Modal particles in Italian

Marco Coniglio
University of Venice

1. Introduction

In the last decades, the linguistic studies on German (and other Germanic languages) have led to the identification of a small class of words, which are generally referred to as Modalpartikeln (‘modal particles’), Abtönungspartikeln (‘gradating, shading particles’), etc. Their name varies in the technical literature according to the aspect each author wants to stress. For the present purposes, I will use the term ‘modal particles’ (henceforth MPs) because, as I pointed out in previous works (cf. Coniglio 2005), I find the name fully legitimated by their syntactic behavior. They constitute a specific class of elements, which are similar to speaker-oriented adverbs, but compared to these they display a higher degree of grammaticalization and other peculiar characteristics clearly distinguishing them from this class of adverbs.

It is difficult to provide a definition describing the features of the whole class which at the same time applies to each word belonging to it. The lexemes of this closed word class fulfill very different functions. Let us think of words such as ja, denn, wohl, etc.²

---

* I would like to thank Anna Cardinaletti for her comments on this paper. The responsibility for any errors is entirely mine.

1. As we will see below, MPs occupy a variable position between Cinque’s (1999) mood and modality projections (MoodPs and ModPs).

2. Unfortunately, it is difficult to provide the English translation of German MPs. In the present paper, I will not attempt to translate them. However, in order to allow the reader to understand the meaning and
These elements are notoriously confined to the *Mittelfeld* (middle field) of the clause, as in the following examples:\(^3\)

(1) Hans ist wohl auf See.  
*Hans is PRT at sea*  
“Hans is probably at sea.”

(2) Was ist denn hier passiert? […]  
*what is PRT here happened?*  
“What happened here?”

From a syntactic perspective, their restriction to the middle field is the only generally accepted criterion to distinguish these lexemes from adverbs in general. But also see the next section about further characteristics all MPs have in common.

There is a consolidated tradition of studies about German MPs in every linguistic field, i.e. from semantics to pragmatics, from phonology to syntax, and so on. In this paper, I would like to concentrate on the syntactic facets of this topic.

As for Italian, in contrast, the existence of such a group of words as German MPs has never been assumed. It has only been sporadically observed that some Italian lexemes (such as *mai*, *poi* and so on) present peculiar characteristics (phonetic, semantic, syntactic, etc.) distinguishing them from the traditional class of adverbs. See, for function of each particle, in the appendix below I will provide the translation of Thurmair’s (1989: 200) table summarizing the principal functions of each particle. I refer to Thurmair (1989) for an in-depth examination.

\(^3\) Notice that unmarked German main clauses (displaying the finite verb in second position) are traditionally subdivided into three *Felder* (‘fields’), i.e. the *Vorfeld* (‘initial field’), the *Mittelfeld* (‘middle field’) and the *Nachfeld* (‘final field’). This division is legitimated by the presence of discontinuous verbal complexes, splitting up the sentence into three parts, as in the following example:

(i) [\(VF\) Hans] \(\text{hat}\) [\(MF\) mehr Glück] \(\text{gehabt}\) [\(NN\) als Ingo].  
*Hans has more luck had than Ingo*  
‘Hans was luckier than Ingo.’

In particular, with *Mittelfeld* we mean that portion of a German clause that in matrix contexts is delimited, to the left, by the finite verb and, to the right, by the uninflected form of the verb, if present at all.
instance, the articles by Burkhardt (1985), Radtke (1985) and Held (1985). Although the number of these words does not reach that of German MPs, some of them are worth exploring. They could reveal the existence of a class of MPs in Italian like the German one.

Consequently, the issue I would like to address in the present paper is the following: are there MPs in Italian? Providing an answer to this question depends on a number of related issues, first of all the criteria we adopt to define the class of MPs. Thus, for example, if we adopted the generally accepted Mittelfeld-criterion to define this class, we would face an insurmountable problem in recognizing the existence of particles in those languages (like Italian) that do not have a middle field. Therefore, we have to find out alternative means to detect potential MPs in these languages as well.

The present paper aims at giving an affirmative answer to the question above, by providing some arguments in favour of this hypothesis, mainly based on the syntactic comparison of Italian and German particles. I will therefore try to apply the results of the long tradition of studies on German to the analysis of potential MPs in Italian.

We need to bear in mind that a sufficiently restrictive syntactic theory is required in order to avoid the inclusion of too many elements in this class. Since there are no clear syntactic criteria to define what MPs are, elements that do not belong to this class (such as figurati, eh, etc.) could be admitted in it as well. Therefore, it is necessary to provide syntactic instruments that allow us to distinguish MPs from discourse elements that, in contrast to the latter, display a parenthetical usage or are not integrated in the clause. As these elements can express the speaker’s attitude to the proposition as well, they are often semantically very close to MPs. However, syntactic criteria can help to restrict the field by revealing elements which do not belong to this class.

This paper is organized as follows. In the next section, I will address the main characteristics of German MPs as they are generally described in traditional works on this topic. These properties will turn out to be useful for the identification of potential MPs in Italian, which are presented in section 3. Here, I will compare German and Italian MPs from a purely syntactic point of view, by extending my previous analysis on German (Coniglio 2005, 2006, 2007a,b,c, forthcoming) to Italian. Conclusions and open questions will follow in section 4.
2. Properties of German modal particles

The attempt to outline common characteristics of MPs is no easy task. The whole group comprises about twenty words, which constitute a closed class of different elements. I am thinking of words like aber, auch, bloß, denn, doch, eben, eigentlich, einfach, etwa, halt, ja, mal, nur, ruhig, schon, sowieso, vielleicht, wohl and maybe a few other lexemes.\(^4\) However, the well-known fact that all these elements present homophones in other word classes makes their analysis more difficult. In what follows, I will present some of the syntactic properties, which characterize MPs as a class and distinguish them from other word classes.\(^5\)

2.1. Traditional observations on the syntax of German modal particles

In general, we can observe that MPs are mainly used in spoken German and usually express the speaker’s subjective point of view with respect to what s/he is saying. However, their strongly grammaticalized status often makes their semantic contribution unclear. They have no lexical meaning in a traditional sense (cf. Molnár 2002: 15) and are, therefore, often difficult to translate into other languages. In most cases, their omission does not render the sentence ungrammatical, but only involves a slight change in its meaning.\(^6\)

(3) Die Preise werden (ja) immer höher.

\textit{the prices are.getting PRT higher and higher}

As mentioned above, a well-known characteristic of MPs is their property of occurring in the Mittelfeld of the clause. They can occupy the middle field of main clauses, as in the sentence above, as well as that of embedded clauses, as in the following example:

\(^4\) For instance, allerdings, immerhin, jedenfalls, ohnehin, schließlich are classified as particles by some authors. Cf. Weydt \textit{et al.} (1983: 159ff).


\(^6\) In very few cases, the presence of MPs is nonetheless obligatory. Thurmair (1989: 24f) lists some contexts where the absence of MPs makes a sentence unacceptable.
(4) Er hat ein schlechtes Gewissen,  
    he has a bad conscience  
    weil er wohl gelogen hat.  (Asbach-Schnitker 1977: 48)  
    because he PRT lied has

Notice that they neither occur in the final field (5) nor in the initial field (6a), not even if topicalized within a bigger constituent (6b):

(5) * Die Preise werden immer höher (,) ja.

(6) a. * Ja werden die Preise immer höher.
    b. * [Ja immer höher] werden die Preise.

Actually, the middle field of root and embedded clauses is not the only context where we can find MPs. They can sometimes occur in complex DPs as modifiers of an adjective or of a participial clause:

(7) In der wohl größten urbanen Umgestaltung seit [...]  (Métrich et al. 2002: 348)  
    in the PRT biggest urban reshaping since [...]

(8) Dieser ja leider viel zu früh  
    this PRT unfortunately too early  
    verstorbenen Komponist [...]  (Thurmair 1989: 27)  
    died composer

We could save the generalization by claiming that, in these contexts, MPs occupy the middle field of reduced clauses, whose predicates are adjectival or participial.
A second apparent exception to their confinement to the clausal middle field is their occurrence in the initial field (Vorfeld) of wh-interrogative clauses:

(9) Wer schon wird das tun wollen?  (Ormélius-Sandblom 1997: 85)  
    who PRT will that do want.to?

