When *before* was based on *back* – the case of 'per addietro' in Old Italian

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1. Introduction

The aim of this brief paper is to describe what *prima facie* seems a typological *rarum* in Old Italian. Specifically, we address the syntax of the temporal adverbial *per addietro* (lit. for at-back), which was commonly used in Old Florentine texts to encode the meaning [BEFORE].

The empirical observation that in many genetically unrelated languages the words used to talk about the location of things in space are also used to talk about the orientation of events in time has intrigued many scholars (cf. Clark 1973; Jackendoff 1983, 1996; Tenbrink 2007, among many others). In cognitive linguistics, the universality of such vocabulary *sharing* has been assumed (embodied) in the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Forms expressing spatial relations of *front* and *back* regularly express, respectively, anteriority and posteriority across languages when they are 'shifted' from space to time (namely, before ≈ in front; after ≈ back).[1] Haspelmath (1997), relying on a sample of 55 languages, provided many examples (e.g. Japanese, German, Basque, Polish, Hebrew, Lezgian; Maltese; Hausa) of this kind of *conceptual drift* (Haspelmath 1997: 20).

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[1] Cross-linguistically, there are many different lexical sources that give rise to 'sequential' temporal items, other than anterior and posterior markers *based on* spatial anterior and posterior markers (cf. Haspelmath 1997: 63-65). For instance, in a number of languages temporal before-like prepositions are derived from the ordinal number 'first'. Italian uses *prima*, which is based on the adverb *prima* 'earlier', from *primo* 'first'. Other languages that use such a strategy are e.g. Punjabi, Latvian and Kannada. Notice that for some languages (e.g. Dutch) it has been argued that low (suppletive) ordinals may be actually superlatives forms (cf. Barbiers 2007). The crucial fact here is that when a language uses spatial markers to convey a sequential temporal meaning before in based on *(in) front* and after is based on *back*.

He affirmed that "almost all cases" (Haspelmath 1997: 56) follow this path, but did not give any possible counterexample. In (1) we present data from Japanese, were the word *mae* (front) is employed with a temporal meaning, both with (1a) and without (1b) a deictic anchoring.

(1)   a.   *Mae ni*   *asonda*   *koto*   *ga*   *aru.*

                front LOC   play.PST   fact   NOM   exist/have

                'We have played before.'

                lit. "(We) have the fact that (we) played at front."

                (Moore, 2011: 766)

        b.   Satoo o   ire-ru   yori   *mae*   ni   sio   o

                sugar ACC   put.in-NON.PST   from front LOC salt ACC

                ire-ru

                put.in-NON.PST

                'Before putting in sugar, I put salt.' [Japanese. Kyoko Hirose Ohara]

                (Moore 2011: 765)

Many other languages not included in Haspelmath (1997)'s sample confirm an analogous 'space to time' conceptual shift. Just to give an example, consider the case of Jamsay, a Dogon language spoken in Mali, where the locative postposition *jíré,* 'in front' can convey temporal anteriority (cf. Heath 2008; Franco 2011).

(2)   a.   [ɛˈmɛˈ *jíré*]   yˈɛrˈɛ-bà   [temporal use of *jíré*]

                [1PLP   before] come.PERF.L-3PLS

                'They came here before us.' Lit. 'They came here in front of us.'

                (Heath 2008: 297)

        b.   [má   *jíré*   lé]   dà:^{n}Ø   [locative use of *jíré*]

[1SGP	in.front	in]	sit.PERF.L-3SGS

'He/She is sitting in front of me.' *Jamsay*

(Heath 2008: 296)

Empirical psycholinguistic research (cf. Boroditsky 2000 and subsequent works) supports the conceptual 'closeness' of spatial and temporal relations. Aymara, a language spoken in the Andes, has provided a possible *across-modality* counterexample (see Núñez and Sweetser 2006). In their *co-speech* gesture research, Núñez and Sweetser (2006) found that Aymara speakers produce hand gestures 'forward from their body' when they talk about past events, and gestures 'towards their back' when explicating issues concerning future events.

