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Emphasis as reduplication: Evidence from *si che/no che* sentences

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Abstract

In this article we investigate the syntax of Italian emphatic replies in which a polarity particle is followed by an embedded clause introduced by the declarative complementizer *che*, which we label *si che/no che sentences*. We propose that the relation between the polarity particle and the clause introduced by *che* is mediated by the presence of a null operator, which binds a variable inside the clause, and that this operator is what makes other movement operations impossible (along the lines of Haegeman, 2007, 2009, 2010b,a). We further suggest that *si che/no che sentences* contain two copies of the triggering utterance: a null one in the Hanging Topic position and an overt one in the clause introduced by *che*, thus accounting for the observation that these sentences (a) cannot be embedded and (b) exhibit restrictions on their content. The effect of emphasis is thus seen as stemming from a syntactic configuration that involves reduplication.
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1. Introduction

In this article, we examine a type of sentence in Italian that is usually considered to be emphatic, in that it either answers a question or reacts to a previously made assertion with a certain degree of what is commonly and informally called “emphasis”. Two examples of the type of sentence under investigation are given in (2), which are to be read as possible answers to the yes/no question in (1):

- (1) È poi arrivato Gianni? (Italian)
is then arrived Gianni
'Did Gianni arrive in the end?'
- (2) a. Si che è arrivato.
yes that is arrived
'Of course he arrived!' / 'Absolutely!'
- b. No che non è arrivato.
no that neg is arrived
'He did not!' / 'Not at all!'

The ability to answer a question or contradict a previously made assertion is a characteristic property of polarity particles, as defined in Farkas (2009, 2010), and Italian *si* and *no* are polarity particles. But where does the emphasis that we detect

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in (2a) and (2b) come from? Note that these sentences form a minimal pair with sentences like the ones in (4a) and (4b), which can also be used to answer a question or react to a previously made assertion (as they also contain a polarity particle) but are not perceived as emphatic:

- (3) È poi arrivato Gianni? (Italian)
is then arrived Gianni
'Did Gianni arrive in the end?'
- (4) a. Sì, è arrivato.
yes, is arrived
'Yes, he did.'
b. No, non è arrivato.
no, neg is arrived
'No, he didn't.'

This paper investigates sentences like (2a) and (2b) with the goal of understanding their syntactic properties and identifying which ones, if any, give rise to the emphatic reading. We adopt a cartographic approach to the syntax of the left periphery of the clause, as first proposed in Rizzi (1997) and later modified in Benincà and Poletto (2004). We argue that *si che/no che* sentences are bi-clausal structures that contain a copy of the triggering utterance in the structural position of the left periphery that hosts Hanging Topics. For example, the structure of a sentence like (4b) would be as indicated in (5):

- (5) [_{HTP} [_{non è arrivato}] [_{ForceP} . . . [_{PolP} no_i [_{TP} . . . [_{ForceP} OP_i] [_{Force⁰} *che* [_{PolP} e_j *non è arrivato*]]]]]]]
-

We also argue that the polarity particles are merged in the higher clause and connected to the clause introduced by *che* through an operator that binds a variable in the lower clause. We will show that this analysis allows us to capture the distinctive distributional properties of *si che/no che* sentences, while also giving us an insight on which aspect of syntactic structure gives rise to the effect of “emphasis” associated with these sentences.

2. Shedding light on a minimal pair

Throughout this paper, we will refer to the type of sentence under investigation, exemplified in (2a) and (2b), as a *SI CHE/NO CHE SENTENCE*. This label mentions the complementizer *che*, which is the one visible/audible morpheme that distinguishes this type of sentence from the type exemplified in (4a) and (4b), which we will simply call a *SI/NO SENTENCE*. In this section, our goal is to describe how *si che/no che* sentences and *si/no* sentences differ in interpretation and use. We will do so both by relying on our native speakers' intuitions and by describing the contexts in which one sentence type is appropriate but the other one is not.

The examples in (2) and (4) show that both a *si che/no che* sentence and a *si/no* sentence can answer a yes/no question. However, though truth-conditionally equivalent, they do not convey the same meaning. For example, the *si/no* sentence in (4a) provides an affirmative answer to the yes–no question concerning whether or not Gianni arrived. The sentence in (2a), in contrast, does more than that: it conveys that the speaker feels quite sure that Gianni arrived. The sentence seems to evoke a scale consisting of degrees of confidence, and to pick a value at the extreme end of the scale. In the example at hand, the *si che* sentence conveys that the speaker is extremely confident of the truth of the proposition that Gianni arrived. (This is why, in the English translations for (2a) and (2b), we provided alternatives like *Absolutely!*, and *Of course he arrived!*).

Another illustration can be seen in the following examples, where (6) is the yes–no question that the sentences in (7) are answering:

- (6) Ha passato l'esame, Maria?
has passed the-exam Maria
'Did Maria pass her exam?'
- (7) a. Sì che l'ha passato!
yes that it-has passed
'Of course she did!' / 'Absolutely!'
b. Sì, l'ha passato.
yes it-has passed
'Yes, she did.'

Both the answers in (7) assert that Maria passed the exam. But the *sì che* sentence in (7a) conveys that the speaker is very confident that Maria passed the exam.¹

In addition to being used as an answer to a yes/no question, a *sì che/no che* sentence can also be used to contradict a previous assertion. An example is given in (9a), a reaction to the assertion in (8):

- (8) Secondo me, Gianni non è arrivato in tempo.
 according to me Gianni neg is arrived in time
 'I don't think that Gianni arrived on time.'
- (9) a. Sì che è arrivato in tempo!
 yes that is arrived in time
 'Of course he arrived on time!' / 'He DID arrive on time!'
- b. # Sì, è arrivato in tempo.
 yes is arrived in time
 'Yes, he arrived on time.'
- c. E invece sì, è arrivato in tempo.
 and rather yes is arrived in time
 'Actually he did, he arrived on time.'

The *sì che* sentence in (9a) contradicts the proposition expressed by (8), to which it is reacting, and asserts that the proposition that Gianni arrived on time is true. In this case, the *sì che* sentence reverses the scale of truth values: the truth value to be associated with the proposition is the opposite than the one attributed to it in the assertion. Note that, in this context, a *sì / no* sentence alone is not felicitous, as shown in (9b); it can be used here only if it is introduced by an element like *invece* (as in (9c)), which indicates that what is about to be said contradicts what was just said.