However, in these contexts, MPs modify a wh-element, thus being embedded in a DP, as in the preceding case, and probably constituting no real exception.
In this paper, I will concentrate on the occurrence of MPs in the clausal middle field, but I have to point out straightaway that their confinement to the middle field is not alone sufficient to define this class, since other lexemes behave in the same way. Other criteria, not only morphosyntactic, but also semantic and pragmatic ones, can help us distinguish particles from similar IP-internal elements. But let us now concentrate on their morphosyntactic characteristics.

First of all, we observe that, although MPs are confined to the middle field, they take scope over the whole proposition (and not over single constituents). They scope even out of the IP, thus displaying strong links to the left clausal periphery. This connection with the CP is testified by two other properties, viz. their dependency on the type of clause they occur in and the illocutionary effects they can have.

As for the first characteristics, we can easily prove that not all particles are compatible with all clausal types. Each of them can only occur in certain types of clauses, i.e. declaratives, imperatives, etc. (cf. Thurmair 1989:49). Thus, for instance, a particle like denn can only be found in interrogatives, wohl in declaratives and interrogatives and so on. Syntactically, we can explain this fact by claiming that there is a close link between MPs and the left periphery, since clause typing is generally assumed to take place in the CP-layer.

With respect to the second point, i.e. the illocutionary effects generated by MPs, Thurmair (1989: 2) points out that MPs can strengthen or modify the illocutionary force of a sentence. Let us consider some examples to illustrate how they can do this. MPs can strengthen the illocutionary force of a clause, as in the case of stressed JA in the following sentence:\footnote{Capital letters indicate that the particle is stressed.}

\begin{equation}
\text{(10) Komm } JA \quad \text{nicht zu spät heim. (Thurmair 1989: 109)}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation*}
\quad \text{come PRT not too late home}
\end{equation*}

Here, the particle JA performs the function of making the order peremptory.

As to their faculty of modifying the illocutionary force of a clause, consider the following example (from Coniglio forthcoming):

\begin{equation}
\text{(11) Wir wollen } \text{doch wohl nicht etwa annehmen,}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation*}
\quad \text{we want PRTs (not) assume}
\end{equation*}

\begin{equation}
\text{dass die Sonne sich } \text{um die Erde dreht.}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation*}
\quad \text{that the sun (itself) around the earth revolves.}
\end{equation*}
Here, the particle (probably in combination with other factors, such as prosody) turns the declarative clause into a (rhetorical) question. However, these cases where MPs completely alter the illocutionary force of a clause are much rarer. Let us now take into account more specific morphosyntactic characteristics of German MPs, which you usually find in the technical literature on this topic. As I pointed out in Coniglio (2005: 29ff), where most examples are drawn from, MPs can be neither coordinated (12a)\(^8\) nor modified (12b).\(^9\) They cannot stand alone as a reply to a question (12c) nor can they be stressed (12d),\(^10\) nor be replaced by means of a substituting element (12e):\(^11\)

\[
\begin{align*}
(12) & \quad \text{a. Kommen Sie \textit{doch} (*und) \textit{mal} zu mir!} \\
& \quad \text{\textit{come} \textit{you PRT (*and) PRT to me}} \\
& \quad \text{b. * Kommen Sie \textit{sehr mal} zu mir!} \\
& \quad \text{\textit{come} \textit{you very PRT to me}} \\
& \quad \text{c. A: (Wie)kann ich zu Ihnen kommen? \quad B: *\textit{Mal!}} \\
& \quad \text{\textit{how can I to you come PRT}} \\
& \quad \text{d. * Kommen Sie \textit{MAL} zu mir!} \\
& \quad \text{\textit{come} \textit{you PRT to me}} \\
& \quad \text{e. * Kommen Sie \textit{es} zu mir! (=\textit{mal})} \\
& \quad \text{\textit{come} \textit{you it to me PRT}}
\end{align*}
\]

Here, I leave out other characteristics that, although being discussed by many authors, are less interesting for our discussion, as for instance the position of MPs with respect to

\(^{8}\) However, they can be combined, as we can see in the example.

\(^{9}\) In particular, they cannot be inflected nor do they have degrees of comparison.

\(^{10}\) Some particles can have focus accent or be contrastively stressed, but among researchers there is no general agreement in considering them as genuine MPs in these cases. However, it is generally recognized that MPs can have an ‘emphatic’ accent, such as \textit{NUR}, \textit{BLOSS}, \textit{JA} and so on (cf. Thurmair 1989: 23).

\(^{11}\) These characteristics are usually assumed as evidence that MPs are head-elements. Nonetheless, I consider them as degenerated maximal projections, as argued in Coniglio (2005, 2006, 2007b). Also see Cardinali (2007) for the same conclusions.
other elements in the middle field, such as negation and (full and pronominal) DPs and PPs. In general, we observe that MPs can never be in the scope of negation and that they have to precede rhematic elements, but follow thematic ones (cf. Coniglio 2005: 31ff). In what follows, I will concentrate on other issues, discussed in previous works of mine.

2.2. Further syntactic characteristics

In this section, I will briefly present the results of my previous studies on German MPs. In particular, in 2.2.1., I will sketch a syntactic analysis of their restriction to the middle field. In 2.2.2., I will then provide evidence for linking MPs to the CP-domain.

2.2.1. Modal particles as weak adverbs in the IP-domain

In previous works (Coniglio 2005, 2006, 2007a,b), I offered an analysis of German MPs in terms of weak adverbs occurring in the IP of the clause. In particular, I addressed two main questions. On one hand, I investigated their internal structure by targeting the fundamental issue, whether they should be considered heads or maximal projections. On the other hand, I examined their external syntax and tried to establish how they behave with respect to other lexical elements also occurring in the clausal middle field, adverbs in particular.

Regarding the first issue, the question whether MPs are heads or maximal projections is a long disputed one. If we consider the examples in (12) again, strong evidence suggests that they are heads. However, other considerations lead us to regard MPs as XPs in the specifier position of some functional projections. The main argument is the following (cf. Bayer forthcoming): if MPs were – as is sometimes claimed – heads in the functional structure of the IP, how could we explain the fact that they do not interfere with verb movement? If this is generally assumed to be cyclic, why is it not the case that MPs cliticize to the verb or block its movement?

I argued that MPs should be considered maximal projections in the specifier position of functional projections, as Cinque (1999) claimed with respect to adverbs (see below). Nevertheless, I suggested that, in contrast to Cinque’s adverbs, MPs are degenerated elements unable to project a full-fledged structure as in the case of adverbs (also see
Cardinaletti 2007). This would be the consequence of a grammaticalization process, which led them to lose part of their syntactic structure. Such an analysis would account for the characteristics seen in (12), as well as for their adverbial nature. Let us now consider the external syntax of these elements, i.e. their distribution in the clause, in particular with respect to other constituents occurring in the middle field. As anticipated, here, I will not address the issue of their position with respect to DPs, but I will concentrate on their distribution with respect to adverbs, as they have been classified by Cinque (1999). In Coniglio (2005, 2006, 2007a,b), I proved that the reciprocal positions of MPs and adverbs provide interesting insight into the nature of particles.

Cinque (1999) assumes that adverbs and functional verb morphology are evidence of the underlying functional structure of the IP. In particular, he claims that the clausal IP-domain is constituted by a fixed sequence of functional projections hierarchically ordered, which host verb morphology in their head positions and the different adverbial classes in their specifiers.

