

Phase-edge properties and complementizer omission♥

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COMMENTS ARE WELCOME!

This paper deals with the diachrony of complementizer omission (C-omission) in Italian. C-omission is restricted to [-*realis*] clauses in Old as well as in Modern Italian, and to some types of declarative clauses in Modern Florentine (Cocchi & Poletto, 2005). This phenomenon is instead much more pervasive in the Renaissance period (Wanner 1981, Scorretti 1991) and invests basically all types of subordinate clauses. The present study concentrates on C-omission in Renaissance Italian relative clauses, which is attested in both subject and non-subject extractions. There is an asymmetry in the frequency of C-omission in subject/non-subject relative clauses, which is analyzed as the result of the combination of the active/inactive alignment that characterizes both Old and Renaissance Italian, and the loss of V2. The active/inactive distinction is attributed to the presence of a strong (*) feature on the low-phase head, Voice*, whereas the loss of V2 results from a parametric change on the higher phase head: from Fin* to Fin. The argument is corroborated by further comparative facts from Old Occitan and Old French.

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1. Introduction

C-omission is a general term that conventionally indicates the possibility, in a grammar, to omit the subordinating element, being it a complementizer, a particle or some sort of pronoun. A language that, to some extent, permits C-omission is English, where complementizers can notoriously be dropped when introducing the declarative

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complements of so called bridge-verbs (cf. Hooper and Thompson 1973, Bolinger 1972, Bosković & Lasnik 2003, Staum 2005 and ref. therein, a.o.):

- (1) a. I believe (that) Mary did it
 b. I heard about the fact *(that) Mary did it
 [(1b) from Bosković & Lasnik 2003:534, (13)]

The pair in (1) shows that C-omission in English complement clauses is generally accepted with bridge-verbs, but ungrammatical or degraded when the complement clause is (semi)-factive or undergoes some syntactic operation, e.g. preposing/dislocation (cf. Bosković & Lasnik 2003:527). It is however not the case that English C-omission is simply ruled out in island contexts, as other well known facts about relative clauses show (cf. Kayne 2010).

- (2) a. I know the person (that) you met on the bus
 b. I know the person *(that) took the bus with you

The sentence in (2a) shows that the subordinating element can be omitted in non-subject extractions. This is a possibility that is typologically quite widespread (a.o. in Mainland Scandinavian, South-East Asian languages, Natchanan & Amara 2008). By contrast, (2b) shows that *that*-omission in subject extractions is ungrammatical, and provokes garden-path effects (McKoon & Ratcliff 2003). Broadly speaking, subject relative clauses in which the subordination marker can be omitted are typologically restricted (cf. Comrie & Kuteva 2005).

The scope of the investigation that is presented in this paper is restricted to the diachrony of Italian, and related comparative facts. It is no new fact that Modern Italian, which is historically derived from the vernacular spoken in the Tuscan area around Florence, has quite restricted C-omission.

- (3) a. *Penso (che) venga anche Pietro* (Modern Italian)
 Think.1SG that come.SBJV;3PL also Peter
 ‘I think (that) Peter is also coming’
 b. *Maria dice *(che) viene anche Pietro*
 Mary says that come.3PL all.PL
 ‘Mary says that Peter is also coming’
- (4) a. *Conosco la persona *(che) hai incontrato in autobus*
 Know.1SG the person that have.2SG met in bus
 ‘I know the person that you met on the bus’
 b. *Conosco la persona *(che) ha preso l’autobus con te*
 Know.1SG the person that has taken the bus with you
 ‘I know the person that has taken the bus with you’

Notice that in Modern Italian, C-omission is possible in declarative complements only if the embedded verb is in subjunctive mood (3a), whereas C-omission is ungrammatical with indicative mood, even if the matrix predicate is a bridge-verb, as *dire* (say), in (3b).¹ Moreover, C-omission is symmetrically impossible in all types of relative clauses, (4), differently from English and other Germanic languages. The facts illustrated in (3) and (4) above have already been extensively discussed in the work of Cocchi & Poletto (2002), (2005) and, more recently, in Franco (to app.). These works also compare Modern

¹ A connection between subjunctive mood marking and C-omission has been also observed and analyzed in other Romance languages, see e.g. Schneider (1999), and (2007) for Spanish.

Italian to a non-standard counterpart, i.e. Modern Florentine, which is the dialect spoken in Florence and surroundings, also derived from Old Florentine. For convenience, I will henceforth refer to Old and Renaissance Florentine as Old and Renaissance Italian, respectively (whereas Modern Florentine and Modern Italian are kept distinct).

In Modern Florentine, C-omission is possible in a larger set of contexts. Cocchi & Poletto (2005) observe that, differently from Modern Italian, in Modern Florentine C-omission is not sensitive to verbal mood, but is subject to the following conditions: (i) it affects declarative complements (regardless the semantic type of the selecting predicate);² (ii) a functional element (clitic pronoun, negation marker or auxiliary) must precede the inflected verb in the embedded clause, (5a) vs. (5b); (iii) no preverbal non-pronominal subjects, (5c), or adverbials can intervene between the omitted C (___) and the inflected verb.

- (5) a. *Dice ___ lo porta* (Modern Florentine)
 say.3SG ACC;3SG take.IND;3SG
 'He says he will bring it'
 b. *?*Dice ___ porta il libro*
 say.3SG take.IND;3SG the book
 'He says he will bring the book'
 c. **Maria m'ha detto ___ Gianni un ha portato il libro*
 Mary DAT;1SG has said John not has.IND brought the book
 'Mary told me John has not brought the book'
 [Cocchi & Poletto, 2005, 12, 13, 15]

Notice that a Modern Italian sentence equivalent to (5a) is ungrammatical. Cocchi & Poletto explain the difference between Modern Italian and Modern Florentine as a parametric difference concerning the contexts in which Alternative Checking (AC) can take place. Specifically, they argue that the illocution features encoded on the C projection ForceP (cf. Rizzi 1997) may either be checked by lexical insertion of a C-functional element, *che*, or via Agree with another functional element, which is located in the IP left-periphery (cf. (ii) above). In the latter case, *che*-omission is licensed via AC of the features encoded in ForceP, which is performed by such functional element. As Cocchi & Poletto (2005) themselves observe, this account is not straightforwardly applicable to the type of C-omission attested at an earlier stage of the grammar, namely in Renaissance Italian (1350-1500). In several Renaissance Italian corpora C-omission is attested in a much broader set of contexts, including non-finite sentences, purpose, factive, comparative and relative clauses (Wanner 1981, Scorretti 1991, see section 2.2). Relative clauses show a subject/object asymmetry in the frequency of C-omission (as it is illustrated in section 2.2), which cannot be directly explained under the AC proposal of Cocchi & Poletto. Specifically, it is not clear why a non-subject relative-OP would perform AC more frequently than a subject relative-OP. Moreover, the AC account does not seem to properly account for C-omission in other languages. For instance, English *that*-omission affects different types of subordinate clauses and cannot be directly related to AC of Force features. In this respect, it is not clear what could constitute an alternative checker (cf. Jaeger 2005, 2010, Jaeger & Walter 2005, Levy & Jaeger 2005, a.o.).

The investigation presented in this paper tries to identify the conditions allowing for C-omission in Renaissance Italian, with a focus on relative clauses. As mentioned above, C-omission in subject-relative clauses is typologically restricted, thus the question is what

² Notice that C-omission is ungrammatical in semi-factive clauses such as those selected by (negated) "know"-type predicates:

- (i) *Un so *(che/icché) gl'è capitato* (Modern Florentine)
 not know.1SG what.to.him is happened
 'I don't know what happened to him' [Iacopo Garzonio, p.c.]

permits C-omission in subject relative clauses and, more generally, in various types of clauses in a grammar. This issue is explored from a diachronic perspective, by analyzing various parametric changes affecting Italian from its initial stage (Old Italian), into its present stages (Modern Italian and Modern Florentine). I propose that the massive C-omission attested in Renaissance Italian corpora, but not at previous or later diachronic stages, depends on the interplay of various parameters and parametric changes. Specifically, C-omission in relative clauses is possible because the loss of V-to-C combines with a still present active/inactive structural distinction.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 illustrates the relevant facts and changes concerning the possibility of C-omission in Old and Renaissance Italian; section 3 presents an argument for the hypothesis that massive C-omission in Renaissance Italian is due to the loss of V-to-C, and the presence of an active/inactive structural distinction. Section 4 presents further facts from Old French and Old Occitan in support the hypothesis that loss of V-to-C, in combination with an active/inactive alignment, permits C-omission in relative clauses. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Data

In this section I present the relevant data concerning the lexicalization of C in Old Italian (2.1) and Renaissance Italian (2.2). Interestingly, the two diachronic stages differ with respect to both the presence of V-to-C and the possibility of C-omission.

2.1 Old Italian

On a par with other Old Romance languages, Old Italian (around 1200-1400), from which Renaissance Italian, Modern Florentine, and Modern Italian descend, has a so-called “V2 property”, whereby the inflected verb always raises to the C-domain in root clauses³ (cf. Benincà 1984, 2006, Benincà & Poletto 2010, Poletto 2006, Poletto in press, Roberts 1993, 2007, a.o.). This is visible, for instance, in (main) clauses where adverb preposing is followed by Aux-S word order, as in (6), whereas the Modern Italian word order would be Adv-S-Aux, S-Aux-Adv or an order in which the subject follows to the right of the past participle.

- (6) *Primieramente **avea** ella fatta a llui ingiuria* (Old Italian)
 First had she done to him injury
 ‘She had offended him for first’ [Brunetto Latini, *Rettorica*, 116]

Benincà (1984), (2006) convincingly argues that V-to-C is limited to roots contexts, in Old Italian, whereas in subordinate clauses the inflected verb remains in the IP domain, as the frequent pronominal subject – finite V order shows:

- (7) *Poniamo **ch’io** sapesse **che tu vuoi** rubare una buttega*
 Put.1PL that I know.1SG,SBJV that you want.2SG rob a shop
 ‘Let’s assume that I know that you want to rob a shop’
 [Trattati Morali di Albertano da Brescia, 12, 2, 1268]

C-omission is not attested in Old Italian: instead, the complementizer *che* (and its variants *ch’*, *ke*, etc.) may be doubled, as in the example below (cf. Vincent 2006).

