A CASE OF INCOMPLETE JESPersen’S CYCLE

IN ROMANCE*

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0. Introduction

In this paper, I examine some diachronic and synchronic aspects of the syntax of negative expressions in Florentine, a dialect of Central Italy. More precisely, I describe and analyze the development of the negative adverb punto (lit. "point"). This element was in origin a minimizer (in the sense of Horn 1989), and in early stages of Florentine became a postverbal marker used to strengthen the negation. This change is a typical first step in the well known process called Jespersen’s cycle (Jespersen 1917), whereby the preverbal negative marker of a language is firstly weakened, then strengthened by a postverbal element and finally supplanted by it. As I will show, a crucial difference between a typical Jespersen’s cycle and the historical development of negation in Florentine is that Florentine never lost the preverbal negative marker and punto has been kept as an aspectual/intensity adverb, corresponding to ‘at all’.

While other minimizers in Northern Italian Dialects, like pa in Piedmontese, briza in Emilian or mi(n)ga in Milanese have become negative markers and have lost their quantificational meaning, punto is still a quantifier in Modern Florentine. I will argue that this is one of the reasons why Jespersen’s cycle was not completed in Florentine. Adopting Roberts & Roussou’s (2003) theory about grammaticalization, I will claim that a postverbal negative adverb can become the unique or the main negative marker only if it undergoes a process of simplification of features, i.e. the loss of quantificational or phi-features.

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Moreover, I will present some data about *punto* that suggest that the position of negative adverbs derived from minimizers in the clause structure is the same position reached by quantified internal arguments of the predicate.

The paper has the following structure: in section 1, I present some general facts about the adverb *punto* and the syntax of Florentine; in section 2, I describe the syntax of *punto* in Old Florentine; in a parallel way, I deal with the syntax of *punto* in Modern Florentine in section 3; section 4 is dedicated to the analysis of the historical development of this adverb; in section 5, I propose that *punto* occupies a precise position in the adverbial hierarchy; section 6 concludes the paper.

1. Preliminary remarks about *punto* and Florentine

*Punto* is both an adverb and a quantifier in Florentine and in other varieties of Tuscany as well. As an adverb, it is used in postverbal position to reinforce sentential negation. In this case, *punto* is equivalent to ‘at all’; it can encode the completive aspect, but it can also deny an explicit or implicit assertion:

(1) a. *La radio la un funziona punto.*
    the radio SCL NEG works PUNTO
    “The radio does not work at all.”

b. *Questa donna umme piace punto.*
    this woman NEG-to-me likes PUNTO
    “I do not like at all this woman.”

c. *Io n ce rido punto.*
    I NEG of-it laugh PUNTO
    “I do not laugh at all at it.”

d. *Nun sento punto r freddo stamattina.*
    NEG feel PUNTO the cold this-morning
    “I do not feel at all the cold this morning.”

Thus, for instance, it is appropriate to use a sentence like (1a) to express the fact that the radio is on mute or that it does not work as it was supposed to.

On the other hand, *punto* is also a quantifier, equivalent to English *no* or Italian *nessun(o)* or *alcun(o)*:

(2) a. *Un vedo punti libri.*
    neg see punto.m.pl books
    “I see no books.”

b. *un l’ho mandato in punti posti.*
    neg him-have sent in punto.m.pl places
    “I have sent him nowhere.”

c. *en’ho punti soldi.*
    (Cortonese)
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neg have punto.m.pl money
“I have no money.”

As a quantifier, *punto* displays adjectival morphology, that is it agrees in gender and number with the quantified noun.

Florentine *punto* is very similar to Old French *point* (Foulet 1990, 264f.; Roberts & Roussou 2003, 152f.): both derive from the noun for ‘point, stitch’ and are minimizers which have undergone a re-analysis process as negative adverbs. It is worth noting that, as an adverb, *punto* is restricted to negative contexts, while as a quantifier – especially in Old Florentine – it can be used both with negative and positive readings. In (3), for instance, the presence of *punto* is licensed by the interrogative operator:

(3) t’ hai trovato punti libro su i tavolo?
  SC.i have found PUNTO.M.PL. books on the table
  ‘Have you found any book on the table?’

