The element *sì*

The element *sì* meaning ‘so’ has several usages in OI, some of which overlap with the adverbial form *così*, also meaning ‘so’.⁵ In what follows I will describe the distribution of *sì* and compare this with the one of *così*, showing that they partially overlap, and then concentrate on the CP usage which I intend to analyze in detail.

In a similar way to *così* ‘so’, *sì* can modify an adjective, an adverb or a noun:

(18) a. *fue sì giusto e guardò sì le mani da..* (F F)
 was so right and looked so the hands that...

⁵ I do not know whether there is an etymological link between the two forms. Although *sì* looks like a short form of *così*, it is usually said to be derived from ‘sic’. Anyhow, *sì* has to be distinguished from the reflexive clitic *si*, which has a different etymological source. I will not pursue this question here.

‘he was so right, and looked down at his hands so that...’

b. *cominciò a tremare sì fortemente ...*

began to tremble so strongly...

‘He began to tremble so strongly.’ (Vita nuova 6)

(19) a. *quando io vi dissi del cavallo cosa così maravigliosa,*
when I you told of.the horse thing so marvelous

‘when I told you such an incredible thing about the horse.’ (Nov. 129)

b. *onde picciolo guiderdone diedi a llui di così ricco insegnamento*
so small reward gave to him of so rich teaching

‘I gave him such a poor reward for such a precious advice.’ (Nov. 145)

However, differently from *sì*, *così* can be a manner adverb, *sì* cannot:

(20) *Allora il lapidaro si rallegrò e prese l'una pietra e miselasi in mano*
Then the stone-worker cheered up and took the one stone and put.it in hand
e disse così:

and said so

‘then the stone worker cheered up, took a stone in his hand and said:’ (Nov 124)

On the other hand, *sì* can occur in the CP before elements like *come* ‘as’ forming the sequence ‘so as’:

(21) a. *sì come appare a chi lo intende*
so how appears to whom it understands

‘So as it appears to whom can understand it.’ (Vita nuova 23)

b. *Sì come elli parlava tra lloro di sì grande maraviglia*
so how he spoke to them of so great wonder

‘So as he spoke to them about such a wonder.’

It can also occur in front of the complementizer *che*:

(22) a. *sì che quasi dal principio del suo anno non apparve a me*
so that almost from.the beginning of the year not appeared to me

‘So that it appeared to me only at the beginning of the year.’ (Vita nuova 6)

- b. *sì che li chiovi pareano 16 lettere*
so that the nails looked 16 letters
‘so that the nails looked like 16 letters.’

When used as a CP operator, it can even climb into the main clause to a position located in front of the past participle, which is presumably an operator position:

- (23) a. *e ho sì saputo fare che li sudditi miei m' hanno cacciato*
and have so been-able to.do that the subjects my me have chased.away
‘I have been so skilled that my subjects sent me away.’ (Nov. 143)
- b. *a chi mi sa sì pregare che io lo diparta dagli altri*
to whom me knows so pray that I him take.away from.the others
‘who can pray to me in such a way that I take him away from the others.’
(Nov. 167)

The manner adverb *così* can also climb to the left of the inflected verb in V2 contexts, as any other adverb, but it never occurs in front of *come* or *che*:

- (24) *E Guglielmo, vedendo che così era sorpreso, parlò e disse*
And Guglielmo, seeing that so was surprised, spoke and said
‘And G., seeing him so surprised, spoke and told him...’ (Nov. 225)

We can conclude that *sì* has access to the CP layer in various contexts, while *così* can only be contrastively focalized, as low adverbs. The structure which is relevant to the present work is the following one:

- (25) a. *traendomi fuori de la veduta di queste donne sì mi domandò ...*
taking.me out of the sight of these women so me asked
‘getting me out of those women’s sight, he asked me...’ (Vita nuova 58)
- b. *E parlandomi così, sì mi cessò la forte fantasia*
And talking.me so, so me stopped the strong phantasy
‘while he was) talking to me like that, I stopped dreaming.’ (Vita nuova 98)

- c. *Poi che detta fue questa canzone, sì venne a me uno, ...*
 Then that said was this song, so came to me one, ...
 ‘After this song was sung, a man came to me...’ (Vita nuova 133)
- d. *La volpe andando per un bosco sì trovò un mulo: e il mulo sì li*
 The fox going through a wood so found a mule: and the mule so her
Mostrò il piede dritto,
 showed the foot right
 ‘while the fox was going through the wood, she met a mule, who showed her
 his right foot.’