- (8) *Trovò **che**, [chi continuo mangiasse nove dì*
 Found C who continuously ate.SBJV nine days
*di petronciani], **che** diverrebbe matto*

³ Differently from Germanic V2, medieval Romance V-to-C allows for more than one constituent in pre-finite V position (see ref. above).

of eggplants C become.COND crazy
 ‘He found out that whoever ate eggplants for nine days in a row would become crazy’
 [Novellino, 35, 208, 2]

C-doubling is a widespread phenomenon across Romance languages, and it is intrinsically diversified for grammar-specific properties. For instance, some Northern Italian Dialects allow for C-doubling only with complement clauses in subjunctive mood (Paoli 2003 for Piedmontese and Ligurian), see (9) and (10). Spanish lexicalizes the same C-form in both positions (Demonte & Fernandez-Soriano 2009), whereas various Southern Italian Dialects lexicalize different forms the two positions (Ledgeway 2003, 2005, D’Alessandro & Ledgeway 2010 a.o), the lower arguably encoding Mood features (Damonte 2011).

- (9) a. *March a serca na fomna **che**, ëd coste robe,* (Turinese)
 Marco SCL looks a woman C of these thing
***ch**’as n’ambrigna*
 C SCL.REFL of.it not.cares.SBJV
 ‘Marco is looking for a woman who doesn’t care about these things’
 b. *Majo a pensa **che** Franchin **ch**’as n’ancorza*
 Mario SCL thinks C Frank C SCL.REFL of.it realizes.SBJV
 ‘Mario thinks that Frank will realize it’ [Paoli 2003, 110:5]

What the C-doubling cases attested in Romance have in common is that some lexical material generally separates the two C occurrences, i.e. these are not adjacent⁴. From a cartographic perspective (cf. Rizzi 1997, Haegeman 2006, a.o.), this fact seems to support the idea that whenever the Topic-Focus field is not activated, the (Sub/)Force-Finiteness system is collapsed into a single head, whereas activation of left-peripheral criterial positions provokes a split in the CP.⁵ Rizzi (1997:312-313) argues, on the basis of English facts, that in case of split CP of a finite clause, Force must lexicalize, whereas Fin has no morphological realization. However, the facts in (8) and (9) show that this is not always the case, since the lower C-position may as well be lexicalized by a morphologically identical functional element, as is also proposed in Belletti (2009, 2012, 2013) for clefts. In other cases, only this position, between the two, is lexicalized, and the outcome is the string: HighC \emptyset – TopP/FocP XP – LowC *che* (Segre 1952, Vincent 2006, Meszler & Samu 2010).

In the Italian dialects mentioned above lexicalization of the lower C in the C-doubling cases seems to be somehow dependent on Mood marking. Franco (2009) also shows that *che*-doubling is generally attested with embedded clauses that are marked with [-*realis*] Mood, i.e. not only when the finite verb is in the subjunctive but also in the conditional or in future (with deontic or epistemic value).

A similar restriction is visible in Northwestern Italian dialects, where *che*-doubling is impossible if the embedded clause is not in the subjunctive (cf. Paoli 2003).

- (10) *U Giani u disa **che** a Maria (***ch**’) a nu mangia de rainocce* (Ligurian)
 The John SCL says C the Mary C SCL not eats.IND of frogs
 ‘John says that Mary does not eat frogs’ [Paoli 2003: 102-107, 1-3]

⁴ Cf. Saab (2011) on anti-adjacency effects of head reduplication.

⁵ This is no new idea. An analysis of C-omission in Modern Spanish along these lines is proposed in Antonelli (2013).

Another option attested in Old Italian is one in which an element dislocated to the left periphery creates a potential context for C-recursion, but the lower C-head is not lexicalized as *che*, cf. (11).

- (11) *Costuma era per lo reame di Francia **che** [l'uomo ch'era degno
Custom was through the kingdom of France C the man C was.IND worth
d'essere disonorato e giustiziato] **sì** andava...
of be.INF dishonored and executed SI went.IND
'In the kingdom of France it was customary that the man worth being dishonored
and executed went...' [Old Florentine, *Novellino*, 27, 192:1]*

In (11) the lower *che* is absent, and we find instead the particle *sì*, analyzed as a CP-expletive located in FocusP (Poletto 2005) or in the lowest CP position (Ledgeway 2008). Crucially, the embedded clause in (11) is in the indicative mood and, differently from the doubling construction in (8), there is no lower *che* introducing it, only *sì*. From a first corpus search, lower *che* and *sì* appear indeed to be in complementary distribution⁶.

What is most relevant to the present discussion are the following facts regarding Old Italian: (i) C-doubling is a way to mark Mood (i.e. *irrealis che...che* vs. indicative *che...(sì)* constructions); (ii) radical C-omission is not attested. By “radical C-omission”, I refer to the possibility to omit the subordinating element in all the available positions in which it can be lexicalized. If “radical C-omission” were possible, the higher and the lower C, in C-doubling contexts, or the only C, in non-doubling contexts (i.e. when there is no dislocation) could be omitted, which is not the case for Old Italian.

To summarize, we have seen so far that Old Italian has both productive V-to-C in root clauses and requires lexicalization of C at least in one of the dedicated CP positions. I argue in section 3 that these two properties are the effect of a specific parametric setting concerning the strength of [finiteness], a feature that is encoded in the CP domain, more specifically on FinP.⁷

2.2 Renaissance Italian

In Renaissance Italian V-to-C is no longer productive: in root clauses the verb raises to the CP domain non-systematically and only in a restricted number contexts, for instance following preposed adverbials, adverbs or adjunct phrases.⁸

- (12) [*Considerate le difficoltà le quali s'hanno a tenere uno stato
Considered the difficulties the which SE have.3PL to keep.INF a state
occupato di nuovo*], **potrebbe** alcuno maravigliarsi...
occupied of new could.3SG anyone be-surprised
'After considering the difficulties that there would be in occupying a state again,
anyone could be surprised...' [P, IV, I]

Moreover, Renaissance Italian displays massive C-omission (Wanner 1981, Scorretti 1991, Cocchi & Poletto 2005), in contrast with both Modern Italian and Modern Florentine, on the one hand (cf. section 1), and Old Italian, on the other (cf. section 2.1).

⁶ In absence of *sì*, the lower C position remains empty, all other conditions being equal to those that apply in (11), cf. Vincent (2006), Franco (2009:202) and Meszler & Samu (2010) for data.

⁷ I have not specified what the C-positions mentioned above are. Following a cartographic perspective, I assume that *che* may lexicalize both the ForceP and FinP heads, which may be split (as in C-doubling clauses) or collapsed (in simple clauses, without dislocations). This would be compatible with the idea that Force and Fin operate in synergy (cf. Rizzi 1997), that is to say that the features that are encoded on FinP are visible to ForceP, as these projections are both part of the CP-phase edge.

⁸ A systematic study of the contexts in which residual V-to-C is attested in Renaissance Florentine has still to be done (cf. also Franco to app.).

The peculiarity of this phenomenon consists in the broad variety of syntactic contexts that it pervades, rather than in the frequency with which it is attested. The frequency of C-omission is potentially dependent on sociolinguistic factors, as the variation among texts belonging to different literary genres suggests. However, it is difficult to assess what ultimately determines a higher frequency of C-omission in a corpus rather than in another one, due to the limitation of available data and information.

With respect to its pervasivity, C-omission in Renaissance Italian can be easily detected in several clause-types and syntactic contexts. Already Scorretti (1991) reports, along the lines of Wanner (1981), that C-omission is attested both in finite, (14)-(16), and non-finite clauses, the latter otherwise normally introduced by the complementizer forms *di* (of), as in (13), or *per* (for), which are used in control clauses, in Modern Italian.⁹

- (13) *Cercassi __ torli*
 tried.1SG;SBJV take.INF.ACC;3PL
 ‘I tried to take them’ [Mandragola; Cocchi & Poletto 2005:25]
- (14) *Mi dice __ è assa’ tempo non sentì novelle di te*
 DAT;1SG tells is much time not hear.3SG;PAST news of you
 ‘He tells me it’s been a long time since he got news from you’ [AMS, II, 35]
- (15) *...Acciò __ le tenessino per sua sicurtà e gloria*
 So ACC;3PL keep.3PL;SBJV;PAST for their safety and glory
 ‘So that they kept them for their own safety and glory’ [P, VII, 39]
- (16) *Era stato più tempo __ non s’era usato*
 Was been more time not SE was used
 ‘He employed more time than it was (generally) used’ [VBV, 56, I, 59]

As the examples in (13)-(16) show, C-omission is wide-spread in Renaissance Italian, by contrast to Old Italian. At this stage C-omission is not restricted as it is in Modern Italian or Modern Florentine, since neither Mood marking nor the conditions given in (i)-(iii) of section 1 for Modern Florentine constrain its distribution.

A separate discussion must be reserved to C-omission in relative clauses, which is the main focus of this paper. In most modern Romance languages C-omission is usually ungrammatical in relative clauses. The ungrammaticality regards symmetrically both subject and non-subject extractions, as the French sentences in (17) show (cf. (4) in section 1 for Italian, and section 4 for a comparison with Old French, cf. Taraldsen 2001 on the *que/qui* alternation, Belletti 2009:233-236 for acquisition facts, a.o.).

