

Old Florentine Stylistic Fronting

Abstract

In the present paper I focus on the syntactic phenomenon of Stylistic Fronting (SF) in Old Florentine, first identified by Maling (1980, 1990) in Icelandic, and attested in other Old Scandinavian languages. SF consists of fronting of a lexical item (belonging to a spurious categorial set) to a preverbal position, in absence of an overt, verb-adjacent subject. I argue that SF licenses omission of the subject by satisfying an interpretational requirement imposed on FinP (cf. Rizzi 1997), which is supported by synchronic and diachronic evidence.

Keywords: *Stylistic Fronting, Subject drop, Finiteness*

1. Introduction

Stylistic Fronting (SF) has been extensively discussed in the literature. This syntactic phenomenon is attested in (Old) Icelandic, modern written Faroese (Maling 1980 and 1990, Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990; Jónsson 1991; Thráinsson 2007; Thráinsson et al. 2004; Heycock and Sorace, 2007; Heycock, p.c.; a.o.) and Old Mainland Scandinavian languages (Nygaard 1906; Falk 1993; Platzack 1988; Delsing 2001; Trips

2003, a.o.). The same phenomenon is attested in some Old Romance languages like Old Catalan (Fischer and Alexiadou 2001; Fischer 2004a and 2004b); Old French (Mathieu 2006) and Old Florentine/Tuscan (Franco 2009):

(1) Icelandic [Thráinsson 2007]

- a. *þetta er mál sem **rætt** hefur verið*
this is issue that discussed has been
“This is an issue that has been discussed”

Old Florentine [N, 5, 28]

- b. *Fu lli contato come **nodrito** era stato*
was 3SG.DAT told how nourished was been
“It was told him how he had been nourished”

In (1) the element fronting to a position preceding the inflected verb is a past participle (*rætt*; *nodrito*). Other lexical categories are attested in this position:

(2) Old Norse [Faarlund, 2008: 237, 104c., Dpl]

- a. *Eina dottur er **Droplaug** hét*
one daughter who Droplaug.NOM was_called
“One daughter who was called Droplaug”

Old Florentine [Franco 2009: FR, 82, 34]

- b. *Nel decimo uno nostro conto che **Decimo** si⁰ chiami*
in.the tenth a our count that Decimo PASS call:3SG.SBJV
“In our tenth counting that is called Decimo”

(3) Icelandic [Hrafnbjargarson 2003: 11, 19, 58]

- a. *Hann syndi mér flóskunnar sem **inn** verið smyglað*
He showed me bottles.the that in were smuggled
“He showed me the bottles that were smuggled in”

Old Florentine [Franco 2009: N, XLI, 8-9]

- b. *E niuno era ardito che **su** vi sedesse*
and no-one was brave who on up would.sit
“And there was no one who dared to sit on it”

(4) Icelandic [Holmberg 1999: 5, 12]

- a. *Þeir sem í **Ósló** hafa búið ____ segja að...*
they who in Oslo have lived say that...
“They who have lived in Oslo say that...”

Old Florentine [FR, 26, 6]

b. *Quello che **di costui** si può dire ___ non si dice*

What that of this.one PASS can say not PASS says

“What one can tell about this one is not said”

In (2)-(4) the fronting elements are respectively a predicative adjective, a verbal particle and a PP complement. The heterogeneous character of the set of lexical categories undergoing SF renders the identification of its function problematic. However, some characteristics, first outlined by Maling (1990), distinguish SF from the topicalization that typically occurs in V2 clauses.

For the present purposes, the following differences are of crucial interest: (i) SF is in complementary distribution with an overt subject in a position adjacent to the inflected verb (with either V-S or S-V order), (ii) SF is highly productive in embedded clauses, specifically in relative clauses (a. o. kinds of islands), whereas topicalization is usually impossible there, at least in strict V2 languages.

Because some of the categories undergoing SF can also be probed in (main clause) topicalizations (cf. 4 and possibly 2), the following criteria are adopted in order to disambiguate SF from other kinds of fronting: I consider:

1. only Wh- islands (e.g. relative clauses);

2. only fronting of past participles and bare infinitival verbs (although the latter may be suspect of undergoing (remnant) VP-fronting, which is supposedly also a root phenomenon, as is clarified below).

The complementary distribution between overt verb-adjacent subjects and SF is tested in three Old Italian corpora (cf. References). Moreover, the scope and structural conditions imposing on SF are identified with help of clitic placement. After illustrating the syntactic properties of SF (section 2), I propose that SF is a strategy to license subject extraction or drop in a V2 grammar without full pro-drop (section 3). The prediction that once the pro-drop setting changes or the V2 property is lost, SF disappears is then borne out by comparative facts regarding other Old Italian varieties and diachronic evolution of Old Florentine into Renaissance Florentine (section 4).

