Verbal Stylistic Fronting in Old Florentine

Abstract

In the present paper I focus on the syntactic phenomenon of Stylistic Fronting (SF) in Old Florentine/Tuscan (OFT), and contrast it to the construction 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 heterogeneous categorial set) to a preverbal position, in absence of an overt, verb-adjacent subject. I concentrate on verbal SF and argue that the complementary distribution of OFT SF and overt subjects in Spec, IP depends on the fact that they are two different strategies to satisfy an interpretational requirement imposed on FinP (cf. Rizzi 1997), according to which argument and event coordinates are anchored to the discourse and interpreted as prominent information (cf. Sigurðsson 2004, 2011), similarly to a Familiar Topic in Frascarelli's (2007) terms. The analysis is supported by synchronic and diachronic facts.

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; a.o.) and Old Mainland Scandinavian languages (Nygaard 1906; Falk 1993; Platzack 1988; Delsing 2001; Trips 2003, a.o.). An arguably analogous phenomenon is attested in some Old Romance languages like Old Catalan (Fischer and Alexiadou 2001; Fischer 2010); Old French (Mathieu 2006) and Old Florentine/Tuscan (OFT, Franco 2009a[1]). Example (1) below shows that the past participle has been fronted to a position preceding the inflected auxiliary, both in Icelandic and in OFT[2].

(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"

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[1] Franco (2009a) and (2009b) propose a comparative analysis of SF in Icelandic and a variety of Old Italian which here is called Old Florentine/Tuscan. The proposal is illustrated in greater detail below.

[2] The word order in sentences without SF would be respectively as follows

(i)   a.   *þetta er mál sem hefur verið rætt*
           this is issue that has been discussed
      b.   *fu lli contato come era stato nodrito*
           was 3SG.DAT told how was been nourished

OFT [N, 5, 28]

b. *Fu lli contato come **nodrito** era stato*

    was DAT;3SG told how nourished was been

    "It was told him how he had been nourished"

In (1) the element fronted to a position preceding the inflected verb is a past participle (*rætt; nodrito)*. SF is a spurious type of fronting: also other lexical categories can be moved to this position. In (2)-(4) the fronted elements are respectively a proper name[3], a verbal particle and a PP complement. Compare the a-cases of SF in old and modern Icelandic, to the b-cases, illustrating OFT examples.

(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"

OFT [Franco 2009a: FR, 82, 34]

b. *Nel decimo uno nostro conto che **Decimo** si*

    in.the tenth a our count that Decimo PASS

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3   The stylistically fronted element may also be a predicative adjective (cf. Maling 1990, Holmberg 2000)

chiami

call:SBJV;3SG

"In our tenth counting that is called Decimo"

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

    a. *Hann syndi mér flóskunnar sem **inn** verið smygglað*

        He showed me bottles.the that in were smuggled

        "He showed me the bottles that were smuggled in"

    OFT [Franco 2009a: 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…"

    OFT [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"

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 (1980, 1990), distinguish SF from the topicalization that typically occurs in V2 clauses. Maling (1980:76) observes that (i) topicalization applies to phrasal categories (DPs, NPs, PPs), whereas SF to past participles, some adjectives, phrasal adverbs, etc.; (ii) topicalization entails that the fronted constituent bears focus or emphasis, whereas this is not necessary for SF; (iii) topicalization is uncommon in embedded clauses, whereas SF is common in subordination; (iv) speakers disagree when they have to judge topicalizations in diverse clause-types (indirect questions, relative clauses, etc.), whereas SF is generally accepted by all speakers; (v) topicalization is unbounded, typically as A'-movements, whereas SF is clause-bounded; (vi) topicalization does not require a "subject gap", whereas SF is in complementary distribution with definite or pronominal subjects.

With the exception of (iv) above, which cannot be tested in a diachronic corpus, the same characteristics seem to apply to OFT SF (Franco 2009a). For the purposes of this investigation, it is particularly revealing that SF is in complementary distribution with overt subjects. In OFT, such restriction regards subjects that are adjacent to the inflected verb

(with either V-S or S-V order)[4]. Another relevant feature of SF is its productivity in embedded clauses, specifically in relative clauses (a.o. kinds of islands), whereas topicalization (of arguments) is usually more limited or impossible there, at least in strict V2 languages (see Hrafnbjargarson & Wiklund 2009 for a fine-grained analysis of embedded topics in Icelandic). In OFT, however, embedded topicalization is far more common than in Germanic V2 languages (cf. Benincà 1984, a.o.), thus it is necessary to identify the proper criteria that enable a distinction between topicalization and genuine SF.

Because some of the lexical items undergoing SF may also be good candidates for (main clause) topicalizations (cf. (4) and possibly (2)), the following criteria are adopted in order to disambiguate OFT SF from other kinds of fronting. I consider:

1. only Wh- islands (e.g. relative clauses). In OFT, as well as in other Old Romance varieties, subject pro-drop is licensed in V-to-C contexts, i.e. in main clauses, whereas it is not attested or more limited in subordinate clauses (Benincà 1984). The specific pro-drop setting of OFT is illustrated

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[4] In Icelandic the V-S order is compatible with SF as long as the subject is not definite, as in the following case, brought to my attention by an anonymous reviewer:

(i) *þetta er baerinn þar sem **faeddir** eru fraegustu menn þjóðarinnar*
     this is town.DEF where REL born are most-famous menn nation.DEF.GEN
     "This is the town where the most famous men of the nation were born"

  Allegedly, indefinite subjects sit in a lower IP position than that occupied by a definite subject. Moreover, indefinite subjects can also be extraposed. The sentence in (i) is ungrammatical if the subject is *mennirnir* (=men.DEF), which indicates that the subject-gap restriction is sensitive to a definiteness effect in Icelandic (cf. Thráinsson 2007, ch. 7.2. and Vangsnes 2001).

in section 2. By analogy with the study conducted by Delsing (2001) on Old Swedish SF, Wh- islands have been chosen because the verb does not raise to C in this clause-type (Benincà 1984, 2006), thus verb movement cannot license pro-drop, contrary to what happens in main/root clauses, or in (complementizerless) complements of so-called bridge verbs (cf. Vikner 1995 for Germanic). If pro-drop occurs in Wh-islands, there must be other licensing factors at play, and SF is arguably one (cf. Mathieu 2006:223 for an analogous discussion of Old French)[5].

2. only fronting of past participles and bare infinitival verbs (although the latter may be interpreted as having undergone (remnant) VP-fronting, which is supposedly also a root phenomenon, as is clarified below). This choice is motivated by fact that past-participle fronting (see (1b)) is a typical characteristic of OFT and is no longer productive in modern Italian, where it is limited to fixed expressions, when grammatical (*pace* Cardinaletti 2003). The same holds for bare infinitivals, which are most often preposed in doubling-like contexts[6], in Modern Italian, and are pragmatically and syntactically different phenomena (therefore not discussed here).

