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# The Relevance of Lesser-Used Languages for Theoretical Linguistics: The Case of Cimbrian and the Support of the TITUS Corpus

Ermenegildo Bidese, Cecilia Poletto  
and Alessandra Tomaselli

On the basis of the TITUS Project, the following contribution aims at showing the importance of a lesser-used language, such as Cimbrian, for the theory of grammar. In Chapter 1, we present the goals of TITUS and its possibilities in order to analyse old Cimbrian writings. Furthermore, according to these possibilities, the second chapter will summarise some recent results of the linguistic research about relevant aspects of Cimbrian grammar, in particular the syntax of verbal elements, of subject clitics, and of subject nominal phrases. Chapter 3 and 4 discuss which relevance these results can have in the Generative framework, in particular with respect to a generalisation concerning the syntactic change in context of isolation and language contact.\*

## 1. The TITUS Project (<http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>)

The TITUS Project was conceived in 1987 during the Eighth Conference of Indo-European Studies in Leiden, when some of the participants had the idea to link their work together in order to create a text database for the electronic storage of writings/sources relevant to their discipline.<sup>1</sup> The name of the project was “Thesaurus of Indo-European Textual Materials on Data Media” (Thesaurus indogermanischer Textmaterialien auf Datenträgern). In the first phase, the project aimed at preparing a collection of textual materials from old Indo-European languages, such as Sanskrit, Old Iranian, Old Greek, Latin, as well as Hittite, Old High German and Old English.

In the beginning of the '90s, the rapid increase of electronic storage capacities in data processing led to a second phase of the project in 1994. During the Third Working Conference for the Employment of Data Processing in the Historical and Comparative Linguistics, in Dresden, the newly-founded working group ‘Historisch-Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft’ (Historic-Comparative Linguistics) of the Society for Computational Linguistics and Language Technology (Gesellschaft für Linguistische

\* The present contribution was written by the three authors in complete collaboration. For the formal definition of scholar responsibility, we declare that Ermenegildo Bidese draws up sections 1, 1.1 and 1.2, 2, 2.1, Cecilia Poletto sections 2.2 and 2.3, Alessandra Tomaselli sections 3 and 4. We would like to thank the staff of EURAC for the opportunity to present our research.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gippert (1995)

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Datenverarbeitung) decided on an extension of the objectives for the 'Thesaurus', including further text corpora from other Indo-European and neighbouring languages, and introduced the new name 'Thesaurus of Indo-European Textual and Linguistic Materials', shortened to the acronym from the German designation: TITUS (Thesaurus indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien). The addition, 'linguistic materials', emphasizes that TITUS understands itself no longer only as a text database, but also as a 'data pool'.<sup>2</sup> On the TITUS server, you can find materials and aids for the analysis of the texts as well as, such as, among other things, a currently up-to-date bibliography with the newest publications in Indo-European studies, teaching materials, lexica, glossaries, language maps, audiovisual materials, software and fonts and heaps of helpful links. In fact, since 1995, owing to the above-mentioned conference, TITUS has been present on the World Wide Web with its own site at <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>.<sup>3</sup> Responsible for the project is the *Institut für Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft* at the University Johann Wolfgang-Goethe in Frankfurt am Main/Germany (direction: Professor Jost Gippert) in connection with other European universities.

The third phase in the development of the TITUS Project coincides with the explosive expansion of the Internet, and the new possibilities that online communication and Web performance offer. The new target of TITUS is the replacement of static data retrieval by an interactive one.<sup>4</sup> This means that in order to better comprehend and analyse the texts, further information about the writings are made available to the user, who can then become interactive with the text. Three issues are pursued:

- a graphic documentation of the physical supports of the texts, usually manuscripts and inscriptions;
- an automatic retrieval of word form correspondences in a single text or in an entire language corpus; and,
- an automatic linguistic analysis of occurrences for the morphology of a word or for the basic forms of a verb.<sup>5</sup>

This interactive retrieval system is currently in development.