The structure of the clausal functional projections given by Cinque for English is the following one, where he also lists an example for the adverbial class hosted in the specifier of each functional projection:\(^{13}\)

(13) **The universal hierarchy of clausal functional projections** (Cinque 1999: 106)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{[frankly Mood}\_\text{speech act} \mid \text{fortunately Mood}\_\text{evaluative} \mid \text{allegedly Mood}\_\text{evidential} \mid \text{probably Mood}\_\text{pistemic}} \\
&\text{[once T(Past) \mid then T(Future) \mid perhaps Mood\_\text{realis} \mid necessarily Mod\_\text{necessity}} \\
&\text{[possibly Mod\_\text{possibility} \mid \text{usually ASp}\_\text{habitual} \mid \text{again ASp}\_\text{perfective}(t) \mid \text{often ASp}\_\text{frequentative}(t)} \\
&\text{[intentionally Mod\_\text{dilion} \mid \text{quickly ASp}\_\text{frequentative}(t) \mid \text{already T\_\text{Anterior}} \mid \text{no longer ASp}\_\text{terminative}} \\
&\text{[still ASp}\_\text{continuative} \mid \text{always ASp}\_\text{perfective}(s) \mid \text{just ASp}\_\text{retrospective} \mid \text{soon ASp}\_\text{proximate} \mid \text{briefly ASp}\_\text{durative}} \\
&\text{[characteristically(?) ASp}\_\text{generic\_\text{progressive} \mid \text{almost ASp}\_\text{perspective} \mid \text{completely}\ ASp}\_\text{Sg\_\text{completive}(t)} \\
&\text{[tutto ASp}\_\text{Pt}\_\text{completive} \mid \text{well Voice} \mid \text{fast/early ASp}\_\text{frequentative}(s) \mid \text{again ASp}\_\text{perfective}(s)} \\
&\text{[often ASp}\_\text{frequentative}(f) \mid \text{completely}\ ASp}\_\text{completive}(f)}
\end{align*}
\]

---

12. By adopting a tripartition of adverbs as the one Cardinaletti/Starke (1999) proposed for pronouns (i.e. clitic, weak and strong), I claimed that MPs are weak adverbs, opposed to strong adverbs, i.e. the ones considered by Cinque (1999). Also see Grosz (2005) and Cardinaletti (2007) for similar conclusions. In the present paper, I will not take into account clitic MPs (i.e. clitic adverbs in the tripartition), which can be found in substandard German or in some German dialects.

13. Also see Cinque (2001) for some refinements of this hierarchy.
For reasons of space, I cannot go deeper into Cinque’s (1999) theory. Therefore, I refer to his work for further clarifications.

In Coniglio (2005, 2006, 2007a,b), I argued that MPs, in contrast to adverbs, do not occupy a fixed position in the IP. Since they occur in certain positions with respect to adverbs, i.e. they can only be found in between the highest adverbs, I claimed that they occupy very high positions in Cinque’s clausal structure.

In particular, I maintained that all particles have to comply with the same pattern. Although they can occupy one or more positions in between Cinque’s highest adverbs, they cannot occur after the (higher) class of repetitive adverbs, as illustrated in (14) and exemplified in (15) by means of the particle *ja in declarative contexts: 14

(14) Positions accessible to MPs

\( (\ddagger) > \text{Mood}_{\text{speech act}} > (\ddagger) > \text{Mood}_{\text{evaluative}} > (\ddagger) > \text{Mood}_{\text{evidential}} > (\ddagger) > \text{Mod}_{\text{epistemic}} > \)

\( (\ddagger) > \text{T(Past)} > (\ddagger) > \text{T(Future)} > (\ddagger) > \text{Mood}_{\text{realis}} > (\ddagger) > \text{Mod}_{\text{accessory}} > \)

\( (\ddagger) > \text{Mod}_{\text{possibility}} > (\ddagger) > \text{Asp}_{\text{habitual}} > (\ddagger) > \text{Asp}_{\text{repetitive}(l)} > * > \text{Asp}_{\text{frequentative}(l)} > * > ... \)

(15) Der Attentäter ist ... von der Polizei festgehalten worden.

*the assassin is ... by the police detained been

a. ... *ja* glücklicherweise *ja* ... Mood_{evaluative} fortunately
b. ... *ja* damals *ja* ... T(Past) then
c. ... *ja* normalerweise *ja* ... Asp_{habitual} usually
d. ... *ja* nochmals *ja* ... Asp_{repetitive(l)} again

---

14. With higher repetitive adverbs, I mean the class of adverbs hosted in the specifier of the projection Asp_{repetitive(l)}. Cinque (1999: 91ff) distinguishes two classes of repetitive adverbs on the basis of examples such as the following (for Italian):

(i) Gianni ha di nuovo battuto alla porta di nuovo/ancora.

‘G. again knocked on the door again.’

With respect to this example, Cinque (1999: 92) argues that “[t]he leftmost di nuovo quantifies over the event (of knocking on the door, perhaps many times), while the rightmost quantifies over the act itself of knocking.” Since MPs have to precede both classes of repetitive adverbs, I will sometimes simplify the facts and say that MPs always precede repetitive adverbs in general, although I mean that they have to occur before the higher class of adverbs and consequently before all adverbial classes following these.
The position between habitual adverbs and repetitive adverbs constitutes a sort of natural boundary between the highest and the lowest clausal projections. In the higher part of the clausal architecture we find syntactic projections linked to mood and modality. Instead, the lower portion of the clause hosts aspectual projections, which have therefore a strong link to or are part of the propositional content of the clause. Since MPs are external to the proposition and clearly linked to mood and modality projections, it is not surprising that they can only be found in the higher part of the clausal structure.

To sum up, MPs are elements syntactically related to the IP. Because of their superficial position between mood and modality projections, they are rightly dubbed “modal” particles. However, in recent investigations, which I will briefly discuss in the next section, I pointed out that these elements also display a link to the left periphery of the clause.

### 2.2.2. A link between modal particles and ForceP

As already pointed out in 2.1., German MPs generally occur in the middle field of root and embedded clauses. The fact that main clauses can license particles is not surprising since these types of clauses display root properties per definition and are therefore endowed with independent illocutionary force. Nevertheless, embedded clauses can sometimes display root properties as well and, consequently, they can also license MPs, as we have seen, for example, in (4), repeated here as (16):

(16) Er hat ein schlechtes Gewissen,

\[
\text{he has a bad conscience}
\]

weil er wohl gelogen hat. (Asbach-Schnitker 1977: 48)

\[
\text{because he PRT lied has}
\]

We should now ask which embedded clauses can display root properties and therefore license MPs. For this purpose, I will make use of some recent theories by Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) about the syntax of root and embedded clauses. In the next section, I will briefly sketch her approach. In 2.2.2.2., I will then provide an explanation for the distribution of German MPs in embedded contexts by adopting Haegeman’s proposals (cf. Coniglio 2007c, forthcoming).
2.2.2.1. The internal and external syntax of clauses

In recent works, Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) draws a distinction between certain subordinate clauses resembling root clauses (since, semantically, they behave as if they were unembedded), on one hand, and embedded clauses in traditional terms, on the other.

Let us now concentrate on adverbials. Haegeman argues for the existence of two types of such subordinate clauses, i.e. central and peripheral adverbials, the first ones being more deeply embedded than the second ones, which would therefore occupy a more peripheral position.

Consider the following examples contrasting two different types of conditionals:

(17) a. If it rains we all get terribly wet and miserable.
    b. If [as you say] it is going to rain this afternoon, why don’t we just stay at home and watch a video?

Haegeman (2002: 117)

The sentence in (17a) contains a sequential relation between the event expressed in the conditional clause and its consequence in the matrix clause. In this case, Haegeman speaks of an event conditional. The sentence (17b) instead is discourse-related and contains a premise leading to the question in the matrix clause (or associated clause, according to Haegeman’s terminology). This type of conditionals, called premise-conditionals by Haegeman (2002: 118), displays a certain degree of independence from the associated clause.

Haegeman (2002: 130ff) provides evidence demonstrating that the two types of conditionals differ syntactically with respect to their degree of subordination, i.e. with respect to their relation to the associated clause. Event conditionals are more deeply embedded than premise conditionals and, consequently, semantically and syntactically dependent from the associated clause. According to Haegeman (2002: 131), event conditionals (and central adverbials in general) are merged within the IP of the matrix clause by adjunction to its vP (or to an AspP). Premise conditionals (and other peripheral adverbials) are adjoined to the CP of the associated clause in a coordination-like structure.