From this point of view the quantifier *punto* behaves like other negative words in Romance, labeled Negative Polarity Items by Laka (1990) and N-words by Zeijlstra (2004). However, *punto* alone cannot express sentential negation, as the contrast in (4) shows:

(4) a. Nessuno studente è venuto. (Italian)
   no student is come

b. *Punto studente gl’ è venuto. (Florentine)
   punto.m.sg student SC.i is come
   “No student has come.”

While *nessuno(o)* in preverbal position is sufficient to introduce a negative context, *punto* cannot be used in preverbal position. I will not deal here with the semantic aspects of the licensing of *punto* and of NPIs in general (see Zeijlstra 2004, 40f.). What is relevant here is the fact that *punto* always needs a (preverbal) c-commanding negative element to be licensed, i.e. a specific syntactic configuration. From this point of view the adverb *punto* and the quantifier *punto*, as I will show in the following sections, behave in a very similar way.

The sources for the Old Florentine examples are (mainly prose) texts from the XIII and XIV centuries. As for Modern Florentine, I investigated three different varieties: the variety of Florence itself (sometimes called Urban Florentine) and two peripheral (and for some aspects more conservative) varieties, the variety of Empoli (30 km west from Florence) and Pontassieve (15 km east from Florence). There are two main differences between Old and Modern Florentine: first, Modern Florentine, like Northern Italian Dialects, has developed a system of subject clitics, while the
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medieval variety had weak pronouns; second, Old Florentine, like other medieval Romance languages, displays verb movement to the left periphery in main clauses, while Modern Florentine has totally lost any trace of Verb Second syntax, even in root interrogatives.

2. The syntax of punto in Old Florentine

The original function of punto in Old Florentine appears to be that of a paucal quantifier or, in other words, of a minimizer. Thus, it can, but does not have to, appear in negative contexts. The examples in (5) show the use of punto in negative contexts, while the examples in (6) and (7) display non-negative contexts where the presence of punto is licensed by another type of operator: a wh element in (6) or a yes/no interrogative or hypothetical operator in (7).

(5) a. Andoronne al detto forno furiosamente e sì rubarono e portaronne went to the said bakery angrily and so stole and took tutto pane cotto e chルドo, e grano e farina, che non ve ne all bread baked and raw and wheat and flour that NEG there of-it rimase punto. (Libro del Biadaiolo) remained PUNTO.

‘They went to the foresaid bakery and stole and took all the bread, both baked and raw, the wheat, the flour, so that there did not remain any.’

b. Il re d’Inghilterra fu a gran pericolo con sua oste […] che 8 dì the king of England was at great peril with his army that 8 days stettono, che non ebbono se non poco pane né punto di vino. stayed that NEG had but NEG little bread and NEG PUNTO of wine (G. Villani – Nuova Cronica 13.66)

‘The king of England was in great peril with his army, since for 8 days they had not but a little of bread and had no wine.’

(6) a. El tempio d’Ercule […] a chi ha punto delle storie romane the temple of Hercules to whom has PUNTO of the histories roman

1 See, among others, Renzi & Vanelli (1983), Brandi & Cordin (1989), Poletto (2000). It is worth noting that the preverbal negation marker is a clitic itself and interacts with subject clitics. Usually the negation un precedes subject clitics, but follows the third person feminine clitics, both singular and plural: la un dorme ‘she does not sleep’ / le un dormano ‘they (f.) do not sleep’ (Manzini & Savoia 2005, l-140).