2. The data: *per addietro* in Old Florentine.

As far as concerns the case of *per addietro* (and its allomorphs *per adietro*, *per adrieto,* etc.), interestingly, the phenomenon seems to be almost exclusively circumscribed to Old Florentine (with rare occurrences from Old Tuscan) which - according to Renzi and Salvi (2010) - is the direct ancestor of modern and contemporary Italian. The present study is based on a survey performed on the OVI database (cf. http://gattoweb.ovi.cnr.it/). Actually, we have found 273 tokens of *per addietro* and allomorphs.

In (3) we provide a set of examples of constructions with *per addietro*.

(3) a. *Quella vide   Cloreo, il   quale per   addietro*

        that.F see.3SG.PAST Cloreo ART.M.SG REL for at.back

        era   stato   prete […]

        be.3SG.IPFV   stay.PST-PTCP priest

        'She saw Cloreo, who was a priest before…"

Lancia, Eneide volg., 1316 (Fior.)

b. […] *furono* *compiute* *di* *murare*

be.3PL.PST complete.PST-PTCP.F.PL COMP wall.up.INF

le *nuove* *cerchie* *cominciate*

the.F.PL new.F.PL circle.of.walls.F.PL started.PST-PTCP.F.PL

per *addietro.*

for at.back

'…The new circle of walls started before was completed'

Paolino Pieri, Cronica, 1305 c. (Fior.)

c. […] *la* *cittade* *sua,* *che* *per* *addietro* *solea*

the town his.F REL for at.back use.to.3SG.IPFV

essere *di* *grande* *popolo* *ripiena.*

be.INF of big people full.F

'…His town, that was usually full of people before'

Bono Giamboni, Orosio, a. 1292 (fior.)

d. […] *ha* *Fortuna* *risoluto* *la* *nebula* *dell'*

have.3SG.PRS Fortune solve.PST-PTCP the fog of.the

errore *per* *addietro* *da* *me* *sostenuto.*

fault for at.back from me support.PST-PTCP

'… Fortune has solved the fault I was arguing for before.'

Boccaccio, Filostrato, 1335-36 (?)

e. […] *benché,* *per* *l'* *adietro, il* *Comune* *d'*

although for the at.back the city of

Orbivieto *di* *ciò* *sia* *stato* *contento* […]

Orvieto of that be.3SG.SBJV stay.PST-PTCP glad

'…Although the city of Orvieto was glad of it before…'

Doc. Fior., 1311-50

The only possible interpretation of all the examples in (3) is with a *before* meaning, which would be standardly expressed with the temporal marker of anteriority *prima* in contemporary Italian. Consider for instance how contemporary Italian expresses the temporal relation in a sentence corresponding to (3a):

(4) | *ha* | *visto* | *Gianni* | *che* | *prima/ *(per)* | *addietro* | *era* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| have.PRS.3SG | see.PST-PTCP | Gianni | that | before/ for | at.back | be.IPFV.3SG |

stato *un* *prete.*
stay.PST-PTCP a priest

'He/She saw Gianni, who was a priest before.'

The correspondence between *per addietro* and *prima* is attested in Italian etymological dictionaries (e.g. Pianigiani 1907), which confirm that the 'archaic' expression *per addietro* stands for *prima / innanzi* (a word crucially derived from Latin *in ante*, in front). The preposition *per* seems to encode here an atelic-extent marker in the past (cf. Haspelmath 1997: 120ff), whereas its most common use in contemporary Italian is with a *cause* or *benefactive* meaning. Obverse also that, in Old Florentine, expressions in which a determiner introduces the temporal adverbial (*per l'addietro* and allomorphs; 5/273 occurrences in the OVI database) are attested, as shown in (3e). This fact suggests a possible *double route* of structural interpretation/encoding, somewhat parallel to the one argued for by Svenonius (2006), who precisely addressed the difference between *axial parts* and *relational nouns.*[2]