---

15. Cf. Haegeman (2002: 118). The term matrix clause would be misleading in this case because premise conditionals are not embedded in the associated clause.
As a consequence of their different external syntax, event conditionals, temporal clauses and other types of central adverbials would also differ from premise conditionals and other peripheral adverbials with respect to another important property. While central adverbials are part of the speech act of the matrix clause, peripheral adverbials have independent illocutionary force: associated clause and peripheral adverbial constitute therefore two different illocutionary speech acts. Another important point is that these two types of clauses, according to Haegeman, can also be distinguished with regard to their internal syntax, i.e. with regard to the internal structure of their left periphery.\textsuperscript{16} Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) adopts the well-known theories by Rizzi (1997, 2001) on the fine structure of the CP. In particular, she assumes that the left periphery of a clause is articulated as follows (Haegeman 2002: 147, 151):

\begin{equation}
\text{(18) Force Top* Focus Mod* Fin}
\end{equation}

The CP would be the syntactic space comprised between the projections of Force and Fin, encoding illocutionary force and finiteness respectively. Between these two boundaries, we find other discourse-related projections hosting topicalized and focalized elements and modifiers.\textsuperscript{17} With respect to these elements, Haegeman observes a crucial difference in the licensing of topicalized and focalized elements. While fronted adjuncts, which according to Haegeman occupy the projection ModP, can be found in all types of clauses (both central and peripheral ones), fronted arguments and focalized elements, which occupy TopP and FocusP respectively, can only be licensed in peripheral clauses as in (20), but they are excluded from central ones, as we see in (19):

\begin{equation}
\text{(19) a. * If these final exams you don’t pass, you won’t get the degree. (Haegeman 2002: 148)}
\end{equation}

\textsuperscript{16} According to Haegeman’s (2008a, 2008b) recent proposals, the highest part of the IP of central adverbials would be truncated as well, as demonstrated by the fact that Cinque’s (1999) higher classes of adverbs are excluded from these contexts.

\textsuperscript{17} For reasons of space, I cannot go into the functions associated to each projection mentioned here. See Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) and Rizzi (1997, 2001, 2004) for an in-depth examination.
b. * When the questions you can’t answer, you can ask for a different set of questions. (Haegeman 2002: 148)

(20) a. We don’t look to his paintings for common place truths, though truths they contain none the less. (Guardian, G2, 18.2.3., p. 8, col 1) (Haegeman 2004a: 160)

b. If these problems we cannot solve, there are many others that we can tackle immediately. (Haegeman 2004a: 160)

Haegeman considers the contrasts above as a piece of evidence for postulating a difference in the internal structure of central and peripheral adverbials. In particular, she assumes that the CP of central adverbials is structurally reduced if compared to that of peripheral clauses.

Provided that all subordinate clauses have a projection SubP containing the subordinating conjunction, the structure of peripheral and central adverbials would only differ with respect to the presence vs. absence of certain projections, i.e. TopP, FocusP and the projection encoding information about the illocutionary force of the clause, viz. ForceP. As illustrated below, while peripheral adverbials, as well as root clauses, would display all the (intermediate) projections ForceP, TopP and FocusP, central adverbials would lack them:

(21) a. Central adverbials: Sub Mod Fin
    b. Peripheral adverbials: Sub Force Top* Focus Mod* Fin
    c. Root clauses: Force Top* Focus Mod* Fin

Haegeman (2002: 159)

Haegeman links the presence of the projections TopP and FocusP in root clauses and peripheral adverbials to the realization of the projection ForceP (Haegeman 2002: 160ff). I.e. the presence of this projection is crucial in determining the possibility for a clause to license topocalized or focalized elements.

At a second stage, Haegeman extends her analysis in terms of structural reduction to the other types of embedded clauses, in particular to complement clauses. Even though,

---

18. Haegeman (2002: 166) points out that relative clauses could be analyzed in a similar fashion. They seem to differ at least with respect to their external syntax. Appositive relatives often display illocutionary independency and are apparently more peripheral than restrictive ones.
with regard to their external syntax, these clauses are always embedded and consequently central clauses, they also present a differentiated internal structure, as represented below:

(22) a. Non-factive complements: \( that \) (Top) (Focus) Force Mod* Fin
b. Factive complements: \( that \) Mod* Fin

Haegeman (2004a: 171)\(^{19}\)

She proposes that non-factive complements present a full structure, in contrast to factive complements, which in contrast to these do not admit the presence of topocalized and focalized elements (see Haegeman 2004a, 2006 for the relevant tests).

The following table summarizes the results of Haegeman’s investigations on the structure of the left periphery of embedded clauses. Only certain types present a full structure like that of root clauses:

(23) The left periphery of embedded clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complement clauses</th>
<th>non-factive complements</th>
<th>full</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>factive complements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial clauses</td>
<td>peripheral adverbials</td>
<td>full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>central adverbials</td>
<td>reduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative clauses</td>
<td>appositive relatives</td>
<td>full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>restrictive relatives</td>
<td>reduced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed above, Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) claims that central adverbials present a reduced CP. In particular, she argues that temporal clauses and event conditionals (i.e. central conditionals) are always of the central type.\(^{20}\) Other adverbials can be both central and peripheral. As far as complement clauses are concerned, we observed that factive complements, in contrast to non-factive clauses, display a reduced

---

\(^{19}\) See Haegeman (2002: 162ff, 2006: 1662f) about the uncertain positioning of ForceP with respect to the other CP-internal projections.

\(^{20}\) In Coniglio (2007c, forthcoming), I proposed that locative clauses should be considered central adverbials as well.
structure. Finally, relative clauses could be analyzed in a similar fashion, since restrictive relatives seem to involve a more reduced structure than non-restrictive ones. As anticipated, Haegeman’s proposals about the internal and external syntax of clauses can help us account for the distribution of MPs, as will be illustrated in the next section.

2.2.2.2. Accounting for the distribution of modal particles in embedded clauses

In Coniglio (2007c, forthcoming), I demonstrated that clauses displaying a reduced structure not only cannot license fronted arguments and focalized elements, but they cannot contain MPs either, since they cannot license root phenomena at all. Thurmair (1989) had already observed that clauses not displaying independent illocutionary force cannot host particles. However, she had not provided a syntactic explanation of the phenomenon. Therefore, starting from Haegeman’s proposals about a different structure of clauses, I provided a syntactic account for the phenomenon. Since MPs are a root phenomenon, their distribution is limited to clauses displaying root properties. They are banned from non-root contexts, since the latter do not constitute independent speech acts. We will see that these observations hold for Italian MPs as well.

Let us consider the following table summarizing the results of my investigation on the distribution of MPs in root and embedded contexts:

(24) Distribution of German MPs in root and embedded clauses (Coniglio 2007c: 27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause types</th>
<th>MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embedded clauses with a reduced CP</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded clauses with a full CP</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root clauses</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MPs can only occur in those contexts that, according to Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006), display a full left periphery and thus root properties. Therefore, on one side, we have root clauses and embedded clauses with a full structure, which are also endowed with independent illocutionary force. On the other side, there are embedded clauses displaying a reduced CP-domain (factive complements, central adverbials and restrictive relatives), which lack illocutionary force and depend on a
matrix clause\textsuperscript{21} as far as the anchoring of force to the speaker is concerned. They do not have a projection ForceP of their own.

It is not surprising that MPs can only occur in the first type of clauses, i.e. the ones with a full periphery. Consider two important characteristics of MPs. First, they trigger illocutionary effects by modifying or strengthening the illocution of the clause they occur in and thus presuppose the presence of Force.\textsuperscript{22} Second, MPs express the speaker’s attitude towards the propositional content of the clause. Since information about the speaker is syntactically encoded in ForceP, the presence of this projection is even more necessary.\textsuperscript{23}

But let us now concentrate on some Italian lexemes and apply the syntactical observations made about German MPs to these elements.