In all these cases *sì* does not seem to mean ‘in this way’. In Poletto (2005), following Benincà’s (1995) intuition, I analyzed *sì* as an expletive located in SpecFocus. The structural arguments showing that *sì* is in SpecFocus are still valid (and will be presented below). However, I would like to propose the idea that *sì* is not an expletive, but has a meaning, though not exactly the one of ‘so’. It is an element indicating the relation between the clause and the context. Put it roughly, *sì* signals that the sentence is new information but has to be set against the preceding context. In a sense it is similar to *e*, though *e* licenses a Hanging Topic which is linked to the preceding context though does not highlight the sentence as new information. Both elements are prosecutive, though *sì* adds something more: it adds the sentence to the context signaling its relevance. As *e*, *sì* is never found to the very beginning of a whole text, where there is no context yet to make reference to. This shows that the element is in itself not an expletive pronoun (contra Poletto (2005) and Ledgeway (2007)) If it were a pure expletive, we would not expect this to be case, as expletive *es* in German can occur at the very beginning of a whole text.

The second argument in favor of this idea is that other elements with a similar function (like for instance *or* ‘now’ in Old French in addition to *sì*) can be found, while there can only be one expletive per language. Therefore, it seems that the interpretation of *sì* as a marker which defines the relation between the proposition and the context is more adequate. Moreover, if *sì* were a real expletive, no V1 would be allowed in OI, (except those cases in which there is a null operator in SpecFocus), as it is the case in modern German, and the verb would never be in first position with enclisis. The last piece of evidence that *sì* is not a CP expletive is the fact that it can occur in embedded clauses:

- (26) a. *che l ferro, se l' aopere, s'ì si logora, se no l' aopere la ruggine il consuma*
 that the iron, if it use, so it wears.outg, if not it use the rust it destroys
 `that the iron wears out if you use it, if you do not, it gets rusty.' (FF 146)
- b. *Leggesi del re Currado, del padre di Curradino, che, quando era garzone,*
 Reads-one of.the king Currado of.the father of Curradino, that, when was boy,
s'ì avea in compagnia dodici garzoni di sua etade,
 so had in company twelve boys of his age,
 `Here you can read about King Currado, Curradino's father, who had twelve
 boys with him when he was a boy.'

This is expected if we assume with Benincà (2006) that the CP layer can be activated in embedded clauses as well, but it is not if we consider *s'ì* as an expletive, as CP expletives like German *es* never occur in embedded contexts.

S'ì is clearly located in the Focus field in OI, as it always occurs at the immediate left of the inflected verb:

- (27) a. *s'ì s' abacinò degli occhi*
 so himself burnt his eyes
 `His eyes were dazzled.' (F F 105)
- b. *e, parlando specialmente alli spiriti del viso, s'ì disse queste parole*
 and, speaking particularly to.the spirits of.the face, so said these words
 (Vita nuova 8)

In the OI data base of the OVI enterprise there are no cases of *s'ì* separated by the inflected verb by elements other than clitics or negation, which shows that *s'ì* is very low in the structure of the CP.

Moreover, *s'ì* very often occurs after an embedded temporal clause indicating either anteriority or simultaneity or after a TopicXP or the subject (which is probably a special type of Topic) This is expected under this analysis, given that Topic and embedded clauses are higher than Focus in the CP layer.

It also often occurs in combination with *e* and the combination is always *e* preceding *s'ì*:

- (28) a. E, *che avrà cuore nobile et intelligenza sottile, sì li potrà simigliare*
 And, that will.have heart noble and intelligence subtle, so him can look.alike
per lo tempo che verrà
 for the time that will.come
 ‘and who will have a noble heart and a subtle intelligence, and will look like
 him in the future.’ (Nov. 118)
- b. *in questo Pittagora sì cominciò...*
 in this Pittagora so began
 ‘Precisely then, P. started...’ (Fiori e Vita de Filosofi, 104)

The strongest piece of evidence that *sì* is located in the Focus field is the fact that it occurs only with proclisis.