### 1.1 *The Cimbrian Texts in the TITUS Project*

The TITUS text database includes two Cimbrian texts provided by Jost Gippert, Oliver Baumann & Ermenegildo Bidese (1999).<sup>6</sup> They comprise the catechism of 1813

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2 Bunz (1998:12)

3 Ibid.

4 Cf. Gippert (2001)

5 Cf. Ibid. Cf. the same for four illustrative examples.

6 The direct links are: <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/germ/zimbr/kat1813d/kat18.htm> and <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/germ/zimbr/kat1842d/kat18.htm>.

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(better known as the 'short Cimbrian catechism', written in the Cimbrian variety of the Seven Communities), and a new edition of the same text with slight alterations from 1842.<sup>7</sup> In fact, this catechism is a Cimbrian translation of the 'Piccolo Catechismo ad uso del regno d'Italia' (Short Catechism for the Italian Kingdom) of 1807. A critical edition of both the original Italian text and the two Cimbrian versions was provided by Wolfgang Meid.<sup>8</sup> The situation of Cimbrian knowledge at this time (with particular reference to the plateau of the Seven Communities) was very good, even though the use of the local Romance variety - in accordance with what the same text in the introduction testifies - was spreading.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, and in view of the possibility of comparing this text with the first Cimbrian catechism of 1602, (which represents the oldest Cimbrian writing<sup>10</sup>), the 'short catechism' of 1813 and its later version in 1842 are essential sources for studying and analysing the diachronic development of the Cimbrian language.<sup>11</sup>

On the basis of the above-mentioned critical edition by Professor Meid, we digitised the text in agreement with Meid's linearization of the original version. Moreover, we provided a first linguistic structuring of the text marking, above all, for the prefix of the participle perfect, pronominal clitics, personal pronouns, and the existence particle *-da*.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2 *The Research of Linguistic Content of the Cimbrian Texts*

The first way of accessing the content of the Cimbrian texts is selecting the levels (chapters, paragraphs, verses and lines) into which the text is specifically subdivided in the entry form on the right frame of the text's start page. In this way, you can precisely find any given passage of the Cimbrian text.<sup>13</sup>

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7 Cimbrian is a German dialect commonly spoken today in the village of Lusern/Luserna in the region of Trentino in northern Italy. It is also found, albeit in widely dispersed pockets, in the Venetian communities of Mittoballe/Mezzaselva (Seven Communities) and Ljetzan/Giazza (Thirteen Communities), in the northeast of Italy. When the Cimbrian colonies were founded and where the colonists came from are still subjects of controversy, although the accepted historical explanation is that the Cimbrian colonies originated from a migration of people from Tyrol and Bavaria (Lechtal) at the beginning of the second millennium. For a general introduction about the Cimbrian question and this language, cf. Bidese (2004b).

8 Cf. Meid (1985b)

9 Cf. Cat.1813:17-21 in Meid (1985b:35)

10 Cf. Meid (1985a). The first Cimbrian catechism is the translation of Cardinal Bellarmino's 'Dottrina cristiana breve' (cristian short doctrine). In spite of the title, the text is remarkably longer than the 1813's 'short catechism.'

11 Moreover, in TITUS, there is the first part of Remigius Geiser's (1999) self-learning Cimbrian course (cf. <http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/didact/zimbr/cimbrian.htm>).

12 Cf. for the linguistically analysed texts following links: <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/germ/zimbr/kat1813s/kat18.htm> and <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/germ/zimbr/kat1842s/kat18.htm>.

13 Cf. for a detailed description of all these possibilities Gippert (2002).

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A second possibility for content searching is obtained by using TITUS word search engine. By double-clicking on a given word of the Cimbrian text, for example, you can automatically look for its occurrences in the text, for the exact text references, and for the context in which this word is used (including orthographic variants).

A third way of content searching in the Cimbrian texts consists of using a search entry form that you can find when you open the link Switch to Word Index on the right frame of the start page of the text. In the box, you can enter a word and obtain its occurrences in the Cimbrian text.

In conclusion, we can state that the TITUS Project, with all the above-mentioned possibilities (and including the Cimbrian texts with a first linguistic structuring), offer a good starting-point for the research of the diachronic development of Cimbrian's syntax.