2. The syntax of Old Florentine SF

2.1. SF and pro-drop

A study conducted on three Old Florentine corpora (N, FF, FR, cf. References) revealed that Old Florentine SF is in complementary distribution with overt pronominal subjects in V-adjacent position, on a par

with Old and Modern Icelandic SF.

Table 1. SF and 1st / 2nd p. pronouns

	1st-2nd pro	SF+ 1st-2nd pro	total
FF	52	0	52
FR	109	0	109
N	406	0	406
total	567	0	567

Table 2. SF and 3rd p. pronouns

	<i>elli-ella-egli-e'</i> only	<i>elli-ella-egli-e'</i> +fronting		total
		topicalizations	SF	
FF	68	1	0	69
FR	31	1	0	32
N	127	1	0	128
total	226	3	0	229

As shown in Table 3 and 4, neither can the adjacency between SF and V_{fin} be broken (by a pronominal subject), nor is the *SF-V_{fin}-Subject pro* word order attested.

The facts illustrated above are more revealing once the pro-drop setting of Old Florentine is taken into consideration. Differently from Modern Italian, Old Florentine has partial and asymmetric pro-drop. The main/embedded pro-drop asymmetry has been related to the V-to-C (V2) property of Old Italian (and other Old Romance languages, Benincà 1994, 1994; Roberts 1933). In subordinate/non-root clauses, null pronouns are generally not attested because there is no V-to-C, structurally licensing pro-

drop in Old Romance. The asymmetry is shown in (5):

(5) Old Florentine [FF, 176.2; N, 18, 166.8]

a. *[cui **elli** trovava], sì dava di petto*
who he found PRT gave:3SG of chest
“He bet whoever he met”

b. *Lo figliuolo lil domandò*
The son 3SG.DAT.ACC asked
*[tanto ch'**elli** l'ebbe]*
much that he 3SG.ACC had
“The son asked it to him so much that he got it”

By contrast, overt pronominal subjects in dependent clauses trigger disjoint reference effect in Modern Italian, which reveals the presence of full pro-drop:

(6) Modern Italian

a. *Il figlio_i glielo chiese*
The son 3SG.DAT.ACC asked
*[tanto che **egli**_{*ij} l'ebbe]*
much that he 3SG.ACC had

b. *Il figlio_i glielo chiese*

The son 3_{SG.DAT.ACC} asked

*[tanto che **pro_i** l'ebbe]*

much that pro 3_{SG.ACC} had

“The son asked it to him so much that he got it”

Old Florentine pro-drop is partial in the sense that 3rd person pronominal subjects are often dropped across the board, whereas 1st and 2nd person pronouns are overt in subordinate clauses. I assume that the pro-drop setting of Old Florentine is sensitive to the subject person feature-specification, being 1st and 2nd [+person] and 3rd [-person] (cf. Sigurðsson 2004, 2011).

With regard to pro-drop, Old Florentine differs from other medieval varieties of Italy, e.g. Old Northern Italian Dialects (cf. section 4) where pro-drop of 3rd person in subordinate clauses is not attested (Benincà 1994).

2.2. *The target position of SF*

In order to identify the probe of SF, some tests concerning the distribution of enclisis, proclisis and CP expletives (Poletto 2005) were run.

As proposed by Benincà (2004) in her reformulation of the Tobler-Mussafia law, enclisis (V-cl) on V_{fin} in Old Romance is attested iff the Focus field in the left periphery is void of any lexical material. If the Focus

field (or a lower projection) is not empty, V-movement to a higher position in CP is blocked and linear word order is cl-V (proclisis).

Following Beninca's (2004) account, Poletto (2005) proposes that some Old Italian CP particles such as the connectives *e/ma* and the particle *sì* are reanalyzed as CP-expletives occupying a specific position, which can be identified in relation to the presence of enclisis or proclisis.

(17) Old Florentine [N, 79, 309.4]

Tolse il signor molti danari d'oro, e feceli mettere

took the lord many coins of gold, E made:3SG;3SG.ACC put

in una torta; e, quand'ella li venne dinanzi,

in a cake E when it 3SG.DAT came before,

sì lla presentò a questo suo giullare

PRT 3SG.ACC presented to this his jester

“The lord took many golden coins and had them put in a

cake; when it (the cake) came before him, he presented it to

this jester”

Poletto's (2005) findings are summed up below:

(8) a. $e/ma + V-cl \rightarrow e/ma = \text{Top}^\circ$ marker

$$b. \quad s_i + \text{cl-V/*V-cl} \rightarrow s_i = \text{FocP PRT}$$

Because s_i is not attested with enclisis (cf. 8b), Poletto argues that it must occupy Spec,FocP. However, nothing excludes that s_i is moved to a lower CP position (ModP or FinP, cf. Franco 2009), which would make more sense for its expletive status.