- (29) *e di ciò sì ne fue*
 and of this so of.it was
 ‘and so it was of this.’ (FF 106)
- (30) *sì si ne diede questa penitenza*
 so himself of.it gave this penance
 ‘He gave himself this penance.’ (F F 108)

Similarly to what has been proposed for *e*, which only occurs with enclisis, when it is immediately followed by the inflected verb, we can exploit the Tobler Mussafia law as a test to determine the position of *sì*, which behaves as foci, and not as higher topic elements. Summing up: the hypothesis that *sì* is a prosecutive operator setting the clause against the context explains:

- a. Why it can occur in embedded clauses
- b. Why it can be substituted by other similar elements like *or*
- c. Why it is never found at the beginning of a whole text

The fact that *sì* is an Operator located in the Focus field explains:

- a. its adjacency to the inflected verb
- b. the fact that it occurs after topics(LD), scene setting temporal elements and hanging topics.
- c. The fact that it only triggers proclisis

As a last point I would like to mention concerning *sì*, the element has not disappeared from the language. MI has indeed cases of *sì* in the CP layer, as shown in (31), where (31abc) have the same meaning:

- (31) a. *Gianni sì che lo fa*
 G. SÌ that it does
- b. *Sì che Gianni lo fa*
 SÌ that Gianni it does
- c. *Gianni lo fa sì*
 Gianni it does sì
 ‘Gianni surely does it.’

Nevertheless this is not the case type of *sì* found in OI, as *sì* here is the assertive pro-sentence, not the adverb ‘so’. Though they are related, MI *sì* has evolved into a contrastive Focus marker which sets the sentence as a correction of the context, it is a marker which signals the denial of (part of) a previous utterance. In work related to the left periphery Benincà and Poletto (2004) show that the left periphery of Romance languages contains at least two distinct types of Foci, contrastive Focus and what is dubbed Information Focus. Some Romance languages or dialects (notably modern Sicilian, see Cruschina (2006) for a detailed discussion on Information Focus in Sicilian) and crucially OI make use of both types of Foci, so a sentence can either have contrastive or information focus located in the CP layer. In MI this is not so, the only possible Focus position independently available is the contrastive Focus position, for reasons which are not clear yet. In MI Information Focus is only available in a parasitic way to Contrastive Focus namely when the Contrastive Focus position is already activated and contains a lexical XP. I will elaborate on this in the next section where I discuss the loss of V2. For the moment, let us take this observation as a fact and analyze how *sì* has changed from OI to MI. If the position of Information Focus is not independently available in MI, then the change that occurred in the syntax of the particle *sì* is expected. A

priori, there are two possibilities when Information Focus is blocked by the loss of V2: the particle could have disappeared from the language, or it could turn into something else. As seen above, the sentential marker *sì* has not disappeared from the language, but given that the Information position is blocked in MI, it has turned into a marker of Contrastive Focus, which is still freely available in MI. I propose that MI *sì* is a contrastive Focus marker signaling that the whole sentence is in contrast to the previous context (as shown in (31b)). One argument in favor of the idea that *sì* has turned from a information Focus to a contrastive Focus is provided by the fact that it has developed a negative counterpart, which did not exist in OI, namely *no*, found in contexts like the following:

- (32) *NO che Gianni non lo fa*
 NO that Gianni not it does
 ‘Gianni won’t surely do it.’

Contrastive Focus with respect to the context can be either assertive or negative, information Focus cannot be negative. This explains the absence of the negative counterpart of *sì*, *no*, in OI.

In addition to this, MI also displays cases as the following one:

- (33) *Gianni sì che lo fa*
 Gianni sì that it does
 ‘Gianni surely does it.’

Here the sentence starts out with a Topic located in front of the Focus marker (as in (31a)). In this case, the sentence is set as a contrast to the discourse only with respect to the Topic. Notice that, while Topics can be more than one in MI (as in all Romance languages), there can only be one Topic of this type (I will call it Ground) which restricts the domain of the contrast, as the ungrammaticality of the following sentence shows:

- (33) **Maria, Gianni sì che lo fa*
 Maria Gianni sì that it does
 ‘As for Maria, Gianni surely does it.’