## 2. Some Relevant Aspects of Cimbrian Syntax

In the last decade, three interrelated syntactic aspects of the Cimbrian dialects have become the subject of intensive descriptive studies, from both the diachronic and the synchronic point of view: a) the syntax of verbal elements; b) the syntax of subject clitics; and, c) the syntax of subject NPs. The theoretical relevance of these studies will be discussed in section 4.

### 2.1 Verb Syntax

As for the syntax of verbal elements, the following descriptive results can be taken for granted:

i) Cimbrian is no longer characterised by the V2 restriction, which requires the second position of the finite verb in the main declarative clause. As the following examples show, the finite verb can be preceded by two or more constituents that are not rigidly ordered, as shown by the fact that both (1) (a and b) and (2) are grammatical. Similar cases of V3 (as in [1a]) or V4 (as in [1b]) are not acceptable, neither in Standard German (cf. 3), or in any other continental Germanic languages:<sup>14</sup>

(1a) Gheistar in Giani hat gahakat iz holtz ime balje (/in balt)<sup>15</sup> (Giazza)

Yesterday the G. has cut the wood in the forest

(1b) De muotar gheistar kam Abato hat kost iz mel<sup>16</sup> (Giazza)

The mother yesterday in Abato has bought the flour

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14 Cf. Scardoni (2000), Poletto & Tomaselli (2000), Tomaselli (2004), Bidese & Tomaselli (2005). In the catechism of 1602, there are few examples of V3 constructions, but this is probably due to the fact that there is no relevant context for the topic. Cf. for this problem Bidese and Tomaselli (2005:76ff.)

15 Scardoni (2000:152)

16 Ivi:157

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- (2) Haute die Mome hat gekoaft die öala al mercà<sup>17</sup> (Luserna)  
Today the mother has bought the eggs at-the market
- (3) \*Gestern die Mutter hat Mehl gekauft  
yesterday the mother has flour bought

ii) A correlate of the V2 phenomenology forces the reordering of subject and inflected verb: in the Germanic languages,<sup>18</sup> the subject can be found in main clauses to the right of the inflected verb (but still to the left of a past participle, if the sentence contains one) when another constituent is located in first position, yielding the ordering XP Vinfl Subject ... (Vpast part.). In Cimbrian, the phenomenon of subject - (finite) verb inversion is limited to subject clitics starting from the first written documents (i.e., the Cimbrian catechisms of 1602, here shortened in *Cat. 1602*) (cf. 4), and survived the loss of the V2 word order restriction for quite a long time (cf. 5 and 6). Nowadays, in Giazza, it is only optionally present, and only for some speakers (cf. 7 and 8), while it survives in Luserna (cf. 9 and 10):<sup>19</sup>

- (4) [Mitt der Bizzonghe] saibar ghemostert zò bizzan den billen Gottez.<sup>20</sup>  
Through knowledge are-we taught to know the will of God.

- (5) [Benne di andarn drai Lentar habent gahört asó], haben-se-sich manegiart ...<sup>21</sup>

When the other three villages had heard this, had-they taken pains to

...

- (6) [Am boute] [gan ljêtsen] hense getrust gien ...<sup>22</sup>  
Once in Ljetzan have-they got to go ...

- (7) In sontaghe regatz / In sontaghe iz regat<sup>23</sup> (Giazza)  
On Sunday rains-it / On Sunday it rains

- (8) Haute er borkofart de oiar / Haute borkofartar de oiar<sup>24</sup> (Giazza)  
Today he sells the eggs/today sells-he the eggs

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17 Grewendorf & Poletto (2005:117)

18 English has this possibility too, but it is restricted to main interrogatives, while in the other Germanic languages it is found also in declaratives.

19 Bosco (1996) and (1999), Benincà & Renzi (2000), Scardoni (2000), Poletto & Tomaselli (2000), Tomaselli (2004), Bidese & Tomaselli (2005) and Grewendorf & Poletto (2005). That subject clitics continue to invert when nominal subjects cannot is a well-known generalisation confirmed in other language domains, such as Romance.