The test identifying the structural target of SF consists of a quantification of the occurrences of SF in clauses with the above mentioned CP particles, and with respect to verbal enclisis/proclisis.

Table 3.

	proclisis		enclisis
	$S_i + \text{SF+cl+V}$	SF+cl+V	
FF	0	4	0
FR	0	24	0
N	0	11	0
total	0	39	0

Table 3 reveals that SF is not attested with enclisis, which suggests that its target position must be equal or lower than FocusP, but it is attested with proclisis. Notice, however that SF is in complementary distribution with s_i , which indicates that both SF and s_i target the low CP area, if not the same position. Indeed, SF does not seem to target Spec,IP (*pace* Cardinaletti

2003; Ott 2009), since overt pronominal subjects in that position are not in complementary distribution with *sì* (i.e. *sì-Vfin-Subj* is attested).

Moreover, SF does not intervene in Wh-extractions, contrary to V2 topics and foci. This suggests that SF does not occupy Spec,FocP, a quantificational position (Rizzi 1997). These observations yield (9):

(9) Generalization

SF is movement to the low CP area (Spec,FinP) in absence of an overt preverbal subject in IP-peripheral position (SubjP/AgrP, cf. Cardinaletti 2004) or in CP (e.g. Icelandic *það*).

The generalization in (9) is motivated by the proposal presented in section 3.

2.3. Locality and SF

A further aspect that Old Florentine SF has in common with Icelandic SF is clause-boundedness. Contrary to topicalization, SF does not undergo long extraction. Compare the A'-extraction of the embedded argument in (10b) to the ungrammatical long SF of the past participle in (10a):

(10) Icelandic [Thráinsson 2007: 373, 7.78]

a. **Bókin [sem stolið var sagt [að þú hefðir __]]*

book.the that stolen was said that you had

“The book that was said that you had stolen”

b. *Þessi bók sagði strákurinn [að þú hefðir stolið __]*

this book said boy.the that you had stolen

“This book said the boy that you had stolen”

Since the ungrammaticality of long SF cannot be directly tested (on speakers) in Old Florentine, the presence of a clause-boundedness condition was measured in restructuring contexts, assuming that lack of restructuring indicates a clausal boundary.

I observed the position of complement and locative clitic pronouns in clauses with a restructuring predicate and SF of a non-finite complement verb. The results are instantiated in (11):

(11) Old Florentine [FR, 82, 145]

a. *Per più parole **ammonire** non ti voglio _*

For more words blame.INF not 2SG.ACC want:1s

“I do not want to blame with more words”

- b. ^{NA}*Per più parole **ammonirti** non voglio ____*

For more words blame:INF;2SG.ACC not want:1SG

SF of the infinitival verb selected by a restructuring predicate is not attested when restructuring does not take place, as in (11b), which suggests that a locality conditions applies to SF.

By contrast, compare infinitival SF in (11a), which is no longer productive in Modern Italian, with the VP-fronting in (12), which is instead possible given a proper contrastive intonation¹.

(12) Modern Italian

- a. **?Incontrare (ho detto che) non vi posso ____*,

Meet:INF have:1SG said that not 2PL.ACC can:1SG

al massimo vi telefono

at most 2PL.DAT phone:1SG

- b. ***Incontrarvi** (ho detto che) non posso ____*,

Meet:INF;1PL.DAT have:1SG said that not can

al massimo vi telefono

at most 2PL.DAT phone:1SG

“(I said that) I cannot meet you, at most I can phone you”

In VP-fronting, (12b), the argument is enclitic on the infinitival verb, whereas clitic climbing makes the sentence degraded, (cf. 12a). Moreover, VP-fronting is different from SF of an infinitival verb, because it can undergo long-extraction (out of *ho detto che* in 12a), where SF is an operation that targets the local C-domain.

3. The proposal

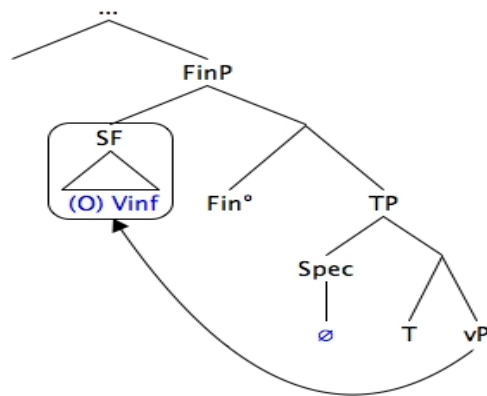
In Old Florentine, VP fronting is in fact quite frequent, and cannot be defined a root phenomenon, since it is also attested in island contexts (relative and other Wh-clauses). The surface word order is often *complements – V*, as illustrated in (13), due to the O V property of Old Florentine (cf. Egerland 1996, Poletto 2006; Franco 2009)²:

- (13) *che [dalle genti quella cosa lodata] non sia ____*
 that by.the people that thing praised not be:3SG.SBJV
 “That that thing is not praised by people” [FR, 80, 4]

The analysis hereby proposed is that SF (of infinitival or past participles, among other lexical items) is XP-movement targeting a low Spec,CP position: Spec, FinP, as in Figure 1, rather than being LHM (cf. Holmberg

2000).

