Splitting subject clitic-verb inversion

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0. Introduction

As is well known, a considerable number of North-Eastern Italian dialects display the morphosyntactic phenomenon defined in the descriptive literature on the topic as interrogative inversion: it consists in the encliticization of a pronominal element coreferent with the subject onto the inflected verb.

In this article, I will try to determine the range of possible interpretations which can be associated with sentences whose predicate has the relevant verbal morphology.\textsuperscript{1}

Within the relatively recent line of research adopting a split-CP approach (see Rizzi (1998) among many others), it will be proposed that the presence of subject clitic inversion is the morphological reflex of a syntactic process; more precisely, that it entails raising of the inflected verb to the head position of one of the functional projections of the CP-layer which are argued to encode some aspects of the speaker’s representation of the propositional content expressed.

The article is organized as follows: in section 1 the existence of an independent series of non-assertive subject clitic pronouns is briefly argued for; in section 2 the possible

\textsuperscript{1} The leading ideas underlying the present article were first expressed in the second chapter of my PhD thesis (Munaro (1997)). Part of the issues addressed here have been dealt with in a paper which is going to appear in the proceedings of the conference I confini del dialetto (Sappada (BI), 5\textsuperscript{th}-9\textsuperscript{th}July 2000): my thanks go to that audience as well as to the one of Going Romance 2000 (Utrecht, 30\textsuperscript{th}November–2\textsuperscript{nd}December 2000) for helpful comments and suggestions; thanks are due to Paola Benincà for reading earlier versions of this work; I also benefitted from discussions with Cecilia Polett. The usual disclaimers apply. Finally, I would like to thank the (mostly academic) native speakers of the varieties analyzed in section 3 for providing me with the relevant judgements.
contexts of use of non-assertive subject clitics in Friulian are presented; section 3 is devoted to identify the crossdialectal variation attested in some Veneto dialects with respect to the range of interpretive implications associated with inversion; in section 4 a finer semantic characterization of the different functional heads hosting the inflected verb is provided; in section 5 the proposed analysis is extended to subject clitic inversion in standard French and to the tu-pas construction in Quebec French; section 6 concludes the paper with some summarizing remarks.

1. The non-assertive series of subject clitic pronouns

In this section I will address the question of the status of the subject pronouns showing up in inversion contexts. The hypothesis that the series of subject clitics surfacing in interrogative contexts is largely independent from the one appearing in assertive contexts was first suggested in one of the earliest investigations about subject clitics in the Northern Italian domain, namely Renzi & Vanelli (1983); they tend to regard the interrogative conjugation as considerably independent from the assertive one on the basis of the two following arguments: firstly, they note that if a variety forms interrogatives through the inversion of the pronoun, then the number of the persons constantly displaying a pronoun is the same or superior with respect to the number of persons with pronoun in assertives; secondly, they point out that in most cases the pronoun following the verb in interrogatives is different from the one preceding the verb in assertives for the corresponding person.

The correctness of these two descriptive generalizations is confirmed by a quick look at the assertive and interrogative inflectional paradigm of the present indicative in Paduan and Agordino (a Central and a Northern Veneto variety) reported in (1) and (2) respectively:

(1) a. 1. magno  
     2. te magni  
     3. el/la magna  
     4. magnemo  
     5. magnè  
     6. i/le magna  

b. 1. magno(i)  
     2. magni-to  
     3. magne-lo/la  
     4. magnémo-(i)  
     5. magnè-o  
     6. magne-li/le
As one can easily see, proclitic subject pronouns differ from enclitic ones both in number and in form. Moreover, in some Northern Italian varieties a proclitic subject can cooccur with an enclitic one, as exemplified in (3a) with the Piedmontese variety of Turin and in (3b) with Western Friulian:

(3) a. lon ch’ a l’ a-lo fait?  b. cui a compri-al il pan?
what that scl-scl-has-scl done  who scl-buys-scl the bread?
‘what has he done?’  ‘who buys the bread?’

Furthermore, when a given variety displays an enclitic series of pronominal subjects, these must be obligatorily used in main interrogatives, as shown by the contrast between (4a) and (4b) in Paduan:

(4) a. *cossa (el) fa?  b. cossa fa-lo?
cosa (scl) fa  cosa fa-scl
‘che cosa fa?’  ‘che cosa fa?’

Interestingly, the occurrence of the enclitic series of pronominal subjects seems to be limited to the structures in which the inflected verb raises higher than the agreement field, that is, in main contexts where the position C° is free, as in (4b), but not in embedded interrogatives, where C° is presumably occupied by the complementizer che, as shown again by the contrast between (5a) and (5b) in Paduan:

(5) a. no so cossa che el ga fato  b. *no so cossa che ga-lo fato
not know what that scl-has done  not know what that has-scl done
I don’t know what he has done’  ‘I don’t know what he has done’
Let us then adopt the following, adapting it from Poletto (2000), as a diagnostic paradigm to determine whether the series of enclitic subject pronouns has to be distinguished from the proclitic series:  

(6)  
a. different number of persons in the verbal paradigm displaying pro- vs enclitic pronouns  
b. (partially) different morphological shape of pro- vs enclitic pronouns  
c. possibility of cooccurrence in some varieties  

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2. Poletto (2000) proposes that subject clitic inversion implies raising of the inflected verb to a (low) position of the CP-layer; her assumption is based mainly on the following arguments:  

(i) the position of the inflected verb displaying inversion with respect to the interrogative particle pa in the Raethoromance variety of Pera di Fassa:  
   a. ola pa  tu  vas?  
      where pa  scl-go?  
      ‘where are you going?’  
   b. ola  vas-to pa?  
      where go-scl pa?  
      ‘where are you going?’  