Another difference between *sì che/no che* sentences and *sì/no* sentences is that the former exhibit strict restrictions on what kind of material can follow the polarity particle. Simply put, the clause following the polarity particle and introduced by *che* must contain no more information than what is present in the sentence to which the *sì che/no che* sentence is reacting. The only differences that are allowed are changes in personal deixis of the type commonly found in question-answer pairs (for example, the individual referred to as the second person, the addressee, becomes the speaker and is therefore referred to with the first person). Other than that, the clause cannot contain any material that was not already present in the sentence to which it is reacting. For example, if we take the sentence in (10) to be the triggering utterance, we can see that the *sì che* sentence that responds to it can contain as much information as (10) contains, but no more, as shown by the contrasts in acceptability exhibited by the answers in (11):

- (10) È poi arrivato? (Italian)
 is then arrived
 'Did he arrive in the end?'
- (11) a. Sì che è arrivato.
 yes that is arrived
 'Of course he did!'
- b. *Sì che è arrivato alle tre.
 yes that is arrived at three
 'Of course he arrived at 3:00 o'clock!'
- c. *Sì che è arrivato puntuale.
 yes that is arrived punctual
 'Of course he arrived on time!'
- (12) a. No che non è arrivato.
 no that neg is arrived
 'He did not!'

¹ Some speakers describe the sentence as expressing surprise that the interlocutor would not know that Maria passed the exam, as if the speaker assumed that the evidence available to him/her should be available to the interlocutor as well.

- b. *No che non è arrivato alle tre.
no that neg is arrived at three
'He did not arrive at 3:00 o'clock!'
- c. *No che non è puntuale.
no that neg is punctual
'He did not get here on time!'

The sentence in (11a) is acceptable as an answer to (10), and it contains no more information than (10) contains; in contrast, (11b) and (11c), which have an additional constituent, are not acceptable in this context. The same is true for the examples in (12): (12a) is a felicitous answer to (10), as it contains no additional constituents with respect to those already present in (10); but (12b) and (12c) are not, as they contain additional information. This is in sharp contrast with what we observe in *si/no* sentences, which may contain additional information with respect to the triggering utterance in (10), as we see in (13):

- (13) a. No, non è arrivato.
no, neg is arrived
'No, he didn't.'
- b. No, non è arrivato alle tre, come avrebbe dovuto.
no, neg is arrived at 3:00 as have should
'No, he didn't arrive at 3:00, as he should have.'
- c. No, non è arrivato in tempo.
no, neg is arrived in time
'No, he did not arrive on time.'

These examples show that the addition of a constituent not present in the triggering utterance, which is banned from *si che/no che* sentences, is perfectly possible in *si/no* sentences.

Notice that the restriction exhibited by *si che/no che* sentences is not a ban on the complexity of the clause that follows the polarity particle. That clause can contain adverbs or PPs, as long as this material was already present in the triggering utterance, as we see in (14b):

- (14) a. È arrivato in ritardo alla riunione, come sempre.
is arrived in delay to-the meeting as always
'He arrived late to the meeting, as always'
- b. No che non è arrivato in ritardo!
no that neg is arrived in delay
'He DID NOT arrive late!'

In sum, *si che/no che* sentences share with *si/no* sentences the property of being used not as a conversational starter, but rather as an answer to a yes/no question or a reaction to a previous assertion. This property is characteristic of polarity particles, as observed in Farkas' work. Despite these similarities, *si che/no che* sentences differ from *si/no* sentences in several respects:

1. *si che/no che* sentences convey that the speaker is very confident of the truth value of the proposition;
2. when used in reaction to an assertion, *si che/no che* sentences may provide a truth value for the proposition that is the opposite of the one provided by the assertion to which they are reacting;
3. *si che/no che* sentences may not contain any lexical material that was not already present in the triggering utterance.

This concludes our informal characterization of the semantic and pragmatic contribution of *si che/no che* sentences, and our description of how they differ from *si/no* sentences. In the next section, we turn our attention to their syntactic properties, starting from the structural position of the polarity particles.

3. The distribution of the polarity particles

We begin our examination of the syntax of *si che/no che* sentences by looking at the distribution of the polarity particles *si* and *no* relative to so-called 'clitic left-dislocated' (CLLD) constituents, and to constituents moved to the left

periphery without a resumptive pronominal clitic, which are often referred to as ‘focused constituents’ in the literature on Italian.²

In Italian, CLLD objects are easily identified because, in addition to referring to an entity that is already present in the discourse, they are obligatorily accompanied by a resumptive pronoun. We will therefore test the relative order of polarity particles and CLLD constituents by focusing on a preposed element that corresponds to the object of the clause. We see that the polarity particles *sì* and *no* may co-occur with a CLLD constituent. The CLLD constituent can occur before the polarity particle (16a) and, for some speakers, also after the complementizer *che* (16b)³:

- (15) Sicuramente Gianni legge molto.
surely Gianni reads much
‘Gianni certainly reads a lot.’
- (16) a. *Di libri, sì che ne legge tanti.*
of books yes that of-them reads many
‘He certainly reads a lot of books!’
b. *Sì che di libri ne legge tanti.*
yes that of books of-them reads many
‘He certainly reads a lot of books!’

However, it cannot occur between the particle and *che*:

- (17) **Sì di libri che ne legge tanti.*
yes of books that of-them reads many

Turning now to focused constituents, such as *wh*-phrases and preposed elements without a pronominal clitic, we note that they do not occur in *sì che/no che* sentences, as they give rise to ungrammaticality. The examples in (19) and (20) show that the focused constituent *Avatar* gives rise to ungrammaticality no matter where it occurs in linear order:

- (18) *Immagino che voi abbiate già visto Avatar e anche The Artist.*
imagine that you have already seen Avatar and also The Artist
‘I figure you’ve already seen Avatar and also The Artist.’
- (19) a. **Sì che Avatar abbiamo già visto (ma l’altro film no).*
yes that Avatar have already seen (but the-other movie not)
b. **No che Avatar non abbiamo ancora visto (ma l’altro film sì).*
no that Avatar neg have yet seen (but the-other movie yes)
- (20) a. **Avatar sì che abbiamo già visto (ma l’altro film no).*
Avatar yes that have already seen (but the-other movie not)
b. **Avatar no che non abbiamo ancora visto (ma l’altro film sì).*
Avatar no that neg have yet seen (but the-other movie yes)

² The literature on Italian (cf. Benincà, 1988; Rizzi, 1997, among others) refers to fronted arguments that lack a resumptive pronominal clitic as ‘focused constituents’, whereas the literature on English typically uses the term ‘topicalization’ to refer to the fronting of arguments without a resumptive pronoun. We will not discuss the differences and similarities between the two here, and refer the reader to Cinque (1990) for further discussion.