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[5] This hypothesis is in some respect analogous to the idea that English locative inversion is a strategy to license subject extraction (Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007, but cf. Franco 2009a).

[6] Of the type
(i) *Mangiare, ho mangiato*
     eat.INF have.1SG eaten
     "As for eating, I have eaten"
Below I discuss other cases of infinitival preposing in modern Italian.

The complementary distribution between overt verb-adjacent subjects and SF was tested in three OFT corpora of the second half of the XII century (cf. Sources, this paper). Moreover, the scope and structural conditions that affect SF are identified with help of clitic placement. After illustrating the syntactic properties of SF (section 2), I propose that SF reflects a discourse-configurational property whereby an element carrying relevant semantic information is fronted in absence of the overt subject in Spec, IP, in a V2 grammar without full pro-drop. The fronted element is then interpreted as a Familiar Topic, or the "subject of predication" (section 3). The prediction is that SF disappears once the pro-drop setting changes or the V2 property is lost. This is borne out by comparative facts regarding other Old Italian varieties and the diachronic evolution of OFT into Renaissance Florentine/Tuscan (section 4).

2. The syntax of Old Florentine SF

2.1. SF and pro-drop

A study conducted on three OFT corpora (N, FF, FR, cf. Sources, this paper) revealed that OFT SF is in complementary distribution with overt pronominal subjects in V-adjacent position. Tables 1 and 2 respectively

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show the number of occurrences of overt $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ or 3rd person pronouns (*elli-ella-egli-e'*) in clauses with SF (second column) or without SF (first column).

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

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

Table 2. SF and 3rd p. pronouns

	elli-ella-egli-e' only	SF	total
FF	68	0	68
FR	31	0	31
N	127	0	127
total	226	**0**	226

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, neither can the adjacency between SF and Vfin

be broken (by a pronominal subject), nor is the *SF-Vfin-Subject pro* word order attested. The sentences in (5) below show that SF is only attested if there is no overt pronominal subject in the canonical Spec, IP position of the clause (NA= not attested):

(5)   OFT [N, LXXXIII, 33]

    a.   *…e mostrò loro l'asempro che **detto** avea*

        and showed;3SG them the example that told had

        "…And showed them the example that he had talked about"

    b.   *NAmostrò loro l'asempro che **detto** elli avea*

        showed;3SG them the example that told he had

    c.   *NAmostrò loro l'asempro che **detto** avea elli*

        showed;3SG them the example that told had he

The facts illustrated above are more revealing once the pro-drop setting of OFT is taken into consideration. Differently from Modern Italian, OFT has partial and asymmetric pro-drop. The main/embedded pro-drop asymmetry has been related to the V-to-C property of Old Italian[7] (and

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7   This is visible, for instance, in (main) clauses where adverb preposing is followed by Aux-S word order (whereas the Modern Italian word order would be Adv-S-Aux or S-

other Old Romance languages, Benincà 1994; Roberts 1993 for Old French). Differently from Germanic languages, V-to-C does not necessarily result in a linear V2 order in OFT, since the inflected verb can be preceded by more than one costituent in the complementizer domain, which is why the Romance-type V2 may surface in V3, V4 orders (Benincà 1984, Poletto 2005). 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. This asymmetry is shown in (6):

(6)   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 DAT.ACC;3SG asked

       *tanto [ch'**elli** l'ebbe]*

       much that he ACC;3SG had

       "The son asked him of it so much that he got it"

Aux-Adv):
(i)   [Brunetto Latini, Rettorica, 116]
       primieramente avea ella fatta a llui ingiuria
       First had she done to him injury
       "She had offended him for first"

By contrast, overt pronominal subjects in dependent clauses trigger the disjoint reference effect in Modern Italian:

(7)   Modern Italian

   a.   *Il figlio$_i$ glielo chiese*

         The son DAT.ACC;3SG asked

         [tanto che egli$_{*i/j}$ l'ebbe]

         much that he ACC;3SG had

   b.   *Il figlio$_i$ glielo chiese*

         The son DAT.ACC;3SG asked

         [tanto che pro$_i$ l'ebbe]

         much that SBJ ACC;3SG had

         "The son asked it to him so much that he got it"

The facts in (7) reveal the presence of full pro-drop in Modern Italian, i.e. pro-drop is not dependent on any other configurational property, by contrast to Old Romance pro-drop, which is instead dependent on the V2 system. This idea finds further support in Old Southern varieties, such as Old Neapolitan, where null subjects are attested both in main and subordinate

clauses, but there are no disjoint-reference effects (Ledgeway 2009). I accordingly define full-pro drop those languages where null subjects are licensed independently from other configurational properties, such as V2 (see Sigurðsson 2011 for a discussion on null-argument licensing in V2 systems).

Moreover, OFT 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, where there is arguably no V-to-C[8]. I assume that the pro-drop setting of OFT is sensitive to the subject person feature-specification, being 1st and 2nd [+person] and 3rd [-person] (cf. Sigurðsson 2004, 2011), namely pro-drop in subordinate clauses is in principle always possible if the subject is [-person]. With regard to pro-drop, OFT differs from other medieval varieties of Italy, e.g. Old Northern Italian Dialects (cf. section 4) where even pro-drop of 3rd person in subordinate clauses is not attested (Benincà 1994). Moreover, OFT also differs from Old French, where also 1st and 2nd person pronouns can be dropped in subordinate clauses[9].

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[8] 1st and 2nd person pronouns may in some cases be dropped as well, but that happens only when they are coreferential with a previously mentioned subjectand there is no switch in reference. I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this possibility to my attention. In this sense, the specific conditions licensing 1st/2nd person subject pro-drop in subordinate clauses seem to be related to a coreference with the topical subject encoded in the matrix (cf. Frascarelli 2007). This hypothesis is still compatible with the analysis proposed in this paper, but because this issue is tangential to the present discussion, I leave it aside.

[9] Null subjects in embedded clauses in Old French, although not frequent in 13th century texts, are discussed in Adams (1987a, b), Dupuis (1988, 1989), Hirschbühler and Junker

I accordingly propose that 3rd person pro-drop be an "at least" condition for SF in a language where pro-drop is licensed configurationally.