2 See, among others, Benincà (1984), Adams (1987), Benincà (2006). Like other medieval varieties of Italy, Old Florentine had a less rigid V2 syntax than other Romance languages. V1, V3 or V4 were very common in Old Florentine, since multiple elements had access to the preverbal portion of the CP.
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letto, è manifesto. (Commento a Ovidio 471)
read is manifest
‘The temple of Hercules is manifest to whom has read a little of
roman histories.’

b. E quando hai punto di tempo quieto pensa a’ benifici di Dio.
and when have PUNTO of time quiet think about benefits of god
(G. delle Celle – Lettere 1392.10)
‘When you have a little of quiet time, think about the benefits of God.’

(7) a. Noi avemo […] parlato delle travaglie de’ nostri paesi […] e sse
we have talked of the troubles of our countries and if
intra esse fosse stato punto di tempo quieto o tranquillo.
between them had been PUNTO of time quiet or peaceful
(M. Villani – Cronica 8.106)
‘We talked about the troubles of our countries and whether
between them there had been a little of quiet or peaceful time.’

b. Se punto di gentilezza nell animo hai […] tutta l’avresti bruttata
if PUNTO of gentleness in the soul have all her would have ruined
e guasta, costei amando. (G. Boccaccio – Il Corbaccio 511.20)
and spoilt, her loving
‘If you have a little of gentleness in your soul, you’d have spoilt
her with your love.’

These examples show, furthermore, that punto is used without any article (this is
expected, since it is used as a quantifier and, therefore, it lacks any referential
meaning; Roberts & Roussou 2003, 150). Note that the quantified nouns appear as
complement PPs introduced by di ‘of’. We can assume that the quantifier punto
is derived through a grammaticalization process whereby the N punto is raised to a
higher position in the DP structure, which I will label NumP following Roberts &
Roussou (2003) and the works cited there:

(8) punto di vino  (5b)
[œ L₀ [Ø] [NumP [sum punto] [œ punto [œ di vino]]]]

Beside this quantifier punto, Old Florentine had an adverb punto, used in
postverbal position to strengthen negation. In the texts of XIII and XIV centuries,
this element is very frequent, thus suggesting that, at this stage, the
grammaticalization process—from quantifier to adverb—was complete and both
these elements were present in the grammar. The adverb punto usually followed the
inflected verb, always required the sentential negation and could be used with both
gradable and non-gradable predicates. Some examples are given in (9):

(9) a. Di ciò non s’adirò punto, perciò ch’era molto
of it NEG REFL became-angry PUNTO because that was very
gentile cavaliere. (Novellino, 77)

‘He did not become angry at all about it, since he was a very gentle knight.’

b. Rivolto il destriere [...] a Diomede non parlò punto.

turned the steed to Diomedes NEG spoke PUNTO

(G. Boccaccio – Filostrato 5.13)

‘He turned his steed and did not say a word to Diomedes.’

c. Il quale veggendo Bruto venire, e conosciutolo, non schifò punto il colpo, ma [...] (G. Boccaccio – Esposizioni, 4(i).234)

PUNTO the blow but

‘…who, seeing that Brutus was incoming and having recognized him, did not dodge the blow, but…’

d. Ma guarda del sentiero luminoso, che davanti ti vedi e per lo quale io andrò, tu non uscissi punto. (G. Boccaccio – Corbaccio)

which I will-go you NEG exit PUNTO

‘Do not leave the bright path that you see before yourself and that I will follow.’

Cases where punto precedes the inflected verb are rare. Some examples are given below. In (10a) punto is licensed by the coordinative negation né, in (10b) it appears in a relative clause and the licenser is the negation of the main clause.

(10) a. Perch’elli vive bestialmente, ed usa con quelli che bestialmente vivono, né da loro punto si parte. (Ottimo Commento 19)

live and-NEG from them PUNTO REFL separates

‘…because he lives as a beast and stays with those that live as beasts and does not separate from them.’

b. In tutta la detta oste non ebbe altra gente che punto reggesse o in all the said army NEG was other people that PUNTO resist or combattesse. (G. Villani – Nuova Cronica 11.216)

fight

‘In all the foresaid army there was not anyone who did not resist or fight.’