(ii) the similarities of syntactic behaviour between fa-support in the dialect of Monno and do-support in English:  
   a. come fa-l comportas?  
      how does-scl behave-himself  
      ‘how is he behaving?’  
   b. qual  è-t  cercà fo?  
      which have-scl found out  
      ‘which one did you choose?’  
   c. che  fa-l  fa?  
      what does-scl do  
      ‘what is he doing?’  

(iii) the possibility, attested in the dialect of Rodoretto di Prali, of coordinating a verb displaying inversion with a second member introduced by the complementizer in main disjunctive yes/no interrogatives:  
   l’ achatà-tu ou qu’  tu  l’achatte pa?  
   it buy-scl or that you it buy not  
   ‘do you buy it or not?’  

Poletto (2000) also analyzes the role of subject clitic inversion in optative, counterfactual and disjunctive clauses with respect to complementizer deletion phenomena, showing that, at least in some cases, an analysis in terms of verb raising to the C-domain is a viable hypothesis.
On the basis of the data discussed in this section, I suggest that enclitic pronominal subjects should be distinguished from proclitic ones and, more precisely, be analyzed as bound morphemes selecting the inflected verb: I will assume that the verbal form displaying encliticization of the subject pronoun is realized through left-adjunction of the verb to the clitic. Furthermore, I propose that the structural position inside which the finite verb merges with the enclitic subject is a relatively high functional head in the inflectional layer of sentence structure.\footnote{In Munaro (1997) I located this position at the edge of IP (that is, at the border between the inflectional and the complementizer layer of the extended functional structure of the sentence) and labelled it Type\textsuperscript{o} to express the fact that it is crucially involved in the determination of the sentential type (as will become clear from the data discussed in section 2). The head position inside which the subject clitic merges with the inflected verb is identified with IntForce\textsuperscript{o} in Pollock et alii (1998), AgrC\textsuperscript{o} in Poletto (2000), AgrS\textsuperscript{o} in Hulk (1993). Note that the discussion of the interpretive values expressable by inversion developed in the following sections is compatible with an approach analyzing the subject pronoun as a maximal projection first merged in [spec,IP] and viewing subject clitic inversion as the result of (remnant) phrasal movement, such as the one recently proposed by Pollock (2000) and adopted in Poletto & Pollock (2000).}

2. The contexts of use of non-assertive subject clitics

As observed in section 1, the encliticization of the pronominal subject obtains primarily in main interrogatives, hence the label inversione interrogativa traditionally attributed to it. However, as pointed out in Munaro (1997), this phenomenon, unlike what is currently assumed, is not at all limited to interrogative sentences, but is attested in the North-Eastern Italian dialects in a variety of sentential types.

The relevant instances of subject clitic inversion have been described by Benincà (1989) in her analysis of the central variety of Friulian; she identifies the following syntactic contexts:

a. main interrogative sentences (both yes/no and wh-questions);

b. sentences structurally resembling interrogatives but having the pragmatic force of exclamatives, through which the speaker expresses an emotionally salient attitude;

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a. main interrogative sentences (both yes/no and wh-questions);

b. sentences structurally resembling interrogatives but having the pragmatic force of exclamatives, through which the speaker expresses an emotionally salient attitude;
c. sentences where inversion is preceded by a negation, expressing the speaker’s negative presupposition with respect to the propositional content, which is thus given as unexpected;

d. optative sentences expressing the speaker’s wish, in which the realization of a counterfactual propositional content is hoped for;

e. the if-clauses of conditional sentences, defining the condition under which the event expressed by the main clause can be realized;

f. disjunctive structures in which two alternative possibilities are taken into account and evaluated as irrelevant to the realization of the event expressed by the main sentence.

The various cases of inversion are instantiated in the following Friulian examples (taken again from Benincà (1989)):

(7)  
a. cui vegni-al?               a’. vegni-al Toni?  
who comes-scl               comes-scl Toni
‘who’s coming?’              ‘is Toni coming?’
b. ce mi toci-al di vjodi!    
what me must-scl of see     
‘what I’m forced to see!’

c. no mi toci-al di pajà la multe! 
not me must-scl of pay the fine 
‘I even have to pay the fine!’

d. ti vess-jo dit la veretàt! 
you had-scl told the truth    
‘if only I had told you the truth!’

e. vinisi-al tjo pari, o podaresin là 
came-scl your father, scl-could go 
‘if your father came, we could go’

f. sedi-al pùar o sedi-al sior, no m’ impuarte 
be-scl poor or be-scl rich, not to-me matters 
‘I don’t care whether he’s rich or poor’

So, beside the ordinary interrogative interpretation of (7a-a’), (7b) expresses the speaker’s dismay for what he’s forced to see, in (7c) the speaker realizes to his surprise that, against his expectations, he has to pay the fine, in (7d) he expresses the wish he
had told the truth, in (7e) he considers the potential consequence of the arrival of a given person, and in (7f) he evaluates the subject’s financial condition as irrelevant to him.\(^4\)

On the whole, the contexts exemplified in (7) are characterized by the fact that the speaker takes a particular stand with respect to the propositional content expressed, in the sense that the event is not presented objectively, as a matter of fact, like in assertive contexts, but subjectively, that is somehow related to the speaker’s personal situation, hence to his peculiar observational perspective.