2.2. The target position of SF

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

As proposed by Benincà (1995, 2006) in her reformulation of the Tobler-Mussafia law[10], enclisis (V-cl) on Vfin in Old Romance is attested only when the inflected verb moves to a CP-peripheral position, higher than Focus, arguably Topic. Given that the distribution of enclisis is not necessarily related to V1 orders, but may follow some dislocated material (e.g. adverbial clauses, hanging topics, etc.), enclisis is not determined by a linear but by a structural restriction, in Benincà's analysis. Enclisis is triggered when the inflected verb reaches a position above the Focus field in the left periphery, which must be void of any lexical material. Specifically, Benincà (2006) suggests that if a constituent is A'-OP moved to the Focus field, V-movement to a higher position in CP is blocked and the resulting linear word order is cl-V (proclisis). Cases of enclisis and

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(1988), Vance (1988), and Hirschbühler (1990) and Mathieu (2006). The fact that there is no person-distinction in embedded pro-drop in Old French is still compatible with the analysis proposed for OFT, since Old French arguably has a V2 constraint on pro-drop (I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this issue to my attention).
[10] See also Salvi (2004).

proclisis following, respectively, a topicalized and a focalized constituent
are illustrated in (8) below:

(8) a.   OFT [Benincà 1995: 336, Novellino]

*[Ed essendo poveramente in arnese], mise**si***

And being poorly in activity put;PAST.REFL

ad andare ad Alessandro

to go.INF to Alexander

"Being in poor conditions, he prepared (himself) to go to
Alexander"

b.   OFT [Benincà 1995: 335, Novellino, IX]

[quello che tu vorrai] **mi** *renderai,*

that that you will;FUT;2SG DAT;1SG give;2SG

[gli altri] **ti** *terrai*

the others DAT;2SG keep;FUT;2SG

"You will give me what you want, keep the others ones
for yourself"

The preposed costituent in (8a) is an adverbial clause, dislocated in Scene-
Setting/Topic position (cf. Benincà & Poletto 2002), whereas those in (8b)
are contrastively focalized objects.

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Following Benincà's (1995) 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. In sentence (9), the *e* particle is followed by enclisis (*e fece**li***), whereas *sì* is followed by proclisis (*sì **lla** presentò*):

(9)   OFT [N, 79, 309.4]

*Tolse il signor molti danari d'oro, **e** fece**li** mettere*

took the lord many coins of gold PRT made;3SG.ACC;3SG. put

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

in a cake PRT when it DAT;3SG came before,

*sì **lla** presentò a questo suo giullare*

PRT ACC;3SG. 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:

(10) a.   *e/ma* + V-cl → *e/ma* = Top^0 marker

b.   *sì* + cl-V/*V-cl → *sì* = FocP PRT

Because *sì* is not attested with enclisis (cf. 8b), Poletto argues that it must occupy Spec,FocP. However, nothing excludes that *sì* is moved to a lower CP position (lexicalizing FinP, cf. Ledgeway 2008, Franco 2009), which would better account for its expletive status.

The test identifying the structural target position 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. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

	proclisis		enclisis
	Sì+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 (3rd column), which

suggests that its target position must be equal or lower than FocusP, but it is attested with proclisis (2nd column). Notice, however, that SF is in complementary distribution with *sì* (1st column), which indicates that both SF and *sì* target the low CP area, if not the same position[11]. On the one hand, SF does not seem to target Spec, IP (*pace* Cardinaletti 2003; Ott 2009). This can be inferred by the fact that overt pronominal subjects in Spec, IP are instead not in complementary distribution with *sì*, i.e. *sì-Vfin-Subj* is attested, as shown below:

(11)   OFT [Brunetto Latini, *Rettorica*, 41.12]

   Sì *vuole **elli** dire un poco…*

   Sì wants he say.INF a bit

   "So he wants to say…"

On the other hand, elements undergoing SF are neither instrinsically quantificational nor necessarily contrastive/emphatic[12], as instead modern

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[11] An anonymous reviewer points out that, while SF looks very much like a phrasal category, *sì* in many respects looks like a simple head. Entering the debate on the status of *sì* in Old Romance (cf. Ledgeway 2008, Poletto 2005) would lead me out of the scope of this paper, therefore I limit my consideration to the following. Even assuming that *sì* is a head, its complementary distribution with SF is accounted for under the hypothesis that SF carries pragmatically-relevant information. A stylistically fronted item, arguably an XP, cannot specify an expletive head because the respective feature-specification is incompatible.

[12] This observation is based on the interpretation of the contexts in which the various instances of SF occur (see Franco 2009a, Appendix, for examples), because it is of course impossible to test the prosodic properties of OFT SF and focalization.

Italian high-left peripheral foci are. This suggests that SF does not occupy Spec,FocP, a quantificational position (Rizzi 1997). These observations yield (12):

(12) **Generalization**

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

The descriptive generalization in (12) is captured by the proposal presented in section 3. Notice that (12) does not entail that subjects are always in complementary distribution with SF. Indeed SF is attested with postverbal subjects that allegedly do not occupy the canonic subject position in IP, i.e. heavy NP-shifted subjects, or indefinites[13]. Moreover, SF is equally attested with preverbal subjects dislocated to a high-left peripheral position, arguably a Topic (see Franco 2009a for data and discussion).

2.3. Locality and SF

A further aspect that OFT SF seems to have in common with Icelandic SF

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[13] Cf. Cardinaletti (2004) for a cartographic picture of the IP subject positions, Rizzi and Shlonsky (2006) for an account of heavy NP-shift with English locative inversion and Franco (2009a) for a comparison of the latter with SF.

is clause-boundedness. Contrary to topicalization, SF does not undergo long extraction. Compare the A'-extraction of the embedded argument in the Icelandic example in (13b) to the ungrammatical long SF of the past participle in (13a):

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

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

book.DEF REL stolen was said that you had

"The book that was said that you had stolen"

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

this book said boy.DEF 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 OFT, the presence of a clause-boundedness condition was measured in restructuring contexts. Rizzi (1982) argues that lack of restructuring indicates a clausal boundary, however Cinque (2004) shows that restructuring predicates are invariably monoclausal. Along these lines, clause-boundedness is then a too strong restriction on OFT SF. A milder condition on SF could be formulated in terms of transparency effects, rather than of clausal boundaries. Transparency effects are typically triggered by

some infinitival complementizers[14], which not only block clitic climbing (cf. Cinque 2004:140-141, for Salentino examples), but arguably also SF, as is also the case for Icelandic SF (cf. Thráinsson 2007: 374 and references therein). If transparency effects are absent in restructuring predicates, the expectation is that both clitic climbing and SF are possible. Moreover, it seems that in OFT transparency effects are reduced to fewer predicates than in modern Italian. As a consequence, clitic climbing is attested in a larger set of predicates, including some that do not allow for it in modern Italian (cf. Cardinaletti & Egerland 2010: 438[15]). Despite its non-obligatoriness in OFT, clitic climbing is generally very frequent: in the analyzed corpora, clitic climbing always occurs with restructuring predicates[16].

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 example below unambiguously shows that clitic climbing applies, because the clitic is separated from the infinitival verb by the negation. In

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[14] E.g. those introducing control clauses selected by non-restructuring predicates, as *di*, in Italian, cf. Rizzi 1982.

[15] For instance clitic climbing applies to purpose clauses too, here introduced by *per*:
  (i)   OFT [Bono Giamboni, *Libro*, 3.11]
        *udì dire che **m**'era venuta per guerire*
        heard.1s say.INF that me was.3s come for heal.INF
        "I heard saying that she had come to heal me"
The equivalent modern Italian sentence is ungrammatical.