- (17) a. *J’ai parlé avec l’homme *(que) tu viens de rencontrer* (Modern French)
 I have spoken with the man that you come of meet.INF
 ‘I have spoken with the man that you have just met’
 b. *J’ai parlé avec l’homme *(qui) à été ici*
 I have spoken with the man who has been here
 ‘I have spoken with the man who has been here’

Instead, many Romance languages, such as Old Occitan, Old French, Old Spanish and Old Portuguese, display C-omission also in relative clauses, at a previous stage of the grammar that roughly corresponds to the Italian Renaissance period (Scorretti 1991 and

⁹ These complementizers allow for clitic climbing in Old Italian (Cardinaletti 2010, Franco & Migliori 2014), which suggests the possibility that they do not embed a full CP but they are rather functional heads. For a proposal concerning Old Italian clitic climbing see Kastelein (2012).

ref. therein).¹⁰ Renaissance Italian equally displays C-omission both in subject (18) and non-subject extractions (19), with a significant asymmetry that limits C-omission in subject extractions, cf. table 1, which shows data from three texts (cf. Sources, this paper).

- (18) a. *Che è faccenda ____ tocca a noi*
that is issue touch.3SG to us
'That is an issue we have to deal with'
- b. *Non gli lascerò mancar nulla di quello*
not DAT;3SG let.FUT.1SG miss.INF nothing of that
____ mi fia possibile
DAT;1SG become.SUBJ possible
'I will not allow him to be deprived of any of the things I will be able to get'
[AMS, Wanner 1981]
- c. *Per quello ____ s'aperteneva alla dignità della Chiesa*
for that SE belonged to.the dignity of the Church
'For what belong to the dignity of the Church' [VBV, 22, (1, 24)]
- (19) a. *Se la divisione ____ fece coi viniziani di Lombardia...*
If the division made.3SG with.the Venetians of Lombardy
'If the division of Lombardy he made with the Venetians...'
- b. *Non si maraviglierà alcuno della facilità ____ ebbe*
Not REFL surprise.FUT.3SG anyone of.the easiness had.3SG
Alessandro a tenere lo stato di Asia
Alexander to keep.INF the state of Asia
'Nobody will be surprised of the easiness with which Alexander kept (the domain of) Asia'
[P, 4, l. 26]
- c. *Et prese il breviario ____ aveva in mano*
and took the book-of-hours had in hand
'And he took the book of hours that he had in his hands'
[VBV, 24, (1, 26)]

¹⁰ There is still no systematic study comparing the period in which C-omission was productive also in relative clauses in the various Old Romance languages in which it is attested.

Table 1: C-omission in relative clauses in Renaissance Florentine

P corpus	REL TOTAL	REL -C	REL +C	HEADLESS REL + C
SUBJ REL	100	0	82	18
OBJ REL	48	3	43	2
Total	149	3	125	20
% C -OMISSION		REL -C	REL +C	HEADLESS REL + C
SUBJ REL		0%	66%	90%
OBJ REL		100%	34%	10%
% TOTAL		2%	84%	14%
AMS corpus	REL TOTAL	REL -C	REL +C	HEADLESS REL + C
SUBJ REL	71	7	59	5
OBJ REL	75	29	46	0
Total	146	36	105	5
% C -OMISSION		REL -C	REL +C	HEADLESS REL + C
SUBJ REL		19%	56%	100%
OBJ REL		81%	44%	0%
% TOTAL		25%	72%	3%
VBV corpus	REL TOTAL	REL -C	REL +C	HEADLESS REL + C
SUBJ REL	171	32	126	13
OBJ REL	106	53	53	0
Total	277	85	179	13
% C -OMISSION		REL -C	REL +C	HEADLESS REL + C
SUBJ REL		38%	70%	100%
OBJ REL		62%	30%	0%
% TOTAL		31%	65%	5%

Table 1 shows the number of C-omissions in subject and object¹¹ relative clauses in three Renaissance Italian corpora, which are ordered from the most recent to the oldest corpus (cf. Sources, this paper, for complete references). By “REL –C” I refer to headed relative clauses with C-omission; “REL +C” are headed relative clauses with a subordination marker and “HEADLESS REL +C” are headless relative clauses with a subordination marker. There are no cases of headless relative clauses with C-omission, following the expectations (see sections 3 and 5).

The table shows that attested cases of C-omission in relative clauses are at most 31% of all the relative clauses (see “% Total” row: 2% in P, 25% in AMS and 31% in VBV). This piece of data indicates that C-omission is *not* the preferred option in any of the examined corpora, despite the significant degree of variation among them. It is quite difficult to assess what is the reason for such variation, namely whether only diachronic or also diaphasic factors are at play. From a first analysis it seems that C-omission is more limited in texts belonging to a higher/more formal register (P is a political treatise) by contrast to texts of a more colloquial/informal style (AMS are letters, VBV biographies). Another factor that may potentially play a role for the frequency of C-omission is of diachronic nature: the most recent corpus among those analyzed (P) is the one with less C-omission, which might indicate that C-omission is disappearing already around 1500.

¹¹ With “object” I more precisely refer to non-subject relative clauses, thus also oblique and adjunct extractions.

Nonetheless, further data collection is needed in order to formulate an empirically grounded hypothesis.¹²

From a comparison between the numbers reported in the rows corresponding to the subject (Rel. S) and the object (Rel. O) relative clauses in each corpus, a subject/object asymmetry becomes immediately evident. C-omission is much more frequent in object relative clauses (3 cases in P, 29 in AMS and 53 in VBV) than in subject relative clauses (no cases in P, 7 in AMS and 32 in VBV). The asymmetry can be quantified if we look the percentage of C-omission in subject and object relative clauses with respect to the total of subject and object relative clauses. In P, 100% of the clauses that display C-omission are object relative clauses, whereas in the other two texts the percent of object relative clauses on the total of clauses with C-omission is a little lower: 81% in AMS and 62% in VBV (see cyphers in bold in the REL –C column). In any case, far more than 50% of the clauses that display C-omission are object relative clauses in all three texts. If we look at subject relative clauses, we see that its percent on the total of clauses with C-omission drops proportionally: only 38% in VBV, 19% in AMS and 0% in P. Conversely, subjects represent the most frequent type of items that are relativized in clauses that are introduced by a C element (66% in P; 56% in AMS and 70% in VBV).

The results can be summarized in the following observations:

- (i) C-omission is possible in relative clauses, and more frequent in object relative clauses, than in subject relative clauses.
- (ii) C-omission is never the preferred option: only in VBV is there an equal number of C-less and C relative clauses, in the case of object extraction (53 C-less and 53 with C, see table 1).
- (iii) Subject headless relative clauses are more frequent than object ones, and there is no case of C-omission.
- (iv) Although C-omission is sporadic in headed relative clauses on the subject, it is attested.

Notice that C-less subject relative clauses represent a potential processing ambiguity in a language like (Renaissance) Italian, cf. (18) above, cf. (McKoon & Ratcliff 2003). The open issue at this point is how to explain the presence of C-omission in subject relative clause at all, in Renaissance Florence, against the typological scarcity of this type of sentences.

3. The analysis

In this section I offer an analysis of C-omission in relative clauses that accounts for the subject/object asymmetry as a result of a specific parametric setting according to which arguments respond to an active/inactive alignment in Old and Renaissance Italian. The proposal further accounts for the frequency, and thus for the optionality, of C-omission as a result of parametric change from a system with V-to-C to a system without V-to-C.

3.1. Parametric change and C-omission

As mentioned in section 2.2, V-to-C, which characterizes the Old Italian system, becomes residual in the Renaissance period. I take this fact to be an indication for an underlying parametric variation concerning the feature-specification of the CP domain. More specifically, I assume that V-to-C is productive in grammars where the lowest C-head, Fin⁰ (Rizzi 1997), encodes a strong (*) feature, and is thus Fin*. FinP encodes [finiteness], which permits the interpretation of temporal/locative coordinates and nominal deixis (cf. Bianchi 2003, Sigurðsson 2004, 2011). This means that time and location of the event/state expressed by the verb, as well as the person features of the arguments are anchored to the discourse context, and thus, interpreted by checking

¹² It is worth mentioning that there is no syntactically parsed corpus for either Old or Renaissance Italian, so all the texts have to be manually parsed.

[finiteness] on Fin*P. Along the lines of Chomsky (1993, 1995), Lasnik (1999), Biberauer and Richards (2006), I assume that in systems where a functional head bears a strong feature, checking requires overt Merge on that head.¹³ This explains why in Old Italian there is V-to-C and no C-omission: at this stage, the system has *Fin, which means that [finiteness] must be checked by overt Merge. This is done by V-to-C in root clauses, and by C-merger in subordinates, under the assumption that subordinating elements such as *che* in Italian may lexicalize Fin and Force (cf. Belletti 2009, 2012, 2013, for the CP of clefts, Ledgeway 2005 and Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007 for C-movement).

In Renaissance Florentine, a weakening from Fin* to Fin, results in a loss of the requirement that the features encoded on Fin be checked via overt Merge. The transition from Fin* to Fin is visible in the loss of V-to-C, i.e. the loss of the trigger for feature-checking movement of finite V to the CP domain. In this sense, residual cases of V-to-C could be accounted for as cases of marked illocution, where the feature requiring checking via Merge is not encoded on FinP but on another (higher) functional head, e.g. Topic, Force, etc. (cf. Benincà & Poletto 2004, a.o.).

I also take the Fin*>Fin parametric change to be the cause of C-omission in Renaissance Italian (cf. the declaratives in (13)-(15)). At this stage, C-omission in declarative clauses is not restricted to clauses marked with [-*realis*] Mood morphology, as is the case for Old and Modern Italian.¹⁴ Put differently, the parametric change affecting Renaissance Italian has C-omission as a “side-effect”: once the overt Merge condition on Fin falls, V-to-C is lost and C-merger is no longer required.

Notice that C-omission is just optional at this stage, not obligatory. In other words, C-Merger is no longer required, but still grammatical and, as such, possible. This optionality resembles in a sense the possibility of overt pronominal subjects in null subject languages, with the difference that, for null subject languages, the insertion of overt subject pros is pragmatically restricted, whereas the conditions for inserting an overt C in Renaissance Italian are not clear (i.e. it is not known whether C-insertion depends on sociolinguistic factors, e.g. by representing a more formal/accurate register, cf. above). Renaissance Italian can thus exploit two options: one with C-omission, which depends on the loss of the Merge requirement resulting from Fin*>Fin shift. A second option, with C-Merge, simply as a result of a previous grammaticalization imposed by a Fin* system. Spell-out of the C-head is however still possible under the new parametrization of FinP. Given that the innovative option, C-omission, never becomes more productive than C-insertion (see section 2.1 and table 2 below), C-omission does not constitute relevant input for developing C-omission in Modern Florentine and Italian (cf. section 4.2).