\(^4\) In (7f) the disjunction involves two auxiliaries, but, according to our informants, disjunction of two lexical verbs is equally well-formed:

\[(i) \text{veni-al o no veni-al, o prepari instèss} \]
\[\text{comes-scl or not comes-scl, scl-prepare the-same} \]
\[‘\text{whether he comes or not, I prepare in any case’}\]

Interestingly, this structure is the only ungrammatical instance of inversion in the Northern and Western Friulian varieties, according to a pattern of distribution that we also find in Paduan, as exemplified in (9) below.

Benincà (1989) identifies a further instance of encliticization of the subject clitic to the subjunctive forms of the verb be, which expresses the exhortative-desiderative passive of transitive predicates; the following examples are taken from Vicario (1998), who similarly observes that in this case the pronoun encliticizes to the inflected form of the verb jessi:

\[(ii) \]
\[\text{a. sedis-tu benedet, Signor Diu di dut il mont} \]
\[\text{b. fossis-tu brusade, tu e la to golate!} \]
\[\text{be-scl blessed, Lord God of all the world} \]
\[\text{were-scl burnt, you and the your} \]
\[\text{throat} \]
\[‘\text{may you be blessed, Lord God of the whole world’} \]
\[‘\text{I wish you were burnt, you and your} \]
\[\text{wretched throat!’}\]

I do not include this particular syntactic context in the comparative survey outlined in the following section, as it can reasonably be subsumed under the optative context exemplified in (7d).
3. The crossdialectal variation

In this section I will outline a short comparative survey of the crossdialectal variation detectable among a few Veneto varieties with respect to the possible interpretations which can be associated with enclisis of the pronominal subject onto the inflected verb. Let us start by considering the variety spoken in the country hinterland of Venice, where inversion (which is fully productive only in the third person singular) is compatible with all the readings attested in Friulian:

(8)  a. vegni-lo?  
     comes-scl  ‘is he coming?’
     a’. cossa magne-lo?  
     what eats-scl  ‘what does he eat?’
 b. quanti libri no ga-lo leto?!  
     how many books not has-scl read  ‘how many books he read!’
     c. no ga-lo magnà tuto!  
     not has-scl eaten everything  ‘(surprisingly,) he ate everything!’
     d. rivasse-lo in tempo, almanco!  
     arrived-scl in time, at least  ‘if only he arrived in time!’
     e. fusse-lo vegnùo anca Mario, gavaressimo podùo dirghelo  
     were-scl come also Mario, could been able tell-him-it  ‘if Mario had come too, we could have told him’
     f. magne-lo o no magne-lo, mi preparo lo stesso  
     eats-scl or not eats-scl, I prepare the same  ‘whether he eats or not, I prepare in any case’

In (9) I report the corresponding examples in Paduan, where the only case in which inverson produces ungrammaticality is the disjunctive structure exemplified in (9f):

(9)  a. vigni-o?  
     come-scl  ‘are you coming?’
     a’. cossa magni-to?  
     what eat-scl  ‘what do you eat?’
b. quanti libri no ga-lo leto?!
   how many books not has-scl read
   ‘how many books he read!’

c. no ga-lo magnà tuto!
   not has-scl eaten everything
   ‘(surprisingly,) he ate everything!’

d. rivâsse-lo in tempo!
   arrived-scl in time
   ‘if only he arrived in time!’

e. fûsse-lo vignù anca Mario, gavarissimo podùo dirghelo
   were-scl come also Mario, have-cond been-able tell-him-it
   ‘if Mario had come too, we could have told him’

f. *magne-lo o no magne-lo, mi parécio istësso
   eat-scl or not eat-scl, I prepare the same
   ‘whether he eats or not, I prepare in any case’

Subject-clitic inversion seems to be equally incompatible with the disjunctive reading in the two varieties of Cereda di Cornedo and Lore (spoken in the provinces of Vicenza and Rovigo, in Central and Southern Veneto respectively) exemplified in (10) and (11):

As pointed out to me by Paola Benincà, in Paduan the presence of inversion in clauses with a hypothetical reading is in general hardly acceptable with a simple tense, as in (ia); the structure can be rescued by adding an adverb such as putacaso (‘suppose’) (as shown in (ib)), whose function most likely consists in underlining the remoteness of the realization of the event expressed by the conditional clause:

(i) a ??vignisse-lo to papà, podarissimo partire
   came-scl your father, could leave
   ‘came your father, we could leave’

b. vignisse-lo putacaso to papà, podarissimo partire
   came-scl suppose your father, could leave
   ‘suppose your father came, we could leave’