³ Note that the CLLD constituent that can occur in sentence initial position and the polarity particle need not be adjacent. As we see in these examples, an adverb can intervene between them:

- (i) Gianni poi no che non l’ho visto.
Gianni then no that neg him-have seen
‘Gianni, I didn’t see him after all.’
- (ii) Gianni forse sì che gli telefono.
Gianni maybe yes that him call
‘Gianni, maybe I’ll indeed call him.’

Note that the example in (19a) contrasts with the one in (16b); the difference is that in (16b) the object is clitic left-dislocated, as shown by the presence of a co-referential resumptive pronoun in the clause, whereas in (19a) it is not, as shown by the lack of a resumptive pronoun and by the prosodic prominence it carries.⁴

The examples in (21) show that the *wh*-phrase *cosa* 'what' cannot occur in a *si che/no che* sentence:

- (21) a. **Cosa sì che fai?*
 what yes that do
 Intended reading: 'What DO you do?'
 b. **Cosa no che non fai?*
 what no that neg do
 Intended reading: 'What DON'T you do?'

This is the case for all *wh*-phrases. More generally, *si che/no che* sentences are always declarative clauses.

Moving now to the complementizer *che* that precedes the clause in *si che/no che* sentences, we note that it must follow the polarity particles *si* and *no* and cannot precede them, as illustrated by the contrast between (22) and (23):

- (22) a. *Sì che è arrivato.*
 yes that is arrived
 'Of course he arrived!'
 b. *No che non è arrivato.*
 no that neg is arrived
 'He did not arrive!'
- (23) a. **Che sì è arrivato.*
 that yes is arrived
 b. **Che no non è arrivato.*
 that no neg is arrived

These patterns suggest two hypotheses concerning the structural position of the polarity particles in *si che/no che* sentences, which we explore in the following section.

4. The structural position of the polarity particles

In this section we first introduce what is arguably the most intuitive hypothesis concerning the position of the polarity particles, namely that they occur in FocusP. We then discuss some empirical and conceptual problems with this hypothesis and reject it, adopting instead a hypothesis that views the polarity particles as external to the sentence introduced by *che*.

4.1. Hypothesis 1: polarity particles in FocusP

One hypothesis concerning the structural position of the polarity particles *si* and *no* is that they occur in the projection that has been said to host focused elements, namely FocusP:

- (24) [_{TopicP} (left dislocated element) [_{FocusP} *no/sì* [*che* [_{TP} . . .]]]

Such a proposal would readily account for the emphatic character of *si che/no che* sentences, as it amounts to saying that they contain a focused constituent. In other words, the emphatic character that native speakers attribute to them can be seen as resulting from them evoking a scale of degrees of confidence concerning the truth of the proposition: they convey

⁴ Ideally, it would be nice to have a minimal pair in (19a) and (16b), so as to have a more direct comparison between CLLD and focused constituents. However, partitive phrases (like *di libri*) cannot be focused constituents in Italian, independently of *si che/no che* sentences. We could replace the partitive phrase with a DP object in (16b), in order to have a minimal pair. However, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, it is important that we use a PP there so that we can be sure that we are dealing with a CLLD constituent, and not with a Hanging Topic. This is because, as pointed out in Benincà (2001), in Italian partitive phrases are realized as PPs when they are CLLD constituents, but as DPs when they are Hanging Topics. The fact that the object is a PP in (16) is therefore a clear indication that we are dealing with an instance of clitic left dislocation and not with a Hanging Topic.

that the speaker is not only somewhat confident, or confident, but very confident that the proposition is true (when the polarity particle is *sì*) or false (when the polarity particle is *no*). Viewing the polarity particle as occurring in FocusP offers a way to account for why this set of alternatives arises, namely as a result of the polarity particle being in focus. A proposal along these lines would also account for the fact that these sentences do not tolerate another focused constituent, as it would be plausible to think that FocusP can only host one maximal projection in its specifier.

One problematic aspect of this proposal is that it requires assuming that the complementizer *che* present in these sentences is in a structural position lower than FocusP. This would amount to saying that it is not in the same position as the *che* of other declarative clauses in Italian, which has been analyzed in Rizzi (1997) as occurring in the head of ForceP, the highest projection of the CP domain. If *che* in *si che/no che* sentences were in the highest projection of the CP domain, it should precede (and not follow) both a CLLD constituent (when one is present) and the polarity particles, as indicated in (25):

(25) [_{ForceP} *che* [_{TopP} (left dislocated element) [_{FocusP} *si/no* [_{TP} ...]]]]

Yet this is definitely not a possible word order in *si che/no che* sentences, where *che* can only follow the polarity particles. It is conceivable that Italian might have two structural positions in which *che* can occur, namely a higher one (ForceP, following Rizzi's work) and a lower one, possibly Rizzi's FiniteP:

(26) [_{ForceP} *che* [_{TopP} (left dislocated element) [_{FocusP} *si/no* [_{FiniteP} *che* [_{TP} ...]]]]]]

This hypothesis finds indirect support in the fact that French exhibits two complementizers in a sentence type similar to the one we are analyzing here for Italian, as reported in Authier (2011, ex. (86))⁵:

(27) Oh *que non que* je ne vous le vendrai pas! (French)
oh that no that I neg you it will-sell neg
'Of course I wouldn't sell you that!'

If Italian *si che/no che* sentences are similar to these sentences in French, the *che* under discussion might correspond to the lower of the two French complementizers. Additional indirect support for the possibility that Italian might have a low complementizer comes from some data from older stages of Romance, where we see sentences with two instances of the complementizer *che*⁶ (see Paoli, 2003; Ledgeway, 2007; Wanner, 1998, which is the source of example (28))⁷:

⁵ The translation is ours, as it is not provided in Authier's manuscript. An anonymous reviewer suggests that *que non que* in (27) might be viewed as a complex C element, similar to English *whether or not*. We don't see why these strings of words should be analyzed as a complex complementizer. For English *whether*, we follow Kayne's (1991) analysis that views it as a phrasal element (in contrast with French *si* or Italian *se* 'if', which are analyzed as heads). Note that, in addition to *que non que*, French also has *que oui que*, which suggests that the string of words is not a fixed expression. Furthermore, the second instance of *que* is optional for some speakers, suggesting that it is a word whose occurrence is independent from that of the other words.

⁶ An anonymous reviewer suggests that sentences with two instances of the complementizer might simply be performance errors. Paoli (2003) discusses and rejects this hypothesis, on the basis of several considerations. One is that the frequency of such examples in the texts of the XIII century is too high for them to be performance errors. Paoli (2003) also shows that a similar phenomenon (although restricted to subjunctive clauses) is robustly present in some contemporary varieties of Romance (like the Ligurian and Piedmontese dialects, where double complementizers can be separated by topics, QPs or by a non-topical subject), but not in all, suggesting that they reflect a property of the grammar and are not performance errors, which should be present across the board. A further argument against viewing them as performance errors is that they are found in the Medieval period and disappear completely during the Renaissance, when Verb Second is lost. If they were performance errors, they should be found at a constant rate across all diachronic stages.