[16] Alternatively, cases of object-drop are attested. In the following example the object (clitic) is dropped and the infinitive is fronted.
  (i)   OFT [N, XVII B, 15]
        Quattro giorni lo cerconno, ma trovare Ø non pottono
        Four days him looked.for.3PL but find:INF not can.3PL
        "They had looked for him for four days but they could not find him"

the analyzed corpora, SF of the infinitival verb selected by a restructuring predicate occurs only with clitic climbing, i.e. I have found no cases like *per più parole **ammonirti** non voglio* (for more words blame.INF.ACC;2SG not want;1SG).

(14) OFT [FR, 82, 145]

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

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

"I do not want to blame you with more words"

Although it is out of the scope of this paper to account for the higher frequency of clitic climbing in OFT with respect to modern Italian, these results suggest that the "transparency" of many OFT predicates favors both clitic-climbing and SF. Crucially, such transparency is much more reduced in modern Italian (cf. fn. 15), which may play a role in the loss of SF. Beside this speculation, though, the results support the intuition that SF is indeed phrasal remnant movement (Franco 2009a; Ott 2009) which may apply if the object vacates the VP by cliticizing to the inflected verb.

Compare SF of an infinitive in (14), which is no longer productive in Modern Italian, with the VP-fronting in (15), which is instead possible given a proper contrastive intonation.

(15)   Modern Italian

    a.   ***?INCONTRARE** (ho detto che) non vi posso ___ ,*

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

        al massimo vi telefono

        at most DAT;2PL phone;1SG

    b.   ***INCONTRARVI** (ho detto che) non posso ___ ,*

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

        al massimo vi telefono

        at most DAT;2PL phone;1SG

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

In VP-fronting, (15b), the argument is enclitic on the infinitival verb, whereas clitic climbing makes the sentence degraded, at least to some speakers (cf. 15a). Moreover, VP-fronting is different from SF of an infinitival verb, because it can undergo long-extraction (out of *ho detto che* in 15b), where SF is an operation that apparently targets the local C-domain.

3. The proposal

In OFT, VP fronting is quite frequent (26% of the cases of past participle or infinitival fronting in the three corpora analyzed in Franco 2009a: 221-225), and cannot be defined a root phenomenon *tout court*, since it is also attested in island contexts (relative and other Wh-clauses). The surface word order is often *complements – V*, as illustrated in (17), due to the O V property of OFT, illustrated in (16) (cf. Egerland 1996, Poletto 2006; Franco 2009a)

(16)   OFT [FR, 80, 4]

*...ch'egli avea **il maleficio** commesso*

that he had the evil-spell done

"…that he had done the evil spell"

(17)   OFT [FR, 80, 4]

*che [dalle genti quella cosa **lodata**] non sia ___*

that by.the people that thing praised not be;SBJV;3SG

"That that thing is not praised by people"

The analysis proposed here 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 some kind of head movement (cf. Holmberg 2000). I propose that SF is a kind of A-

movement, similarly to English Locative Inversion in the account of Rizzi & Shlonsky (2007, cf. Franco 2009a for a distinction between Locative Inversion and SF). The idea that FinP may have mixed A/A'- properties in Germanic V2 languages is accurately argued for also in Haeberli (2002), on the basis that matrix subject-initial V2 clauses display V-to-C. I suggest that this property extends to Old Romance languages that also displayed V-to-C. Although A-movement usually regards arguments, I assume, with Ott (2009), that a bigger chunk of syntactic structure containing the arguments can also be probed. These arguments can either evacuate the structure at some stage of the derivation (as happens in Icelandic and OFT remnant SF, cf. Franco 2009a, Ott 2009) or not, as in OFT (full) VP-fronting, which is better defined as vP-fronting.
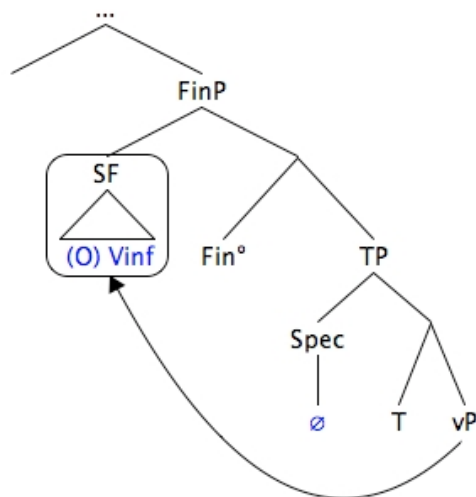
Figure 1. Schematic derivation of SF

Figure 1 shows that the phrase containing the past participle (or infinitival) head is stylistically fronted to Spec, FinP, in absence of a subject in the canonic subject position in Spec, TP. This special type of fronting is possible under certain conditions ensuring that no subject-movement to Spec, TP intervenes. The details of the derivation are discussed in the remainder of the paper together with the interpretational properties of this construction.

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 OFT corpora.

In the contexts in (ii) and (iii), SF alternates with the overt expletive *elli/e'/ei* in OFT, which can be dropped (cf. Section 1).

(18)   OFT [FF 138.7; Franco 2009a: 222, FR, 31, 3]

a.   *consigliavano ch'**elli** era meglio che la femina avesse*

suggested.3PL that ESPL was better that the woman had

due mariti che l'uomo due mogli

two husbands than the man two wives

"The suggested that it would be better that the woman had

two husbands, than the man two wives".

b. *Se **profetato** era* ____ *....*

If foretold was

"If it were foretold…"

In subject extractions, SF, (19a), alternates with a gap, (19b), whereas insertion of an overt expletive is obviously ungrammatical in both languages, (19c):

(19) OFT [Franco 2009a: 224, N, LXV, B, 42-43; FR, 1, 8]

a. *Credendo che non fosse di Tristano e d'Ysotta*

believing that not were of Tristan and Isolde

*quello che **detto** era* ___

which that said was

"Believing that what was said was not about Tristan and

Isolde"

b. *Certi tempi, che ____ sono dati all'uomo per riposo*

   some times that are given to.the man for rest

   "Some time that one is given in order to rest"

c. [NA] *...quello che **elli** era detto*

   what that it said was

The possibility to extract the subject *indipendently* of SF, as in (19b), seems problematic for the argument that SF is a mechanism licensing the extraction/drop of the subject in Spec,IP (Rögnvaldsson & Thráinsson 1990 [17]). If SF were really a mechanism licensing a subject gap we would expect no optionality, contrary to facts, as shown in (19a) and (19b). The present proposal, instead, proposes an account of the optionality of SF in discourse-configurational terms. In this perspective, SF is triggered by an interpretive requirement active on FinP and related to the way in which the semantic content of the argument structure (vP) is anchored to the discourse (CP) and thus interpreted. On the one hand, subjects and SF satisfy this pragmatic requirement in two distinct ways, which explains their complementary distribution. On the other hand, the pragmatics of the sentence may not require (stylistic) fronting, as in (19b), which yields a third different

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[17] An anonymous reviewer observes that arguing that SF licenses a subject gap seems pretty obviously wrong and that Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson's proposal contains a logical error (Poole 2007).

interpretation (cf. Section 3.2).