Table 2: C-omission in various subordinate clauses

	P corpus	AMS corpus
Total finite subordinate clauses	231	125
C-omission cases	4	34
Percentage C-omission	1,53%	27%

According to Cocchi & Poletto (2005), in the modern varieties C-omission is indeed limited to contexts where AC can be performed (cf. section 1). I address the issue of the diachrony of C-omission after the Renaissance period in section 4.2, whereas in the following section I offer an account for C-omission in relative clauses.

¹³ According to Lasnik (1999), strong features require overt Merge in order to avoid crash at PF.

¹⁴ Cocchi & Poletto (2005) propose, in their analysis, that AC concerns the [Force], rather than the [Fin] feature, however, there is independent support (cf. Belletti 2001b, Damonte 2011) for thinking that [Mood] may be encoded in the low (not the high) CP periphery or at least that it is local to FinP, rather than ForceP. Beside the fact that my proposal is not based on AC, I assume that Force and Fin are in fact a single head in a subordinate clause in which the left periphery is not split, so this structural issue does not even arise.

3.2 Active/inactive alignment and C-omission in relative clauses

A characteristic that remains more or less unchanged up to the whole Italian Renaissance period regards the alignment of arguments. Ledgeway (2012: 236) observes that “in the passage from classical Latin to Romance there is initially a notable decline in the nominative/accusative orientation of the nominal and verbal system, paralleled by a corresponding expansion in the range of the active/inactive alignment in the verbal and nominal domains”. The consequences of such realignment are observable at verbal, nominal and clausal levels, as is visible in the cases of past participle agreement, auxiliary selection, bare plural NPs, and word order, typically pre- and postverbal subjects, depending on the thematic role they cover (see Ledgeway 2012:335-339 and ref. therein). As is also reported in La Fauci (1988), Formentin (1996), Parry (2005), and Ledgeway (2009: 963–7), Ledgeway (2012:308) further observes that the active/inactive distinction is also marked on the nominal morphology at the level of complementation. The Latin NOM/ACC distinction that is visible in the alternation between QUI “who” vs. QUEM/QUOD “whom/which” is substituted, in early Romance, by the forms *qui/chi* vs. *que/che*, which display an active/inactive orientation. That is, these forms distinguish the agentive argument (S_A/A) from the object and the non-agentive subjects (S_O/O), respectively. This distinction is realized in some old vernaculars of the Italian peninsula, such as old Northwestern varieties, (19a), (19b), (19c), (19e), and Old Neapolitan, (19d).

- (19) a. *A quella santa inperarixe **chi** de lo mundo è guiarixe* (Old Genovese)
to that holy empress who of the world is guide
'To that holy empress who leads the world'
[Anon. gen 98.31–2, from Ledgeway 2012:308]
- b. *A questa cità **que** avea num Iherico* (Old Piedmontese)
to this city which had name Jericho
'To this city which was called Jericho'
[Serm. sub. 246.12–13, ibid.]
- c. *Quilli **ke** sono andai* (Old Lombardian)
those who are gone
'Those who have gone'
[PSPDI 28.30-31, ibid.]
- d. *Chillo **che** piscia raro* (Old Neapolitan)
that.one who pisses rarely
'he who urinates rarely'
[Bagni 382, ibid.]
- e. *Som quella **che** lo portay* (Old Piedmontese)
I.am that.one who him= I.carried
'I am the one who carried him (in my womb)' [SCSG 33.18, ibid.]

Differently from Old North Western vernaculars and Old Neapolitan in which the *qui/chi* vs. *que/che* alternation is morphologically marked, Old and Renaissance Italian and other Tuscan varieties display no morphologically distinct C-form for A/S_As of headed relative clauses, which would correspond to the form *chi* of those varieties.

Benincà & Cinque (2010) distinguish the various forms that are attested in Old and Renaissance Italian on the basis of the semantic features [+/-human], [+/-animate], and observe that only the extremes are morphologically realized, namely either forms that bear [+human] or forms that bear [-animate]. The various forms that are attested in Old and Renaissance Italian are thus *chi*, *che* and *cui* similarly to other Italic vernaculars, but they have a different feature specification, as is reported in table 3 below (cf. Benincà & Cinque 2010:437, table 12.1).

Table 3: Relative subordination forms in Old and Renaissance Italian

Old/Renaissance Florentine	<i>Chi</i>	<i>Che</i>	<i>Cui</i>
<i>Interrogative</i> <i>Headless relative</i>	+ human S_A/A	- animate S_O/O	+ human S_O/O
<i>Headed relative</i>	-	- animate	+/- human/animate

As Benincà & Cinque (2010) observe, only pronouns, not complementizers, can be sensitive to the +human/-animate opposition. They accordingly identify two possible usages for *che*:

(i) As a pronoun, when following a preposition. In this case it is always referred to a [-animate] antecedent, as *bastone* (=stick) in (20).

- (20) *Uno bastone con che s'apogiava perch'era debole*
 a stick with that REFL point because was weak
 'A stick with which he sustained himself because he was weak'
 [*Fiori e vite de' filosafi*, 9, 4-5, in Benincà & Cinque 2010: 472, (6)]

(ii) As a complementizer, when it does not follow any preposition and it introduces a relative clause on the subject or on the object. In this case, "*che* is insensitive to the semantic +human/-animate distinction because it can also introduce a relative clause on a [+human] antecedent" (Benincà & Cinque 2010:473, my translation).

- (21) *Andò alli altri giovani che stavano a ricevere l'acqua piovana...*
 Went to.the other youngsters that stayed to receive the water rainy
 'He went up to the other youngsters that were staying under the rain'
 [*Novellino*, 4, 16-17, in Benincà & Cinque 2010: 473]

For this reason, Benincà & Cinque conclude that *che*, in a sentence like (21) where it introduces a relative clause on an animate subject (*altri giovani*), is to be analyzed as a complementizer following an abstract pronoun (2010:473).

The existence of *che* as a complementizer (cf. (ii) above) means that the *che* that is employed in relative clauses is in fact syncretic with the complementizer *che* that introduces declarative complement clauses. We have already seen in section 2.2 that declarative complementizers can be omitted in Renaissance Italian, and in section 3.1 I have argued that this is the by-product of a parametric change from *Fin to Fin. C-omission in relative clauses in Renaissance Italian can thus be explained as a consequence of the syncretism between the declarative *che* and the relative *che*, which are basically the same complementizer form with two different usages (cf. Hendery 2012 for a typological overview of the complementation strategies in relative clauses). Put differently, because declarative *che* can be omitted, relative *che* can also be omitted.

Nonetheless, this is expected to hold only for those cases in which *che* is a complementizer, not a pronoun. That is to say, prepositional relative clauses such as (20) should not allow for C-omission at any diachronic stage (i.e. "*uno bastone (con) s'apogiava*" = not attested). Moreover, C-omission should not affect the subordinating form of headless relative clauses, because in these clauses the C-form is in fact pronominal (e.g. *chi*, cf. table 3), not a complementizer. This expectation is also borne out by facts, as is mentioned in section 2.2 (headless relative clauses with C-omission is unattested).

However, an explanation purely based on such syncretism cannot be the full story. According to what has been just proposed, *che*+abstract pro can introduce both subject

and object relative clauses, thus *che* omission should be equally possible for both types of extraction, in this perspective. Instead, Renaissance Florentine C-omission in relative clauses displays a subject/object asymmetry (cf. table 2), which is so far left unexplained. In order to account for this asymmetry, I have looked more attentively at the semantic theta role of the antecedent: the asymmetry apparently concerns subjects vs. objects, but as is discussed at the beginning of this section, Old and Renaissance Italian distinguish their arguments on the basis of an active/inactive opposition. Since this distinction is clearly visible in the morphosyntax of relative pronouns in some varieties (cf. Old North Western dialects and Old Neapolitan), we can expect that a similar distinction be somehow marked also in coeval Tuscan varieties. We have seen above that this marking does not concern the morphology of the subordinating element, as this is an invariable complementizer. I will argue below that the active/inactive distinction is visible on the possibility of C-omission itself.

If we take a look back at table 1, we can see that the cases of C-omission in subject relative clauses are 7 in AMS and 32 in VBV (no cases in the P corpus). Interestingly, the extracted subject in these clauses has the following properties:

