

# Complementizer doubling and clausal topics in (early) Italo-Romance

Nicola Munaro

Università Ca' Foscari - Venezia

Building on some recent studies on complementizer doubling in (early) Romance, in this paper I intend to contribute to a deeper understanding of the functional articulation of the Topic field within the left periphery of embedded clauses, examining at the same time the implications of the observed developments for a formal theory of downward reanalysis.

The phenomenon of complementizer doubling has received considerable attention in recent years: it consists in the double phonetic realization of the subordinating complementizer, which appears preceding and following a preposed constituent of the embedded clause; the second occurrence of the complementizer has been repeatedly proposed to lexicalize the head  $\text{Top}^\circ$  of a TopP projection hosting the topicalized constituent in its specifier.

For example, Paoli (2005), discussing some cases of complementizer doubling in early Romance - like the one exemplified in (1) from 13<sup>th</sup> century Tuscan - takes the second occurrence of *che* to head the TopP projection (which hosts the topicalized *if*-clause in its specifier); the overt realization of the complementizer in  $\text{Top}^\circ$  is taken to reflect a spec-head agreement relation between  $\text{Top}^\circ$  and the clausal constituent occupying  $\text{Spec,TopP}$ :

(1) ...si pensò ir re Pelleus *che*, se elli potesse tanto fare che Giason suo nepote volesse andare in quella isola per lo tostone conquistare, *che* mai non tornerebbe, e in tal manera si diliverebbe di lui.  
'...king Pelleus thought that, if he could do so that his nephew Giason wanted to go to that island to take that ..., that he would never come back, and so he could get rid of him'.

In the same vein, Ledgeway (2005) - in examples like (2) from an early Southern Italian variety - interprets the first occurrence of *che* as the lexicalization of  $\text{Force}^\circ$  and the second one as the phonetically realized trace left in  $\text{Top}^\circ$  by the complementizer raising up to  $\text{Force}^\circ$ :

(2) ...le aveva ditto *che* se sua maistà voleva lo stato suo *che* se llo venesse a ppigliare co la spata in mano.  
'he had told him that, if his majesty wanted his state, that he should come and take it with his sword in hand'.

Hence, in early Italo-Romance varieties *if*-clauses – and clausal adjuncts in general – were among the most plausible candidates to fill the position sandwiched between the two occurrences of the complementizer (cf. also Vincent (2006)).

Nowadays, within the Italo-Romance domain, complementizer doubling is exclusively attested in some North-Western Italian varieties like Ligurian and Turinese, as exemplified in (3) and (4) from Poletto (2000) and Paoli (2005) respectively:

(3) Sperem *che* Gianni *ch*'u lese questu libru  
'We hope that John reads this book'.

(4) Majo a pensa *che* Franchin *ch*'as n' ancorza.  
'Mario thinks that Frank will realize it'.

The possibility for a clausal adjunct to appear between the two instances of *che* has been lost with time in Italo-Romance and, as is clear from (3) and (4), only phrasal constituents – most frequently the subject – can now intervene between the higher and the lower complementizer.

On the other hand, the hypothesis that the second complementizer lexicalizes a Top<sup>o</sup> head has been recently reposed for the cases of complementizer doubling attested in modern Ibero-Romance (cf. Mascarenhas (2007) on European Portuguese, Villa-García (2012) on Spanish and González i Planas (2013) on Catalan), where the possibility for an *if*-clause to intervene between two instances of *que* is still attested.

If we accept the correctness of this approach, then the fact that preposed protases can easily enter the complementizer doubling construction can be seen as an empirical argument in favour of the hypothesis that they belong to the Topic field of the associated embedded clause. Moreover, the data presented above suggest that the Topic field (in the sense of Benincà & Poletto (2004)) should be split into at least two distinct Topic subfields, the higher of which – let's label it Top2P – dedicated to host topicalized clausal adjuncts, the lower one – let's label it Top1P – hosting topicalized phrasal constituents. Adopting this view, the impossibility in modern Italo-Romance to sandwich a clausal adjunct between two complementizers can be interpreted as a consequence of a diachronic process of downward reanalysis to the effect that the second occurrence of *che* in (1) and (2), originally lexicalizing the higher head Top2<sup>o</sup>, has been reanalyzed by the speakers – due to the structural ambiguity of the linear string – as the lexicalization of the lower head Top1<sup>o</sup>, namely the one associated with the specifier position hosting preposed phrasal constituents. Interestingly, the reanalysis can apply recursively downwards and the complementizer heading Top1<sup>o</sup> can be further reanalyzed as a lexicalization of Fin<sup>o</sup>, the lowest functional head of the left periphery (according to Rizzi's (1997) seminal proposal); this hypothesis receives empirical support from the fact that in examples like (3) and (4) the presence of the complementizer correlates with the use of the subjunctive in the embedded clause, as pointed out by Paoli (2005).

If the diachronic path sketched here is on the right track, it challenges some aspects of the notion of downward reanalysis as defined in Roberts & Roussou (2003), in so far as this process seems to be cyclic and to entail some interface effects.

## References

- Benincà, P. & C. Poletto (2004) "Topic, Focus and V2 – Defining the CP sublayers", in L. Rizzi (ed.) *The structure of IP and CP*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 52-75.
- González i Planas, F. (2013) "On quotative recomplementation: Between pragmatics and morphosyntax", manuscript, University of Girona.
- Ledgeway, A. (2005) "Moving through the left periphery: The dual complementizer system in the dialects of Southern Italy". *Transactions of the Philological Society* 103.3: 339-396.
- Mascarenhas, S. (2007) "Complementizer doubling in European Portuguese", manuscript, Amsterdam ILLC/ NYU.
- Paoli, S. (2005) "COMP: a multi-talented category: Evidence from Romance", in L. Brugè et alii (eds.) *Contributions to the 30<sup>th</sup> Incontro di Grammatica Generativa*. Venice: Cafoscarina, pp.185-202.
- Poletto, C. (2000) *The higher functional field – Evidence from Northern Italian dialects*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rizzi, L. (1997) "The fine structure of the left periphery", in L. Haegeman (ed.) *Elements of grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 281-337.
- Roberts, I. & A. Roussou (2003) *Syntactic change: a minimalist approach to grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Villa-García, J. (2012) "Recomplementation and locality of movement in Spanish". *Probus* 24.2: 257-314.
- Vincent, N. (2006) "Il problema del doppio complementatore nei primi volgari d'Italia", talk delivered at the University of Padua, April 2006.