As a consequence of the OFT pro-drop setting (cf. Section 2), subject gaps are not only possible in case the subject is extracted (on a par with 19), 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:

(20) OFT [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 (20) the alternation between a "gap" and SF (of *stato*[18]) suggests that SF is somehow "optional" in OFT too.

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

3.2. SF and information structure

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[18] The past participle *stato* has a lexical use corresponding to *accaduto* (occurred). Thus (20) is not a case of SF of an auxiliary, which is not attested in OFT, on a par with Icelandic.

Previous literature has identified SF with a phenomenon contributing to some extent to information structure. As for Icelandic, Hrafnbjargarson (2003) argues that SF is movement to a Focus position in CP, but Thráinsson (2007) already argues against this idea on the basis of a different behavior between SF and embedded "constituent preposing"[19]. In Icelandic, embedded constituent preposing triggers island effects, which is why arguments generally cannot be fronted to a preverbal position. This is not the case for SF, which does not intervene with Wh- extraction. Although (embedded) constituent preposing is apparently less restricted in Romance than in Germanic, sentences like (21) where a focus (*IL LIBRO)* fronts within an island clause, are highly degraded or ungrammatical, if there is an overt subject[20] (cf. Franco 2009a, ch. 1):

(21) Italian

  a. *?Gianni ha chiesto [a chi IL LIBRO Maria ha dato ___]*

      John has asked to whom the book Mary has given

  b. **Gianni ha parlato alla ragazza [a cui IL LIBRO Maria*

---

[19] In Germanic V2 languages, the linear restriction on the number of constituents that may front to a preverbal position (just one) makes it harder to distinguish between topics and foci. In Romance languages, for instance, topics can be recursive and may cooccur with foci, which are not recursive, in virtue of their quantificational nature (Rizzi 1997). This distinction is not crucial to the present discussion, thus I will just refer to both topicalization and focalization with the generic term *constituent preposing*, which conventionally excludes SF.

[20] The judgment does not change with a(n indefinite) postverbal subject.

John has spoken to.the girl to whom the book Mary

ha dato ___]

has given

If SF were an instance of focalization, we should expect that focalization be equally possible in island contexts, where SF is very productive, contrary to facts. The ungrammaticality of (21) is indeed related to the minimality effects triggered by multiple fronting of OP-like elements, arguably the focalized constituent (cf. Rizzi 1997) and the Wh-OP deriving the island.

With regard to SF in Old Romance languages, Mathieu (2006) argues that SF in Old French is movement to a Topic+ position, which may be the target of SF in case the [D] and the [P] features (cf. Holmberg 2000) are checked on two different heads, arguably T^0 and Top+^{0}. The interpretive properties that Mathieu ascribes to Old French SF effectively apply to OFT SF as well: "Top+ is unlike Top in that it does not host focused or presupposed elements but simply *asserted background topics*" (2006: 247, italics mine). However, the characterization of SF as a kind of topic might be misleading in reference to the work of Benincà and Poletto (2002), according to whom topics occupy the left-peripheral field located higher than Focus. Clearly, this is not the case for Mathieu's (2006) proposal, where Top+ is in fact located immediately above FinP, but below FocusP (cf. Rizzi 1997). The intuition concerning the left-peripheral area (between

FocusP and FinP) targeted by SF seems to be on the right track given the distribution of SF with respect to enclisis and proclisis (cf. Table 3). Following Rizzi (2004) and Haegeman (2006), I have proposed (cf. Franco 2009a) that the target position of SF is either FinP or ModP depending on a typological distinction of the semantics of the fronted elements[21]. According to Rizzi (2004), ModP is a non-quantificational position dedicated to preposed elements that bear "discourse-prominence", such as "adverbials" (I discuss this point in greater detail below). Assuming that asserted material receives discourse prominence, Mathieu's Top+ could easily fit under this label. Mathieu's proposal is that SF does not modify the truth-conditions of the proposition in which it occurs, thus it seems in contrast to Fischer and Alexiadou's (2001) claim that SF in Old Catalan bears some "emphasis" (that does affect the truth conditions). Fischer & Alexiadou (2001) and Fischer (2010) propose that SF is a strategy to check an emphatic feature, structurally encoded between the IP and the CP. This feature can be negatively [+Neg] or positively [+V] valued, as proposed by Laka (1990). Fischer (2010) argues that SF is a strategy to check the positive, emphatic [+V] value on such projection by fronting a verbal head. As evidence for the hypothesis that emphasis is marked by V-fronting, she refers to the relative V-clitic order, observing that enclisis is never attested

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[21] The distinction between SF targeting FinP or ModP is controversial and still speculative, thus I leave it to future research. For an overview of the differences, see Franco (2009a, section 2.4.7).

with negation. However, enclisis, in Old Romance languages, is mostly common in main clauses as a consequence of V-to-C (where, C, in V-cl orders, is arguably a position above FocusP in the left periphery, cf. Benincà 1995, Poletto 2005). Instead, SF of verbal elements like past participles is very frequent in embedded contexts. The difference in distribution and in the target position of elements (V and SF) that both allegedly check an emphatic feature (encoded, instead, in the same structural position) thus requires an independent explanation. Nonetheless, Fischer & Alexiadou (2001) and Fischer (2010) build up on the intuition that Old Catalan SF is a "marked" construction contributing to some extent to information structure, which is also shared by Mathieu (2006) for Old French (cf. above) although he provides a different syntactic analysis and a different semantics for it.

The analysis proposed here is based on a fundamental, typological distinction of subtypes of SF, corresponding to the category of fronted items. Franco (2009a) shows that OFT SF of some categories is more frequent in root clauses (e.g. SF of nominal predicates and predicative adjectives), whereas SF of past participles and infinitives is more frequent in non-root contexts. This root/non-root asymmetry can be explained by the pragmatics of these elements: nominal predicates and predicative adjectives (both +N elements) receive discourse prominence when fronted to a dedicated position, arguably ModP. Because OFT pro-drop is licensed by

V-to-C, in root contexts it is often not possible to distinguish between genuine cases of SF (with a subject "gap") and copular inversions with pro-drop (where pro would often be expletive, as in impersonal constructions, cf. Franco (2009a) for data and discussion). The fact that SF of nominal predicates and predicative adjectives is less frequent in non-root contexts is explained under the hypothesis that some interface restrictions (related to the discourse pragmatics) disfavor at least focalization (thus OP-A'-movement to FocusP). The reason why past participles are relatively more frequent in non-root clauses (see Franco (2009a: 79, 80) for figures) might be related to the different feature specification of these elements (i.e. +V), as well as to their pragmatics. Assuming that pragmatics is syntactically encoded, I have argued that SF of past participles targets a structurally different position from nominal elements fronted in root clauses (Franco 2009a, b). In other words, although the syntactic properties of different types of SF are similar, SF of a past participle will have a slightly different interpretation from nominal SF, which also depends on the clause type in which it occurs (i.e. subordinate, vs. main, a similar distinction holds for Icelandic cf. Jónsson 1991). Such a difference has been attributed to a different feature-specification of the various lexical items, which find their respective syntactic encoding on different CP heads, in a cartographic perspective (cf. Rizzi 2004, Haegeman 2006). On the one hand, nominal predicates and predicative adjectives, on a par with adverbs and locative or

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temporal phrases, can be preposed to ModP ("where adverbials receive discourse prominence", Rizzi 2004: 243). On the other hand, it is not immediately clear what would be the discourse prominence that SF of past participles, (verbal particles) and infinitive verbs allegedly bears.