3. Some potential modal particles in Italian

I will now survey some Italian words which, though being often considered as adverbs, display special characteristics worth scrutinizing. We will see that some elements are semantically as well as syntactically very close to German MPs. One should think of words like mai, poi, pure and so on, which will be separately taken into account below (see 3.1. to 3.3.).\textsuperscript{24} More elements (mica, ben and si) are considered in 3.4., which are probably to be treated like MPs too, but which are semantically still linked to the propositional content of the clause.

\textsuperscript{21} The clause containing their antecedent, in the case of (restrictive) relatives.

\textsuperscript{22} There is another important difference with respect to adverbs. While adverbs usually occur only in declarative clauses, MPs can also be found in other illocutionary types.

\textsuperscript{23} For reasons of space, I will not address the issue of how they are licensed by ForceP. In Coniglio (2005, 141; 2007a, 110) I hinted at a possible analysis in terms of movement of MPs to SpecForceP, in accordance with some proposals by Abraham (1995) and Zimmermann (2004a,b).

\textsuperscript{24} I will not attempt to give an English translation for these elements. In order to capture their meaning, the reader should read the explanation for each particle below.
Other examples of potential particles in Italian could be *appunto, certo, magari* and so on. They can also occur clausal-internally and have a function similar to that of MPs. However, for reasons of space, I will limit my analysis to the lexemes mentioned above.

### 3.1. *Mai*

Though being homophonous with the temporal adverb meaning ‘never’, the Italian MP *mai* has developed a completely different meaning. In general, depending on contexts, its function is that of signaling the rhetoricity of a question or the total incapacity on the speaker’s side to give an answer to it. The following example can be interpreted in both ways, according to the situation:

(25) Cosa significheranno *mai* quelle parole?

> *what will.mean PRT those words*

The particle only occurs in interrogative contexts,\(^{25}\) mainly in *wh*-questions, as in the example above. More rarely, it occurs in polarity questions as well. In this case, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the MP from the temporal adverb:

(26) Avrà *mai* letto quel libro?

> *will.s/he.have PRT read that book*

Obenauer/Poletto (2000: 134) have noticed that the positions that the particle can occupy are numerous, as we see in their example:

\(^{25}\) It may also occur in (only formally) imperative types introduced by special verbs, with which they form a sort of fixed expression, as in the case of *vedi mai* in the following example:

(i) *Vedi mai che non riesca a perdere peso!*

> *look PRT that not I.manage to lose weight*

‘If only I could lose weight!’

In such contexts, the illocutionary force of the clause is generally optative.
(27) a. Cosa avrebbe mai Gianni potuto fare ...
   *what had+conditional ever John could do ...*
   b. Cosa avrebbe Gianni mai potuto fare ...
   *what had+conditional John ever could do ...*
   c. Cosa avrebbe Gianni potuto mai fare ...
   *what had+conditional John could do ever in that occasion*
   d. Cosa avrebbe Gianni potuto fare mai in quel frangente?
   *what had+conditional John could do ever in that occasion*

In contrast to poi, which – as we will see below – can appear in wh-questions as well, mai can also occupy a position adjacent to the wh-element:

(28) Cosa mai avrebbe Gianni potuto fare in quel frangente?
   *what PRT would have Gianni could do in that occasion*
   “What could Gianni do on that occasion?”

However, in this case, mai seems to directly modify the wh-element (thus taking narrow scope over it), as do certain expressions like diavolo (‘devil’) and similar ones (cf. English ‘what the hell...?’).

But at a closer scrutiny, we notice that the positions mai occupies are not so numerous as one could conclude from the observation of example (27). If we look at the following sentence, we see for instance that the particle cannot follow the complement of the verb, nor occur in the first position of the clause:

(29) <!*mai*> quando <mai> avrà <mai> letto <!*mai*> quel libro <!*mai*>?
   *PRT when PRT will.s/he have PRT read PRT that book PRT?

In this case, mai seems to be able to occupy all intermediate positions. However, the occurrence of the particle after quando is possible only if mai has narrow scope over the wh-element, as mentioned above. Interestingly, the position immediately before the object seems to be excluded as well, unless quel libro is ‘deaccented’. A plain intonation is not possible. Therefore, the only genuine position for the particle is the one between the two verbal elements, which delimit a sort of middle field.

Let us now consider the position of mai with respect to the Cinque’s (1999) adverbal hierarchy. Since the MP occurs in questions, it can only be combined with few classes of adverbs. We can nonetheless observe that the particle has to follow all higher
adverbs, until the habitual ones, such as *di solito* (‘usually’) in the example below. However, it cannot follow the higher class of repetitive adverbs, such as *di nuovo* (‘again’), and all the lower adverbs.\(^{26}\)

\[(30)\] a. Chi l’avrebbe *\(?mai\)> francamente *\(mai\)> detto che...?  
b. Chi l’avrebbe *\(mai\)> allora *\(mai\)> detto che...?  
c. Chi l’avrebbe *\(mai\)> di solito *\(mai\)> detto che...?  
d. Chi l’avrebbe *\(mai\)> di nuovo *\(mai\)> detto che...?  
e. Chi l’avrebbe *\(mai\)> ancora *\(mai\)> detto che...?  

\textit{who it-would have PRT frankly/then/usually/again/still PRT said that}

Thus, the Italian particle displays a behavior similar to that of German MPs. It occurs in the higher portion of the IP-domain, but it can only be found in one position between adverbs in Asp\textsubscript{habitual} and those in Asp\textsubscript{repetitive()}. Interestingly, as in the case of German, we can postulate a link between \textit{mai} and the CP-domain. The particle only occurs in those clausal types that according to Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) display a full structure of the CP layer. The number of contexts in which \textit{mai} can be found is very limited, since only a few types of subordinate clauses display interrogative force, which is necessary for \textit{mai} to be licensed. Nonetheless, as we see in the example below, the particle occurs in indirect questions (31), as well as in peripheral adverbials (32) and appositive relatives (33), provided that they are endowed with interrogative force:\(^{27}\)

\[(31)\] Ha chiesto cosa avrebbe \(s/he\).\textsubscript{has asked} \(s/he\).\textsubscript{would have PRT} potuto \(s/he\).\textsubscript{been able to} fare \(s/he\).\textsubscript{in that situation} in quella situazione.  

\textit{do in that situation}  

‘\(s/he\) asked what \(s/he\) could have done in that situation.’

\(^{26}\) It is worth pointing out that, probably as a consequence of the grammaticalization process, the particle \textit{mai} occupies a higher position than the homophonous temporal adverb, which occupies the specifier of the projection Asp\textsubscript{perfect} in the hierarchy in (13). Also see Cardinaletti (2008).

\(^{27}\) In embedded clauses displaying a full CP-domain, it is also possible to have imperative constructions of the type seen in fn. 25.
(32) Quel giorno ho lavorato fino a tarda notta perché cosa
that day I have worked until late night because what
avrebbe mai detto il capo se avesse scoperto l’errore?
would-have PRT said the boss if he had discovered the mistake
‘On that day, I worked till late night. (because...) What would the boss have said if he had discovered the mistake?’

(33) Non ebbi il coraggio di dirlo a Gianni,
NEG I had the courage to tell it to Gianni
il quale come avrebbe mai reagito alla notizia?
who how would he have PRT reacted to the piece of news
‘I didn’t trust to tell it to Gianni. (because...) How would he have reacted to this piece of news?"

To conclude, though being an IP-internal element, the particle mai, like German MPs, displays typical characteristics of CP-related elements, since they only occur in clauses that constitute independent speech acts and consequently present a full left periphery.

3.2. Poi

The particle poi derives from the homophonous temporal adverb meaning ‘then’, ‘later’, which is also a conjunctive adverb (‘in addition’). Therefore, it is often difficult to keep its different uses distinct. It can be mainly found in questions, but also in declaratives. In questions, poi can signal that the speaker is not able to find an answer, nor is the hearer, according to the speaker’s assumptions, as we see in (34). But it may also express the speaker’s concern or interest with respect to the information being asked for, as in (35).

28. Notice that the particle can also be used ‘perfidiously’ (in a rhetorical sense) to indicate that the answer is known to both speaker and hearer.