Figure 1. Schematic derivation of SF



3.1. *SF and subjects*

As Maling (1990) remarks, SF in Icelandic is most frequent in the following constructions: (i) subject extractions; (ii) impersonal and passive constructions; (iii) indefinite NP postposing. An analogous distribution is attested for SF in the excerpted Old Florentine corpora (cf. References).

In the contexts in (ii) and (iii), SF alternates with an overt expletive: namely *það* in Icelandic, obligatory in CP (cf. Falk 1993, a.o.), cf. (14); and *elli* in Old Florentine, which can be dropped (cf. Section 1).

(14) Modern Icelandic [Thránsson 2007: 355, 7.35]

- a. *Þeir segja [að **dansað** verði ___ í brúðkaupinu]*
they say that danced will.be in wedding.the
- b. *Þeir segja [að **það** verði **dansað** í brúðkaupinu].*
they say that there will.be danced in wedding.the
“They said that people will dance at the wedding”

In subject extractions, (i) above, SF alternates with a gap, whereas insertion of an overt expletive is obviously ungrammatical in both languages:

(15) Modern Icelandic [Thránsson 2007: 374, 7.79, 7.81]

Þetta er maðurinn

this is man.the

- a. *[sem ___ vildi lesa allar bækurnar]*
that wanted read:INF all books.the
- b. *[sem **lesa** vildi ___ allar bækurnar]*
that read:INF wanted all books.the

c. **[sem það vildi lesa allar bækurnar]*

that there wanted read:INF all books.the

“This is the man that wanted to read all the books”

The possibility to extract the subject *independently* of SF, as in (13a), seems problematic for the argument that SF is a mechanism licensing the extraction/drop of the subject in Spec,IP (cf. Franco 2009). The puzzle here consists of the optionality of SF in cases like (15) for Icelandic and its Old Florentine counterpart.

As a consequence of the Old Florentine pro-drop setting (cf. Section 2), subject gaps are not only possible in case the subject is extracted (on a par with 15), but also in impersonal constructions. In the latter case, the gap is occupied by a [-person] null pro, identified with a 3rd person referent in the discourse:

(16) Old Florentine [FR, 60, 1]

...il fatto veramente come Ø è stato,

the fact truly how Ø is been,

*o come Ø è verisimile che **stato** sia*

or how Ø is likely that been is

“...the fact truly how it has been, or how it is likely to have been”

In (16) the alternance between a “gap” and SF (of *stato*³) suggests that SF is somehow optional in Old Florentine too.

The optionality problem is addressed in the attempt to identify the trigger and interpretive function of SF.

3.2. SF and the information structure

Previous literature has identified SF with a phenomenon contributing to some extent to the information structure. As for Icelandic, Hrafnbjargarson (2003) argues that SF is movement to a Focus position in CP, but such argument seems untenable given the occurrence of SF in island contexts (e.g. relative clauses), vs. the impossibility of embedded topicalization (cf. Franco 2009, ch. 1).

With regard to SF in Old Romance languages, Mathieu (2006) argues, without compelling evidence, that SF in Old French is movement to a Topic position, whereas Fischer and Alexiadou (2001) claim that SF in Old Catalan contributes to the information structure, because the construction bears some “emphasis”. Although the latter intuition seems correct, the notion of “emphasis” is yet controversial or not shared by everyone (i.e. absence of speakers for judgments in Old Romance; Thráinsson 2007 and p.c. for Icelandic).

The argument hereby proposed is based on a fundamental, typological

distinction of subtypes of SF, corresponding to the fronted categories (as in Franco 2009). In other words, although the syntactic properties of different types of SF are similar, if not identical, SF of a past participle will have a slightly different interpretation from adverbial SF, which also depends on the clause type (i.e. subordinate, vs. main, cf. Jónsson 1991 for Icelandic)⁴.

Such a difference has been attributed to a different feature-specification of the various lexical items, which find their respective syntactic encoding onto different CP heads, in a cartographic perspective (cf. Rizzi 2001, Haegeman 2006). On the one hand, adverbs and locative or temporal phrases can be preposed to ModP (“where adverbials receive discourse prominence”, Rizzi 2001). On the other hand, it is apparently not clear what would receive such discourse prominence with SF of past participles, (verbal particles) and infinitive verbs.