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)[22] to a structural position (FinP) where it is interpreted, in discourse-functional terms, as *clausal theme* (cf. Figure 1 above), by contrast to other clauses where past participles or infinitive remain in their post-Vfin position and are interpreted as *rhemes*. In this perspective, SF instantiates syntactically a pragmatic enrichment of the propositional content encoded in the event structure (i.e. of the result or the process that the predicate expresses). Among the typologically different cases of SF, I concentrate, for the present purposes, on past participle SF (infinitive SF is briefly addressed at the end of section 3): the phrase undergoing SF in this case is generally interpreted as a result, or a state (cf. below and Ramchand 2008). I accordingly propose that SF of past participles is a mechanism whereby the event structure is anchored to the discourse context and specifies the [finiteness] feature on FinP, by virtue of its aspectual features (e.g. it is a result). In support of this

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[22] This account applies to Icelandic as well. Franco (2009a) analyzes cases of stranded objects as shifted to a vP-peripheral position prior to SF of the remnant vP and cases of P-stranding as the result of particle-movement, on the basis of facts discussed in Hróarsdóttir (2008). Given that these cases are not frequent or not attested in OFT, I do not discuss them here.

suggestion is the distribution of past participle SF: data presented in Franco (2009a) show that past participles undergo SF most frequently in non-root contexts, namely where there is no V-to-C (i.e. no V-to-Fin) checking [finiteness]. Instead, fronting of other elements, e.g. sentential adverbs, or nominal predicates, is more frequent in root clauses, whose information structure allows for a broader range of discourse-preposing operations[23] (Rizzi 1997). Moreover, SF of verbal items never blocks A'-extractions, which is compatible with the analysis that it targets a low CP position, such as FinP[24] (cf. Franco 2009).

What remains to be explained is the complementary distribution between overt pronominal subjects in Spec, IP and SF. In a nutshell, subjects in Spec, IP and SF are different ways to meet the pragmatic requirement that arguments and predicates (expressing events or states) be anchored to the discourse. This proposal is based on the following assumptions:

i) The requirement that arguments and predicates be anchored to the discourse is encoded in the CP domain, arguably in FinP (Rizzi 1997),

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[23] In other words, fronting of adverbials or nominal predicates (as in copular inversion) in root clauses is ambiguous between SF and fronting to ModP or FocP. The accessibility hierarchy of elements undergoing SF (Maling 1990) is explained in terms of scope: sentential adverbs usually take scope over the vP, and will, accordingly, be probed first by SF. In case of SF of a sentential adverb, the event-anchoring may be enforced in a parasitic way: the adverb successive-cyclically moves through Spec,FinP, where it checks [finiteness] in virtue of its sentential function (scope properties) and ends up in a position where it receives discourse prominence, e.g. ModP (cf. Rizzi 2004, Haegeman 2006, cf. Franco 2009a for a more detailed proposal).

[24] Ott (2009) also proposes that SF of non-finite verbs is remnant movement, but he argues that the target position is Spec, TP. According to Ott, SF satisfies the EPP requirement on T. With the present proposal, I wish to avoid reference to the stipulative notion of EPP, and I build my analysis on the empirical evidence of movement to the C-domain.

where predicate-anchoring is enforced via [finiteness]-checking.

ii) Argument-anchoring is obtained by checking the nominal counterpart to the functional [finiteness] feature, i.e. [definiteness], also spelled out in FinP. This idea is based on the fact that C may be specified for both [+V; +N] and follows the intuition of Déchaine and Tremblay (2010), cf. Muyskens (2008:245, 249[25]), Chomsky (1995).

iii) On a par with Germanic V2 languages, OFT arguably licenses null arguments configurationally, with a topic-drop system (cf. Sigurðsson 2010, 2011).

The proposal is based on the following observations: first, FinP locally c-commands the highest IP subject position (cf. Rizzi and Shlonsky 2006, 2007). Secondly, SF (of verbal items) is mostly common in impersonal and passive constructions: in the three analyzed corpora, SF occurs in impersonal or passive constructions in 60,8% of the cases; whereas in active constructions in 39,2% of the cases. Of these active constructions, 10,8% of the cases are SF of unaccusative verbs and 28,4% are either unergative or transitive predicates whose object has been extracted (e.g. in relative clauses) or has undergone clitic climbing. The latter group of predicates basically only regards SF of infinitives under restructuring predicates.

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[25] Muyskens (2008: 249) interprets definite/indefinite determiners as markers of discourse status. Whence the hypothesis that [definiteness] be interpreted in the information structure.

What impersonal, passive and unaccusative constructions all have in common is lack of an agent merged in Spec, vP, or in cartographic terms Spec, InitP as in (22) below.

Assuming that infinitive and past participles occupy different structural positions, i.e. past participles are in Res^0 and infinitivals are in $Proc^0$ (cf. Ramchand (2008)), a representation of a passive vP is given in Figure 2, where the vP structure is based on Ramchand's (2008) cartography, given in (22). vPdef stands for *defective*: this merely indicates that no Spec, InitP is projected.

Figure 3. "*Dalle genti quella cosa lodata*" (cf. 17)
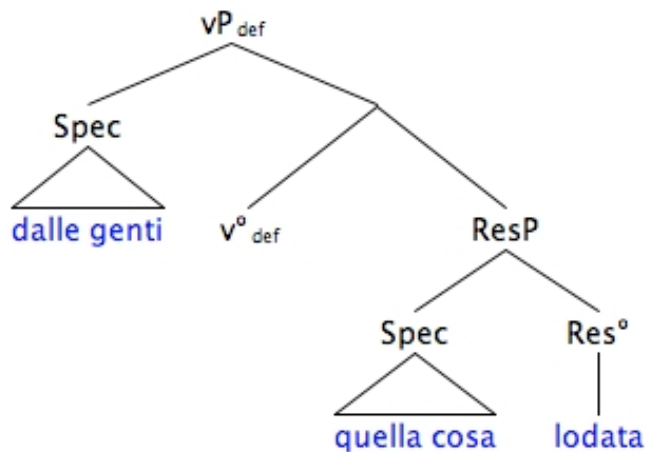
(22) [vP: Init(iator)P...Proc(ess)P...Res(ult)P...