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[2] Specifically, Svenonius (2006) argues against the idea that axial parts, namely items like *front*, *beside*, *behind* and so on, are a subclass of (i.e. relational) nouns (cf. also Hagége 2010: 162ff). Consider, for instance, the following examples from North-Eastern Basque. The expressions in (i) and (ii) have different

It is interesting to note that the temporal adverbial *prima*, with the meaning 'before', was widely attested in Old Florentine (hence, it was coexistent with *per addietro*) and that in the early stage of the language (XIII century) *prima* was standardly introduced by the stative preposition *in*, as shown in (5):

(5) a.   […] *il colore delle sue armi, ch' era*

          the   colour of.the.F.PL his.F.PL weapons REL be. 3SG.IPFV

          candidissimo in prima, si offuscoe un poco.

          snow-white.SUP-ABS in before CL.REFL darken.3SG.PST a bit

          '… the color of his weapons, that was snow-white before, became a bit dirty.'

          Bono Giamboni, Vizi e Virtudi, a. 1292 (fior.)

    b.   *Bambillonia in prima da Nembrot giogante edificata* […]

          Babylon in before by Nembrot huge build.PST-PTCP.F

          'Babylon, hugely built before by Nembrot …'

          Bono Giamboni, Orosio, a. 1292 (fior.)

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configurational properties: the 'ground' term (*exte*, house) either receives genitive case in (i) or is directly selected by the axial item (*aurre*, in front) in (ii). According to Svenonius (2006), the former is a relational noun and the latter is a (functional) axial part:

    (i)   Etxearen   aurrean

          house-GEN   front-DET-LOC

          'In front of the house'

    (ii)   Etxe-aurrean

          house-front-DET-LOC

          'In front of the house'

          (Etxepare and Oyharçabal 2012)

The presence of a stative preposition before the item *prima* suggests a strong parallelism between spatial and temporal expressions. Cinque (2010: 5) has shown that in contemporary Italian DP$_{place}$ can be conceivably selected by an unpronounced stative preposition (cf. also Holmberg 2002; Svenonius 2006; Kayne 2004, among others). An analogous *layered* configuration may be definitely argued for temporal expressions, on the basis of cross-linguistic data (cf. Franco 2011). Notice that *addietro* may be introduced by a stative preposition, too. Even if less productively than the expression with the preposition *per*, '*in addietro*' is attested in Old Florentine (43 occurrences in the OVI database), as shown in (6).

(6)　　a.　　*E　　voi　　avete　　bene　　udito　　in　　addietro* […]

And　　you.PL　　have.2PL.PRS　　well　　hear.PST-PTCP　　in　　at.back

'And you have heard well before…'

Tesoro volg. (ed. Gaiter), XIII ex. (fior.)

　　　　b.　　[…]　　*in　　addietro tenuto　　buono　　uomo　　e　　di　　santa*

　　　　　　　　in　　at.back consider.PST-PTCP　　good　　man　　and　　of　　saintly

vita.

life

'…Considered before a good and saintly man.'

Giovanni Villani (ed. Moutier) a. 1348 (fior.)

　　　　c.　　[…]　　*siccome　in　　addietro i　　Sabini* […]

　　　　　　　　as　　in　　at.back the.PL　　Sabines

'…as the Sabines before…'

Piero de' Crescenzi volg. (ed. Sorio), XIV (fior.)

Moreover, the *fuzziness* of the linguistic encoding of the concept of temporal anteriority in Old Florentine can be well-represented by the presence of temporal expressions, which rely on the 'right' spatial source (i.e. *avanti*, in front), as shown below in (7).[3]

(7) a. […] *dai* *denti* *morsi* *de* *la* *morte*

by.the.PL teeth bite.PST-PTCP.PL of the.F death

avante *che* *fosser* *da* *l'* *umana*

in.front that be.3PL.SBJV.PST by the human

colpa *essenti*

sinfulness be.PRS-PTCP

'…Snatched by the teeth of death before they were exempt from our human sinfulness.'