Other types of Topics are not in principle excluded, showing that not all TopP are blocked, but that there can be only one Topic per type:

- (34) Per Maria, Gianni *sì* che lo fa
 For Maria, Gianni *sì* that it does
 ‘Gianni surely does it to please Mary.’

Sì can also unexpectedly occur at the end of the clause (see (31c)). There are two possible ways to analyze the sentence final position found in MI: we either assume that the sentence initial and the sentence final positions are different, and *sì* can appear close to the VP (in fact lower than all VP elements, as it is sentence final) or we can hypothesize that the sentence final and sentence initial position are one and the same: the sentence final effect is due to movement of the whole clause to a GroundP (a type of Topic) position in front of the Focus marker. As I extensively show in Poletto (2008), there is empirical evidence that the second hypothesis is correct.⁶ The structure of the two sentences with sentence initial and sentence final *sì* are represented below:

- (35) [GroundP [CPFocus SI [FinP [Fin° che ... [IP Gianni lo fa]]]]]

- (36) [SpecGroundP [IP Gianni lo fa] [Ground° [CPFocus SI] [FinP [IP Gianni lo fa]]] [Fin° [IP Gianni lo fa]]]]

In the first case *sì* is sentence initial followed by the whole clause, with a low complementizer in Fin°.⁷ In the second, the whole IP has moved to the Spec of a GroundP moving through the Spec of the FinP and thereby preventing the realization of the complementizer because of the doubly filled comp filter (see Poletto (2000) for a discussion on the notion of doubly filled comp filter in a cartographic approach). I report here some of the arguments in favor of this hypothesis developed in Poletto (2008): the first is that NO occurs in sentence final position and only right dislocated items can occur after it. Those elements which cannot be right dislocated, as negative quantifiers or verbal particles are ungrammatical:

⁶ I briefly sum up here what I assume for MI *sì*. The reader is referred to Poletto (2008) for a detailed discussion of the empirical arguments and of the technical details of the analysis.

⁷ These structures are also an argument in favour of the idea that the complementizer in these constructions is in Fin. See also Belletti (2008).

(37) *Ci sono andata **SI**, al cinema*

there am gone YES, to.the cinema

'I really went to the cinema.'

(38) **Ci sono andata **SI**, da nessuna parte*

there am gone yes, to no place

'I really did not go anywhere.'

(39) **Non mi ha detto **NO** su*

Not me has told NO off

'He did not tell me off.'

According to the hypothesis illustrated above, this is due to the fact that the whole IP has to be moved, hence all IP-internal material has to occur before *sì*, and only elements which can be right dislocated (like definite PPs, but unlike Quantified PPs or verbal particles) can be found to the right of the negative marker. If *sì* were in IP, we would expect it to be followed by some non dislocated XPs.

The second argument is that *sì* is incompatible with elements whose position is typically associated to the lower portion of the CP layer, like wh-items:

(40) **Dove sei andato **sì**?*

Where are gone yes?

'Where did you really go?'

(41) **Il ragazzo a cui ho telefonato **sì**, è Gianni*

The boy to whom have phoned yes, is John

'The boy I really phoned is John.'

Sentence final *sì* is both incompatible with interrogative wh-items and with relative pronouns. This is expected if the two types of elements are banned by a minimality effect. On this basis I will assume that *sì* is always a contrastive Focus marker in Italian, so its position

is still in the Focus layer, but has readjusted to the new grammar, which does not allow information focus. As for the more general reason why an element like *sì* has been selected for marking Focus (either Information or Contrastive) I propose that, as in the case of the particle *e*, it must be related to its intrinsic nature. In this case I think that it is its status as an operator which makes *sì* the ideal candidate to mark Focus. That *sì* is an operator is shown by the cases in OI in which *sì* is in SpecCP followed by a complementizer:

- (42) a. *sì* che quasi dal principio del suo anno non apparve a me
 so that almost from-the beginning of his year not appeared to me
 ‘so that almost at the beginning of the year it appeared to me...’ (Vita nuova 6)
- b. *sì* che li chiovi pareano 16 lettere
 so that the nails looked-like 16 letters
 ‘so that the nails looked like 16 letters.’