20 *Cat. 1602:694-5* in Meid (1985a:87)

21 Baragiola 1906:108

22 Schweizer 1939:36

23 Scardoni 2000:144

24 Ivi:155

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(9) \*Häüte geat dar Giani vort<sup>25</sup> (Luserna)

Today goes the Gianni away

(10) Häüte gearar vort (dar Gianni)<sup>26</sup> (Luserna)

Today goes-he away (the John)

This seems to indicate that the 'core' of the V2 phenomenon (i.e., the word order restriction) could be lost before one of its main correlates (i.e., pronominal subject inversion).

- Germanic languages can be OV (German and Dutch) or VO (Scandinavian and Yiddish). In Cimbrian, the discontinuity of the verbal complex is limited to the intervention of pronominal elements, negation (cf. 12), monosyllabic adverbs/verbal prefixes,<sup>27</sup> and bare quantifiers<sup>28</sup> (cf. 13). In fact, from a typological point of view, Cimbrian belongs, without any doubt, to the group of VO languages:

(11a) Häüte die Mome hat gebäschd di Piattn<sup>29</sup> (Luserna)

Today the mother has washed the dishes

(11b) \*Häüte di Mome hat di Piattn gebäschd<sup>30</sup> (Luserna)

(12) Sa hom khött ke dar Gianni hat net geböllt gian pit se<sup>31</sup> (Luserna)

They have said that the G. has not wanted go with them

(13a) I hon niamat gesek<sup>32</sup> (Luserna)

I have nobody seen

(13b) han-ich khoome gaseecht (Roana)

have-I nobody seen

- Residual word order asymmetries between main and subordinate clauses with respect to the position of the finite verb are determined by a) the syntax of some 'light' elements (cf. 14 and 15 for negation and pronominal); b) by the presence of clitics (cf. 14b and 15b versus 16 and 17); and, c) by the type of subordinate clause (cf. 14b and 15b versus 18 and 19):

(14a) Biar zéteren nete<sup>33</sup>

We give in not

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25 Grewendorf & Poletto 2005:116

26 Ibid.

27 Cf. Bidese 2004a and Bidese & Tomaselli 2005

28 Cf. Grewendorf & Poletto (2005)

29 Ivi:117

30 Ivi:121

31 Ivi:122

32 Ivi:123

33 Baragiola 1906:108

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- (14b) 'az se nette ghenan vüar<sup>34</sup>  
that they don't put forward
- (15a) Noch in de erste Lichte von deme Tage hevan-se-sich alle<sup>35</sup>  
Even at the break of that day get-they all up
- (15b) 'az se sich legen in Kiete<sup>36</sup>  
that they calm down
- (16) 'az de Consiliere ghen nette auf in de Sala<sup>37</sup>  
that the advisers go not above into the room
- (17) 'az diese Loite richten-sich<sup>38</sup>  
that these people arrange themselves
- (18) umbrume di andar Lentar saint net contente<sup>39</sup>  
because the other villages are not glad
- (19) umbrume dear Afar has-sich gamachet groaz<sup>40</sup>  
because the question has got great

## 2.2 Clitic Syntax

The Cimbrian dialect, contrary to other Germanic languages that only admit weak object pronouns, is characterized by a very structured set of pronominal clitics, like all northern Italian dialects.<sup>41</sup> One important piece of evidence that subject and object pronouns are indeed clitics is the phenomenon of clitic doubling, namely, the possibility to double a full pronoun or an NP with a clitic, already noted in the grammars:

- (20) az sai-der getant diar<sup>42</sup>  
that it will be to you made to you
- (21) Hoite [de muutar] hat-se gakhooft de ojar in merkatén (Roana)  
Today the mother has-she bought the eggs at-the market

From a diachronic point of view, this phenomenon already appears for *subject clitics* in *Cat. 1813*, but is limited to interrogative sentences, while in Baragiola (1906) it also appears in declarative sentences. The phenomenon is, nowadays, according to