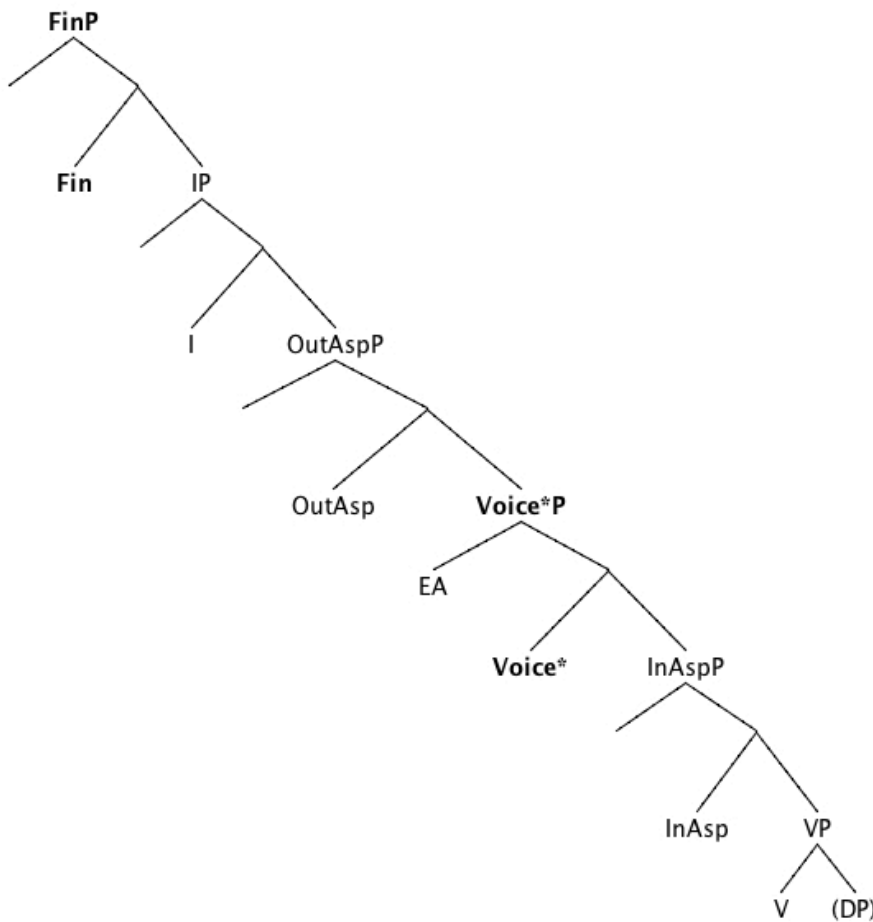
- (i) it is either [neuter] or [feminine] (e.g. an abstract/inanimate entity, as in (18) and (22a) or a feminine argument, as in (22b));
 - (ii) it is non-agentive (e.g. the subject of an inactive predicate), as in (23).
- (22) a. ...*Come si vede ancora in Grecia nel luogo* ____ *si chiama i campi Filippi*
How IMP sees still in Greece in.the place REFL call.3SG the field Filippi
‘How one may still see in Greece, in the place that is called the Filippi fields’
[VBV, 17, (1,19)]
- b. *Poi ci venne quella ischiavetta di Barzalona* ____ *è migliorata*
Then to.us came that.FSG slave.FSG of Barcelona is improved
‘Then there came to us that little slave from Barcelona who has improved’
[AMS, X, 118]
- (23) *Fece venire Papa Eugenio tutti e’ dotti uomini* ____ *erano in Italia*
Made.3SG come.INF Pope E. all the educated men were in Italy
‘Pope Eugene gathered all the educated men who were in Italy’
[VBV, 15, (1,17)]

The formulation of conditions i) and ii) above is intended to capture the distribution of C-omission in relative clauses (and more, generally, in extraction contexts).¹⁵ Following a recent proposal by Franco & Migliori (2014), I argue that the active/inactive distinction is given by a parametrization of VoiceP. If the predicate takes an external argument (EA) that is marked as [+agent], Voice is projected, and the EA is merged in its specifier (Kratzer 1996 et seq., Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1999, 2003, 2004 et seq. Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer 2006). Franco & Migliori (2014) provide empirical support to the claim that Voice, when projected, is always * in Old Italian. This is visible in various syntactic phenomena that involve movement of some lexical elements to the low-phase edge (widespread clitic climbing, VP-ellipsis and object or XP-low scrambling result from the presence of Voice*, cf. Franco & Migliori 2014, Poletto in press). The presence of Voice* marks the low phase-edge and the material that is structurally lower than the phase-head (Voice*) becomes invisible to probing operations from higher structural positions (cf. split-intransitivity agreement, Franco & Migliori 2014, cf. Belletti 2001a, 2006, Bentley 2006), unless it reaches the low-phase edge, which may host several projections (cf. Belletti 2004, 2005 et seq.). This * property of Voice is

¹⁵ At this point it is still not possible to establish whether both i) and ii) or whether i) or ii) must hold. For a discussion over the possibility that i) and ii) are hierarchically ranked see the end of this section and section 3.3.

maintained also in Renaissance Italian, which still distinguishes active and inactive structures. Active structures are thus biphasic (figure 1): they project both a low phase (vP) boundary, Voice*P, where the agentive EA is merged, and a high phase (CP) boundary, where nominal deixis identifies the person features of the (agentive) subject, which are thus interpreted in relation to the discourse context, (cf. section 3.1, first paragraph).

Figure 1: Active structure¹⁶



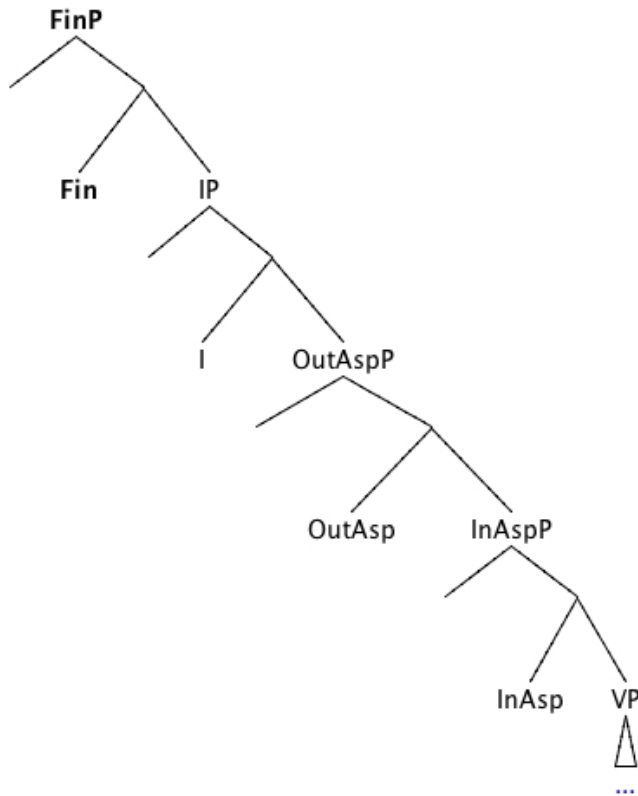
Merger of an agentive EA thus imposes that the EA be identified by the end of the following phase (CP), by recovering its (phi-)features. In the case of subject extractions, these features are directly interpreted on the higher phase head, Fin (cf. Rizzi & Shlonsky 2007). Recall that in Renaissance Italian, Fin is no longer *. However, visibility on Fin is induced from its probing operation onto Voice*P (cf. below), given that the low-phase edge is visible to the higher phase edge. This results in a sort of CP/vP-phase parallelism, in the flavor of Poletto (2005).

By contrast, inactive predicates do not project any Voice*P, since they do not take any agentive EA. As a consequence, inactive structures lack the low-(vP)-phase boundary

¹⁶ The structure given in figure 1 is reduced to the most relevant projections for convenience. Notice that Voice*P creates opacity between Inner and Outer Aspect (cf. Franco & Migliori 2014).

(figure 2), which results in a transparency of the event structure to probing operations from the higher phase-edge.

Figure 2: Inactive structure



Put differently, morphologic visibility conditions that are imposed on a lower phase (Voice*P, recall that * requires overt Merge) cannot be ignored at the next phase level (FinP, in Renaissance Italian). Put differently, let us assume that Voice*P is projected and lexically realized in virtue of its * property. When the higher phase head, Fin, probes down, it will be sensitive to the visibility condition on Voice* as to a requirement of overt morphological realization that is necessary for recoverability. This means that the lexical material that is first merged in Voice*P must receive a morphological realization by the end of the higher phase, otherwise the reference of the extracted argument cannot be recovered, cf. the discussion in section 3.3.

For this reason, extraction of agentive EAs, but not of unmarked ([-masculine; -human] and/or structurally lower) arguments, requires a lexicalization of FinP. In Renaissance Italian relative clauses, this asymmetry is visible in C-omission: the morphological visibility requirement that is imposed on FinP for the extraction of agentive EAs is formally satisfied by merging an overt C-head (*che*), whereas this requirement does not hold for inactive subjects, as is illustrated in (i), (ii), (22) and (23) above. Inactive arguments, i.e. structurally lower arguments, can be extracted without incurring in visibility requirements on Voice*P, thus C-omission (at the FinP level) is possible.¹⁷

¹⁷ There are basically two syntactic contexts for the extraction inactive arguments: either the structure is inactive and lacks Voice*P (fig. 2), in which case no visibility condition is imposed, or the structure is active and a non-subject is extracted. In this case, the phase-edge is expected to create an opaque domain for probing operations, however objects can still move to the lower phase-edge in virtue of its * property. From there the object is visible to the higher phase and can be extracted. In this case the object would bear

Before moving to the next section, let me briefly outline an issue that concerns the conditions i) and ii) for C-omission, which I have given above. With respect to the relation between condition i) and ii), a first hypothesis is that an argument is interpreted as [+agentive] if it is (lexically or morphologically) [+masculine; +human], *and* it is merged in SpecVoice*P, where it arguably values and checks a [uAgent] feature.¹⁸ All other cases are interpreted as “unmarked”. These should be cases in which the argument is [-masculine; -human], because it is either feminine or neuter, and/or inanimate, AND it cannot be merged in SpecVoice*P, because of the predicate structure. However, this restriction seems to be too strong.

A second hypothesis is that either condition i) or condition ii) (or both) must hold, however this automatically excludes the possibility that [+feminine; +human] arguments are agentive, and, as such, impose C-realization. Both these hypotheses are discussed in greater detail in the next subsection.

3.3. *A note on the recoverability of extracted arguments*

In Renaissance Italian, the shift from Fin* to Fin brings along a number of syntactic consequences, among which the fact that null subjects are no longer licensed as either null topics or by morphological spell-out of the respective inflectional phi-features on the verb, under V-to-Fin* (i.e. morphological merger on Fin*P), as happens in Old Italian. In Renaissance Italian, the loss of a morphological realization requirement on FinP coincides with the possibility for the subject phi-features to be recovered via the inflection morphology on the verb in IP. Recall that nominal *deixis*, which formalizes the recoverability requirement at the phase-edge, is encoded in FinP (cf. section 3.1), which is the structural position onto which person features are interpreted.