⁷ Contemporary Italian also has a sentence type where *che* appears to be in a position other than the highest structural position within CP, as it follows a *wh*-element in linear order. This sentence type is a *wh*-exclamative, exemplified in (i):

(i) Che bel libro che mi hai regalato.
what nice book that me have given
'What a nice book you gave me!'

However, it does not seem plausible to assimilate the *che* of *si che/no che* sentences to that of *wh*-exclamatives, given the many differences between the two clause types. In particular, Zanuttini and Portner (2003) argue that the *che* of exclamatives is different from the complementizer that introduces declarative clauses and is a marker of factivity, as it occurs in the head of a projection that has a factive operator in its specifier. While exclamatives presuppose the truth of the proposition they express, as has been argued by Grimshaw (1979), it does not seem plausible to say that *si che/no che* do; rather, they assert the truth or falsity of the proposition they express, in a context in which someone else might have asserted the opposite.

- (28) però vi priegho in lealtade e fede *che*, se ttue vuoi del mio avere, *che* ttu ne tolghi
 hence you pray in loyalty and faith that, if you want of my wealth that you it take
 'Thus I beg you in loyalty and truth that, if you want some of my wealth, that you should take it.'

Finally, the existence of a low complementizer *che* gains some plausibility from the observation that, in interrogatives, certain Romance varieties show *che* in a position following the *wh*-item, as we see in (29)⁸:

- (29) No so cossa *che* el fassa. (Venetian)
 neg know what that he does.subjunctive
 'I don't know what he's doing.'

Though the *si che/no che* sentences under examination here are not interrogative but declarative clauses, they could be making use of the same low complementizer position used in interrogatives in these varieties.

Despite the indirect support for assuming that *che* might be a low complementizer, we are going to reject the hypothesis that polarity particles occur in the FocusP of the clause introduced by *che*, for the following reasons:

1. On the conceptual level, it is suspicious that the complementizer *che* present in *si che/no che* sentences should be different from the complementizer *che* that introduces other declarative clauses in contemporary Italian. Moreover, though *si che/no che* sentences are emphatic, one should not automatically conclude that the polarity particles are in FocusP, because not all focused constituents occur in FocusP in Italian. As in English, in Italian as well a constituent can be associated with focus and be in situ, as we see in the following cases, where the PP in sentence final position is associated with the counterparts of *even* and *only*, respectively:

- (30) a. Sono *persino* riuscita a parlare *con il vice-preside*.
 am even succeeded to talk with the vice-principal
 'I even managed to talk to the vice-principal.'
 b. Sono *solo* riuscita a parlare *con il vice-preside*.
 am only succeeded to talk with the vice-principal
 'I only managed to talk to the vice-principal.'

Hence, even if the polarity particles are focused, it does not necessarily follow that they are in FocusP.

2. On the empirical level, we also see two problems. One is that CLLD constituents may follow *che*. We have already seen an example in (16b) above, and we provide one more here:

- (31) No *che* di libri non ne legge tanti!
 no that of books neg of-them reads many
 'He does not read many books at all!'

Here *di libri* is a CLLD element, as indicated by the presence of the pronominal clitic co-referential with it. It occurs in a position following *che* in linear order, hence in a position structurally lower than the one occupied by *che*. This sentence is perfect for many speakers, suggesting that a topic can indeed occur in a position lower than the one occupied by *che*. There are speakers who do not find it completely acceptable; but even these speakers seem to find its positive counterpart acceptable:

- (32) Sì *che* di libri ne legge tanti!
 yes that of books of-them reads many
 'He does indeed read a lot of books!'

The fact that (at least some) speakers accept the presence of a CLLD constituent in a position lower than *che* casts doubt on the hypothesis that *che* occupies a low position within the CP domain: since CLLD constituents are topic elements, we expect them to occur in TopicP; if *che* were in FiniteP, as indicated in (26), it should follow a topic, and should not be able to precede it. Moreover, in their analysis of the left periphery of the clause in Italian, Benincà and Poletto (2004) argue that the TopicP projection within CP is always higher than FocusP; hence, the fact that a CLLD

⁸ See Poletto (2000) for a detailed discussion of the distribution of complementizers in interrogative clauses.

constituent can follow *che* in linear order, which in turn follows the polarity particle, casts doubt not only on the assumption that *che* is in a low CP position, but also on the assumption that the polarity particle is in FocusP.

The second empirical problem concerns negative sentences. Italian is a language where sentential negation must always be expressed in a position higher than the one occupied by the finite verb, which is in T, and is usually expressed through the marker of sentential negation *non*, which occurs in pre-verbal position (cf. Zanuttini, 1997). When the clause contains a negative constituent in post-verbal position, *non* is obligatorily present:

- (33) a. *Non ha mangiato niente.*
neg has eaten nothing
'He didn't eat anything.'
- b. *Non aveva mai parlato a nessuno di quei problemi.*
neg had never spoken to nobody of those problems
'He had never talked to anyone about those problems.'
- c. *Non si era mai comportato in quel modo prima d'ora.*
neg self was never behaved in that way before of-now
'He had never behaved that way before.'

However, if a negative constituent occurs in a position higher than T, either in subject position or in FocusP, *non* is not (and cannot be) overtly realized. We see some relevant examples in (34), which form minimal pairs with the ones in (33):

- (34) a. *NIENTE ha mangiato, neanche un pezzo di pane.*
nothing has eaten, not-even a piece of bread
'She ate NOTHING, not even a piece of bread.'
- b. *A NESSUNO aveva parlato di quei problemi.*
to nobody had talked of those problems
'WITH NO ONE had she talked about those problems.'
- c. *MAI si era comportato in quel modo prima d'ora!*
never self was behaved in that way before of-now
'NEVER had he behaved that way before now!'

If the polarity particle *no* occurred in FocusP in a *si che/no che* sentence, we would expect to see the same pattern as that exemplified in (34), namely the absence of the negative marker *non*. But this is not what we see. On the contrary, the negative marker *non* must be present and cannot be left out:

- (35) a. **No che è arrivato!*
no that is arrived
- b. **No che l'ho visto!*
no that him-have seen

This casts further doubt on the hypothesis that the polarity particles are in the FocusP of the clause introduced by *che*.