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)^0. They may further raise to Proc^0 and Init^0 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^0.

Both passive constructions and clauses with an impersonal/generic interpretation lack an overt external argument (EA) in the highest vP specifier, i.e. in Spec, InitP, where the agent, or subject of cause, merges. Assuming that expletives of impersonal (among other) constructions generally merge only at a later stage of the derivation, in the left periphery (Spec, IP or Spec, CP, depending on the grammar), the complementary distribution between overt expletives (*elli* in OFT) and SF can be straightforwardly explained in structural terms. By contrast, a subject in Spec, InitP is an intervener for SF. A subject in Spec, InitP raises to Spec, IP and the interface condition imposing that arguments are contextually anchored via [definiteness]-checking is met (via local C-command, with a head-head relation between Fin and I, *à la* Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007). In this circumstance, no further mechanism is required to check the discourse-related features on FinP (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 (23),

where the candidate for SF is undelined and nothing fronts:

(23) OFT [FR, 12, 27]

Lo re che fosse <u>preso</u> 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.

A first major challenge to such an idea 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 information structure in a specific way, which is not shared by 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 (i.e. specified as [-pn]), and in clauses where subject pro-drop is licensed independently, in OFT. Assuming that *phi*-features are hierarchically ranked in the

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

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

Because OFT pro-drop is independently licensed with 3rd person, we can conclude that it is possible at least 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 [defineteness], the latter ensuring anchoring of event arguments to the discourse (cf. ii) above). As a follow up to Frascarelli (2007), the feature specification of FinP may contribute 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, and coincide with a Familiar Topic that I choose to locate in FinP for sake of simplicity (instead of postulating a dedicated projection, FamP). The choice of spelling out a weak pronominal copy 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 interpreting some given

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information[26] as anchored to the discourse. Such piece of information may be represented by an argument (e.g. the overt subject in Spec, IP), in which case it may coincide with a [+definite] Aboutness topic. In addition to Frascarelli's intuitions, I propose that FinP can be alternatively specified by an event, as in the case of SF of a vP, depending on what the sentence is about. In this second case, the event semantics do not match with those of a nominal Aboutness topic, but contribute to information structure in a different way. When a given event (rather than just an argument) is anchored to the discourse, it will be interpreted as the most prominent information: the *theme*, rather than the *rheme*, of a clause, which gives discourse prominence to a result, or a process.

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

(25)   ...**SF**[+Fin, -De] Fin° [+Fin; -De] [SubjP Ø[-pn] …

Arguably, SF is [-definite] as it does not have the property of a nominal argument. Nonetheless SF can contribute to information concerning the Familiar Topic encoded in FinP with its non-vacuous semantic content. For

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[26] Crucially, no new information is introduced in this position, contrary to what happens with Aboutness/Shift-Topics. This analysis is in line with Mathieu's (2006) proposal. I thank an anonimous reviewer for his/her positive feed-back on this point.

instance, SF of a past participle, cf. (1b) repeated as (26), is analyzed as phrasal movement of ResP-to-FinP. ResP bears the proper feature specification to check [finiteness] because it encodes the semantics of a"result".

(26) OFT [N, 5, 28]

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

was DAT;3SG told how nourished was been

"It was told him how he had been nourished"

The intuition is that the stylistically fronted phrase in (25) (containing *nodrito*) receives the interpretation of a Familiar Topic, i.e. it is understood as the clausal *theme:* the fact that the clausal subject had been nourished (in such and such a way) is the topic of discussion[27]. Familiar Topics, in this sense, do not need to match entirely with the Aboutness Topic of the clause (whose reference may be"inherited"from the higher clause, cf. Frascarelli 2007). For instance, a Familiar Topic might just partially match with the Aboutness Topic, if the Aboutness Topic is an argument successively extracted from a larger phrase which corresponds to the Familiar Topic (for a concrete case, see figure 4 below). The fact that auxiliaries are not proper

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[27] I do not attempt further speculations on the pragmatics of SF here, as the phenomenon belongs to a dead variety.

goals for SF is accordingly explained by the fact that semantically they do not denote an event.

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, (27), and in impersonal constructions with an expletive subject.

(27)   ...**Rel/Wh-OP** [+Fin, +De] Fin°[~~+Fin~~, ~~+De~~] [SubjP Ø[-pn]

(28)   ... ***elli/e'*** [+Fin, +De] Fin° [~~+Fin~~, ~~+De~~] [SubjP [-pn]

As illustrated in (27) and (28) 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 *e'* in (29) below. In (29a) there is no SF of the potential candidate, the infinitival *morire;* (29b) is a root clause, which suggests that the expletive can be located in the CP:

(29) OFT [N, 42, 224.16; FF, 211.4]

a.   *Pensa, guigliemo, che per la tua follia **e'** ti conviene*

Think G.   that for your folly it DAT;2SG is.convenient

morire

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die.INF

"Think, Guglielmo, that it is better for you to die, because of your folly"

b.   ***E' non è degno e non si conviene…***

It not is noble and not PASS is.convenient

"It is not noble, nor convenient…"

The interpretive difference between clauses with SF and expletive constructions is arguably that with SF the relevant information is thematized (cf. 26 and 30a), whereas in expletive constructions the information is conveyed in a presentational manner. In this case, the expletive (which may be null in OFT[28]) is semantically vacuous and the informational content resides in the *rheme* (associate), as in (30b), *tenuto troppo grande arroganza.*

(30) OFT [FR, 31,3; FR, 35, 3]

a.   *Se **profetato** era* ___

If predicted was

"If it were predicted"

b.   *Acciò che* ___ *non sia* <u>tenuto</u> *troppo grande arroganza*

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[28] I cannot deal with the issue of expletive-optionality in OFT here.

So.that that   not is;SBJV;3SG held too big arrogance

"So that it would not be considered a too big boast"

The feature specification given in (25), (27) and (28) makes the following correct predictions:

(i) Complementary distribution with argumental pronominal subjects: SF is possible iff there is no [+definite] subject in the thematic structure that locally intervenes in the probing operation by FinP (such an EA would raise to Spec, SubjP, whereby it intervenes in any other probing by FinP onto its c-command domain);

(ii) complementary distribution of SF and expletive pronouns: SF is possible iff there is no merger of expletive pronouns in Spec, IP or Spec,CP[29].