Following Camacho (2013:96ff.), who, in turn, capitalizes on Cole (2009), I assume that the recoverability of subjects resorts to different mechanisms depending on the language. Specifically, Cole (2009) and Camacho (2013) propose a recoverability scale according to which “recoverability first resorts to morphological identification, then to identification by antecedent and finally by inserting an overt pronoun” (Camacho 2013:96). This means that some languages that do not resort to morphological identification may allow null subjects via contextual recovery, i.e. when an antecedent is given in the context or the subject is the topic, in which case a null subject is an instance of topic-drop. This seems to be what happens in certain root clauses in Germanic (V2) languages and, arguably, in Old Italian. In fact, null subjects are not only attested in Old Italian root clauses, but also

the visibility requirement that is imposed on Voice*P. The prediction is thus that C-omission is not licensed for object extractions in active-transitive structures, unless the visibility condition is satisfied otherwise. This alternative is represented by morphological object agreement on the past participle (given that merger on Fin is not obligatory in absence of *), which is obligatorily triggered in OV orders in Old Italian (cf. Egerland 1996, Poletto in press), i.e. when objects are fronted to a vP-peripheral position (cf. Belletti 2004 *et seq.*). I have checked whether there is agreement marking in object relative clauses with C-omission in the data I have collected. In order to see whether agreement takes place I have considered only feminine or plural object extractions, since M.SG. agreement is morphologically default. While object agreement is usually optional in VO orders as well as with object extractions with C, object relative clauses with C-omission with a non-finite past participle verb *all* show object agreement. I take this to mean that the morphological visibility condition for recoverability does hold but instead of being satisfied in Fin, it is satisfied with verbal agreement. This possibility is compatible with the proposal of a parametric change from Fin* to Fin. The attested cases are not very many so it is not possible to determine whether this finding is just a coincidence. In absence of a quantitatively more consistent support I refrain from drawing any conclusion at this point.

¹⁸ The exact feature-checking mechanism on the low phase edge projection is not crucial to the present analysis thus I do not go into further details nor do I take a specific stand in this respect. A still open issue is whether only [+masculine] among the gender features may qualify as potential Agent, and, if so, why. A possible answer might be related to the frequency of male, rather than female actors in old texts (see end of section 3.3).

in subordinate clauses, i.e. in absence of V-to-Fin*. Specifically, Old Italian permits subject pro-drop with [3Pn] subjects in embedded clauses (Benincà 1994), which can be attributed to the fact that [3Pn] is actually non-person and, as such, it does not require morphological visibility for interpretation on Fin*P. Some instances of null [1/2Pn] are equally attested, and these are all cases in which recoverability is guaranteed by the presence of an antecedent in the discourse, i.e. they are cases of topic-drop.¹⁹ Once the Italian system loses the morphological visibility requirement associated with * on Fin, which is satisfied by V in Fin*, recoverability of phi-features becomes possible via morphological visibility of verbal inflectional features, which are no longer required to be spelled-out in FinP. This is what happens in Renaissance Italian²⁰. Camacho (2013:97) observes that languages differ with respect to the type of morphological information that they require to identify a null subject. He specifically refers to a Minimal Morphological Threshold (MMT) as to “the minimal set of values overtly encoded in the morphology that a language requires to identify a null subject”. Accordingly, he shows that some languages require only [Pn], among the phi-features, whereas other languages also require [Number] and [Gender].

In line with Harley and Ritter (2002) and Béjar (2003), Camacho (2013) further assumes that nominal features are hierarchically ranked, as is illustrated in figure 3 below. For the present purposes I will just concentrate on the distinction that concerns [3Pn] referents, which are the arguments that are most typically extracted in relative clauses.

Figure 3: Hierarchical ranking of nominal features, from Harley & Ritter (2002:8).

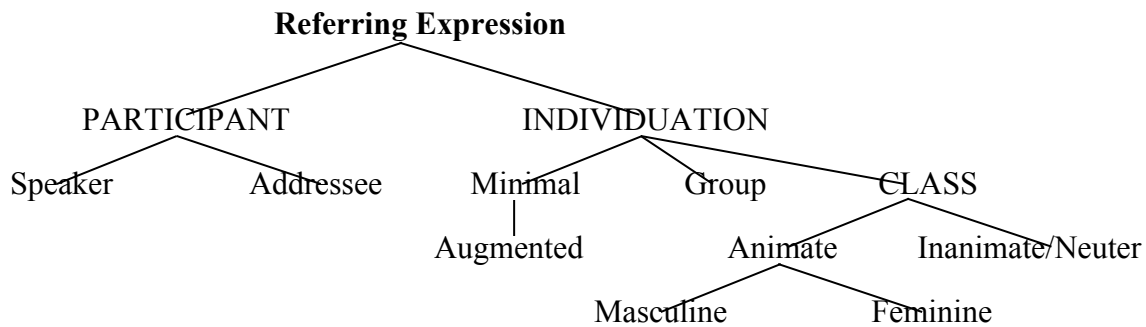


Figure 3 above gives a representation of the hierarchy of the features of referential expressions. Crucially, [3Pn] is “non-person”, which corresponds to the fact that [3Pn] referents are not participants in the discourse. Béjar (2009:49) remarks that “3rd persons subcategorize in more ways than can be represented by the binary contrast between participants and nonparticipants”. Specifically, a first opposition within a class is given by the marking of animacy, which has been argued to play a role in the morphosyntax of C-forms in Old Italic (cf. Parry 2005, Benincà & Cinque 2010, above). In line with Benincà & Cinque (2010), one may thus postulate that, for C-forms, [animate] in figure 3 also implies [+human].²¹ Following Harley & Ritter’s hierarchy, referents that are [+animate]

¹⁹ This is just the result of a first analysis but a more systematic study of the recoverability conditions for Old Italian null subjects is needed. I refrain from discussing the issue further at this point, since it is not directly pertinent to the analysis of C-omission in Renaissance Italian.

²⁰ Renaissance Italian presents a higher rate of overt pronominal subjects than Modern Italian (cf. Franco, to app.). It seems, in this respect, that before morphological identification becomes the standard strategy of recoverability, Renaissance Italian still makes use of overt pronoun insertion. Again, a systematic study of the conditions of recoverability for null subjects in Renaissance Italian is needed.

²¹ Recall that Benincà & Cinque (2010) talk about a [+human]/[-animate] opposition for the lexicalization of C-forms, but such opposition is not specified in Harley & Ritter’s hierarchy. This is not a big issue, since the only pronominal C-forms that lexicalize exclusively [+human] referents (and not [-animate] ones) are

further divide into [feminine] and [masculine].

As was sketched at the end of section 3.2, one first hypothesis it to assume that [masculine] is the semantically marked form for class, according to which we can derive the [masculine] vs. [feminine]/[neuter/inanimate] opposition that Parry (2005) identifies in Old Italo-Romance varieties. This would in turn mean that the MMT for the identification of a [3Pn] referent in these varieties includes gender features, as seems to be confirmed by split-intransitivity agreement patterns, which are still visible in Modern Italian and several dialects of the Italian peninsula (cf. Bentley 2006 and ref. therein, a.o.). If [masculine] is indeed the marked form, the recoverability of a [masculine] S_A/A will require morphological spell-out at the higher phase (cf. section 3.2). This means that, in case of active EA extraction, FinP must receive morphological realization, which is realized as spell-out of the Fin head with a C-form. Notice that this morphological realization of Fin is thus not imposed by the featural make-up of Fin (no * imposes lexical Merge after the shift $\text{Fin}^* > \text{Fin}$), but by a recoverability requirement on marked arguments.

At this point a legitimate question is: why is verbal inflection not enough, if null subjects are already licensed in *absence* of V-to-Fin in Renaissance Italian? A relevant observation in this respect is that C-omission and null-subject licensing via inflectional morphology coexist in the Italian system only for a relatively limited period of time. It is possible that at the time in which C-omission in relative clauses is productive, null subjects are not yet fully recoverable by means of the information on the verbal inflectional morphology, as is visible in the still high frequency of overt subjects pronouns in Renaissance Italian texts (cf. fn. 18 above). This would in turn mean that verbal inflectional morphology is not yet sufficient to guarantee the recoverability of extracted arguments, more specifically of extracted (marked) subjects.

Notice that the morphological visibility requirement imposing the spell-out of Fin does not apply if the extracted argument enters a lower position in the thematic structure, i.e. it does not happen with S_O/Os (cf. also 23 above). In (24), the subject is not agentive.

- (24) *Uno giovane ____ istava con meser Gianozzo Maneti*
A boy stayed with mister G.M.
“A boy who was with mr. Gianozzo Maneti” [VBV, 88, 1,92]

Another important point is that verbal morphology, while expressing phi- and TMA features, does not directly lexicalize inner aspect features. This means that agentivity is not visible on verbal inflectional morphology, but only deducible from the verb semantics, with the sole exception of past participle agreement, which is triggered with raised O_s and S_O subjects. Agentivity is thus inferred from the lack of agreement on the past participle, but since no morphological marking permits an active/inactive distinctions in non-perfective contexts, the visibility requirement on Fin in active contexts cannot be guaranteed solely by verb inflection.

Under this first hypothesis, referents bearing unmarked features, such as [feminine] or [neuter/inanimate], should not in general require morphological realization, by contrast to [masculine] S_A/A . This possibility is based on the fact that a) [neuter/inanimate] arguments are not agentive, since they cannot perform any intentional action; b) [feminine] arguments are frequently inactive (e.g. abstract nouns, cf. *faccenda*, in (18a) above).

Albeit female protagonists are generally few (cf. Parry 2005:217), it is nonetheless plausible that [feminine] agentive arguments exist. In the analyzed Renaissance corpora, I could not find any instance of [feminine] S_A/A for subject relative clauses. For this reason

chi and *cui* in headless relatives and interrogatives. Clearly these are not syntactic contexts where a [-human; +animate] referent, such as an animal, could be felicitous.

it is not possible to determine whether structural-semantic conditions, i.e. merger of the agentive argument in Voice*P, override morpho-semantic information, namely the different marking for [masculine] and [feminine]/[inanimate/neuter], in imposing a spell-out requirement on FinP. Put differently, due to the lack of relevant data (i.e. behavior of [feminine] S_A/As), a potential ranking of the conditions i) and ii) for C-omission (cf. section 3.2) seems doomed to remain undetermined for now.