Structures with punto and the infinitival are very often introduced by senza ‘without’, which performs the function of the negative licenser of punto. In this case, the adverb can precede or follow the verb. Some examples are given in (11).

(11) a. E là senza parlare punto, entra nel letto, e fa’ ragione

and there without speak PUNTO enter in-the bed and make reason
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d’esser me... (Trecentonovelle 206)
of be me
‘And there, without saying a word, get into the bed and think that you are me.’

b. La giovane, senza schifar punto il colpo, lui similmente cominciò a love
la giovane without dodge punto the blow him similarly started to amare. (G. Boccaccio – Decameron 5.4)
‘The girl, without dodging the hit, began to love him with the same passion.’

c. Bergamino allora, senza punto pensare, [...] disse questa novel
B. then without punto think told this novella... (G. Boccaccio – Decameron 1.7)
‘Bergamino, without thinking at all, told the following novel.’

I will assume that this use of punto derives from the grammaticalization into an adverb of the quantificational noun presented in examples (5)-(7). I will analyze more in detail this development in section 4; for now it is sufficient to say that punto, like other minimizers in Romance, lost its DP layer and became a clausal element. However, while other elements (like point in French or mica in Italian) ceased to be used as quantifiers, punto has still this function, both in Old and Modern Florentine.

3. The Syntax of punto in Modern Florentine

The adverb punto still exists in Modern Florentine, but it has not yet supplanted preverbal negation and is used less frequently than in the medieval variety. In Modern Florentine it is used mainly with gradable predicates, and it encodes a negative completive or intensity reading (corresponding approximately to English ‘at all’). From the syntactic point of view, it has many of the properties of punto in Old Florentine. It needs the preverbal negation and cannot precede the inflected verb, as it is shown in (12a-d), unless it is contrastively focalized (12e):

(12) a. La radio la *(un) funziona punto. the radio SCL NEG works PUNTO  
‘The radio does not work at all.’

b. (E) *(un) mi piace punto. to-me likes PUNTO
‘I do not like it at all.’

c. *La radio punto la funziona./*la radio la punto funziona.

d. *Punto mi piace.

e. A: Ma a te ti piace?
but to you to-you likes
'As for you, do you like it?'
B: PUNTO mi piace.
PUNTO to-me likes
'I do not like it AT ALL.'

In the presence of an auxiliary verb, the unmarked position of punto is between the auxiliary and the lexical verb. In this case, punto must follow other temporal/aspectual adverbs, if present:

(13) a. *Un m'è punto più piaciuto. *punto-più
unity to-me is PUNTO anymore liked
b. Un m'è più punto piaciuto. più-punto
'I have not liked it anymore at all.'
c. *Un m'è punto mai piaciuto. *punto-mai
unity to-me is PUNTO never liked
d. Un m'è mai punto piaciuto. mai-punto
'I never liked it at all.'

The examples in (13) show that punto is located in a low position in the adverbial hierarchy in IP (Cinque 1999). It should be pointed out that punto is not compatible with temporal/aspectual adverbs that do not need preverbal negation (or another type of operator) to be licensed. For instance, it is impossible to combine punto and già 'already'.

(14) a. *Un l'ho punto già visto. *punto-già
unity it have PUNTO already seen
'lt have not already seen it.'
b. *Un l'ho già punto visto. *già-punto

So it seems that temporal/aspectual adverbs like già interfere with the licensing conditions of punto. NPI-like adverbs like mai or più do not interfere with these conditions. It should also be pointed out that punto is not compatible with tutto 'all', which, according to Cinque’s (1999) analysis, is located in the [Spec] of the Completive Aspect Phrase.