29. Thus resembling the German particle denn, which usually expresses the speaker’s concern. See Bayer (forthcoming).
(34) Chi avrà poi telefonato?
    who will.have PRT called

(35) Ha poi cantato alla festa?
    has.s/he PRT sung at-the party

Poi usually occurs in interrogative clauses, both *wh*- and polarity questions, as we can see in the examples above. It can be found in declarative contexts as well. In such cases, it is even more difficult to distinguish the MP from the adverbal usage. See the following examples where the particle has a MP-function:\textsuperscript{30}

(36) Non siamo poi così lontani dalla verità. (Bazzanella 1995: 226)
    NEG we.are PRT so far from-the truth

(37) Non è poi così male!
    NEG is PRT so bad

By using this particle, the speaker aims at mitigating the too strong assertion that is present in the preceding linguistic or extralinguistic context.

It is worth noting that, in *wh*-questions, the particle *poi* can occupy different positions with respect to other constituents. However, in contrast to *mai*, the particle *poi* cannot be found in the position immediately adjacent to the *wh*-element. See the following example:

(38) Cosa <*poi*> avrò <*poi*> detto <*poi*> che l’ha offesa?
    what PRT will.I have PRT said PRT that her.has offended
    ‘What did I say that offended her?’

In polarity questions, we observe a similar behavior:

(39) Avrà <*poi*> cantato <*poi*> alla festa <*poi*>?
    will.she.have PRT sung PRT at-the party PRT
    ‘Do you think she sang at the party?’

---
\textsuperscript{30} However, with comma intonation, *poi* can also be a conjunctive adverb.
In both examples, the unmarked position is the one between the two verbal elements, as we have seen in the case of *mai*. Notice that also the first position is available in the examples above. But in such cases, we are no longer dealing with the particle *poi*, but with the temporal or conjunctive adverb. Therefore, the position of *poi* can help us distinguish the particle from adverbial usages.

When occurring in declaratives, the MP cannot occupy the first position, nor the one after the verbal complement:

(40)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\langle *\text{poi} \rangle & \text{ Non siamo} & \langle \text{poi} \rangle & \text{ così lontani} & \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \\
PRT & \text{NEG we.aren't} & PRT & \text{so far} & PRT \\
& \text{dalla verità} & \langle *\text{poi}\rangle. & \text{ (adapted, from Bazzanella 1995: 226)} \\
& \text{from the truth} & PRT \\
\end{align*}
\]

Nonetheless, other positions may be semantically ambiguous. In any case, we can claim that the MP *poi* occupies an IP-internal position.

Let us now consider its placement with respect to Cinque’s (1999) adverbial classes (also see Cardinaletti 2008). In *wh*-questions, the particle seems to be able to occupy only the position between habitual adverbs, such as *di solito* (‘usually’), and higher repetitive adverbs, such as *di nuovo* (‘again’):

(41)  
\[
\begin{align*}
a. & \text{ Chi l’avrebbe } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ francamente } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
b. & \text{ Chi l’avrebbe } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ allora } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
c. & \text{ Chi l’avrebbe } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ di solito } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
d. & \text{ Chi l’avrebbe } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ di nuovo } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
& \text{ who it-would have PRT frankly/then/usually/again PRT said that s/he not wanted-to come} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The same facts hold for *poi* in polarity questions:

(42)  
\[
\begin{align*}
a. & \text{ L’avresti } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ francamente } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
b. & \text{ L’avresti } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ allora } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
c. & \text{ L’avresti } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ di solito } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
d. & \text{ L’avresti } \langle \text{poi} \rangle \text{ di nuovo } \langle *\text{poi} \rangle \text{ detto che non voleva venire?} \\
& \text{ it-would.you have PRT frankly/then/usually/again PRT said that s/he not wanted-to come} \\
\end{align*}
\]
Considering declarative contexts, still higher positions are available. The particle can even precede adverbs in Mood\textsubscript{speech act}. In any case, it cannot follow (higher) repetitive and lower adverbs:

(43) a. Non era \textit{<poi>} francamente \textit{<poi>} così male.
   b. Non era \textit{<poi>} allora \textit{<poi>} così male.
   c. Non era \textit{<poi>} di solito \textit{<poi>} così male.
   d. Non era \textit{<poi>} di nuovo \textit{*<poi>} così male.
   e. Non era \textit{<poi>} spesso \textit{*<poi>} così male.

\textit{not it was PRT frankly/then/usually/again/often PRT so bad}

\textit{Poi} seems therefore to follow a pattern similar to that of German MPs, occupying a very high position in the IP of the clause, and thus having scope over the whole proposition. Moreover, like German MPs, \textit{poi} only occurs in those contexts that Haegeman (2002, 2004a,b, 2006) considers as peripheral clauses. As was seen in the case of \textit{mai}, central adverbials cannot license the particle \textit{poi} either. Let us consider a simple contrast:

(44) Se il libro non ha \textit{*<poi>} il successo previsto, non verrà ristampato.\textsuperscript{31}

‘If the book hasn’t the foreseen success, it won’t be reprinted.’

(45) Se il libro non ha \textit{poi} il successo previsto, perché verrà ristampato?

‘If the book hasn’t the foreseen success, why will it be reprinted?’

According to Haegeman’s proposals, the conditional in (44) is a central adverbial and is embedded in the matrix clause. On the contrary, the conditional in (45) is a peripheral adverbial and displays syntactic independence from to the main clause. As we have seen in 2.2.2.1., only peripheral clauses display the projection ForceP. The fact that \textit{poi} only occurs in these contexts seems to indicate that it is a CP-related element as the other MPs.

\textsuperscript{31} Notice that \textit{poi} in its adverbial usage (both the temporal and the conjunctive one) is possible here.
3.3. Pur(e)

The Italian lexeme pur(e) originally means ‘also’, ‘as well’, ‘too’. In its MP-function, it has a different meaning, which varies according to the type of clause (declarative or imperative).

In declarative clauses, pur(e) signals that the speaker has no evidence to prove that his assertion is true, but he still thinks it logical to suppose that it must be true. In these contexts, the particle usually lacks its final -e. Let us consider the following example:

(46) Deve aver pur(*e) letto il libro.
    s/he.must have PRT read the book

In this case, only the reduced form is possible. The full form pure would have another function, meaning ‘too, as well’. Nevertheless, there are cases where both the full and the reduced form are possible.

The particle can generally have an ‘emphatic accent’. This can be optional, as in the preceding example, or obligatory. For instance, the particle in the following sentence must preferably be stressed:

(47) Fantasmi o no, li ho PUR toccati con le mie mani.
    ghosts or not them I have PRT touched with the my hands
    ‘Ghosts or no ghosts, I’ve still touched them with my hands.’

The particle often occurs in concessive contexts, where we usually find the full form:

(48) Ammesso pure che riesca a vincere la gara…
    provided PRT that s/he.manages to win the competition

In such cases, the particle must be interpreted as the particle in imperative clauses we will see below (i.e. ammetti pure… ‘suppose…’), as is proven by the fact that the particle can only appear in its full form, which is typical of imperative contexts.

In imperative clauses, the particle weakens the strength of an order, as in the following example.32

---

32. Notice that, in such cases, we have to exclude the reading of the particle as a Gradpartikel, meaning ‘also, as well’.
(49) Lascialo pure sul tavolo!
leave-it PRT on-the table

As already anticipated, in this case, the omission of final -e leads to ungrammaticality (except for an accurate or poetic style):\(^{33}\)

(50) *Lascialo pur sul tavolo!
leave-it PRT on-the table

In contrast to pur(e) in declarative contexts, ‘imperative’ pure cannot generally have an emphatic accent:\(^{34}\)

(51) *Lascialo PURE sul tavolo!
leave-it PRT on-the table

Both in declarative and imperative contexts, the particle precedes VP-internal elements, thus having scope over the proposition. However, it cannot occupy the first position of the clause. The intermediate positions are the only possible ones:

(52) \(<\textit{*pur}>\) deve \(<\textit{pur}>\) aver \(<\textit{?pur}>\) letto \(<\textit{?pur}>\) il libro \(<\textit{?pur}>\).
PRT s/he.must PRT have PRT read PRT the book PRT

\(^{33}\) The same can be said for those cases where the particle pure, though occurring in declarative contexts, has the function of weakening an order, as in imperative clauses. In the following example, the occurrence of the ‘imperative’ particle pure is made possible by the presence of the modal verb potere (‘can’).