34 Ivi:111

35 Ivi:109-110

36 Ivi:114

37 Ivi:110

38 Ivi:108

39 Ivi:105

40 Ivi:113

41 For an exhaustive description of the positions of clitics and pronouns in Cimbrian cf. Castagna (2005).

42 Schweizer (1952:27)



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the research of Scardoni (2000), no longer productive in Giazza, optional/possible in Luserna,<sup>43</sup> but still frequent in Roana.<sup>44</sup>

In *main clauses*, subject clitics are usually found in enclisis to the finite verb (in Giazza, only as a vestige, cf. the above sentences [7] and [8]):<sup>45</sup>

- (22) Bia hoas-to (de) (du)? (Luserna)  
How call-you?
- (23) Hasto gi khoaft in ġornal?<sup>46</sup> (Luserna)  
Have-you bought the newspaper?
- (24) Ghestar han-ich ghet an libar ame Pieren (Roana)<sup>47</sup>  
Yesterday have-I given a book to P.

In *embedded clauses*, subject clitics occur either in enclitic position to the finite verb or in enclitic position to the conjunction, depending on two main factors: i) the Cimbrian variety under consideration (and the 'degree' of V2 preservation); and, ii) the different types of subordinate clauses. According to what our data suggest, nowadays, enclisis to the finite verb seems to be the rule in Roana (25-8), but Schweizer's grammar (Schweizer 1952) gives evidence for a different distribution of the subject clitics in subordinate clauses. He observes that subject clitics in the variety of Roana usually occur (or occurred) at the Wackernagel's position (WP) in enclisis to the subordinating conjunction (cf. 29-31; cf. the above sentences [14b] and [15b] as well):<sup>48</sup>

- (25) Ist gant zoornig, ambrumme han-ich ghet an libarn ame Pieren (Roana)  
(He) has got angry, because have-I given a book P.
- (26) Gianni hatt-ar-mi gaboorsset, benne khimmas-to hoam (Roana)  
Gianni has-he-me asked, when come-you home
- (27) Haban-sa-mich gaboorsset, ba ghe-ban haint (Roana)  
Have-they-me asked, where go-we today evening
- (28) Haban-sa-mich khött, habat-ar gabunnet Maria nach im beeck (Roana)  
Have-they-(to)me said, have-you met M. on the road
- (29) bas-er köt<sup>49</sup> (Roana)

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43 Cf. Vicentini (1993:149-51) and Castagna (2005)

44 Our data suggest that there may be a difference between auxiliaries and main verbs: with the auxiliary 'have', doubling seems mandatory, while this is not the case with main verbs.

45 Some ambiguous forms can also appear in first position; we assume here that when occurring in first position, the pronominal forms are not real clitics, but, at most, weak forms.

46 Vicentini (1993:44)

47 In the variety of Roana, when the subject is definite and preverbal, there is always an enclitic pronoun.

48 Cf. Castagna (2005) as well

49 Schweizer (1952:27)

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what-he says

(30) ben-ig-en nox vinne<sup>50</sup> (Roana)

if-I-him still meet

(31) ad-ix gea au<sup>51</sup> (Roana)

if-EXPL.-I (az-da-ich) go above

All the same, Schweizer (1952) underlines that there are many irregularities in accordance to which subject clitics in embedded clauses can appear in enclisis to the finite verb, or in both positions (clitic doubling). Luserna Schweizer notes that all the pronouns have to be cliticized to the complementizer.<sup>52</sup> But we found evidence for a construction (cf. 32) in which the subject clitic appears in enclisis to the finite verb, probably due to the presence of a constituent between the complementizer and the finite verb (a case of “residual” embedded V2). In this sentence, there is clitic doubling too:

(32) Dar issese darzürnt obrom gestarn honne i get an libar in Peatar<sup>53</sup>  
(Luserna)

He has got angry because yesterday have-I I given a book P.