A second hypothesis is that [feminine] S_A/As indeed pattern with [masculine] ones and thus require spell-out of the C-form in Fin. This would mean that what ultimately matters for C-omission is the active/inactive distinction, which is primarily marked on Voice*P. By contrast, if [feminine] S_A/As patterned with [feminine]/[neuter/inanimate] S_O/Os, this would mean that gender marking also plays a role, and conditions i) and ii) above would stand in an “either/or” relation.

A third hypothesis is that [feminine] S_A/As are completely unattested, i.e. [feminine] is never agentive. This third possibility is immediately disconfirmed by facts. Despite not being able to find relevant cases of [feminine] S_A/As in subject extractions, I could find (not frequent²², but indeed existent) cases of [feminine] S_A/A in simple clauses.²³ The examples (25)-(29) show cases in which a female subject is agentive. Interestingly, this applies also to non-human subjects as in (29).

- (25) *Vero è che la madre d'Orestes **uccise** Agamennon*
 True is that the mother of O. killed A.
 ‘It is true that the mother of Orestes killed Agamennon’
 [Brunetto Latini, *Rettorica*, 133.12]
- (26) *Vedi come cotale donna **distrugge** la persona di colui*
 See how such woman destroys the person of this.one
 ‘See how such woman destroys his person’ [Vita Nuova, ch. 5, par. 1-4]
- (27) *Ma la corotta fanciulla [...] ivi a pochi dì **avelenò** il padre*
 But the corrupt girl there to few days poisoned the father
 ‘But some days later the corrupt girl poisoned the father’
 [Matteo Villani, *Cronica*, 54,1]
- (28) *E quando Moises fu nato, la madre il **rinchiuse** gentilmente*
 And when M. was born, the mother him closed.in gently
*in uno vassello, et **gittollo** in un fiume corrente*
 in a basket and threw.him in a river flowing
 ‘And when Moses was born, the mother gently closed him into a basket and threw him in a flowing river.’
 [Tesoro volg., ed. Gaiter, 40,1]
- (29) *E sappiate che la pernice **fa** suo nido di spine e di piccoli stecchi [...]*
 And know.2PL that the partridge makes her nest of thorns and small sticks
*E spesse volte la madre **tramuta** i suoi figliuoli d'un luogo*
 And several times the mother moves the her children of a place
in un altro per paura del suo maschio.
 in a other for fear of.the her male
 ‘And you should know that the partridge makes her nest with thorns and small sticks, and moves often her baby birds to another place for fear of her male’
 [Tesoro volg. 5, 31]

²² On a corpus search for *donzella* (maiden) and *fanciulla* (girl) I obtained 696 occurrences but only one S_A/A. Of course, this must be related to the fact that the occurrences represents any type of arguments (even non-arguments), not only subjects.

²³ Source: OVI online corpus, for Old and (early) Renaissance Italian. Cf. Sources, this paper.

These facts confirm the hypothesis that female agentive subjects exist, which means that SpecVoice*P may select [feminine] (and even [-human], cf. (29)) S_A/As. These facts are however not sufficient to understand whether [feminine] and [masculine] S_A/As pattern alike in extraction contexts, i.e. whether they are indeed subject to the same recoverability conditions. The possibility that [feminine] S_A/As patterned with [feminine]/[neuter/inanimate] S_O/Os for recoverability in extraction contexts is still open, which would entail that the condition on gender marking (cf. i) in section 3.2) is not subordinate to the condition on agentivity. Nonetheless, an asymmetry between [masculine] S_A/As - S_O/Os and [feminine] S_A/As - S_O/Os with respect to extractions is unexpected, given that [feminine] S_A/As are attested and plausibly merged in SpecVoice*P.

C-omission in examples like (23) and (24) shows that [masculine] marking alone is clearly not sufficient for imposing a morphologic visibility condition on Fin, because the extracted subject in these examples are non-marked (S_Os) and, as such, the S_O antecedents are recoverable without morphological spell-out of FinP. This amounts to say that, if gender marking does play a role, it is anyway subordinate to the active/inactive distinction. The same S_A/A - S_O/O asymmetry can be reasonably expected from [feminine] arguments.

A tentative conclusion, given the present state of knowledge, is thus that condition ii) overrides condition i), and the extent to which condition i) is relevant requires further empirical investigation, as is summarized in (30) below.

- (30) Marking of [3Pn] extracted argument for recoverability
- a. [S_A/A]-[masculine] = marked → *(C)
 - b. [S_A/A]-[feminine] = ?
 - c. [S_O/O]-[masculine]/[feminine]/[neuter] = non-marked → (C)

From a broader perspective, I will just limit my observation to a well-documented fact, which is however not yet entirely clear from an explanatory viewpoint, namely to the fact that [+agentive] is commonly associated with [+masculine] in many Old Italo-Romance varieties (Parry 2005). This correlation finds empirical support in the morphology of the C-forms that is attested in texts across the Italian Peninsula. In various Italo-Romance varieties, *che* lexicalized feminine (plural) antecedents, in contrast to *chi* (and analogous forms), which is used for masculine referents (Parry 2005:209). Notice that such a gender distinction seems to be absent in Old French, according to the descriptive literature. This remains an unexplored field, for the moment.

4. Comparative facts and diachronic change

In this section I offer a comparative discussion of C-omission in Old French and Old Occitan relative clauses (section 4.1), showing that these languages share the same properties of Renaissance Italian, with respect to C-omission. In section 4.2 I discuss the diachronic change affecting C-omission in Italian/Florentine, in light of the proposed analysis.

4.1. C-omission in Old French and Old Occitan relative clauses

Next to the characteristic features of active/inactive alignment, which pervades both the nominal, the verbal and the sentence domain (cf. Ledgeway 2012:305-307, 318, and ref. therein), the old dialects of Northern Romània (“coinciding with the historical areas of *Gallia transalpina* (northern Gaul: langue d’oïl, southern Gaul: langue d’oc), *Gallia cisalpina* (northern Italian dialects), and *Rætia* (Ræto-Romance varieties)”, Ledgeway (2012:289)) display a morphosyntax that reflects a bipartite case marking (Nom vs. Acc/Oblique). On a par with Old North Western Italian varieties (cf. section 3.2), Old Occitan and Old French present different forms to introduce relative clauses: *que*, *qui* and

cui (for obliques). Ledgeway (2012:306) argues that the *qui/que* distinction of Old Romance originated from the Latin nominative/accusative marking (cf. section 3.2), but began to be associated to an active/inactive opposition. Subject relative clauses are marked by *qui* when the subject is high in the animacy hierarchy, and typically displays agentivity features (it is human, dynamic, etc.). By contrast, *que*, even if it is used for human antecedents, generally denotes a non-controlled event or a state with a non-agentive subject.

These general observations seem to partially contrast with the traditional descriptions of Medieval Occitan and Old French (Jensen 1986:139ff., 1990), according to which “both *qui* and *que* are used indifferently about persons or things” (Jensen 1986:141, cf. Jensen 1990:203). This is apparently not expected if the distribution of *qui* depended on the animacy of the extracted argument. Jensen (1986) bases his observation on the attested usage of *qui* for inanimate antecedents, (31), already in old texts (*pace* Grafström 1968).

- (31) a. *Le mas **qui** fo Ponzon Durant* (Medieval Occitan)
 The farm QUI was P.D.
 ‘The farmhouse that belonged to Ponzon Durant’
 [Jensen 1986:140, 1990:203 *Chartes*, 98,30]
- b. *Une parole **qui** avant hier me fut dite*
 A word QUI before yesterday to.me was said
 ‘A word that was related to me the day before yesterday’
 [Jensen 1990:203, *Queste* 53.33]

Moreover, Jensen (1986, 1990) observes some differences between Old French and Medieval Occitan. There is a tendency, in Occitan, to use *que* regardless of the syntactic function, thus also in subject extractions.

- (32) *Chascus hom **que** son gen cors ve*
 Every man QUE her beautiful body sees
 ‘Every man who sees her beautiful body’
 [Jensen 1986:140, *Uc de Saint Circ* III 19]

However, of all the examples that Jensen provides, I could not find any case in which *que* is used for an S_A/A antecedent, whereas *qui* is adopted both for agentive as well as non-agentive subjects (cf. (31) above). This intricate morphosyntactic situation seems to result from the partial overlap between an active/inactive opposition and a nominative/accusative marking, as Ledgeway (2012) also suggests for other Northern Romance languages (cf. above). I tentatively analyze these facts by assuming that Old French and Medieval Occitan present a (microparametrically different) mixed system. While *qui* preserves morphologically nominative case, *que* is unmarked for case and, as such, it is typically adopted for S_O/O antecedents. This may account for the usage of *qui* also with inactive/non-human antecedents inasmuch as they are subjects, hence nominative, which gives rise to a mixed system. Notice moreover that relative *que* is syncretic with the generic subordinator *que* of declarative and several adverbial clauses (Jensen 1990:477), on a par with (Old) Italian *che*.

Jensen (1986:362; 1990:497) analyzes C-omission in relative clauses of Old French and Old Occitan as parataxis. For both French and Occitan, Jensen (1986, 1990) observes that C-omission is most frequent in noun clauses, “which means that the conjunction most often omitted is the semantically insignificant *que*” (Jensen 1990:497). In Old Occitan, C-omission usually affects subject relative clauses, (33a), but is also attested in object relative clauses (33b). Similarly, Old French displays a subject-object asymmetry for C-omission that is apparently the reverse of what is attested in Renaissance Florentine. That is, “it is mostly the pronoun serving in subject function that

may be omitted [..., cf. (34a)]. It is less common for the dative *cui* or the accusative *que* to be left unexpressed, [cf. (34b)]”. A more attentive observation of the following examples reveals that this is not quite an appropriate picture.