Dante, Commedia, a. 1321

b. […] sperando nella potenza degl' iddii, come

hoping in.the.F strength of.the.PL gods like

avanti ti dissi

in.front cl.2SG.DAT. tell.2SG.PST.

'…hoping in the strength of gods, like I told you before.'

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[3] Forms like *avanti*, *avante* are clearly connected with Latin *ante* 'before (prep.)' and *anteā* 'before (adv.)'. Latin *ante* is the source of 'before'-words for most Romance languages: Spanish, *antes (de), ante*; Portuguese, *antes*; Old French, *ainz*; Catalan, *ans (de)* (cf. Hall 1937; Traugott 1978). Notice that in Contemporary Italian the word *anzi* (rather, on the contrary) – marginally attested in Old Italian with a loosely temporal sense (at any rate, related to a *rather* meaning)- is widely used in the compound word *anzitempo* (before/ahead of time). Actually, I have found no Romance items (at least) resembling *per addietro* in my survey.

Boccaccio, Filocolo, 1336-38

	c.	*Io*	*ho*	*fatto*	*uno*	*voto*	*per*	*avanti,*	*e*
		I	have.1SG.PRS	make.PST-PTCP	a	vow	for	in.front	and

		oggi	*sono*	*stata*	*ad*	*offerirlo.*			
		today	be.1SG.PRS	stay.PST-PTCP	to	offer.INF-CL.3SG.ACC			

'I made a vow before and today I have offered it'

Bibbia, XIV-XV (tosc.)

3. A *deictic* constraint: Cartographic insights and spanning.

In the examples above *avanti* (in front) -optionally preceded by an analogous (*per*, for) adpositional item- 'correctly' encodes a relation of temporal anteriority and it is somewhat symmetrical to *per addietro* (hugely more widespread in the OVI database). The relevant question is now: what triggers this unstable encoding of temporal expressions in Old Florentine? In particular, how can an item that means 'back' encode anteriority?

The first thing to be noted is that constructions with *(in) prima* and *per or in addietro* in Old Florentine differ in one crucial aspect: the former can 'take complements', while the latter is *strictly* intransitive. We have detected 316 occurrences of *per addietro* (273) and *in addietro* (43) and allomorphs, and in no case these forms have an overt complement. On the contrary, with *prima*, as shown in (8), we have found many instances of *transitivity.* Consider also the examples from contemporary Italian in (8c,d):

(8)	a.	[…]	*e*	*prima*	*della*	*dottrina*	*data*	*da'*	*savi*
			and	before	of.the.F	doctrine	given	by	sages

'… and before the teaching of the sages'.

Fiore di rett., red. beta, a. 1292 (fior.)

b.   […] *che   i   tuoi   vizi   muoiano   prima   di   te*

         COMP the.PL your sins die.3PL.SBJV.PRS   before of   you

         '… that your sins die before you.'

         Fiori di filosafi, 1271-75 (fior.)

c.   *Non   ho   mai   visto   un   arcobaleno   prima*

         NEG have.1SG.PRS never see.PST-PTCP a   rainbow   before

         della   pioggia

         of.the.F   rain

         'I have never seen a rainbow before the rain'

d.   **Non* ho   mai   visto   un   arcobaleno   per*

         NEG have.1SG.PRS never see.PST-PTCP a   rainbow   for

         addietro della   pioggia

         at.back of.the.F   rain

In this respect, *per addietro* shares some similarities with deictic items such as *ago* (or *fa* in Italian), precisely analysed by Williams (1994) as intransitive prepositions, namely prepositions that does not license a complement. Hence we may argue that the expression *per addietro* has solely a deictic interpretation.[4] Drawing on insights from Cartography (see Cinque and Rizzi, 2010; Svenonius,

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[4] In contemporary Italian, *prima* has both a deictic (i, ii) and a non-deictic (iii, i.e. anaphoric) value:

(i)   *non l'ho mai visto prima (d'ora)*   [deictic; time of speech = time of elocution]

      I have never seen it before (now)

(ii)   *non l'avevo mai visto prima (d'allora)*

      I had never seen it before (then)   [deictic; time of speech ≠ time of elocution]