Here the meaning of *sì* is not “in this way” but “in such a way that”. In other words in this usage the adverb already connects the previous utterance to the following one. We can conclude that the particle *sì* in OI and MI can be used as a Focus marker due to its operator nature. In OI it marks Information Focus, and it has been reanalyzed as a marker of contrastive Focus in MI. In the next section I will try to provide an explanation for this change based on the loss of the general V2 property.

4. *A broken cycle*

Both sentential particles examined here have undergone a change from OI to MI: the case of the particle *e* has been reduced to contexts which have the common property of having an active CP (due to the presence of a Wh-item or an operator), *sì* has been reinterpreted as a contrastive focus marker instead of an information focus marker.

It is well known that the syntax of Italian underwent a major change after the medieval period, losing V2 and that this had consequences on the licensing of null subjects (which were limited to I to C contexts in OI and are not anymore in MI) and on the distribution of pronouns (see Benincà (1984), on the availability of a low left periphery located on top of the low phase vP (Poletto (2006) thereby banning DP objects located in between the auxiliary and the past participle. I would like to propose that the change in the

particle distribution also depends on the loss of V2 though in two different ways. I adopt here the standard assumption that “loss of V2” means in technical terms that the inflected verb does not obligatorily raise to the CP domain in main declarative clauses. More precisely, the relevant projection inside the split CP domain to which the inflected verb moves in OI is Information Focus, the lowest projection inside the Focus field. Therefore, after the medieval period the inflected verb can remain in IP in declarative main clauses, as the feature in Information Focus forcing verb movement is not there anymore. Notice however, that MI does not represent the immediate stage expected after this change. This is represented by languages like modern Sicilian, where, though the verb is not forced to move to the Information Focus head, this projection is still available to an XP, as the grammaticality of sentences like the following in a question-answer pair show (see Benincà and Poletto 2004) and Cruschina 2006 on this):

- (43) A: *Chi è?*
 Who is ?
 ‘Who is it?’
 B: *Montalbano sono*
 Montalbano am
 ‘It is M.’

MI has evolved further from a stage where the Specifier of Information Focus is still available: this projection can only be occupied when the specifier of Contrastive Focus already contains an XP. There are other Romance languages which have evolved even further, losing movement to Information and Contrastive Focus altogether, for instance, standard French. At this point I do not know why MI is different both from modern Sicilian and modern French. One can speculate that the unavailability of the Information Focus position must be in line with some property of the low left periphery on top of vP, but I will not take a stand with respect to the motivation of the loss of V2, which has been under discussion for years in the diachronic literature. What can be observed from the texts is exactly what Roberts (1993) observes in the case of Old French: on the one hand subject inversion becomes rarer and rarer while cases of preverbal subjects increase, on the other there is a restriction on the elements which can be moved to Information Focus. I analyzed the first ten chapters and chapter twenty to twenty-three of Machiavelli’s “Il Principe”,

written in the early part of the 16th century, and only found very few clear cases of subject inversion (i.e. a nominal subject located inbetween the auxiliary and the past participle). In the whole sample (over 100 pages) there are only three cases of subject inversion with an auxiliary verb (cf. (44)) and eight cases with modals (six with *potere* ‘can’ and two with *dovere* ‘must’). Cases with modal verbs are illustrated in (45):

- (44) a. *Spenti adunque questi capi, e ridotti i partigiani loro*
 blown.off then these bosses and reduced the friends their
amici suoi, aveva il duca gittato assai buoni fondamenti
 friends his had the duke thrown very good foundations
alla potenza sua
 to.the power his (p.221)

‘when he had killed those chiefs and captured their friends, the duke had laid solid foundations to his power’

- b. *Aveva adunque Luigi fatto questi cinque errori*
 had then Luigi made these five mistakes (p.197)

‘So Luigi had made these five mistakes ‘

- c. *Mentre che durò la memoria, sempre furono i Romani*
 while that lasted.3sg the memory always were the Romans
incerti di quella possessione
 unsure of that possession (p.203)

‘as long as this story is remembered, the Romans never completely possessed that land’

- (45) a. *E deve soprattutto uno principe vivere con i suoi sudditi*
 And must.3sg overall a prince live with the his subjects
in modo che ...

in way that...
(p.237)

‘and above all a prince should live with his subjects so that...’