(i) Lo puoi pure\textit/*pur} lasciare sul tavolo.
    \textit{it} you.can PRT leave on.the table
    ‘You can leave it on the table.’

\(^{34}\) However, there are some exceptions. For example, when the particle occupies the last position in a sentence (or when it is followed by deaccented element). In this case, the particle can be stressed:

(i) Lascialo \textit{PURE} (, il libro) (, a Gianni)!
    leave-it PRT the book to Gianni
(53) <pure> lascialo <pure> sul tavolo <pure>!

PRT leave-it PRT on-the table PRT

If we now turn our attention to the orderings of the MP with respect to Cinque’s adverbial classes, we observe that pur(e) follows all higher adverbs, but it has to precede all lower ones. I.e., in Cinque’s hierarchy, the particle can only occupy one position between habitual (di solito) and (higher) repetitive adverbs (di nuovo):

(54) a. Aveva <pur> francamente <pur> detto che non voleva venire.
    b. Aveva <pur> allora <pur> detto che non voleva venire.
    c. Aveva <pur> di solito <pur> detto che non voleva venire.
    d. Aveva <pur> di nuovo <pur> detto che non voleva venire.
    e. Aveva <pur> sempre <pur> detto che non voleva venire.

s/he.had PRT frankly/then/usually/again/always PRT said that not s/he wanted.to come

Testing the position of pure with respect to adverbs in imperative contexts is much more problematic, since the presence of (higher) adverbs in imperatives is subject to numerous restrictions.

However, we can generally assume that the particle pur(e) displays a behavior similar to that of German MPs and can occupy the same IP-internal positions as these.

One further analogy to German MPs can be observed with respect to the distribution of pur(e) in embedded contexts. As mentioned above for the other particles, also the presence of pur(e) is restricted to those contexts that are to be considered as peripheral clauses. In contrast, the particle is excluded from central adverbials and other clauses that display a reduced CP-domain and thus do not allow for root phenomena.

The following sentences exemplify this fact with respect to pur(e) in declarative contexts (but similar considerations can also be made for pur in imperative contexts).

The event conditional in (55) cannot license the particle, which is in turn possible in a conditional of peripheral type, such as (56):

(55) Se Gianni ha (*pur) detto che non verrà, allora non verrà.

\[ \text{if Gianni has PRT said that not he.will.come then not he.will.come} \]

‘If Gianni said that he won’t come, then he won’t come.’
(56) Se Gianni – come dici – ha pur detto che non verrà,
     if Gianni as you say has PRT said that not he.will.come
perché allora ha prenotato l’hotel?
     why then has he booked the-hotel
‘If Gianni – as you say – said that he won’t come, then why did he book the
hotel?’

To conclude, the syntactic characteristics of pur(e) seem to indicate that we are dealing
with a modal particle like German ones.

3.4. Other potential modal particles

In this section, I will briefly take some more lexemes into consideration, which are
probably to be analyzed as MPs as well. Nonetheless, these elements seem to still have
a close connection to the propositional content of the clause. I am referring to elements
such as mica, si and ben, which will be briefly considered below.

3.4.1. Mica

Mica is a negative adverbial element, whose syntactic nature is far from trivial. It
derives from Latin mica, meaning ‘crumb’, and is generally used to strengthen the
negation.\(^{35}\)

(57) Non siamo mica così lontanidalla verità.
     not we.are PRT so far from-the truth
‘We are not so far from the truth.’

In its function of contributing to negate the clause,\(^{36}\) mica seems to be linked to
propositional content of the latter. However, its semantics is different from that of

\(^{35}\) Notice that many Romance languages use analogous words indicating small things to strengthen the
negation (e.g. French pas ‘step’, Tuscan punto ‘point’, etc.).

\(^{36}\) Notice that it is possible for mica to occupy the position that is generally occupied by the negation non.
In this case, the presence of the overt negation non is impossible:
negative adverbs. Its speaker-orientation induces us to think that we are dealing with a modal particle.

As observed by Cinque (1991), rather than strengthening the negation, the function of mica is that of introducing a presupposition on the speaker’s side. But the issue whether mica could also be considered as a MP is far from clear. Cinque (1999) still considers it a negative adverb.

Let us now consider the functions of mica with respect to its syntactic distribution, as described by Cinque (1991). Mica can occur in different clausal types. In declaratives the particle is used by the speaker to negate an expectation on the hearer’s side (cf. Cinque 1991: 314), as in the following example:

not is PRT late not it-they.have yet announced
‘It’s not late. They haven’t announced it yet.’

Mica can also occur in polarity questions (but not in wh-questions), where it strengthens the speaker’s expectation of a negative answer (cf. Cinque 1991: 315). See the following example:

(59) Non è mica arrivata Maria? (Cinque 1991: 315)
not is PRT come Maria
‘Has Maria not come (yet)’?

In imperatives, mica implies the speaker’s expectation that the hearer would certainly do p if he did not order him not to do it (cf. Cinque 1991: 316):

(60) Non andartene mica!
not go.away PRT
‘Don’t go away!’

(i) Mica siamo così lontani dalla verità.
PRT we.are so far from-the truth
‘We are not so far from the truth.’

We could claim that, in this case, the particle has overtly moved to a higher position, the one usually occupied by negation (cf. Cinque 1991: 318f).
The interaction of *mica* with illocutionary force and speaker is a piece of evidence of its modal nature. Even its placement within the sentence is similar to that of (German) MPs. It precedes VP-internal elements, occupying an intermediate position in the clause, after the finite verb (thus never occupying the first position):³⁷

(61) `<*mica>` non `<*mica>` ho `<mica>` letto `<mica>` quel libro `<*mica>`.
    PRT not PRT I have PRT read PRT that book PRT
    ‘I haven’t read that book.’

Notice that also its distribution with respect to adverbs is significative. Cinque (1999: 11) points out that the negative adverb occupies an intermediate position between the adverbs *solitamente* (‘usually’) and *già* (‘already’). Interestingly, this resembles the lowest position MPs can occupy. Finer combination tests reveal that *mica* occupies a position between habitual adverbs (*solitamente*, ‘usually’) and (higher) repetitive adverbs, such as *di nuovo* (‘again’), exactly as in the case of MPs. What is generally assumed to be a negative adverb is therefore probably a MP.

Furthermore, the distribution of *mica* in embedded clauses suggests that we are dealing with a root phenomenon, since it can occur in peripheral contexts, such as the clausal clause in (63), but not in clauses that are devoid of independent illocutionary force, as we see in the case of the temporal clause in (62):

(62) *Quando non piove mica, esco di casa.
    when not it.rains PRT I go out of home
    ‘When it doesn’t rain, I go out.’

(63) Non prendo l’ombrellino, perché non piove *mica.*
    not I take the-umbrella because not it.rains PRT
    ‘I won’t take the umbrella, because it isn’t raining.’

Therefore, although further investigations are maybe necessary in this case, I suggest that there are good reasons to include *mica* in the class of MPs.

³⁷. Except for the case seen in fn. 36.
3.4.2. Si

Beside its adverbial function (meaning ‘yes’), the lexeme *si* has developed another use, very similar to that of particles. *Si* is used to assert with strength the truth of a proposition that has previously been negated, either implicitly or explicitly. Thus, it has sometimes the same function as verum focus. But in this sense, the semantic contribution of *Si’* seems to be linked to the propositional content of the clause. It is therefore often considered as an adverb, but – as we will see – its peculiar syntactic characteristics suggest that it should be considered as a MP. *Si* generally presents an emphatic or sometimes even a contrastive accent:

(64) Gianni ha *Si’* detto che sarebbe venuto.