Given the shortcomings just outlined, we will set this hypothesis aside and explore a different possibility for the position of the polarity particles in *si che/no che* sentences.

4.2. Hypothesis 2: polarity particles in a higher clause

The analysis we just rejected requires assuming that the *che* we see in *si che/no che* sentences is not in the position where we usually find the complementizer of declarative clauses, but in a lower position. Let us set that stipulation aside and assume instead that *che* in these sentences is just like the complementizer *che* that introduces other declarative clauses in Italian, namely the head of the highest projection within CP, as in Rizzi (1997). Besides not requiring the stipulation of an additional position for the complementizer, this is also desirable because it aligns *si che/no che* sentences with other declarative clauses. Let us think again about where the polarity particles might be located in the structure.

Assuming *che* is in the highest projection of CP, ForceP in Rizzi's (1997) terms, *si* and *no* could be in the specifier position of ForceP. However, if this were the case, we would expect that no other constituent could occur to the left of the polarity particle. This prediction is wrong, since we know that CLLD elements can occur to the left of *si* and *no*, as we saw in (16a), repeated here for convenience:

- (36) *Di libri, sì che ne legge tanti.*
 of books ys that of-them reads many
 'He certainly reads a lot of books!'

Alternatively, still assuming that *che* is in ForceP, the polarity particles could be in a higher clause, either as a result of internal merge (i.e., movement) or of external merge. In this view, *sì che/no che* sentences would be bi-clausal, i.e. consist of the clause introduced by *che* plus a higher clause containing the polarity particles and the material that precedes them, like CLLD constituents.

Let us then assume that *sì che/no che* sentences are biclausal structures. What is the relation between the polarity particle and the clause introduced by *che*? Since *che* can introduce complement clauses, one possibility is that the polarity particle takes the clause introduced by *che* as its argument. In this view, the polarity particles would be a type of non-verbal predicate. Cases that appear to have a non-verbal predicate taking a clausal argument are provided by elements like *certo, chiaro, ovvio* 'certain, clear, obvious'. In Italian, they may appear without a copula, immediately followed by a clausal complement, as we see in (37) and (38). We provide an example with *certo* and one with a polarity particle, to highlight their superficial similarities:

- (37) a. *Certo che lo sapeva.*
 certain that it knew
 'He certainly knew that.'
 b. *Sì che lo sapeva.*
 yes that it knew
 'Of course he knew that.'
- (38) a. *Certo che non lo sapeva.*
 certain that neg it knew
 'He certainly did not know that.'
 b. *No che non lo sapeva.*
 yes that neg it knew
 'Of course he didn't know that.'

Similarly to *sì che/no che* sentences, these sentences come across as emphatic. The intuition of native speakers is that they are truth conditionally equivalent to sentences with an adverb within the clause, as those given in (39), but pragmatically different from them in that they convey that the speaker is convinced of the truth of the proposition:

- (39) a. *Lo sapeva di certo/certamente.*
 it knew of certain/certainly
 'He knew that for sure.'
 b. *Non lo sapeva di certo/certamente.*
 neg it knew of certain/certainly
 'He did not know that, for sure.'

Though the morphological form of the adverb in these examples (*di certo, certamente*) is different from the form of the proposed elements exhibit (*certo*, which is morphologically identical to the adjective), we think that it is the adverbial form that occurs in sentence initial position in (37) and (38). It is common to use one for the other in casual speech, as in the following exchange between speaker A and B (just as in English it is common to use *sure* instead of *for sure* or *certainly*):

- (40) A: *L'avrà fatto?* B: *Certamente!/Certo!*
 A: it-have done B: certainly/certain
 'A: Do you think he did it? B: For sure!/Sure!'

There are also other, clearer examples where an adverb is immediately followed by a clause introduced by *che*. They involve *sempre* 'always' and *mai* 'never', as show in (41) and (42) (from Munaro, 2009)⁹:

⁹ Note that the quantifier must express values that are at one extreme end of a scale; for example, among the quantifiers referring to moments of time, *sempre* 'always' and *mai* 'never' are possible in this construction, whereas *qualche volta* 'sometimes' or *metà delle volte* 'half the time' are not.

- (41) a. Sempre che studia.
 always that studies
 'He studies all the time.'
 b. Sempre che protesta.
 always that objects
 'He/she is always objecting to something.'
- (42) a. Mai che mi telefoni.
 never that me telephone
 'Never does he give me a call.'
 b. Mai che li abbiano invitati ad una cerimonia ufficiale.
 never that them have invited to a ceremony official
 'Never have they invited them to an official event.'

These examples are similar to *si che/no che* sentences in several ways. They are truth conditionally equivalent to their counterpart in which the adverb is within the clause:

- (43) a. Studia sempre.
 studies always
 'He/she's always studying.'
 b. Protesta sempre.
 objects always
 'He/she is always objecting to something.'
- (44) a. Non mi telefona mai.
 neg me telephones never
 'He/she never gives me a call.'
 b. Non li hanno mai invitati ad una cerimonia ufficiale.
 neg them have never invited to a ceremony official
 'They have never invited them to an official event.'

However, the sentences with fronted *sempre* and *mai* are perceived as emphatic. The example in (41a), for instance, conveys that the speaker wants to emphasize that the person under discussion studies all the time. Similarly, the example in (42) conveys emphasis on the lack of phone calls at all times; it is similar to an English sentence with negative inversion, as in (45):

- (45) Never does he give me a call!

These sentences are also syntactically similar to *si che/no che* sentences, at least in some respects. First, they are compatible with CLLD constituents. Just as in *si che/no che* sentences, in fact, two positions are available for the CLLD element: either before *mai* (or *sempre*), as in (46a), or after *che*, as in (46b)¹⁰:

- (46) a. *Di libri*, mai che me ne regalino tanti.
 of books never that me of-them give many
 'It's never the case that they give me many books.'
 b. Mai che, *di libri*, me ne regalino tanti.
 never that of books me of-them give many
 'It's never the case that they give me many books.'

¹⁰ Notice that these cases are instances of CLLD and not of Hanging Topics, as shown by the fact that they are PPs (recall that Hanging Topics never display a preposition, they are always DPs):

(i) A Gianni, mai che gli regalino qualcosa di carino.
 to Gianni never that to.him give something of nice
 'To Gianni, it's never the case that they give nice gifts.'

Second, these cases, like *si che/no che* sentences, are not compatible with a focused constituent:

- (47) a. **Sempre che il caffè beve.*
 always that the coffee drinks
 b. **Il caffè sempre che beve (non il thé).*
 the coffee always that drinks (not tea)
 c. **Sempre il caffè che beve*
 always the coffee that drinks

This brief excursus shows that there are other cases in Italian where an element interpreted as modifying the clause introduced by *che* occurs to the left of *che*; in these cases as well, the pragmatic effect is the one commonly and informally described as emphasis.