- b. *E con più facilità se le può un principe guadagnare*
and with more ease for-himself them can.3sg a prince gain
(p.205)

and a prince can gain them more easily’

The second fact is that the class of elements which can be placed in front of the inflected verb without being left dislocations or contrastive focus is dramatically reduced: in Machiavelli’s text the vast majority of cases are represented by the adverbs *sempre* ‘always’ and its negative counterpart, *mai* ‘never’. This clearly shows that Information Focus is not as readily available (both to the inflected verb and to XPs) as it was in the medieval period. The fact that Information Focus is blocked evidently produces an effect on the particle *sì*, which is then reanalyzed as contained in the closest projection, namely Contrastive Focus. As a consequence, the particle takes over also the properties of the new projection where it is located, not only because it indicates a contrast with the previous discourse, but also because it has the same properties as other types of CP elements in MI in allowing remnant IP movement and thereby triggering sentence final position of the particle.

The case of the particle *e* is more difficult to explain, as the particle has not changed its status, but only reduced the number of contexts where it can be used as such. In order to function as a topic marking the continuation of the context, the particle *e* exploits a structure which is the same as the one used when it represents a conjunction. Given that the context, which is located in SpecConjunctionP is represented as a whole CP starting with a Topic, it is necessary that also the following clause is syntactically a whole CP starting with some Topic (hence higher than Focus). This is by no means a problem in OI, where in all main clauses the inflected verb has to reach the Focus field and there are null Topics available. However, in MI this is not the case. Therefore, using the conjunction as a Topic marker becomes impossible in MI unless the sentence is already a whole CP starting with some projection higher than FocusP. Precisely in these cases (namely when also the second condition is met) it is indeed still possible to use the conjunction particle as a Topic marker. This means that the particle itself has undergone no real reanalysis from OI to MI, it is rather

the structure of the language that has changed preventing an extensive use of the conjunction marker as a topic marking prosecution of the context.

More generally we can conclude that these two cases show that what looks like the reanalysis of a isolated item is strictly related to the whole system. This might prove to be a more general pattern which applies to reanalysis throughout: no lexical item can be reanalyzed by itself, reanalysis must always be the effect of a more general restructuring of the whole system. If this is correct, any time we deal with some element changing (even single cases as the development of a new modal auxiliary, as *bisogna* from OI to MI, or of class of adverbs changing from manner to speaker oriented adverbs, which seem unrelated to the general structure of the language) we should seek the general structural change which drives the smaller ones of single items.

5. *Conclusion*

In this work I have examined the distribution of two sentential markers from OI to MI and have reached a number of conclusions: first of all, following Kaiser (2006ab), I concluded that neither of the two elements is a left periphery expletive. The second conclusion is that the change of the two items is driven by a very major change in the V2 system of the language and that the two elements have only “readjusted” to the general context they are in. Moreover, the usage as Topic or Focus markers of these items seems to be related to their invariant categorial properties. This ensure that when the right context is provided, these elements can still behave as they did in the old system (*e* still is a Topic marker when CP is active). The general conclusion we can draw from this case study is that we should not only consider the change of lexical elements per se, as specifiers becoming heads, or lower elements climbing to higher functional projections, but also the general picture of the language which requires the change to be activated. In some cases we might find that the element per se has not changed at all, and that its categorial and/or semantic invariant features just adapt to the context it is in.