The same interpretive restriction holds for the Friulian example in (7e) above, which seems to indicate that such a structure conveys a counterfactual entailment. A recent analysis of the notion of counterfactuality aiming at investigating how the meaning of clauses interpreted counterfactually can be derived as a conversational implicature is provided by Iatridou (2000).
A different pattern is attested in the dialect of Illasi (spoken in the Western Veneto province of Verona), where the presence of inversion gives rise to ungrammatical outcomes in optative, hypothetical and disjunctive structures, as shown in (12):\(^6\)

\(^6\). An intermediate position between the varieties discussed up to now and the dialect of Illasi is occupied by the Veneto variety spoken in Carmignano di Brenta (located between Padua and Vicenza), where inversion is accepted in optative contexts but not in hypothetical and disjunctive ones, as shown in (i):

\[(i) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{a. } & \text{vignì-o?} \\
\text{b. } & \text{quantì libri no ga-lo leto?!!} \\
\text{c. } & \text{no ga-lo magnà tuto!} \\
\text{d. } & \text{rivasse-lo in tempo, almanco!} \\
\text{e. } & \text{fùsse-lo vignù anca Mario, gavarissimo podùo dirghelo} \\
\text{f. } & \text{*màgne-lo o no màgne-lo, mi parecio istésso} \\
\end{array}\]

However, according to our informants, to obtain full acceptability in optatives it is preferable to add some lexical material at the end of the clause, such as the adverbial ‘na volta (‘for once’) in (id).

That the (un)grammaticality of the optative and hypothetical structures in (id-e) is independent of the simple vs compound nature of the tense is shown by the following contrast:
(12) a. ven-to?  a’. sa magni-to?
b. quanti libri no à-lo leto?!
c. no a-lo magnà tuto!
d. *rivéssé-lo in tempo!
e. *fosse-lo vengù anca Mario, avaressimo podù dirghelo
f. *magne-lo o no magne-lo mia, mi preparo istéssso

Still different is the situation found in the variety of Pieve d’Alpago (spoken in the Northern Veneto province of Belluno), where inversion is compatible with the disjunctive reading, but not with the optative and the hypothetical one, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (13d-e): 7

(ii) a. fusse-lo vignù anca Mario, almanco!  b. *rivasse-lo anca Mario, podarissimo partire
    were-scl come also Mario, at least!        arrived-scl also Mario, could leave
    ‘if only Mario had come too!’             ‘if Mario arrived too, we could leave’

7. Note that in this variety an example corresponding to (7f) above, where the pronominal subject encliticizes onto a subjunctive form of the verb èser, is ungrammatical, as shown in (ia); however, this does not seem to depend on the use of an auxiliary verb, as shown by the grammaticality of (ib) where an indicative form is used:

(i)  a. *sìe-lo sior o sìe-lo puarét, no me intarèsa
    be-scl rich or be-scl poor, not me interests
    ‘I don’t care whether he is rich or poor’
    b. è-lo sior (o) è-lo puarét, no me intarèsa
    is-scl rich (or) is-scl poor, not me interests
    ‘I don’t care whether he is rich or poor’

One should rather attribute the ungrammaticality of (i) to an incompatibility of the enclitic subject with the subjunctive mood.

It is noteworthy that in the North-Eastern Lombard varieties displaying do-support in interrogatives, inversion is compatible with the disjunctive reading, as exemplified in (iii) and (iv) with the dialects of Monno and Malonno:

(iii) a. vègn-el o vègn-el mia, no m’ha da ‘ndà
    comes-scl or comes-scl not, we scl-have to go
(13)  

a. vegnê-o?  
   a’. màgne-tu che?  

b. quanti libri no à-lo ledêst?!  
c. no à-lo magnà tut!  
d. *rivéssé-lo in temp!  
e. *fûsse-lo gnést anca Mario, se avarìa podêst dirghelo  
f. màgne-lo o no màgne-lo, mi parècie instéss  

Summarizing, even from this short comparison among some of the North-Eastern Italian dialects displaying subject clitic inversion, it is possible to detect a remarkable crosslinguistic variation in the set of possible interpretations associated with structures displaying the enclisis of the pronominal subject.  

In the next section, I will try to determine more precisely the relevant range of variation.  

4. Splitting the hosting head  

Let us now try to outline the pattern of variation resulting from the data discussed in the previous section: mainland Venetian, like Friulian, displays the whole set of readings expressable by subject clitic inversion; the dialects of Padua, Cereda and Loreo lack only the disjunctive reading; the dialect of Illasi lacks the optative, the hypothetical and

‘whether he comes or not, we have to go’  

b. plö-el o plö-el mia, m-vol fa ina girada  
rains-scl or rains-scl not, scl-want do a trip  

‘whether it rains or not, we go for a trip’  

(iv)  

a. egn-el o egn-el mia, nu n’gha de nà  
comes-scl or comes-scl not, we scl-have to go  

‘whether he comes or not, we have to go’  
b. piö-el o piö-el mia, nu fom na caminada  
rains-scl or rains-scl not, we do a walk  

‘whether it rains or not, we go for a trip’  

I leave open the question as to why in these varieties the disjunctive structure is expressed by means of subject clitic inversion rather than through the do-support strategy available in interrogatives.
the disjunctive reading, while the dialect of Pieve d’Alpago lacks the optative and the hypothetical reading but does have the disjunctive one. The data are summarized in the following scheme:

(14)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mainl.Ven.</th>
<th>Paduan</th>
<th>Cereda(Vi)</th>
<th>Loreo(Ro)</th>
<th>Illasi(Vr)</th>
<th>Pieve d’A.(Bl)</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. interrogatives</td>
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<td>b. pseudo-questions</td>
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<td>c. presup. exclamatives</td>
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<td>d. optatives</td>
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<td>e. if-clauses</td>
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<td>f. disjunctives</td>
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Interestingly, as one can easily see, the variation attested across the varieties considered here is not random: inversion is invariably associated to the syntactic contexts in (a-c); hence, whenever a given variety lacks some instances of inversion, the missing cases always belong to the same subset of contexts (d-f).

This peculiar distribution of inversion can be straightforwardly accounted for assuming that the inflected verb with enclisis of the pronominal subject can occupy more than one position in the upper portion of the sentence structure; more precisely, that it depends on verb raising to different functional heads.

The fact that inversion is invariably compatible with the syntactic contexts in (a-c) provides substantial evidence for a first splitting into two subfields grouping (a-c) on the one hand and (d-f) on the other, as represented in (15):^8

(15)  

\textit{disjunctive-hypothetical-optative > presuppositional-exclamative-interrogative}

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^8. An independent piece of evidence supporting this first splitting into two subareas comes from standard Italian, if one considers that only in the latter group of structures it is possible to insert a complementizer in initial position:

(i)  

a. venite?  
b. quanti libri (non) ha letto?!  
c. non ha mangiato tutto!  
d. (se) arrivasse in tempo...!  
e. (se) fosse venuto anche Mario, avremmo potuto dirglielo  
f. (che) mangi o (che) non mangi, io preparo lo stesso
Recently, some authors have argued for a different landing site of wh-items when they occur in sentences which are not interpreted as standard questions, that is as genuine requests for information; if these works are on the right track, they provide a strong empirical argument for the assumption that at least one (and most likely more than one) specifier position is available above the one in which the standard interrogative interpretation is determined.\(^9\) Adopting Kayne (1994)’s framework (whose antisymmetric approach produces a single-specifier syntactic structure), we are led to postulate a functional head corresponding to the specifier position argued for above; I propose to assign to such position the label \(\text{Presup(positional)}\), which is intended to cover here for simplicity the two cases exemplified in (7b-c) (namely apparent wh-interrogatives having the pragmatic force of exclamatives and sentences expressing the speaker’s negative presupposition with respect to the propositional content), where some form of presupposition of the speaker is entailed. Applying this conclusion to the second portion of the sequence in (15), we obtain the following tripartite system:

\[
\text{(16)} \quad \text{disjunctive-hypothetical-optative} > \text{Presup}^\circ > \text{Int}^\circ
\]

Let us consider now more closely the upper part of this sequence. As witnessed by the examples from (9) to (13) in the previous section, crossdialectal variation concerns

\(^9\) See for example Benincà (1995) about wh-exclamatives, Munaro & Obenauer (1999) about pseudo-interrogatives, Obenauer & Poletto (2000) about rhetorical questions. For the purposes of the present study, the label \(\text{Pres(uppositional)}\) introduced below is intended to cover the whole set of projections activated in this kind of structures.

The possibility of a further splitting of the projection encoding the standard interrogative reading is suggested by the contrast between (ia) and (ib) in Venetian (where subject clitic inversion is limited to a restricted class of predicates):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(i)} & \quad \text{a. el fa cussi?} & \text{b. cossa fa-lo?} \\
& \quad \text{scl-does so} & \text{what does-scl} \\
& \quad \text{‘does he behave so?’} & \text{‘what is he doing?’}
\end{align*}
\]

Inversion is present in the wh-question in (ib) but not in the yes/no question in (ia); this might suggest that (at least in some varieties) the projection encoding the latter interpretation is located lower that the one hosting the wh-item in standard wh-interrogatives.
more robustly the syntactic contexts in (d-f); within this second subset, the chart in (14) reveals a consistent solidarity between the optative and the hypothetical reading as opposed to the disjunctive one; this provides evidence for a splitting of the upper portion of (16) into at least two different positions, which will be labelled Counterf(actual)° (under which I subsume both the optative and the hypothetical reading) and Disj(unctive)° respectively; integrating these two positions with the ones identified in (16) gives us the following sequence of functional heads:

\[
\text{(17)} \quad \text{Disj}° \succ \text{Counterf}° \succ \text{Presup}° \succ \text{Int}°
\]

However, under an account of the attested crossdialectal variation in terms of incremental reduction of verb movement, an obvious problem is posed by the data in (13): assuming a hierarchical order such as the one just sketched, one would expect that, on its head-by-head raising through the different functional heads up to Disj°, the verb does not skip any head position; hence the unexpected ungrammaticality of (13d-e) involving the head Counterf°. As it happens, in the dialect of Pieve d’Alpago one does indeed find an instance of inversion with very peculiar interpretive properties; the relevant structure is reported in (18):

\[
\text{(18)} \quad \text{vien-lo (o) no vien-lo, no so dirte comes-scl (or) not comes-scl, not know tell-you}
\]
\[= \text{‘is he coming or not, I can’t tell you = I can’t tell you whether he’s coming or not’}\]