(15) a. *Un (l')ho punto fatto tutto. *punto-tutto
unity (lt) have PUNTO done all
'lt have not done (lt) all.'
b. *Un (l')ho fatto punto tutto. *punto-tutto

c. *Un (l')ho fatto tutto punto. *tutto-punto

The data presented so far show that the syntax of the adverb punto has not changed so much in its diachronic evolution and punto has not lost its licensing
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conditions. More importantly, punto has not become a negation marker in the sense of Zeijlstra (2004, 51), i.e. a particle or affix encoding sentential negation.

Consider now the development of the quantifier punto. As I have shown in section 2, in Old Florentine quantifier punto was a noun selecting a PP as complement. In Modern Florentine, like in all the varieties of Tuscany where it is present, it is a quantifier. It displays gender and number agreement with the quantified noun. Thus, what in Modern Florentine is *punta paura* ‘no fear’ (16b), in Old Florentine would have been *punto di paura*.

(16)  a. Un ho punto sonno.
    NEG have PUNTO.M.SG sleep
    ‘I do not feel sleepy.’

  b. Un ho punta paura.
    NEG have PUNTO.F.SG fear
    ‘I have no fear.’

  c. Un ho punti libri.
    NEG have PUNTO.M.PL books
    ‘I have no books.’

  d. Un ho punte sorelle.
    NEG have PUNTO.F.PL sisters
    ‘I have no sisters.’

The agreement paradigm of punto is richer than that of similar elements in Italian and other dialects. For instance, the Italian adjective *nessun(o)* ‘no’ has only singular forms (*nessun(o), nessuna, but *nessuni, *nessune)*.

Like the adverb, the quantifier punto needs to be licensed. While the adverb can be licensed only by negation, the quantifier can be licensed also by an interrogative or hypothetical operator. The examples in (17) show that the quantifier punto cannot appear without an appropriate licenser, and that sentential negation is preferred to a preverbal NPI like *nessuno* ‘nobody’ as a licenser. Notice that Negative Concord arises in these cases.

(17)  a. (E) un vedo punti libri.
    SCL NEG see PUNTO.M.PL books

3 Differently than the quantifier *alcuno* of Italian, punto cannot follow its quantified DP complement:

(i)  a. …senza paura alcuna.
    without fear ALCUNO.F.SG
    ‘…with no fear.’

  b. *…senza paura punta.

This can be explained assuming that punto does not allow the movement of its complement to [Spec, QP]. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this property.

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‘I see no books.’

b. *Vedo punti libri.

c. ??Nessuno ha visto punte persone.

‘Nobody has seen anyone.’

Example (18) shows that, like the adverb, the quantifier punto can appear in preverbal position only when it is focalized. In this case, it is not compatible with sentential negation:

(18) a. PUNTE PERSONE hanno visto Mario.
    PUNTO.F.PL people have seen M.
    ‘NO ONE has seen Mario.’

b. *PUNTE PERSONE un hanno visto Mario.
    PUNTO.F.PL people NEG have seen M.

Example (19) shows that punto can be licensed also by an interrogative or hypothetical operator, but, contrary to Old Florentine (see examples in (6)), it cannot be licensed by a wh operator.

(19) a. T’hai trovato punti libri su i tavolo?
    SCL have found PUNTO.M.PL books on the table
    ‘Have you found any book on the table?’

b. Se tu trovi punti libri, portali.
    if SCL find PUNTO.M.PL book bring-them
    ‘If you find any books, bring them.

c. *Chi c’ha punti libri, li porti.
    who there has PUNTO.M.PL books them bring
    ‘Who has any books should bring them.

The examples in (20) show that there is no pronominal counterpart of punto.

(20) a. *Un s’è visto punto.
    NEG SCL is seen PUNTO.M.SG

b. *Un s’è visto punti.
    NEG SCL is seen PUNTO.M.PL
    ‘We have not seen anyone.’

c. *Punto (un) ha visto Mario.
    PUNTO.M.SG NEG has seen M.

d. *Punti (un) hanno visto Mario.
    PUNTO.M.PL NEG have seen M.
    ‘Nobody has seen Mario.’