(iii) *l'ho visto prima del film*   [non-deictic]

      I have seen it before the movie

2006), we may consider *addietro* as spelling-out a deictic (time of reference ≈ time of speech) node in the extended projection of a (abstract) head-noun TIME, roughly represented in as (9).[5] Specifically, *addietro*, can be generated in Time Axis P (a projection analogous to the Axial part P of Svenonius 2006 and Cinque 2010), as a (phrasal) modifier of a (unpronounced) head noun TIME and can *span* (cross-over) a higher Deictic P. According to this approach, an item can *lexicalize* more than one node in a given syntactic structure (cf. Caha 2009 on Case suffixes for a similar proposal).

(9)   [DP REFERENCE TIME [DEICTIC P [TimeAXIS P   [REFERENCE TIME P [NP Time [REFERENCE TIME]]]]]]]

Spell-out Chunk

This idea is supported by the fact that many languages (e.g. Persian, Turkish, Lezgian, Armenian, Hungarian, etc.) use the same lexical item to express simple *anterior* meaning (i.e. before) and *deictic-past* meaning (i.e. ago), enhancing Cinque (2010: 3)'s claim in its discussion of spatial prepositions: "*phrases composed of spatial prepositions, adverbs, particles, and DPs do not instantiate different structures but merely spell-out different portions of one and the same articulated configuration*". Consider the following examples from Lezgian, Persian, Armenian and Punjabi:

(10)   a.   *däwedi-laj*   *wilik*

            war-SUPEREL   before

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[5] Cinque (2010:10) proposes a very layered configuration for spatial preposition on a basis of cross-linguistical data. Cinque's structure is reported in (i):

(i)   [PP_Dir [PP_Stat [DP_Place [DegP [ModeDirP [AbsViewP [RelViewP [RelViewP [DecticP [AxPartP X° [PP P [NP_Place DP [PLACE]]]]]]]]]]]]]]

'before the war'

b.   *dümdüž 250   jis   ida-laj   wilik*

exactly   250   year   this-SUPEREL   before

'exactly 250 years ago' (lit. 'exactly 250 years before now')

(*Lezgian*, Haspelmath 1993: 216;305)

(11)   a.   *piš   az   ǰang*

before   from   war

'before the war'

b.   *do   sâ'at-e   piš*

 two   hour-EZ   before

'two hours ago'

(*Persian*, Haspelmath 1997: 83)

(12)   a.   *křv-ic'   ařaǰ*

war-ABL   before

'before the war'

b.   *erku   žam   ařaǰ*

two   hour   before

'two hours ago'

(*Armenian*, Haspelmath 1997: 83)

(13)   a.   *maŋgalvaar   tõ   páílãã*

Tuesday   from   before

'before Tuesday'

b.   *do   saal   páílãã   asĩĩ   Multaan   gae*

two   year   before   we   Multaan   went

'Two years ago we went to Multaan.'

Punjabi, Bhatia 1993: 206ff.)

In all the examples above *before* and *ago* are expressed with the same lexical item. From a syntactic viewpoint a possible explanation of this 'conflation' of meaning can be, following Svenonius (2012), that Spell-out is sensitive to *spans* and two adjacent nodes in an extended projection in principle can be spelled out by a single morpheme, without any movement being necessary (cf. also Muriungi, 2009).[6]

Crucially, *addietro* retains a temporal [DISTANCE-PAST] deictic meaning (cf. Haspelmath 1997: 80ff) in contemporary Italian, sharing approximately the same distribution with particles like *fa* and *or son/orsono*. See the examples in (14) below:

(14)   *Ho*   *incontrato*   *Gianni due*   *anni*   *fa/or sono/addietro*

        have.1SG.PRS   meet.PST-PTCP Gianni two   years   ago

        'I met him two years ago'.