Here, what might be analyzed as a disjunctive yes/no question formed by two verbs displaying inversion (separated either by the disjunction o or by a slight pause) precedes the main clause, which contains a predicate selecting an embedded interrogative; I propose that the surface order might be determined by (obligatory) raising of the embedded clause to the specifier position of CounterfP (and possibly DisjP) of the main clause.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{ Integrating into the picture the data of the dialect of Carmignano di Brenta discussed in footnote 6 would force us to a further splitting, distinguishing a Counterf° proper, encoding the hypothetical interpretation, from a structurally lower Opt(ative)°, responsible for the optative reading. I will assume that this hypothesis is essentially correct, awaiting further empirical evidence to substantiate it.}\]
If the proposed analysis is correct, then the distribution of inversion in this variety of Northern Veneto does not represent a counterexample to the hierarchical

11. As for the trigger of such movement, it is very plausible to assume that it consists in the necessity of checking the features associated with the heads Counterf° and (most likely) Disj°, selecting the hypothetical-disjunctive interpretation associated with the structure in (18).

Adapting the analysis of coordinated structures that Kayne (1994) suggests revising a proposal by Munn (1993), the two predicates of the alleged embedded clause can be taken to occupy the specifier and the complement position of a Disj(unctive)P (optionally) headed by o, as represented in (i):

(i)  
\[
\text{DisjP} \quad \wedge \\
\text{vienlo} \quad \text{Disj'} \quad \wedge \\
\text{Disj° no vienlo} \\
(o)
\]

It is noteworthy that fronting of the embedded clause in some cases produces an ungrammatical outcome, as shown by the contrast between (iia) and (iib):

(ii) a. vien-lo o no vien-lo, no me intarèsa  
comes-scl or not comes-scl, not me interests  
‘I don’t care whether he’s coming or not’

b. *vien-lo o no vien-lo, i me à domandà  
comes-scl or not comes-scl, scl-me-have asked  
‘they asked me whether he’s coming or not’

What opposes (18) and (iia) to (iib) is the fact that in the former the main clause expresses the speaker’s mental attitude concerning the content of the embedded clause; if this is indeed the crucial factor, the contrast provides further support for the hypothesis that subject clitic inversion codifies some aspects of the speaker’s knowledge and subjective representation of a specific event.

The obligatoriness of the raising of the embedded clause is shown by the ungrammaticality of (iii), where the two verbs displaying inversion follow the main clause:

(iii)  
\[
*\text{no so dirte, vien-lo o no vien-lo} \\
not know tell-you, comes-scl or not comes-scl \\
‘I can’t tell you whether he is coming or not’
\]
A similar contrast is attested in Paduan with *if*-clauses, which exhibit the following asymmetry:

(iv)  

a.  f*us*se-*lo* vignù, gavarissimo podùo dirghelo  
were-scl come, have-cond been able tell-him  
‘had he come, we could have told him’  
b.  *gavarissimo podùo dirghelo, f*us*se-*lo* vignù  
have-cond been able tell-him, were-scl come  
‘we could have told him, had he come’  
c.  se el fusse vignù, gavarissimo podùo dirghelo  
if scl-were come, have-cond been able tell-him  
‘if he had come, we could have told him’  
d.  gavarissimo podùo dirghelo, se el fusse vignù  
have-cond been able tell-him, if scl-were come  
‘we could have told him, if he had come’

The contrast between (iva) and (ivb) clearly indicates that, unlike what happens in *if*-conditionals (where the relative order of main and embedded clause is irrelevant), the conditional embedded clause containing inversion has to precede the main clause; the restriction on the relative order is exactly the same as the one holding in (18), hence it is very likely to depend on the same triggering factor, whatever it may be.

Note that in standard Italian a similar restriction holds between the conditional sentence introduced by *se* and the main clause: as shown by the example reported in (ie) in footnote 8 above, *se* can be omitted when the embedded clause precedes the main clause; however, when the order is reversed, omission of *se* gives a marginal result for some speakers, while for others an intonational break between the two clauses is required, as in (vb):

(v)  

a.  avremmo potuto dirglielo, se fosse venuto  
have-cond been able tell-him, if were come  
‘we could have told him, if he had come’  
b.  (??)avremmo potuto dirglielo / fosse venuto  
have-cond been able tell-him / were come  
‘we could have told him, had he come’

This contrast suggests that raising of the embedded inflected verb to the head occupied by *se*, deleting it, triggers raising of the whole embedded clause across the main clause.
sequence identified in (17), but simply resorts to an alternative device in order to check the feature of the relevant head.