References

- Adams, Marianne. 1987. "From Old French to the Theory of pro-drop". *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 5:1-32.
- Belletti, Adriana. 2008. "Answering strategies: New information subjects and the nature of clefts." Ms. University of Siena. To appear as Chapter 10 of *Structures and Strategies*. London: Routledge
- Benincà, Paola. 1984. "Un'ipotesi sulla sintassi delle lingue romanze medievali". *Quaderni Patavini di Linguistica*, 4:3-19.
- Benincà, Paola 1988. "L'ordine degli elementi della frase e le costruzioni marcate". In Lorenzo Renzi (ed.), *Grande Grammatica Italiana di Consultazione*, 129-194. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Benincà, Paola 1994. *La variazione sintattica*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Benincà, Paola 1995. "Complement Clitics in Medieval Romance: the Tobler-Mussafia Law". In Adrian Battye and Ian Roberts (eds.), *Clause Structure and Language Change*, 296-325. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Benincà, Paola. 2006. "A Detailed Map of the Left Periphery of Medieval Romance". In Raffaella Zanuttini, Héctor Campos, Elena Herburger and Paul Portner (eds.) *Negation, Tense and Clausal Architecture: Cross-linguistics Investigations*. pp. 53-86. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.
- Benincà, Paola & Cecilia Poletto. 2004. "Topic, Focus and V2. Defining the CP sublayers". In Luigi Rizzi (ed.), *The structure of the CP*. 52-75. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Boya, Li. 2006. *Chinese final particles and the syntax of the periphery*. Leiden: The Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL).
- Cruschina, Silvio 2006. "Informational focus in Sicilian and the left-periphery". In Mara Frascarelli (ed.), *Phases of Interpretation*. 363-385. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Garzonio, Jacopo 2005. 'Le frasi interrogative non-standard in fiorentino'. *Rivista Italiana di Dialettologia* 28, 219-235.
- Gelderen, Elly van 2004. *Grammaticalization as Economy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kaiser, Georg. 2006a. "Sobre a (alegada) perda do sujeito nulo no português brasileiro." In Tânia Lobo, Ilza Ribeiro, Zenaide Carneiro and Norma Almeida (eds), *Para a*

- história do português brasileiro*. Vol. 6: Novos dados, novas análises. Tomo 1. 11-42. Salvador: Editora da Universidade Federal da Bahia.
- Kaiser, Georg. 2006b. "Pronombres sujeto en construcciones impersonales de lenguas iberorrománicas." In Beatriz Fernández & Itziar Laka (eds.), *Andolin gogoan. Essays in Honour of Professor Eguzkitza*, 513-530. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea.
- Kayne, Richard 1994. *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Ledgeway, Adam 2007. 'Old Neapolitan word order: some initial observations', in Anna Laura Lepschy and Arturo Tosi (eds), *Histories and dictionaries of the languages of Italy*. Ravenna: Longo, pp. 121-49.
- Obenauer Hans-Georg 2004. "Non standard wh-questions and alternative checkers in Pagotto". In Horst. Lohnstein & Susanne Trissler (eds), *The Syntax and Semantics of the Left Periphery*, Interface explorations 9, 343-383. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Poletto, Cecilia 2000. *The Higher Functional Field in the Northern Italian Dialects*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Poletto, Cecilia. 2005. "Si and e as CP expletives in Old Italian". In Maria Luisa Hernanz et al.(eds) *Grammaticalization and Parametric Variation*, 206-235. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Poletto, Cecilia. 2006. "Parallel Phases: a study on the high and low left periphery of Old Italian". In Mara Frascarelli (ed.), *Phases of Interpretation*. 261-294. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Poletto, Cecilia. 2008 The syntax of focus negation. Ms. University of Venice (to appear in Working Papers in Linguistics University of Siena).
- Zanuttini, Raffaella & Paul Portner. 2003. "Exclamative Clauses: At the Syntax-Semantics Interface" *Language* 79.1: 39-81
- Roberts, Ian. 1993. *Verbs and Diachronic Syntax: a Comparative History of English and French*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Vanelli, Laura, Lorenzo Renzi & Paola Benincà. 1985/6. "Tipologia dei pronomi soggetto nelle lingue romanze medievali". *Quaderni Patavini di Linguistica* 5: 49-66. Reprinted in Benincà (1994).

Primary sources

Alighieri Dante. *Vita nuova*. Michele Barbi (ed.), Firenze, Bemporad, 1932.

Anonymous *Fiori e vita di filosafi e d'altri savi e d'imperadori* Alfonso D'Agostino, (ed.)
Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1979.

Anonymous *Novellino* Edizione Libro di novelle et di bel parlar gentile: nel qual si
contengono cento nouelle altrauolta mandate fuori da messer Carlo Gualteruzzi
da Fano. Guido Favati, (ed.) Genova, Bozzi, 1970.