I accordingly propose that SF of a verbal item (e.g. past participle or infinitival) is fronting of (a chunk of) the eventive structure (vP) to a structural position (FinP) where it is interpreted as *clausal theme* (cf. Figure 1 above). This intuition is based on the following observations:

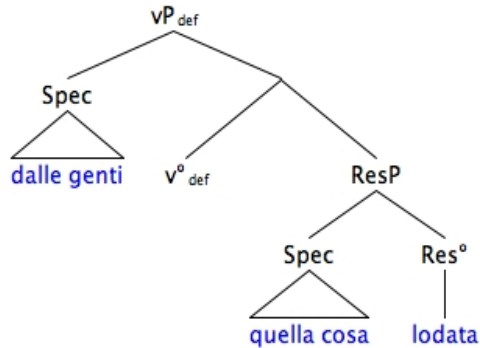
- (i) SF of verbal items does not require (prosodic) emphasis, unlike contrastive information, and does not block A'-extractions;
- (ii) FinP encodes both [finiteness] and [definiteness] features, in order to respectively anchor the event and the arguments to the discourse;
- (iii) FinP locally c-commands the highest IP subject position (cf. Rizzi and

Shlonsky 2006, 2007);

(iv) SF (of verbal items) is mostly common in impersonal and passive constructions, i.e. whose vP phase is arguably not *phi*-complete, thus defective (Chomsky 2001: 8, 9.).

In defective phases (among other cases), both vP and CP are specified as [-pn]. Recall that in Old Florentine this specification on the subject, corresponding to 3rd person, can be morphologically Ø. A representation of a passive (defective) vP is given in Figure 2, where the vP structure is based on Ramchand's (2008) cartography, in (17):

Figure 3. “*Dalle genti quella cosa lodata*” (cf. 13)



(17) [vP: Init(iator)P...Proc(ess)P...Res(ult)P...

The details of Ramchand's analysis are not discussed here. For the present purposes it is sufficient to remark that past participles generally

denote results and are merged in Res(ult)^o. They may further raise to Proc^o and Init^o depending on whether they are interpreted as a-telic (process) or transitive active (cause) (Ramchand 2008, D'Alessandro 2007): past participles in passive constructions remain in Res^o.

Both passive constructions and clauses that receive an impersonal/generic interpretation are defective phases in the sense that they lack an overt external argument (EA) in the highest vP specifier, i.e. in Spec, InitP, where the agent, or subject of cause, merges. Lack of a morphologically realized agent in the thematic structure is in fact a characteristic of all the clauses where SF takes place. Assuming that expletives of impersonal (among other) constructions merge in Spec,InitP, on a par with referential pronominal subjects, the complementary distribution between overt expletives (*það* in Icelandic, *elli* in Old Florentine) and SF can be straightforwardly be explained in structural terms. An overt pronominal subject in Spec,InitP is an intervener for SF (the issue of the respective feature specification is addressed below).

What still calls for an explanation is the optionality of SF in subject extractions, i.e. the alternation between SF and a subject gap, as in (18), where the candidate to SF is undelined and nothing fronts:

(18) Old Florentine [FR, 12, 27]

Lo re che fosse preso in battaglia

The king who were.SBJV caught in battle

“The king who would be caught during the battle”

Given the complementary distribution between SF and overt pronominal subjects (cf. Section 2), and the high frequency of SF in subject extractions, a first intuition is that SF might check the subject *phi*-features. Such idea underlies Ott's (2009) proposal that SF is an EPP-driven mechanism targeting Spec,TP.

A first major challenge to such proposal is the implausibility that diverse lexical categories undergoing SF (e.g. adverbs, particles, past participles) can check subject-specific *phi*-features. The second problematic aspect is the optionality mentioned above: if SF were a *phi*-licensor, how come it is not always attested whenever the subject is extracted or dropped?

The answer proposed here is that SF does not check the subject *phi*-features, but contributes to the information structure in a specific way which is not proper of pronominal topical subjects.

The idea that SF does not check *phi*-features is supported by the fact that SF is mostly attested in impersonal/passive constructions, and in clauses where subject pro-drop is licensed independently, in Old Florentine. Assuming that *phi*-features are hierarchically ranked in the structure (cf.

Sigurðsson 2004, a.o.), [pn] encoding is in a local configuration with Fin:

(19) [CP: ...Fin [IP: Pers...Num...

Because Old Florentine pro-drop is independently licensed with 3rd person, we can conclude that it is possible whenever [pn] lacks any value (i.e. 3rd person corresponds to [-pn]).

Which feature-checking mechanism, if any, triggers SF then?

I assume that FinP encodes both [finiteness] and [definiteness], the latter ensuring anchoring of event arguments to the discourse (cf. (ii) above). As a follow up to Frascarelli (2007), I propose that the feature specification of FinP contributes to the identification of the Aboutness topic of the clause, which consists of the pragmatic anchoring of the subject-of-predication to the discourse. According to Frascarelli, the criterial position for Aboutness topics is located higher in the CP, but weak copies of the Aboutness topic can be spelled out in the low CP area, that I locate in FinP for sake of simplicity. The choice of spelling out a weak pronominal copy of an Aboutness topic in FinP is purely a PF choice. For the present purpose, I just assume that the feature specification of FinP (i.e. [finiteness]/[definiteness]) contributes to the interpretation of the discourse-related property of Aboutness (namely, what the sentence is about, cf. Frascarelli 2007 for details).