By carefully dissecting the summarizing scheme in (14) we obtain therefore the following sequence of functional projections, hierarchically organized in a fixed order, each of which codifying a particular type of mental attitude of the speaker with respect to the propositional content expressed:

(19) \textit{Disjunctive} > \textit{Counterfactual} > \textit{Presuppositional} > \textit{Interrogative}

Conceptually, such a sequence can be made sense of if interpreted as reflecting a (from right to left) decreasing degree of salience of the event’s truth value for the speaker, along the following lines:

- \textit{IntP} is associated with the interrogative reading in (7a), intended as real request for new information: in yes/no questions the speaker asks the addressee to assign a truth value to the event in question (and in wh-questions, to identify an adequate referent for the wh-phrase);

- \textit{PresupP} is associated with the readings exemplified in (7b-c); in this case the truth value of the event is assumed as positive (and the referent of the wh-constituent is already known) but the event (or the degree expressed by the wh-word) is assigned by the speaker a certain relevance according to his (or to standard) expectations, the compatibility with such expectations depending on the presence of negation;\textsuperscript{12}

- \textit{CounterfP} is associated with the optative and hypothetical contexts exemplified in (7d-e), where the speaker takes into account the potential consequences of a given truth value for the event expressed by the main clause;

- \textit{DisjP} is associated with the disjunctive reading exemplified in (7f): in this case the speaker takes into account both truth values for the same event (or, alternatively, two different events) evaluating them as irrelevant for the realization of the event of the main clause.

As for the precise location of the sequence of projections in (19), following the standard assumption that the projection codifying the interrogative interpretation is situated

\textsuperscript{12} See Portner & Zanuttini (1996) on the relevance of the presence of negation, both in \textit{yes/no} exclamatives and in \textit{wh}-exclamatives, in triggering a presuppositional implication.
within the CP-layer, we are forced to the conclusion that the other projections considered here, being hierarchically above it, belong to the same structural layer.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13}. As pointed out by Marcato (1995) and Benincà (1996), in some varieties of the North-Eastern Italian area in the first and second plural person of some tenses an enclitic morpheme surfaces on the right of the inflected verb even in the assertive conjugation; in (i) I report the conjugation of the verb \textit{sing} in Western Friulian, while in (ii) and (iii) are reported the conjugations of some tenses of the verbs \textit{sleep} and \textit{look} in Northern and Central Agordino respectively:

(i) imperfect indicative:
1. cante
2. te cantea
3. l cantea
4. canten-\textit{si}
5. cante-\textit{si}
6. i cantea

(ii) a. imperfect indicative:
1. dormive
2. te dormive
3. el dormiva
4. dormi-\textit{ne}
5. dormi-\textit{de}
6. i dormiva
b. imperfect subjunctive:
1. dormise
2. te dormise
3. el dormise
4. dormis-\textit{ne}
5. dormis-\textit{de}
6. i dormise
c. present conditional:
1. dormirave
2. te dormirave
3. el dormirave
4. dormis-\textit{ne}
5. dormis-\textit{de}
6. i dormirave

(iii)a. imperfect indicative:
1. vardâve
2. te vardâve
3. l vardâva
4. vardi-\textit{ne}
5. vardi-\textit{de}
6. i vardâva
b. imperfect subjunctive:
1. vardâse
2. te vardâse
3. l vardâse
4. vardes-\textit{ne}
5. vardes-\textit{de}
6. i vardâse
c. present conditional:
1. vardarâe
2. te vardarâe
3. l vardarâe
4. vardes-\textit{ne}
5. vardes-\textit{de}
6. i vardarâe

As one can see from these verbal paradigms, first and second plural person are morphologically marked with a special ending in the tenses which are characterized by a [-real] modality. I suggest that this peculiarity of verbal morphology may be due to the fact that these two persons, by their intrinsic semantics, entail a reduced commitment of the speaker in asserting the truthfulness of his statement; on the one hand, differently from what happens in the singular, a plural subject implies by definition a plurality of referents, hence a higher level of knowledge of the world is required, which may induce the speaker to warn the addressee of the potentially reduced degree of objectivity of his statement; on the other hand, unlike third person subject sentences (whose subject we assume to be absent form the discourse in the unmarked case), with first and second plural subjects the speaker’s subjective representation of the event can in principle be questioned by the other co-referent subjects, which again may weaken the speaker’s self-confidence.
5. On subject clitic inversion in French

In this section I will check the compatibility of the hierarchical ordering of functional heads in (17) with subject clitic inversion in standard French and its relevance for the tu-pas construction in Quebec French. In contemporary standard French subject clitic inversion is compatible with many of the readings listed under (7), as shown by (20):

(20) a. vient-il?
   a’. où va-t-il?
   comes-scl where goes-scl
   ‘is he coming?’ ‘where is he going?’

b. quel tour de cochon ne m’ a-t-il pas joué!
   which turn of pig neg me-has-scl not played
   ‘what a dirty trick he played to me!’

c. (je pensais que rien d’intéressant ne m’arriverait aujourd’hui et)
   (ne) voilà-t-il (i(l)) pas que Naomi Campbell me téléphone!!
   (neg) seethere-(scl) not that Naomi Campbell me calls
   ‘...(surprisingly,)Naomi Campbell rings me up!!’

d. puisse-t-il venir!
   d’. plût-il a Dieu qu’il pût venir
   can-subj-scl come like-subj-scl to God that he could come
   ‘if only he could come!’

e. (Marie) viendrait-elle que je serais surpris
   (Mary) would-come-scl that I would-be surprised
   ‘if Mary/she came I would be surprised’

f. ???viendrait-il ou ne viendrait-il pas je partirai de toute façon

If this interpretation of the data is on the right track, these inflectional endings represent a class of enclitic morphemes whose interpretive properties resemble the ones of enclitic pronominal subjects discussed above: again, enclisis on the inflected verb seems to occur in contexts conveying the peculiar relation entertained by the speaker with the propositional content.