Let us turn our attention back to the structural position of polarity particles in *si che/no che* sentences. Two questions arise. One is how the polarity particles are connected with the clause introduced by *che*. We assume that they bind a null operator in the left periphery of the clause introduced by *che*, which in turn binds a variable inside the clause, in a projection that we label PolP (corresponding to Laka's SigmaP). We will justify this assumption in Section 5.1. The other question concerns what the exact position of these elements is, in the higher clause. One possibility is that *si/no* are elements located in the specifier of PolP of the higher clause, as in (48):

- (48) [_{ForceP} [_{TopP} [_{FocusP} [_{PolP} *si*_i [_{TP} [_{ForceP} OP_i *che* [_{TopP} [_{FocusP} [_{PolP} e_i [_{TP} . . .]]]]]]]]]]

Another is that the polarity particle has moved from the PolP of the higher clause to a Focus position, as shown in (49):

- (49) [_{ForceP} [_{TopP} [_{FocusP} *si*_i [_{PolP} [_{PolP} *si*_i [_{TP} [_{ForceP} OP_i *che* [_{TopP} [_{TopP} [_{PolP} e_i [_{TP} . . .]]]]]]]]]]

As we do not have empirical evidence that would help us distinguish between these two possibilities, for the time being we leave the issue open.

In sum, in this section we have discussed two ways of analyzing the polarity particles in *si che/no che* sentences. They may be seen as occurring in the FocusP projection of a monoclausal structure, as indicated in (26) above. Alternatively, they may be seen as elements that occur in a higher clause, as in (48) or (49). We rejected the first hypothesis and opted for the second one, which presents the following advantages:

1. it does not need to stipulate that the complementizer *che* occurs in a low complementizer position. Instead, it views it as occurring in the structural position in which *che* is usually taken to occur in declarative clauses in contemporary Italian. This is desirable, as *si che/no che* sentences are declarative clauses;
2. it captures why (at least some) speakers allow a CLLD constituent to occur in a position following *che* in linear order. This is because, if *che* is in the head of ForceP, a CLLD element can occur in TopicP, which is lower than ForceP, as standardly assumed about the structure of the left periphery in Italian;
3. it can account for why the negative marker *non* obligatorily co-occurs with the polarity particle *no*: the polarity particle is in a higher clause, and therefore does not obviate the need of *non* in the clause introduced by *che*.

5. The structure of *si che/no che* sentences

Having made a proposal concerning the structural position of the polarity particles, we now need to provide an analysis that can account for the properties of *si che/no che* sentences we have been highlighting throughout the paper. We will start by discussing their incompatibility with focused elements (in Section 5.1) and then move on to accounting for the impossibility of embedding them, and the restrictions on what they can contain (in Section 5.2).

5.1. Incompatibility with focused constituents

One property of *si che/no che* sentences is that they cannot contain a focused constituent, as we saw in examples (19) and (20) in Section 3, repeated here for convenience:

- (50) a. **Sì che Avatar abbiamo già visto (ma l'altro film no).*
 yes that Avatar have already seen (but the-other movie not)
 b. **No che Avatar non abbiamo ancora visto (ma l'altro film sì).*
 no that Avatar neg have yet seen (but the-other movie yes)

- (51) a. *Avatar sì che abbiamo già visto (ma l'altro film no).
Avatar yes that have already seen (but the-other movie not)
b. *Avatar no che non abbiamo ancora visto (ma l'altro film sì).
Avatar no that neg have yet seen (but the-other movie yes)

If we assumed that the polarity particles are in the FocusP of the clause introduced by *che*, this restriction could be accounted for by suggesting that the polarity particle and the preposed constituent compete for the same position, FocusP. Given that we have rejected that hypothesis, however, we will explore a different way of accounting for it, namely the following.

Suppose that the polarity particles are in a structural position higher than the clause introduced by *che*. They could be in that position because they have been merged there (i.e., by external merge), or because they have moved to that position (i.e., as a result of internal merge). We argue that the first of these possibilities is correct, on the basis of the following observation. When the sentence is negative, it contains both the polarity particle *no* and the negative marker *non*, which is obligatory, as we see in (52):

- (52) a. No che *non* mi hanno invitato a casa loro!
no that neg me have invited to home their
'They did NOT invite me to their home.'
b. *No che mi hanno invitato a casa loro.
no that me have invited to home their

The fact that *non* is obligatory suggests that the particle *no* is outside the clause introduced by *che*. This is because, whenever a negative element occurs in a position higher than the finite verb but within the clause, in Italian, *non* does not occur, as we saw earlier in the examples in (34). Hence we conclude that the polarity particle *no* is merged into the structure in a position outside the clause introduced by *che*.

We further suggest that the polarity particle is connected to the clause introduced by *che* via an operator, as we anticipated above. We reproduce here the relevant piece of structural representation:

- (53) $no_i \dots [ForceP \text{ OP}_i [Force^0 \text{ che } [TopP [FocusP [PolP e_i [Pol^0 \text{ non } [TP \dots]]]]]]]$
-

We view the null operator as ranging over a set of two values, affirmative and negative, which correspond to the features of the polarity phrase, represented as PolP in (53). When the operator binds a variable with negative value in the spec of PolP, the head of PolP is realized as *non*; otherwise, the head of PolP is null. This is the reason why the co-occurrence of *no* and *non* gives rise to single instance of negation, and not to double negation: *no* binds an operator that has the same value as the head of PolP, *non*, resulting in a single chain.

This approach to the relation between *no* and *non*, namely as mediated by an operator in the left periphery of the clause introduced by *che*, allows us to account for the incompatibility with a fronted focused constituent. Fronting an argument from inside the clause to the FocusP projection (e.g. *Avatar* in the examples above), gives rise to ungrammaticality because it creates a minimality effect that interferes with the relation between the operator and the variable it binds:

- (54) $no_i \dots [ForceP \text{ OP}_i [Force^0 \text{ che } [TopP [FocusP \text{ Avatar}_j [PolP e_i [Pol^0 \text{ non } [TP \dots e_j]]]]]]$
-

This is the same kind of reasoning that was applied to a similar restriction observed in temporal clauses and conditional clauses in Haegeman (2007, 2009, 2010b,a). Haegeman's work shows that the reason why temporal and conditional clauses cannot tolerate focused XPs in their left periphery is not that the Focus projection is missing, as argued in previous analyses, but that the presence of a Focus operator induces minimality with a null operator in the same area. We are suggesting that in our case, as well, the polarity particle is connected to the following clause through a null operator, and that this relation is incompatible with the fronting of a focused constituent.