*Gianni has PRT said that he.would.be come

‘Gianni DID say he would come.’

The types of clauses in which the particle is attested are very limited, since it can probably occur only in declarative clauses.  

As for the position of the particle with respect to other IP-internal elements, we notice that it occurs before Cinque’s lower adverbs and takes scope over the proposition. However, it can never occupy the first position of the clause:

(65) <*Si’*> lui <*?Si’*> probabilmente <*Si’*> PRT he PRT has PRT probably PRT

---

38. However, the particle is possible in contexts such as the following, where, even though the verb is marked as indicative, the sentence has imperative force:

(i) *Si’* che vai a scuola!

*PRT that you.go.to school

‘You WILL go to school!’

One could assume that we are dealing with an elliptical biclausal structure, where *Si’* occupies the IP of a superordinate clause of the declarative type (since the particle generally occurs only in declarative clauses). However, I prefer to analyze this case not as a biclausal structure, but as a unique clause, where the particle *Si’* overtly occupies the CP. In this position, the particle is able to modify the illocutionary force of the clause.

39. Except for the case seen in the preceding note.

40. This position is probably only available if the particle directly modifies the pronoun, thus having narrow scope over it.
già <*SI'> confessato <*SI'>.

already PRT confessed PRT

‘He HAS probably already confessed.’

Therefore, the behavior of *SI’ is similar to that of the other particles. This can also be observed on the basis of its distribution in embedded clauses. As expected, peripheral adverbials (67), but not central ones (66), can license the particle:

(66) *Quando Gianni ha *SI’ detto che sarebbe venuto, non gli credevo.

when Gianni has PRT said that he.would.be come not him I.believed

‘When Gianni said he would come, I didn’t believe him.’

(67) Mentre Gianni ha *SI’ detto che sarebbe venuto,

while Gianni has PRT said that he.would.be come

Luigi ha detto che preferiva rimanere a casa.

Luigi has said that he.preferred to stay at home

‘While Gianni DID say that he would come, Luigi said that he preferred to stay home.’

To conclude, the syntactic behavior of *SI’ suggests that it should be considered as a MP as well.

3.4.3. Ben

The Italian particle ben derives from the adverb ben(e), meaning ‘well’, which is a very low adverb in Cinque’s (1999) hierarchy. The particle, which only occurs in

41. Notice that the adverb NO (meaning ‘no’), used to strengthen the negation, displays a different behaviour, since it can follow VP-internal elements:

(i) Non ha fatto i compiti NO.

not s/he.has done the homework PRT

‘S/he didn’t do his/her homework.’

42. Interestingly, particle and adverb can marginally co-occur, as in the following example:
declarative contexts, generally has an emphatic stress, as in the case of SI’ (but this is not always obligatory):

(68) Ci deve **BEN** pur essere una scorciatoia.\(^{43}\)

\[
\text{there must PRT PRT be a shortcut}
\]

‘There MUST be a shortcut.’

In contrast to the particle *pur(e)*, which has both a full and a reduced form, *ben* only has a phonetically reduced form, the full form *bene* being restricted to the adverbial usage. As the result of a grammaticalization process, the particle has acquired a semantically bleached meaning. In particular, the function of *ben* is similar to that of *SI’*. By using this particle, the speaker usually wants to emphasize that he or she feels (or encouragingly strives to feel) confident about a certain fact.

Although, in rare cases, the particle seems to be part of the propositional content of the sentence (probably because its semantics is still linked to that of the homophonous adverb), its syntactic characteristics suggest that its behavior in these contexts is similar to that of other MPs.

For instance, as was shown for other particles, **BEN** must also occur before Cinque’s lower adverbs.\(^{44}\) It can be found in a high IP-internal position, but in any case after the main verb. Therefore, it is never sentence-initial:

(69) <\text{*BEN}> deve <\text{BEN}> aver <\text{BEN}> già <\text{*BEN}> confessato <\text{*BEN}>.

\[
\text{PRT s/he.must PRT have PRT already PRT confessed PRT}
\]

‘He MUST have already confessed.’

---

(i) Deve **BEN** aver già esposto bene le proprie ragioni.

\[
s/he.must PRT have already told well the her/his reasons
\]

‘S/he MUST have already stated her/his reasons well.’

But see Cardinaletti (2008) for different assumptions.

\(^{43}\) Notice that the particle **BEN** is often combined with the particle *pur*, as in this example.

\(^{44}\) According to Cinque (1999), *bene*, the adverbial counterpart of the MP, occupies a different position, in the specifier of VoiceP, a very low projection in his hierarchy. As we can see in the example below, the particle **BEN** occurs before the adverb già (‘already’). On the contrary, the adverb *bene* has to follow it obligatorily (cf. 13).
A behavior reminiscent of that of other particles can be observed also with respect to its distribution in embedded clauses:

(70) *Quando Gianni ha BEN detto che sarebbe venuto, non gli credevo.
    when Gianni has PRT said that he.would.be come not him I.believed
    ‘When Gianni said he would come, I didn’t believe him.’

(71) Mentre Gianni ha BEN detto che sarebbe venuto,
    while Gianni has PRT said that he.would.be come
    Luigi ha detto che preferiva rimanere a casa.
    Luigi has said that he.preferred to stay at home
    ‘While Gianni DID say that he would come, Luigi said that he preferred to stay home.’

The particle cannot occur in central adverbials, such as the temporal clause in (70), since, as was illustrated in 2.2.2., these contexts do not display independent illocutionary force, nor the projection ForceP. In contrast, BEN can be found in peripheral clauses such as (71), which according to our assumptions are endowed with independent force.

To sum up, syntactic data confirms that BEN belongs to the class of MPs. In general, we observe that many elements displaying an adverbial nature should be included in this class. But further investigation is required on this point.

4. Conclusions

To conclude, we can give a positive answer to the initial question, i.e. whether there are MPs in Italian. Some authors have already suggested this fact, but their analysis has been mainly based on semantic observations. Limiting the investigation on MPs to semantic criteria could lead to the extension of this class to lexemes that do not belong to it, such as interjections and similar discourse elements.

In this paper, I claimed that syntactic facts can help us shed some light on this phenomenon. In recent works (Coniglio 2005, 2006, 2007a,b,c, forthcoming), I explored the syntactic behavior of German MPs by exploring their peculiar ordering with respect to adverbs and their distribution in subordinate clauses, thus developing some syntactic instruments to detect them. In particular, I argued that not only do all
MPs occupy specific positions in the higher portion of the IP-domain, but also display analogies as far as their distribution in embedded clauses is concerned. Similar observations hold for some Italian lexemes as well. The flourishing literature on German MPs may therefore help us better understand a phenomenon, which has not yet been fully understood in Italian. Needless to say, many problems have been left unresolved. In particular, no answer has been given to a fundamental question: why are there so few MPs in Italian (and in Romance languages in general),\textsuperscript{45} while in German (and in Germanic languages) we find such a wide variety of MPs? These and other facts deserve further investigation.

\textsuperscript{45} For example, \textit{bien} in French, \textit{pues} in Spanish (both occurring in questions) and so on.
### Appendix: The meaning of modal particles (Thurmair 1989: 200)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment of proposition</th>
<th>JA</th>
<th>doch</th>
<th>even</th>
<th>halt</th>
<th>solch</th>
<th>eingesessen</th>
<th>wohl</th>
<th>schon</th>
<th>auch</th>
<th>auch</th>
<th>dem</th>
<th>etwa</th>
<th>eigentlich</th>
<th>das</th>
<th>die</th>
<th>was</th>
<th>aber</th>
<th>vielleicht</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KNOWN</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA USIBLE</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPECTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEXPECTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNWANTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEREST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REINFORCEMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAKENING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESTRICTION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORRECTION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENCOURAGEMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECTION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSITION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPECTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEXPECTED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(S)</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALIDITY RESTRICT.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMIT. OF RELEVANCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**S** = referred to the speaker  
**H** = referred to the hearer
References


communication », vol. 4., Nancy, Bibliothèque des Nouveaux Cahiers d’Allemand.