14. The grammatical counterpart of (20f) is the following, where the two members of the disjunction are introduced by the complementizer que and the preverbal subject clitic is used:

(i) qu’il vienne ou qu’il ne vienne pas je partirai de toute façon
    that scl-come or that scl-neg-come not I will-leave of all way
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would-come-scl or neg would-come-scl not I will-leave of all way
‘whether he comes or not, I’m going to leave in any case’

The marginality of (20f), that is, the fact that the only reading incompatible with inversion in French is the disjunctive one, confirms the correctness and the crosslinguistic validity of the linear-hierarchical order indicated in (17), where the disjunctive reading is located in the highest position.

Another instance of subject clitic inversion is attested in standard French in the structure reported in (21), where -t-il pas is enclitic on the defective verbal form voilà:

(21) ne voilâ-t-il pas que le loup revient
neg seethere-scl not that the wolf comes back
‘and here the wolf returns’

Vinet (1998), in examining the similar construction with tu-pas attested in Quebec French, points out that it has a wide range of uses which all seem to bear some peculiar form of implication, as exemplified in (22):

(22) a. c’est-tu-pas choquant!
it-is-tu-pas shocking!
‘isn’t it shocking!’

b. ce serait-tu-pas lui, le coupable?
it would-be-tu-pas he, the culprit?
‘wouldn’t he be the culprit?’

c. penses-tu que ce serait-tu-pas brisé?
think-you that it would-be-tu-pas broken?
‘do you think it could not be broken?’

‘whether he comes or not, I’m going to leave in any case’

Jean-Marie Marandin has pointed out to me that subject clitic inversion obtains in standard French after some adverbs like peut-être (‘maybe’), sans doute (‘without doubt’), probablement (‘probably’), which equally seem to be involved in a more effective characterization of the speaker’s representation of the event; I will however leave open for future research the question concerning the relation between the obligatoriness of inversion with these adverbs and the hierarchy of functional projections proposed by Cinque (1999).
Splitting subject clitic-verb inversion

d. j’irai-*tu*?  j’irai-*tu*-pas?
    I will-go-scl? I will-go-*tu*-pas?
    ‘should I go? should I not go?’

According to her, (22a) is an emphatic assertion expressing degree and implying a presupposition of the speaker; in (22b) the non-negative counterpart of the proposition expressed by the sentence is assumed in the discourse; (22c), attested in a subdialect of Quebec French, contains a hint of surprise or bewilderment concerning the event expressed by the embedded verb; finally, (22d), acceptable only if both sentences cooccur, is interpreted as expressing indeterminacy or doubt. Interestingly, the interpretive implications of the examples in (22) seem to be somehow reducible to the semantic import of the heads in (17): (22a) to Presup°, (22b-c) to Counterf°, (22d) to Disj° respectively.

According to Roberts (1993a), tu in tu-pas can be analyzed as a phonological variant of t-il in standard French (or ti in many varieties of colloquial French); furthermore, Roberts (1993b) claims that in some dialects of contemporary Valdotain postverbal subject pronouns are developing into ti-morphemes and that this phenomenon is a consequence of the loss of inversion in interrogatives; the following example, from Roberts (1993b), is of the Valdotain variety of St.Nicholas:

(23)  l’a-t- *i* vu son làon?
    scl-has-scl seen his uncle
    ‘has he seen his uncle?’

If his hypothesis is correct, it looks plausible to relate the structures in (21) and (22) to erstwhile inversion structures where the verb used to raise to the relevant head position; such connection is strongly supported by the fact that, as shown in (20), in standard

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15. More recently, Vinet (2000) has sketched an analysis of –tu(pas) in Quebec French in terms of feature composition; she proposes that the features of –tu are checked both at PF and LF and analyzes it as a Force operator identified in the CP domain at LF (while pas is analyzed as a negative marker interpreted with a reverse positive polarity when it scopes over a Force operator, such as –tu); she also points out that –tu has an LF reflex since it licenses certain types of illocutionary force structures with a finite tense. Interestingly, some of the features of –tu as a reinforcer of a mood force indicator can also be found with the –t-il form and its variants in standard French.
French inversion is compatible nowadays with most of the readings attested in the Northern Italian domain.

6. Conclusion

Through a crosslinguistic comparison of some North-Eastern Italian varieties it has been shown that clauses containing a verbal form with enclisis of the pronominal subject can be associated to different subsets of a given range of possible readings. The various interpretations expressed by this class of enclitic morphemes can be characterized by a common feature: they imply a less objective representation of the propositional content than the one conveyed in assertive contexts; in other words, whenever subject clitic inversion obtains, the event is presented subjectively, that is, related to the speaker’s observational perspective. The range of variation detectable from the comparison among the different dialects examined is traced back to precise structural conditions, in the sense that each type of interpretation is triggered by the raising of the inflected verb to a different landing site inside the upper layer of the sentence structure; hence, the attested variation provides suggestive evidence for the existence of a few functional projections encoding some aspects of the speaker’s relation to the propositional content expressed by the clause.
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