Finally, quantifier punto is incompatible with the definite article and admits the extraction of the quantified noun by means of the partitive clitic ne (examples in
(21)). These properties are characteristic of a group of quantifiers, which, according to Giusti (1997), are Q heads that select indefinite DPs as complements.

(21)  
   a. *Punti i libri…
   PUNTO.M.PL the books
   b. *I punti libri…
   c. Un ne ho visti punti.
   NEG of-them have seen PUNTO.M.PL
   ‘I have not seen any of them.’

   Thus, I will assume that the internal structure of a punto QP is as represented in (22):

(22) punto libri (17a)
    QP
    2
    Q’           2
    Qº           DP
    | 5
    punti libri

4. The diachronic development

   Let us summarize some relevant facts about the adverb and quantifier punto. In Old Florentine it was a minimizer which could be used in negative constructions alongside preverbal negation. This type of grammaticalization can be considered one of the first stages of a Jespersen’s cycle. Optional negative reinforcement by a postverbal marker is stage 2 (out of 7) in Jespersen’s cycle – as assumed by Zeijlstra (2004, 56; see also Willis 2005). In Modern Florentine we have both an adverb punto, which is optional, and a quantifier, which, contrary to the Old Florentine quantifier, is a Quantificational head and not a DP. All these elements, in both varieties, are not free choice items, but need a licensing configuration. So, it seems that punto has failed to become the unique negative marker in Florentine. In other Italian dialects, elements which were in origin minimizers very similar to punto have undergone a complete cycle. Take, for instance, Milanese mi(n)ga. In Old Milanese it was a noun expressing a small quantity and could be used in both positive and negative contexts, like in (23):

(23)  
   a. on sté de scisceri e miga de vin d’intrà (Lancino Curti 6.14)
      one staio of chickpeas and MIGA of wine of income
      ‘One staio (20 l) of chickpeas and a little of wine as income…’
b. là no se sente miga de male (Barsegapé 2430)
   there NEG REFL feels MIGA of pain
   ‘There one does not feel any pain.’

In Modern Milanese, mi(n)ga is only employed as sentential negation (see Vai 1996; Rohlf 1969, 304):

(24) a. I credun che mi sia minga bun.
    SCL believe that SCL am NEG good
    ‘They think that I am not able (to do that).’

b. L’idea che nquidun al sia dizunest l’è minga nova.
    the idea that someone SCL is dishonest SCL is NEG new
    ‘The idea that someone is dishonest is not new.’

In this section, I will account for the fact that punto did not undergo the same process of other minimizers in Italo-Romance. I will follow some of the claims made by Roberts & Roussou (2003) and Roberts (2007) about negative Agree and minimizers in Jespersen’s cycle. As we have seen, the quantifier punto is not intrinsically negative, since it can appear in non-negative contexts, where it is licensed by different operators. This means that it bears no negative feature, but an uninterpretable operator feature (like n-words in Old French; see Roberts 2007). This is why punto must be licensed: bearing an uninterpretable operator feature, it must be in an Agree relation with an appropriate c-commanding licenser. When the licenser is an interrogative or wh operator, punto has a positive polarity interpretation. When the licenser is negation, punto acquires a negative polarity interpretation. Notice that punto, contrary to Italian n-words, cannot function as a negative operator (i.e. it cannot be used in preverbal position).

Initially, punto was a DP, with the structure proposed in (8). At the stage described in section 2, it could be used as an adverb, without any PP (or NP) as its complement. I will assume that this grammaticalization process corresponds to a transition from DP to QP⁴, which can agree only with the preverbal negation (the adverb punto can be licensed only by negation):