In main clauses, *object clitics* are always in enclisis to the inflected verb:

(33a) Der Tatta hat-se gekoaft<sup>54</sup> (Luserna)

The father has-her bought

(33b) Der Tatta \*se hat gekoaft<sup>55</sup> (Luserna)

(34) De muutari hat-sei-se gasecht (Roana)

The mother has-she-her seen

(35) Gianni hatt-an-se gaseecht (Roana)

Gianni has-he-her seen

The same is true for embedded declarative clauses:

(36a) I woas ke der Tatta hatse (net) gekoaft<sup>56</sup> (Luserna)

I know that the father has-her (not) bought

(36b) I woas ke der Tatta \*se hat gekoaft<sup>57</sup> (Luserna)

I know that the father her has bought

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50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid. This analysis is confirmed in the data of Vicentini (1993)

53 Grewendorf & Poletto (2005:121)

54 Ivi:122

55 Ibid.

56 Ivi:123

57 Ibid.

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- (37) Gianni hatt-ar-mi gaboorsset, bear hat-ar-dich telephonaart (Roana)  
Gianni has-he-me asked, who has-he-you called
- (38) kloob-ich Gianni hatt-ar-me ghet nicht ad ander (Roana)  
believe-I (that) Gianni has-he-(to)me given nothing else
- (39) biss-i net, Gianni hat-an-en ghakhoofet (Roana)  
know-I not, (if) Gianni has-he-him bought

While in Roana, enclisis to the finite verb is the rule in all embedded clauses (including embedded interrogatives), in Luserna, in *relative and embedded interrogative clauses*, subject and object clitics are usually found in a position located to the immediate right of the complementiser (or the *wh*-item).<sup>58</sup> This corresponds to Wackernagel's position of the Germanic tradition, and is usually hosting weak pronouns in the Germanic languages, which are rigidly ordered (contrary to DPs, which can scramble):

- (40) 's baibe bo-da-r-en hat geet an liber<sup>59</sup> (Luserna)  
the woman who-EXPL.-he-(to) her has given a book
- (41) dar Mann bo dar en (er) hat geet an libar (Luserna)  
the man who-EXPL.-he-him (he) has given a book
- (42) Dar Giani hatmar gevorst zega ber (da)de hat o-gerüaft (Luserna)  
The G. has-me asked compl. who you has phoned
- (43) I boas net ber-me hat o-gerüaft (Luserna)  
I know not who us has phoned
- (44) I vorsmaar zega bar me mage hom o-gerüaf (Luserna)  
I wonder COMPL. who me could have phoned

Summarising the data illustrated so far, we can state that:

- Both subject and object clitics are always in *enclisis to the finite verb* in *main clauses* in all varieties;
- Currently in Roana, both subject and object clitics always occur in enclisis to the finite verb in all embedded clauses; and,
- In Luserna, clitics occur in enclisis in embedded declaratives and in WP in relative and embedded interrogatives.

From this we conclude that:

- Luserna displays a split between embedded *wh*-constructions on the one hand and embedded declaratives on the other, while Roana (at least nowadays) does not; and,

<sup>58</sup> This means that no element can intervene between the element located in CP and the pronoun(s).

<sup>59</sup> Grewendorf & Poletto (2005:121)

- *No cases of proclisis to the inflected verb are ever found in any Cimbrian variety.*

In general, although Cimbrian, contrary to other Germanic languages, has developed a class of clitic pronouns, it does not seem to have ‘copied’ the syntactic behaviour of subject and object clitics of neighbouring Romance dialects, which realize consistently proclisis to the inflected verb for object clitics in all sentence types, and permit enclisis of subject clitics only in main interrogative clauses, and enclisis of object clitics only with infinitival verbal forms.<sup>60</sup> On the contrary, enclisis to the inflected verb seems to be the rule in Cimbrian. Proclisis to the inflected verb is not at all attested, and the only other position apart from enclisis is the Germanic WP position in some embedded clause types in the variety of Luserna.