- (33) a. *No i aura un ____ no veia son arnes* (Old Occitan)
 Not there will.be one not see.SBJV his equipment
 ‘There will not be one who does not examine his equipment’
 [B. de Born 14, 45, in Jensen 1986:364]
- b. *Res non es ____ Amor non ensin*
 thing not is love not teach
 ‘There is nothing love does not teach’
 [Flamenca v. 4335, in Jensen 1986:364]
- (34) a. *Mais il n’a membre ____ ne li dueille* (Old French)
 But it not has limb not to.him hurt.SBJV
 ‘But he does not have a limb that does not hurt’
 [Fabliaux 10.246, in Jensen 1990:498]
- b. *N’i a celui ____ n’aie fait honte*
 Not there has that not has.SBJV done insult
 ‘There is not a person whom I have not insulted’
 [Renart 1764, in Jensen 1990:498]

As examples (33)-(34) show, C-omission is “the norm” (Jensen 1990:498) when both the matrix and the relative clause are negated, which in fact results in an affirmative interpretation (e.g. (33b)= “Love teaches everything”; (34a) = “All his limbs hurt”). Moreover, a closer look at the predicates of the relative clauses in these examples reveals that C-omission always follows an inactive antecedent, which is confirmed by further data reported in Jensen (1986), (1990), here omitted for space reasons. I can thus conclude that the active/inactive distinction also plays a role in C-omission in relative clauses of Old French and Old Occitan, being it attested with inactive antecedents, on a par with C-omission in Renaissance Florentine.

As for the presence of expletive negation in clauses with C-omission, notice that these clauses receive a modal interpretation as typical instances of an [-*realis*] situation or event, interpretation that results from anchoring the state/event to the discourse context (cf. section 3.1). The analysis of Belletti (2001b) for the presence of expletive negation in Italian (and Old French) comparative clauses is directly applicable to the relative clauses in (33), (34) (it is worth pointing out that also Old and Renaissance Italian display expletive negation in the same contexts). Belletti proposes that the presence of an expletive negative head (*no*, *non*, in Old Occitan, *ne*, in Old French) is licensed by a modal [-*realis*] OP, such as the one encoding subjunctive mood, which moves in the Spec of the NegP projection. The Spec-Head agreement with a [-*realis*] OP (rather than with a true Neg OP) yields the expletive [-*realis*] interpretation on the negation. It is also worth mentioning that C-omission in Old French and Old Occitan, let aside relative clauses, is most frequently attested with embedded subjunctive predicates or, regardless of mood, in complements of semifactives and propositional attitude verbs (Jensen 1990, Scorretti 1991). What all these syntactic contexts seem to share is absence of embedded independent illocution. This explains why C-omission is possible: on the one hand, illocution on ForceP is unmarked, so it does not require overt spell-out of illocution features. On the other hand, nominal and spatio-temporal deixis, which are encoded on FinP, can be recovered morphologically by means of functional elements (e.g. verbal morphology). Lack of illocution also characterizes relative clauses, in which C-omission is further subject to the condition that the antecedent be inactive, thus unmarked, for recoverability purposes, on a par with Renaissance Florentine (cf. discussion in section 3.3).

In conclusion of this section I make a few remarks on the setting of the V2 parameter in Old French and Old Occitan. Old French has also a Romance-type V2 (Vanelli, Renzi, Benincà 1985, Adams 1987, Roberts 1993, 2005 and ref. therein, a.o., cf. section 2.1 above for Old Italian), and null subjects are only possible in Old French if the subject would be postverbal (Foulet 1928), namely if V-to-C occurs.

Vance et al. (2010) attribute the loss of V2 in Old French to the progressive increase of SV orders in main clauses preceded by a fronted adverbial clause already in the course of the 13th century. By contrast, the evolution of V2 in Old Occitan cannot be detected in the same way, given the higher frequency of null subjects in this language (Lafont 1967, Vanelli, Renzi, Benincà 1985, Sitaridou 2005, Vance 1997, Vance et al. 2010). At this point the possible correlation between a V2 parameter (determined by Fin*, in the present analysis) and the productivity of C-omission in Old French and Old Occitan requires further investigations. More specifically, the micro-parametric differences with respect to Old Italian V2 have to be identified in order to understand what the possible correlation between absence/presence of V2 and C-omission can be, in Old French and Old Occitan.²⁴ I leave this issue open for future research.

4.2. Loss of C-omission

After the Renaissance period, Italian C-omission reduces drastically and eventually disappears, with the exception of few syntactic contexts (cf. section 1). I have argued that the reason why C-omission becomes productive in Renaissance Florentine is the parametric change from Fin*, which requires overt spell-out, to Fin, which permits a absence of an overt C-head. The problem is that this possibility is not an option at later stages, which equally miss an overt spell-out requirement on Fin. Similarly, C-omission in (subject) relative clauses is equally ungrammatical in the modern counterparts.

From a diachronic perspective, there are two issues to be addressed:

- a) Why is C-omission possible in Renaissance Italian, whereas it is restricted to specific (modal) contexts in Modern Italian and Modern Florentine, given that these languages all have weak Fin?
- b) Why is C-omission possible in relative clauses in Renaissance Florentine but it is no longer so in Modern Italian and Modern Florentine?

As an answer to a) I suggest that while Fin* requires a morphological realization (as in Old Italian), Fin does not, but of course nothing rules out a morphological spell-out, as for the overt C cases in Renaissance Italian. My intuition in this respect is that C-omission in Renaissance Italian is symptomatic of the ongoing *Fin>Fin parametric change. C-insertion becomes grammaticalized as the default choice, on the basis of a higher input frequency of overt C contexts, in comparison to C-omission contexts. It is not clear whether other sociolinguistic factors also play a relevant role for the type of input generating diachronic change, but this is plausible, given that C-omission is permitted in a greater number of syntactic contexts in Modern Florentine (a dialect), with respect to Modern Italian.

Complementizers are thus merged only for subordinating purposes in Modern Italian and Modern Florentine (cf. Rizzi & Shlonsky 2005). Broadly speaking, complementizers can only be omitted if the interpretation of the clause as a subordinate is guaranteed, e.g. by means of morphological marking (for instance, with subjunctive morphology; with a sentential negation in the complement position of a predicate that selects a sentential complement, such as *dire* (=“say”), cf. section 1 for Modern Florentine), or in absolutive

²⁴ Notice that C-omission, at least in Old French, occurs in typical non-V2 clauses (cf. above), where namely no V-to-Fin takes place. The absence of V2 in embedded contexts is related to absence of * on the unique C head, where both Fin and Force features are conflated. This setting would also account for the fact that non-V2 embedded clauses lack illocutive force.

constructions (cf. Poletto 1995, a.o.).²⁵

The answer to b) follows straightforwardly from the analysis presented in section 3, according to which C-omission in relative clauses depends on the combination of two factors: i) an active/inactive distinction in the argument structure, whereby C-omission is possible in presence of inactive and/or morphologically non-marked (i.e. [-masculine]) antecedents, and ii) syncretism between the relative C-form and the declarative complementizer (*ke, che, que*), which are both unmarked for case. In Modern Italian and Modern Florentine, we assist at a fall of structural marking of active/inactive alignment (cf. Ledgeway 2012), so factor i) no longer applies. Franco & Migliori (2014) propose that the change bringing to the modern argument structure basically consists of a weakening of the Voice features, i.e. Voice* > Voice. As a consequence, the [Agent] feature encoded on the Voice head no longer requires a morphological spell-out. The loss of an active/inactive structural distinction provokes a change in the recoverability conditions of (extracted) arguments. My hypothesis is that due to the loss of the visibility requirement on Voice (the low phase-head) the identification of active/inactive relative-clause antecedents via a formal, structural marking on Fin, i.e. at the end of the phase, is no longer permitted.

Given the weakening of both Fin and Voice in Modern Italian and Modern Florentine, the question now is why is not C-omission licensed in *all* argument extractions in these languages? I suggest that the obligatory spell-out of C in relative clauses generally depends on the obligatoriness of C as a complementizer in other types of subordinate clauses, at this stage (cf. above). That is, C-insertion is no longer related to an active/inactive distinction, and, in fact no morphosyntactic requirement imposes a marking of the Nom/Acc distinction at the CP-phase edge, given the parametric setting of Modern Italian and Modern Florentine (weak Voice, weak Fin).

5. Summary and conclusion

On the basis of the collected data, I have proposed that widespread C-omission in Renaissance Italian results from the coexistence of the following conditions:

- (a) Parametric shift from Fin* to Fin;
- (b) Morphological recoverability of phi-features of the arguments via long-distance agreement;
- (c) Presence of active/inactive alignment, where inactive is the unmarked option.

Condition (a) is relevant for C-omission in all clauses; conditions (b) and (c) for omission in A'-extractions of arguments. All three conditions are met in Renaissance Italian, by contrast to Old Italian (which still has Fin* and pro-drop that is dependent on V-to-Fin*), or Modern Italian and Modern Florentine (in which the active/inactive alignment is lost). In Renaissance Italian, spelling out C is no longer required, but it is permitted by weak Fin. As a result of an inactive/active distinction, inactive/-Pn arguments do not require C spell-out for recoverability, when extracted.

This proposal predicts that the following restrictions should apply to C-omission in Renaissance Italian:

- (i) C-omission is unattested (=ungrammatical) in headless relative and interrogative clauses in which C is a pronoun and has a [+human, S_A/A] value, cf. Table 3.;
- (ii) C-omission is unattested in headed relative clauses in which the extracted argument is [+human, S_A/A], for the reasons discussed in section 4.2.

As it has been discussed in sections 2.2 and 3.2, predictions (i) and (ii) are borne out by facts. Nonetheless, further research needs to be done in order to understand what are the

²⁵ Poletto (1995) shows that in case of C-omission in Modern Italian the subjunctive verb raises to the CP domain, where she argues that it check a [-*realis*] feature encoded on C. As the focus of this paper is mainly a diachronic analysis, I refrain from further discussion on alleged feature-checking mechanisms permitting C-omission in Modern Italian. See a.o. Llinas-Grau & Fernandez-Sanchez (2011) for a proposal, and ref. therein.

potential (micro)parametric differences among Old Romance languages in relation to C-omission.

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