Hence, the expression *per addietro* seems to be a deictic *device* of temporal anteriority, in which the elapsed time is not necessarily linked to the time of elocution (contrary to what happens in contemporary Italian in the examples in (14)). Namely, the point in time signalled by *per addietro* can refer to any moment in the past and can be read in contemporary Italian *indifferently* as *prima*

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[6] Svenounios (2012) specifically argues that lexical insertion (in a late-insertion model, cf. e.g. Embick 1997) recognizes spans, defined in terms of a functional sequence in an extended projection. Svenonius (2012: 1) claims that: "*A functional sequence is a (partially) ordered set consisting of a lexical head and its associated functional projections […]. In an extended projection, each element in a functional sequence takes some lower element in the same sequence as a complement. A span is a subpart of the complement line in an extended projection.*"

(di allora)/prima (d'ora), respectively, before then/heretofore. Possibly, in Old Florentine the preposition *per* above DP$_{time}$ signals (compositionally)[7] the atelic extent in the past, allowing to detach the time of reference from the time of elocution.

That our analysis is on the right track can be confirmed by the fact that deictic *posteriority* in time is commonly expressed in Italian in a way which seems quite symmetrical to the construction with *per addietro,* namely by the strings *da ora in avanti*, from now on, lit. 'from now to in front' or da allora in avanti, *from then on* (in these cases temporal posteriority is *markedly* based on 'in front'). Interestingly, Old Italian was somewhat more 'liberal' and allowed again a marker of atelic extent (*per*) to introduce such constructions of temporal posteriority. See (15) below:

(15) *Per   d'   allora   in   avanti   sua   vita   fu   tanto*

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[7] Possibly *per* is generated in the temporal counterpart of PP$_{path}$ in a layered adpositional phrase structure (cf. Cinque 2010; Pantcheva 2010 among others). In any case, the important fact here is that it can function as a tool in order to extend (in the past) the scope of *addietro* (beyond the moment of elocution). Notice that the idea that time expressions can have a 'compositional nature' is supported by empirical facts. Following Haspelmath (1997), for instance, {DISTANCE-POSTERIOR} function can be thought of as a combination of a {POSTERIOR-DURATIVE} function (as in 'since the beginning of the school') and the {DISTANCE-PAST} function (namely, ago-meaning). Crucially, as shown in (i) and (ii), there are languages such as Persian and Spanish, where the overt marking is transparently composed of these two features/markers:

(i)   *Maria   az   se   sâl-e   piš   dar   Madrid   zendegi   mi-kon-ad.*   (*Persian*)
       Maria   from   three   year-EZ   ago   in   Madrid   life   IMPF-do-3SG
       'Maria has lived in Madrid for three years.'

(ii)   *Maria   vive   en   Madrid   desde   hace   tres   años.*   (*Spanish*)
       Maria   lives   in   Madrid   since   ago   three   years
       'Maria has lived in Madrid for three years.'

For	from	then	to	in.front	his	life	be.PST.3SG	very

remota   e   solitaria.

sad   and   lonely

'Since then, his life was very sad and lonely'

Matteo Villani, Cronica, 1348-63 (fior.)

Adpositional combination/ interaction such the one represented in (15), which was quite common in Old Italian, in addition, represent evidence of a layered *Path* above DP$_{time/place}$ (cf. Koopman, 2000; Schweikert, 2005; Pantcheva, 2010, among many others). These adpositional combinations could represent an interesting topic for further researches on the extended projection of the prepositional phrase.

Conclusions

In this brief paper we have shown that the temporal construction *per addietro* in Old Florentine goes against the accepted generalization that spatial relations of *front* and *back* regularly express, respectively, anteriority and posteriority across languages when they are 'shifted' from space to time. We have given a possible syntactic explanation to this empirical observation, based on the fact that that *addietro* has necessarily a deictic value, triggering a *span* TimeAxisP > DeicticP (cf. Svenonius 2012 and Cinque, 2010; see also Starke 2009). *Addietro*, indeed, is still used in Italian to express the meaning [AGO]. The preposition *per* signals atelic extent (in the past). Thus, it allows to disentangle the time of reference from the time of elocution (unlike particles with an *ago* meaning).

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