### 2.3 The Syntax of Subject NPs

As regards the syntax of the subject NPs in Cimbrian, there is evidence of the following aspects:

- Cimbrian is not a *pro-drop* language. As with standard German, English and French, it is characterised by: a) obligatory expression of the subject (cf. 45);
- the use of the expletive pronoun *iz* (cf. 46); and, c) (contrary to standard German) a VO typology and the consequent adjacency of the verbal complex (cf. 47); and, d) a relatively free position of the finite verb:<sup>61</sup>

(45) *i han gaarbat (/gaarbatat) ime balt / Haute hani gaarbatat ime balje*<sup>62</sup>  
(Giazza)

Today I have worked in the forest / Today have-I worked in the forest

(46) *Haute iz regat / Haute regatz*<sup>63</sup> (Giazza)

Today it rains / Today rains-it

(47) *Gheistar in Giani hat gahakat iz holtz ime balje (/in balt)*<sup>64</sup> (Giazza)

Yesterday G. has cut the wood in the forest

- Languages requiring a mandatory expression of the subject, such as English or French, see the possibility of putting the subject NPs on the right of the verbal

60 Note that there are Romance dialects that have enclisis to the inflected verb, such as the variety of Borgomanero, studied by Tortora (1997), but this is a Piedmontese dialect, which can not have been in touch with Cimbrian, so we can exclude that enclisis has been developed through language contact with Romance.

61 Cf. Poletto & Tomaselli (2002) and Tomaselli (2004:543). Cf. Castagna (2005) as well.

62 Scardoni (2000:155)

63 Ivi:144

64 Ivi:152

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complex only in very limited contexts. From this perspective, it is interesting to note that Cimbrian generally permits it (cf. 48 and 49), similarly to standard Italian (cf. 50), and in opposition to the neighbouring romance dialect, in which the post verbal subject co-occurs with a subject pronoun in a preverbal position (cf. 51 and 52):

(48) Gheistar hat gessat dain manestar iz diarlja<sup>65</sup> (Giazza)

Yesterday has eaten your soup the girl

(49) Hat gahakat iz holtz dain vatar<sup>66</sup> (Giazza)

Has cut he wood your father

(50) Lo hanno comprato al mercato i miei genitori

It have bought at the market my parents

(51) Algéri l'à magnà la to minestra la buteleta<sup>67</sup>

Yesterday she has eaten your soup the girl

(52) L'à taià la legna to papà<sup>68</sup>

He has cut the wood your father

### 3. Cimbrian Data and the Generative Grammar Framework

The results of the syntactic description of some aspects of Cimbrian grammar are relevant for any theoretical framework. In particular, within the Generative Grammar theoretical approach, the data discussed so far is relevant from both a *synchronic* and a *diachronic* point of view.

Cimbrian, having been in a situation of language contact for centuries, offers a privileged point of view for determining how phenomena are lost and acquired. A number of interesting observations can be made concerning language change induced by language contact.

First, Cimbrian shows that the 'correlates' of a given phenomenon (in our case V2) are lost after the loss of the phenomenon itself. More specifically, Cimbrian has maintained the possibility of inverting subject pronouns, while losing the V2 linear restriction. On the other hand, we can also state that the correlates can be acquired before the phenomenon itself: although Cimbrian has not developed a fully-fledged *pro drop* system, it already admits subject free inversion of the Italian type (i.e., the subject inverts with the 'whole' verbal phrase).

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65 Ivi:165

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

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Second, syntactic change does not proceed in parallel to the lexicon, where a word is simply borrowed and then adapted to the phonological system of the language.<sup>69</sup> The syntactic distribution of clitic elements in Cimbrian shows that they have maintained a Germanic syntax, allowing either enclisis to the verb or the complementizer (WP), but never proclisis to the inflected verb, as is the case for Romance. Therefore, even though Cimbrian might have developed (or rather ‘maintained’ / ‘preserved’) a class of clitic elements due to language contact, it has not ‘copied’ the Romance syntax of clitics.

Moreover, the study of Cimbrian also confirms two descriptive generalisations concerning the loss of the V2 phenomenology established on the basis of the evolution of Romance syntax:<sup>70</sup>

- Embedded wh-constructions constitute the sentence type that longer maintains asymmetry with main clauses. This is shown in Cimbrian by the possibility of having clitics in WP only in embedded interrogatives, and relatives in the variety of Luserna; and,
- Inversion of NPs is lost before inversion of subject clitics, which persists for a longer period.