Let us now consider the case of a clause where SF takes place. In a clause where the external argument is [-pn], Fin will be [-definiteness]. In such clause, the feature-checking mechanism behind SF is as follows:

(20) ...SF_[+Fin, -De] Fin^o_[+Fin, -De] [SubjP Ø_[-pn] ...

As (20) shows, SF is [-definite] as it does not have the property of a nominal argument. Nonetheless SF can contribute to the information concerning the clausal Aboutness encoded in FinP with its non-vacuous semantic content. For instance, SF of a past participle, cf. (1b) repeated as (21), is analyzed as phrasal movement of ResP-to-FinP. ResP bears the proper feature specification to check [finiteness]⁵.

(21) Old Florentine [N, 5, 28]

*Fu lli contato come **nodrito** era stato ____*

was 3SG.DAT told how nourished was been

“It was told him how he had been nourished”

The intuition is that the stylistically fronted phrase in (21) (containing *nodrito*) receives the Aboutness interpretation, i.e. it is understood as the clausal *theme* (in functional, not thematic, terms). The fact that auxiliaries or modal verbs are not a proper goal for SF is accordingly explained by

their being semantically inert for the contribution to the Aboutness interpretation.

Clauses in which SF does not occur receive a different interpretation. In this case the elements involved in checking the features valued on FinP vary depending on the clause type. Below is illustrated what happens in subject A'-extractions, (22), and in impersonal constructions with an expletive subject (obligatory overt in Icelandic, cf. *það*, in (23)).

(22) ...**Rel/Wh-OP** _[+Fin, +De] Fin^o _[+Fin, +De] [SubjP \emptyset _[-pn]]

(23) ...*það* _[+Fin, +De] Fin^o _[+Fin, +De] [SubjP \emptyset _[-pn]]

As illustrated in (22) and (23) above, discourse anchoring of the clausal arguments is ensured once [definiteness] on FinP is checked respectively by the A'-OP (Wh- or relative) or by the expletive, as in Icelandic expletive-associate constructions.

The interpretive difference between clauses with SF and expletive constructions is arguably that in the first case the relevant information is thematized (cf. 21, and 24a), whereas in the latter the information is conveyed with a presentational construction. In this case, the expletive (which may be null in Old Florentine) is semantically vacuous and the informational content resides in the *rheme* (associate), as in (24b), *tenuto*

troppo grande arroganza.

(24) a. *Se **profetato** era ____*

If predicted was

“If it were predicted”

[FR, 31,3]

b. *Acciò che ____ non sia tenuto troppo grande arroganza*

So.that that not is:SBIV held too big arrogance

“So that it would not be considered a too big boast”

[FR, 35, 3]

The feature specification given in (20), (22) and (23) makes the correct predictions that

(i) in Icelandic, SF does not create an island to extractions, whereas the overt expletive *það* does;

(ii) SF is possible iff there is no [+definite] EA in the thematic structure that locally intervenes in the probing operation by FinP (such EA would raise to Spec,SubjP, whereby it intervenes in any other probing by FinP onto its c-command domain);

(iii) The presence of SF is determined by a choice concerning information packaging: SF is not a necessary condition for deriving subject extractions.

Prediction (i) is borne out by facts: see the ungrammaticality of

extraction out of a *það*-clause in (25b). A discussion of Icelandic island effects is out of the scope of this paper. For more details the reader is addressed to Thráinsson 2007; Rögnvaldsson 1984.

(25) Icelandic [Thráinsson 2007: 353, 7.28-31]

a. *Þetta er mál sem ___ hefur verið rætt*

this is issue that has been discussed

b. *Þetta er mál sem **rætt** hefur verið*

this is issue that discussed has been

c. **Þetta er mál sem **það** hefur verið rætt*

this is issue that there has been discussed

“This is an issue that has been discussed”

Prediction (ii) is borne out by the high frequency of SF in constructions resulting from defective vP phases: impersonal constructions, passive clauses. Two further cases need accounting in this respect: the first one is a passive construction where a by-phrase is merged (arguably in Spec,InitP), as in Figure 3 above. In this case, the stylistically fronted chunk is larger than ResP: the whole vP is pied-piped. In the hypothesis that the by-phrase, despite being an inactive goal, still acts as an intervener, the expectation is

that it should not be possible to strand it in a low clausal position, while ResP undergoes SF. This is borne out by facts, since such construction is not attested in the investigated corpora:

(26) *che [quella cosa **lodata**] non sia dalle genti ____* N.A.

that that thing praised not be:SBJV by.the people

“That that thing is not praised by people”

Another case is how to account for SF in clauses where the EA is extracted, instead of being underspecified for [pn]. In this case, it is once again the whole vP that is pied-piped, and the EA is extracted. Such mechanism may apply to subject relative clauses, for instance, and can be understood as a type of *smuggling* (Collins 2006), where the vP is the *smuggler*, and the relativized argument the *smugglee*. The same mechanism applies to (26), where the extracted argument is the subject of an unaccusative predicate:

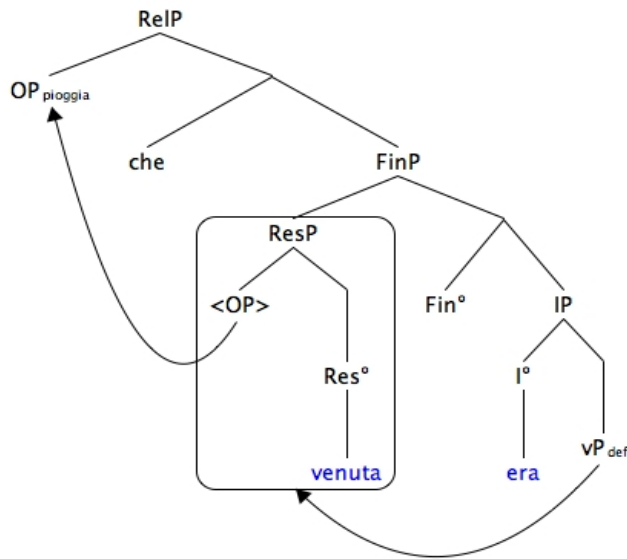
(26) Old Florentine [N, 31, 11]

*Per una grande pioggia che **venuta** era ____*

For a big rain that come was

“Because of a lot of rain that had come”

Figure 4. “*che venuta era ____*”



Prediction (iii) is connected to what just said. The mechanism illustrated in Figure 4 is not *required* to derive a subject extraction. If SF is just determined by a choice in the information packaging (i.e. discourse-anchoring of the event, via thematization to FinP), the optionality of SF in extraction (a.o.) contexts follows straightforwardly.

4. Diachronic support

I have argued that the productivity of SF is tightly connected to a specific pro-drop setting and the presence of V-to-Fin (V2) in a grammar. In the specific case of Old Italian, it has been proposed (Benincà 1994; Roberts

1993 for French) that pro-drop is licensed by V-to-Fin. The intuition behind this idea is that Old Florentine agreement (a.o. Old Romance varieties) does not have the same pronominal properties that Modern Romance languages with full pro-drop display. The agreement properties of Old Florentine show interesting similarities to those that Sigurðsson (2011) attributes to Icelandic. According to Sigurðsson (2011), Icelandic verbal agreement does not have pronominal properties, and argument drop is licensed configurationally, by establishing a local relation between the dropped argument and the CP position where such argument receives its interpretation via discourse-anchoring. In the present proposal, such discourse-anchoring of arguments is one side of the requirement imposed on FinP, where not only [definiteness] (for arguments), but also [finiteness], for predicates, requires checking. In the latter case, the V2 order results from anchoring the event/state to the discourse and checking of [finiteness]. In this view, SF may check the features specified on FinP (cf. Section 3), and it is especially productive in subordinate clauses, where no V-to-Fin takes place (cf. Franco 2009).

If a configurational licensing of argument drop generally applies to V2 languages, including Old Florentine, the expectation is that SF disappears from a grammar where FinP no longer imposes a local feature-checking. In order to test this hypothesis, both the change from Old Florentine to Modern Italian (no V2, full pro-drop), and the synchronic

variation with respect to other varieties of Old Italian have been observed.

4.1. Renaissance Florentine

Renaissance Florentine displays some crucial differences with respect to Old Florentine: on the one hand, V-to-Fin is only residual to narrative inversion cases and Wh- questions, in Renaissance Florentine. Moreover, the V2 order is generally generated with some adverbials, as the bold phrase in (27), where the subject is indefinite (*alcuno*).

(27) Renaissance Florentine [P, IV, 1]

Considerate le difficoltà le quali s'hanno a tenere uno

Considered the difficulties the which PASS have:3PL to keep a

stato occupato di nuovo, potrebbe alcuno maravigliarsi...

state occupied of new could someone wonder

“Considering the difficulties in occupying a state for the first time, one could wonder...”