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

Prediction (ii) is borne out by the high frequency of SF in constructions lacking a [+pn] agent: impersonal constructions, passive clauses. Two further cases need accounting in this respect: the first one is a passive

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[29] I assume that expletives merge at a later stage of the derivation with respect to argumental pronouns. Whether they are in Spec,IP or Spec,CP seems grammar specific and is anyway irrilevant given the previous discussion on the feature-checking mechanism involved in expletive construction and in the SF constructions.

construction where a by-phrase is merged (arguably in Spec, InitP), as in (17) and 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, may still act as an intervener, the expectation is that it should not be possible to strand it in a low clausal position (cf. *dalle genti*, in (31)), while ResP undergoes SF. This is borne out by facts, since such a construction is not attested in the investigated corpora:

(31) OFT

*NAche [quella cosa **lodata**] non sia <u>dalle genti</u> ____*

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 missing altogether, i.e. those cases where Spec, InitP is projected and headed by an OP which derives, e.g. a relative clause. It is worth mentioning that cases of past participle SF with transitive constructions are unattested in the excerpted corpora. What is instead attested are cases of infinitival fronting in relative clauses. I propose that in this case it is the whole vP that is pied-piped, and the EA is then extracted. The same mechanism applies to (32), where the extracted argument is the

subject of a modal followed by an infinitival, which arguably undergoes SF, as is illustrated in Figure 4:
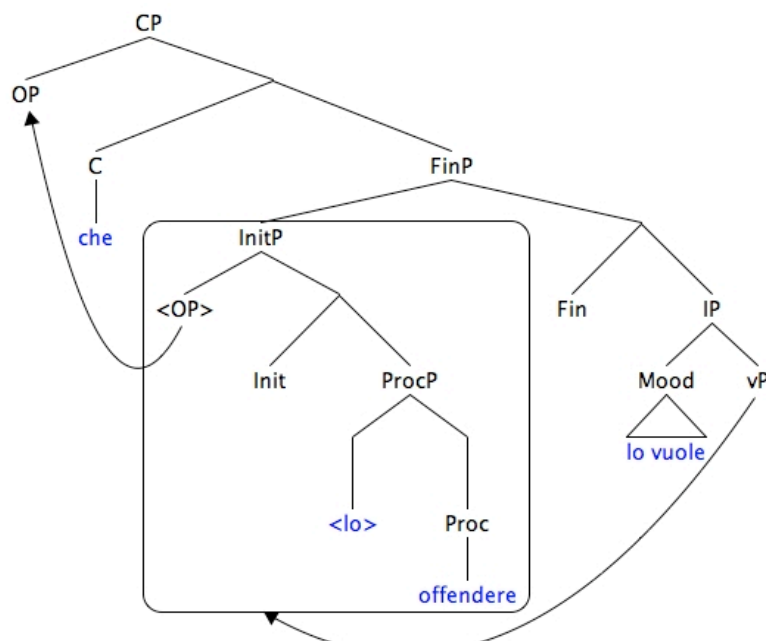
(32) OFT [Franco 2009a: FR, 81, 33]

*A colui che **offendere** lo vuole* ___

to who that offend.INF ACC;3SG want;3SG

"To the one who wants to offend him"

Figure 4. "*che **offendere** lo vuole* ___"

Assuming that modals form monoclausal constructions with the infinitival that they select, a possible derivation for (32) is that the EA must raise from Spec, InitP to Spec, IP thus blocking SF. Alternatively, the whole vP

undergoes SF, as in (32) and the subject is then extracted, deriving the relative clause.

Prediction (iii) is connected to what has just been said. The mechanism illustrated in Figure 4 is not *required* to derive a subject extraction, and the size of the fronted phrase depends on a discourse-related requirement, i.e. on which semantic content has to become discourse-prominent. 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[30]. In the specific case of Old Italian (here OFT), it has been proposed (Benincà 1994; Roberts 1993 for French) that pro-drop is licensed by V-to-C (V-to-Fin in the present perspective). The intuition behind this idea is that OFT agreement (a.o. Old Romance varieties) does not have the same pronominal

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[30] It has been proposed that SF depends on the presence of independent V-to-I in a grammar (Falk 1993), however, this claim is controversial since it cannot be straightforwardly generalized to other languages with V-to-I (e.g. modern Italian and Spanish, Franco 2009a).

properties that Modern Romance languages with full pro-drop display. The agreement properties of OFT 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 an argument receives its interpretation via discourse-anchoring. In the present proposal, such a 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 specifying [finiteness] with some semantic content related to the aspectual features (e.g. the result of an event). 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.

If a configurational licensing of argument drop generally applies to V2 languages, including OFT, 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 OFT to Modern Italian (no V2, full pro-drop), and the synchronic variation with respect to other varieties of Old Italian have been observed. Notice that the same change from configurational to agreement-based licensing of pro-drop arguably affects

other Romance languages as well, e.g. Old to Modern Spanish and Catalan (cf. Poole 2006, a.o.).

4.1. Renaissance Florentine/Tuscan

Renaissance Florentine/Tuscan (RFT) displays some crucial differences with respect to OFT: on the one hand, V-to-Fin is only residual to narrative inversion cases and Wh- questions, in RFT. Moreover, the V2 order generally obtains only with some adverbials, such as the bold phrase in (33), where the subject is indefinite (*alcuno*).

(33) RFT [P, IV, 1]

Considerate le difficultà le quali s'hanno a tenere

Considered the difficulties the which PASS have;3PL to keep

uno stato occupato di nuovo,

a state occupied of new

potrebbe alcuno maravigliarsi...

could someone wonder

"Considering the difficulties in occupying a state for the first

time, one could wonder..."

On the other hand, RFT 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[31]. 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 non-contrastive or previously mentioned subjects (i.e. overt 1st and 2nd person pronouns are generally contrastive or Shift Topics); and there is variation in the pro-drop of 3rd person expletive/quasi-argumental subjects.

(33) RFT [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*

---

[31] This observation is based on a comparison between OFT and RFT subordinate clauses where there is arguably no V-to-C (Benincà 1994). There is a general decrease of overt pronominal subjects in the RFT sentences, in comparison to OFT sentences.

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 DAT;1SG 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 (which is still compatible with full pro-drop):

(34) RFT [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;SBJV;1SG. 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 4.

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

(36) 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 (36), the pronominal subject is in bold, whereas the non-fronted 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 pronoun in the ONID grammar. In terms of information packaging, I propose that ONID convey new information via rhematic constructions, i.e. in a presentational way, rather than by thematizing the new information via SF, which is instead a possibility in a grammar with 3rd person configurational pro-drop, like OFT.

5. Conclusion

By referring to some comparative facts on Scandinavian, I have illustrated the syntactic properties of OFT verbal SF and argued that it targets a position in the lower CP area: FinP. FinP encodes [finiteness/definiteness],

which permits 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 functionally as the theme of the clause, more precisely as a Familiar Topic, thereby licensing subject/drop or extractions. The conditions for SF are restricted to grammars 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 have been adduced as evidence here, but also by futher comparative evidence considering the (lack of) productivity and loss of SF in other Romance and Scandinavian languages (Franco 2009a; Garbacz 2010).

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