More generally, Cimbrian also confirms the hypothesis first put forth by Lightfoot (1979), and mathematically developed by Clark & Roberts (1993), that the reanalysis made by bilingual speakers goes through ambiguous strings that have two possible structural analyses; the speaker tends to use the more economical one (in terms of movement) that is compatible with the set of data at his/her disposal.

Also, from the *synchronic point of view*, Cimbrian is an interesting study case, at least as far as verb movement is concerned. In V2 languages, it is most probably an Agreement feature located in the C that attracts the finite verb (see Tomaselli 1990 for a detailed discussion of this hypothesis). Cimbrian seems to have lost this property, as neither the linear V2 restriction nor the NP subject inversion are possible at this time. On the other hand, it has not (yet) developed a ‘Romance’ syntax, because clitics are always enclitics in the main clause (both declarative and interrogative). It is a well-known fact (see, among others, Sportiche 1993 and Kayne 1991 & 1994) that in the higher portion of the IP layer, there is a (set of) position(s) for clitic elements, and that subject clitics are always located to the left of object clitics inside the template containing the various clitics.

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69 This hypothesis is already been made by Brugmann (1917).

70 See Benincà (2005) for the first generalization, Benincà (1984), Poletto (1998) and Roberts (1993), for the second.

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The position of the inflected verb in Cimbrian is neither the one found in V2 language (within the CP domain), nor the lower one found in modern Romance (within the IP domain). The syntax of clitics suggests that, in Cimbrian, the inflected verb moves to a position inside the clitic layer in the high IP (corresponding to the traditional WP), and precisely to the left of clitic elements both in main and embedded declarative clauses.<sup>71</sup> If this theoretical description proves to be tenable, we are now in the position to speculate about a possible explanation.

#### 4. A New Theoretical Correlation 'Visible' in Cimbrian

A further interesting field to explore has to do with the theoretical reason why Cimbrian could not develop a Romance clitic syntax. In other words, there must have been some restriction constraining the speakers to maintain enclisis.

A striking difference between the neighbouring Romance dialects and Cimbrian is the past participle agreement phenomenon. Past participle agreement is mandatory (at least for some object clitics) in Northern Italian dialects (cf. 53), while it is completely absent in Cimbrian. The morphological structure of the Cimbrian past participle has simply preserved the invariant German model, that is, *ge-* ... *-t*, (cf. 54):

(53) (A) so k'el papá li ga visti

I know that the father them-has seen

(54) I woas ke der Tatta hatze (net) gekoaft (Luserna)

I know that the father has-her (not) bought

The existence of past participle agreement is usually analysed in the relevant literature as involving an agreement projection (AgrOP) to which both the object clitic and the verb move; the configuration of spec-head agreement between the two triggers the 'passage' of the number and gender features of the clitic onto the verb yielding agreement on the past participle (see Kayne 1991 and 1993).

We believe that it is the presence of this lower agreement projection that is related to the possibility of having proclisis in Romance, and its absence that constrains Cimbrian to enclisis to the inflected verb. In Cimbrian, the clitic element moves directly to the higher clitic position (within the IP domain), while in Romance, this movement is always in two steps, the first being movement to the lower AgrO projection. In favour of this assumption is the fact that Cimbrian, like all other Germanic varieties, never showed past participle agreement of the Romance type.

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71 As we have already noted, the same is true for embedded interrogatives in Roana, while in Luserna, the verb is probably located lower in embedded interrogatives and relative clauses, leaving the clitic in WP alone.

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# Abbreviations

<i>Cat. 1602</i>	Cimbrian Catechism of 1602 (cf. Meid 1985a)
<i>Cat. 1813</i>	Cimbrian Catechism of 1813 (cf. Meid 1985b)
DP	Determiner Phrase
NP	Nominal Phrase
Vinfl	Inflected Verb
Vpast part.	Participle Past Verb
Wh	(interrogative element)
XP	X-phrase



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