That *si che/no che* sentences involve movement of an operator is supported by at least two additional observations. The first is that, while these sentences are incompatible with a fronted argument (without pronominal resumption), as shown in (50) and (51) above, they are perfectly compatible with a circumstantial adjunct (e.g. 'last year') in the left periphery of the clause. This can be seen in examples like (56):

- (55) Secondo me non aveva mai vinto, neanche l'anno scorso.
according me neg had never won, not-even the-year past
'I think that he has never won, not even last year.'

- (56) Si che *l'anno scorso* aveva vinto!
 yes that the-year last had won
 'Of course, last year, he won!'

Sentences that involve operator movement show exactly this type of contrast: they are incompatible with fronted arguments but compatible with circumstantial adjuncts in the left periphery of the clause (cf. Rizzi, 1990). This can be seen in relative clauses, as in (57) and (58):

- (57) a. *These are the students who *these texts* will study in the next semester.
 b. These are the students who *in the next semester* will study these texts.
- (58) a. *There was a time when *these courses* they did not teach at university level.
 b. There was a time when *at university level* they did not teach these courses.

Haegeman (2010b) points out that the same contrast holds in temporal clauses where the *wh*-word *when* undergoes *wh*-movement, as we see in (59)¹¹:

- (59) a. *When *this column* she started to write last year, I thought she would be fine.
 b. When *last year* she started to write this column, I thought she would be fine.

The question naturally arises of why fronted arguments cannot occur in a sentence with operator movement, whereas circumstantial adjuncts in the left periphery can. But whatever the answer to this question is, the fact that *sì che/no che* sentences exhibit this contrast supports the idea that they involve the presence of an operator.¹²

The second piece of evidence comes from yet another restriction that *sì che/no che* sentences share with sentences that exhibit operator movement, such as temporal clauses. Haegeman (2010b) points out that preposing around a form of *be* is impossible in temporal *when* clauses, as we see in (60b):

- (60) a. When the company directors were *present at the meeting*, nothing of substance was ever said.
 b. *When *present at the meeting* were the company directors, nothing of substance was ever said.

Just as in temporal clauses, predicate raising in copular constructions is impossible in *sì che/no che* sentences as well, as we see from the example in (61b):

- (61) a. Si che i direttori dei vari dipartimenti erano presenti alla riunione.
 yes that the directors of-the various departments were present to-the meeting
 'Of course the heads of the various departments were present at the meeting!'
 b. *Si che *presenti alla riunione* erano i direttori dei vari dipartimenti.
 yes that present to-the meeting were the directors of-the various departments

This again supports an analysis that views *sì che/no che* sentences as containing a null operator.

In sum, in this section we have argued that the polarity particles *sì* and *no* are in a higher clause, connected to the clause introduced by *che* by means of a null operator, as in (53). We have then explained the incompatibility of preposed focused constituents with *sì che/no che* sentences by appealing to a minimality effect that arises from two operator-variable relations, namely the one between the focused constituent and its variable, and the one between the operator bound by the polarity particle and its variable.

¹¹ The examples in (57)–(59) are all from Haegeman (2010b).

¹² We might think that circumstantial adjuncts are merged in the left periphery (see Haegeman, 2010b, note 2, which credits this proposal to Cinque; and Benincà and Poletto, 2004, where it is argued that they are part of the so-called “topic field”). Rizzi (2004) suggests that topics do not have the same types of features that characterize other phrasal chains, as they do not belong to the system of arguments, quantification, or adverbial modification. Because their feature matrix is different, they are virtually invisible to the system that computes dependencies, and hence they do not give rise to Relativized Minimality effects, which are triggered by ‘sameness’ of type.

5.2. Accounting for the remaining properties

Let us now turn our attention to three other properties of *si che/no che* sentences that need to be accounted for:

1. *Si che/no che* sentences cannot be embedded. The polarity particles *si* and *no* alone can be embedded, as we see in (63); but an entire *si che/no che* sentence cannot, as we see in (64), not even under so-called 'bridge verbs', the set of predicates that allow embedding of the widest range of declarative complement types:

- (62) Viene?
comes
'Is he coming?'
- (63) a. Credo di sì. / Credo di no.
believe of yes / believe of no
'I believe so. / I believe not.'
b. Mi ha detto di sì. / Mi ha detto di no.
me has told of yes / me has told of no
'He told me so.' / 'He told me not.'
- (64) a. *Credo che/di sì che viene.
believe that/of yes that comes
Intended reading: 'I believe he will so come.'
b. *Mi ha detto che/di sì che viene.
me have said that/of yes that comes
Intended reading: 'He told me that he will so come.'

2. *Si che/no che* sentences cannot contain material that was not present in the utterance to which they are responding. As we already pointed out in [Section 2](#), the clause following the polarity particle and introduced by *che* must contain no more arguments and modifiers than are present in the sentence to which it is reacting:

- (65) Ho sentito che non hanno avuto un buon punteggio.
have heard that neg have had a good score
'I heard that they didn't get a good score.'
- (66) a. Sì che hanno avuto un buon punteggio!
yes that have had a good score
'They did so get a good score!'
b. *Sì che hanno avuto un buon punteggio ieri!
yes that have had a good score yesterday
'They did so get a good score yesterday!'
- (67) a. Non hai vinto la gara ieri?
neg have won the race yesterday
'Didn't you win the race yesterday?'
b. Sì che l'ho vinta!
yes that it-have won
'Sure I won it!'

As we see in (67b), the sentence introduced by *che* may exhibit the kind of changes in personal deixis that are commonly found in question-answer pairs or conversational exchanges among speakers (where the addressee becomes the speaker, for example). It may also express some arguments in the form of a pronoun, instead of a lexical noun phrase; and it can drop an adjunct (in this case, *ieri*). But it cannot contain material that was not already present in the triggering utterance.

3. *Si che/no che* sentences exhibit rather severe restrictions on what kind of hanging topic they may have. These are illustrated in the examples below:¹³

- (68) a. Ti piacciono i fiori?
 you please the flowers
 'Do you like flowers?'
 b. *(Quanto ai) fiori, sì che mi piacciono le camelie.
 (as to-the) flowers yes that me please the camelias
 'As for flowers, I sure like camelias.'
- (69) a. Bevi il caffè?
 drink the coffee
 'Do you drink coffee?'
 b. ?? Quanto al caffè, sì che lo bevo!
 as to-the coffee yes that it drink
 Intended reading: 'As for coffee, of course I drink it.'