Moreover, Renaissance Florentine displays interesting variation with respect to the licensing of null subjects. From the studies conducted on several corpora which differ among each other for style and literary genre, it emerges that pro-drop is no longer licensed by V-to-Fin, namely

configurationally. There is nonetheless variation with respect to the frequency and distribution of overt pronominal subjects, which is probably dependent on pragmatic factors, such as recoverability conditions for the subject. For instance, in the GRL corpus (1489, cf. References) there is full pro-drop of referential 3rd person (although with some exceptions); pro-drop of 1st and 2nd person is limited to salient topics; and there is variation in the pro-drop of 3rd person expletive/quasi-argumental subjects.

(28) Renaissance Florentine [GRL p. 7, 6; p. 5, 3; p. 6, 10]

a. *perchè Ø era grande*

because Ø was great

“Because he was great”

b. *se io dico questo fatto, io sarò tenuto pazzo*

if I tell.1s this fact I will.be.1s considered crazy

“If I tell this story, I will be considered crazy”

c. *e' mi pare pure essere il Grasso*

it 1SG.DAT seems even be:INF the Fat

“It seems to me it is the Fat”

In the P corpus (1513, cf. References), there is full pro-drop of all persons,

although weak copies of subject pronouns are occasionally and not systematically spelled out:

(29) Renaissance Florentine [P, 8, 3; 9, 5]

a. *Ø dico adunque che...*

Ø say:1SG thus that

“Thus I say that...”

b. *donde Ø conviene che Ø sia più amato*

whence Ø is.convenient that Ø be:1SG.SBJV more loved

“Whence it is more convenient that he is loved more”

Table 4 below shows the presence of SF of diverse categories in relative clauses. The frequency of pronominal subjects is obtained by observing their occurrences in object relatives, and the percentage of SF on the total is then calculated.

Table 5.

SF in relative clauses	SF	Overt pro subject in Obj Rel	Obj Rel	Subj Rel	Total Relative Clauses	% SF
GRL	7	15	26	63	89	7,87%
P	0	11	54	100	154	0%

The frequency of SF in the above mentioned corpora drops dramatically in comparison to the Old Florentine ones, which shows a positive correlation between the loss of V2 and the full pro-drop setting, on the one hand, and the loss of SF on the other, as expected.

4.2. Old Northern Italian Dialects

Differently from Old Florentine, Old Northern Italian Dialects (ONID) do not have (3rd person) pro-drop in subordinate clauses, where the overt pronominal subjects are obligatory (Benincà 1994):

(30) Old Venetian [TriVen 5]

*Aciò qu'**ello** non fosse cognosudo*

For that it not were:SBJV known

“So that it would not be found out”

In (30), the pronominal subject is in bold, whereas the unfronted candidate to SF is underlined. This is the standard construction for subordinate (passive) clauses in the Northern varieties, and on six ONID corpora no cases of unambiguous SF were attested.

The [-pn] specification has a one-to-one corresponding overt morphological realization in 3rd person pronouns in the ONID grammar. In

terms of information packaging, ONID arguably convey new information via rhematic constructions, i.e. in a presentational way, rather than by thematizing it via SF.

5. Conclusion

By referring to some comparative facts on Scandinavian, I have illustrated the syntactic properties of Old Florentine SF and argued that it targets a position in the lower CP area: FinP. FinP encodes [finiteness/definiteness], which permit discourse-anchoring of the arguments and the event merged in the thematic layer. SF responds to the feature-checking requirement on FinP and the semantic information carried by fronted chunk is interpreted as the functional theme, thereby licensing subject/drop or extractions. The conditions for SF are restricted to grammar where null arguments are licensed in a configurational way by establishing a local relation between the subject position and the licensing head in CP, i.e. FinP. This idea is not only supported by the facts that has been adduced as evidence here, but also by further comparative evidence (Franco 2009; Garbacz 2010).

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- 0 As the gloss indicates, Old Florentine *si* has a passive behaviour, rather than being reflexive or impersonal. Current research is being carried out on the interaction between *si*- constructions and SF.
- 1 VP fronting is highly constrained in Italian and seems possible only with a contrastive reading. The intuition, then, is that it targets a Focus position.
- 2 No cases of this sort of VP-fronting crossing clausal boundaries were attested in the Old Florentine corpora, cf. with (11b).
- 3 The past participle *stato* has a lexical use which correspond to *accaduto* (occurred). Thus (14) is not a case of SF of an auxiliary, which is not attested in Old Florentine, on a par with Icelandic.
- 4 The difference consists of the fact that stylistically fronted adverbials receive some sort of emphasis that is typical of anteposition, whereas stylistically fronted past participles or infinitival are not necessarily stressed. Even more striking are the differences between preposed locative PPs in Icelandic, which pattern with English locative inversion (Thráinsson 2007), and past participles (cf. Franco 2009, ch. 1).
- 5 So have arguably other items undergoing SF: verbal particles in Icelandic, as they are also encoding resultative features (cf. Ramchand 2008); but also phrasal adverbs, since they take semantic scope over the event and provide temporal/modal anchoring of it to the discourse (cf. Cinque 1999, a.o.).