The ungrammaticality of (68b) might be due to the constraint against introducing material not present in the triggering utterance (in this example, *camelias*). However, the ungrammaticality of (69b) cannot be reduced to that reason, since *caffé* is present in the triggering utterance.¹⁴

We would like to suggest that these three properties are related, and derive from a single, more abstract property of *si che/no che* sentences. The idea that we would like to put forward is that *si che/no che* sentences contain a null copy of the triggering utterance. Since the content of the triggering utterance is already in the conversational context, we suggest that, syntactically, the null copy of the triggering utterance is a topic occurring in the structural position that hosts Hanging Topics.

If we combine this idea with the bi-clausal structure we are adopting for these sentences, we obtain the structure in (70), where the copy of the clause in the Hanging Topic position is crossed out to indicate that it is phonetically null:

- (70) [_{HTP} ~~[non è arrivato]~~ [_{ForceP}... [_{PolP} no_i [_{TP}... [_{ForceP} OP_i] [_{Force⁰} che [_{PolP} e_j non è arrivato]]]]]]]]]

¹³ We should note that the literature distinguishes at least two types of nominal Hanging Topics. In one type, the topic is co-referential with one of the arguments of the following clause, as in (i):

- (i) Mario, non rivolgerò più la parola a quel disgraziato in vita mia.
 Mario neg address anymore the word to that scoundrel in life mine
 'As for Mario, I won't talk to that scoundrel anymore for the rest of my life.'

The other type of Hanging Topic is characterized by the topic having only a loose semantic connection with one of the arguments of the following clause, as in (ii):

- (ii) Cina, sono stato a Shangai in vacanza l'anno scorso.
 China, am been to Shangai in vacation the-year last
 'As for China, I went to Shangai on vacation last year.'

This second type of Hanging can be analyzed as proposed in Ott (2011) for left dislocation in Germanic languages, and in Garzonio (2004) for Hanging Topics in Florentine, that is, as a clause whose content has been deleted leaving the Hanging Topic as the only overt lexical material. One question that we leave for further research concerns which kinds of nominal Hanging Topic are possible in *si che/no che* sentences, if any, once one draws more subtle distinctions among the different kinds.

¹⁴ Note that *il caffè* could occur as a CLLD constituent, as in (ii):

- (i) Bevi il caffè?
 drink the coffee
 'Do you drink coffee?'
 (ii) Il caffè, sì che lo bevo!
 the coffee, yes that it drink
 'Of course I drink coffee!'

Postulating the existence of a null copy of the triggering utterance in the Hanging Topic position allows us to make sense of the properties outlined above. The fact that *si che/no che* sentences cannot be embedded can be seen as an instance of the more general restriction that clauses containing a Hanging Topic cannot be embedded (cf. Benincà, 1988; Benincà and Poletto, 2004). Moreover, if we further assume that the clause in the Hanging Topic position and the clause following *che* are copies of one another, we can capture why the clause introduced by *che* cannot contain any constituent that is not already present in the triggering utterance. Finally, the restriction on Hanging Topics can be seen as a consequence of the fact that the Hanging Topic position is filled by a null copy of the triggering utterance. If the Hanging Topic were to be pronounced, it would have to be a copy of the triggering utterance.

Having argued that the structure of *si che/no che* sentences contains a null copy of the triggering utterance in the Hanging Topic position of the higher clause, two questions arise. One is whether the copy of the triggering utterance can ever be overt. The answer is positive: it can be overt, as long as it corresponds to the triggering utterance, as we see in (71):

- (71) Non è arrivato, no che non è arrivato.
 neg is arrived no che neg is arrived
 'Of course he hasn't arrived!'

The other question is why the copy of the triggering utterance in the Hanging Topic position can fail to be pronounced. One might invoke some ellipsis mechanism that deletes the clause in this position. However, we intend to exploit a different view on unpronounced XPs, namely the one proposed in Kayne (2006): null elements are unpronounced only when they are located in the specifier of a phase. Kayne formulates the following two principles (cf. (33) in his article) to account for what and cannot be null:

- (72) a. At a given phase level, only the head and material in the c-command domain of the head can (and must) be spelled out.
 b. At a given phase level, no material within (or adjoined to) a lower phase can be spelled out.

In our case the null copy of the triggering utterance is in a position that is the outmost specifier of the whole structure, hence the specifier of the phase constituted by the clause containing the polarity particle. In this view, then, the reason why the higher copy of the triggering utterance is null is that it is in the edge of the phase. In contrast, the reason why the lower copy of the triggering utterance is spelled out is that it is not located in an edge position.¹⁵

6. Conclusion

In this work we have focused on the distributional properties of *si che/no che* sentences as a means to investigate the syntactic correlates of emphasis. The first syntactic component we have singled out is a null operator that is hosted in the left periphery of the clause following the polarity particle and relates the polarity of the embedded clause to the polarity particle itself. The presence of this null operator blocks other operator-like movements like the fronting of focused constituents. The second component we have identified is a null copy of the triggering utterance located in the Hanging Topic position preceding the polarity particle: the presence of this null clause accounts for various restrictions, like the impossibility of embedding *si che/no che* sentences (as Hanging Topics cannot be embedded), and the “copying effect” that holds between the triggering utterance and the clause introduced by *che*. This copying effect does not take place directly between the triggering utterance and the clause introduced by *che*, but is mediated by the null clause in the Hanging Topic position (a position typically associated with the “aboutness topic” of a clause). In our case, the aboutness topic is the triggering utterance itself.

We are still far from understanding all the details of the syntactic reflection of the pragmatic phenomenon we commonly call ‘emphasis’. However, in the sentences we have examined, emphasis seems to arise as a result of the repetition of a constituent. In our case, it is a clause that occurs twice, once as a phonetically null element in the Hanging Topic position of the matrix clause, and once as the overt clause embedded clause under *che*.¹⁶

¹⁵ Other cases of null topics are well known in the literature: null topics are rather common in colloquial German (see Sigurðsson, 2011), in English diary-style (see Haegeman, 2007) and also in language acquisition (see Rizzi, 1994). All these cases might be instances of movement of the topic to the edge of the phase, which results in the topic not being spelled out.

¹⁶ Another possible syntactic correlate of emphasis is the activation of a Focus position: in the bi-clausal analysis we propose here, we leave open the possibility that the polarity particle might be in the FocusP projection of the matrix clause (having moved there, as in (49)). If this is correct, emphasis would arise from having lexical content in FocusP.

Our preliminary investigation in the realm of emphatic replies still leaves many theoretical questions and empirical issues open. However, it also points us in the direction of reduplication as a syntactic strategy for the encoding of what is perceived as emphasis, even when some of the copies of the reduplicated element are phonetically null.

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