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⁴ This is in accordance with the Head Preference Principle (HPP) ‘Be a head, rather than a phrase’ – as formulated by van Gelderen (2004) – which is a general principle of language acquisition and change.
Willis (2005) claims that elements which become sentential negation markers undergo a change of interpretability of features: the uninterpretable negative feature on the postverbal negative head becomes interpretable, while the interpretable feature on the preverbal one becomes uninterpretable. Following this analysis, I would suggest that the negative feature on punto has not become interpretable. Furthermore, I propose that the adverb and the quantifier punto are the same element in syntax, even in Modern Florentine. The only difference between the structure of the adverb punto (as in (25)) and that of the quantifier punto (as in (22)) is that the former lacks a DP complement. However, notice that in the more archaic peripheral varieties of Empoli and Pontassieve, the adverb can optionally show morphological agreement with the direct object or the subject of an unaccusative verb:\footnote{This construction seems to be more frequent with psychological verbs. For instance, the following example has been considered ungrammatical by all the informants: (i) *La tu radio la un funziona punta. the your radio scl neg works punto.f.sg ‘Your radio does not work at all.’ The phenomenon was already attested in the literature. For instance the AIS atlas (Sprach und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz, 1678) reports the following sentence for Incisa in Val d’Arno (20 kms southeast of Florence): (ii) La ommi garba punta, chesta donna. scl neg-to-me likes punto.f.sg this woman ‘I do not like at all this woman.’}

(26) a La un mi piace punta, questa storia. to-me likes punto.f.sg this story ‘I do not like at all this story.’
   SCL NEG b Un l’ho punta sentita, questa storia. her have punto.f.sg heard this story ‘I have not heard at all about this story.’

\[\text{(25)}\]
\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{DP} & \text{QP} \\
2 & 2 \\
\text{NumP} & \text{QP} & \rightarrow \\
2 & 2 & Q^o \\
punto & \text{NP} & Q^o \\
\end{array}
\]
b’??un l’ho sentita punta, questa storia.
b’’??un ho sentita sentita questa storia.

(26) also shows that right dislocation is preferred in these constructions ((26b’) shows that punto can marginally follow the past participle). I consider these examples evidence supporting the idea that the two puntos are to be reduced to a unique lexical element, that is a quantificational head. I will return/come back to these examples in the following section.

Thus, the main difference between Old and Modern Florentine lies in the selectional properties of punto: it either selects a PP in Old Florentine, or a DP in Modern Florentine. Examples of adjectival agreement across a preposition like di ‘of’ can be found in other contemporary Italo-Romance varieties. Some examples, taken from Cinque (1997) are given in (27):

(27) a. Un poca de pasta. (Veneto)
   a little.F.SG of pasta
b. Un pochi de bizi. (Veneto)
   a little.M.PL of peas
c. Tante de onge. (Bellunese)
   many.F.PL of nails
d. Tante de petre. (Salentino)
   many.F.PL of rocks

The agreement morphology of punto is likely to have derived from similar structures. The presence of adjectival agreement on quantifiers can be seen as the development of new agreement features on the quantificational head. In Modern Florentine punto, as other adjectival-like quantifiers, is the probe of an Agree relation of number and gender phi-features, which are valued by the phi-features of the complement DP. I argue that the presence of these phi-features on punto inhibits the development of the following stage of the Jespersen’s cycle. In other words, punto acquires new features (gender and number) but loses the capability to bear an interpretable negative feature. All the minimizers that have become sentential negations have lost any referential content and phi-features (mica in Standard Italian, mi(n)ga in Milanese, briza in Emilian, pa in Piedmontese, bitʃ in Romansh, and so on)\(^6\). Note that all the negative quantifiers that have become sentential negations are pronouns and not adjectives (nen and nente in Piedmontese, nylia in Romansh, and so on). Since punto does not become a sentential negation marker, it must be the case that it keeps its quantificational interpretation as well.

\(^6\) As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, Catalan has two comparable elements: cap (< caput), which is both adverb and quantifier (and like modern Florentine punto does not take a de complement, but can be used pronominally), and gens (< gens) which again is both adverb and quantifier.
5. The position of punto

In the preceding section, I have proposed that punto is a quantificational head that can be used either as a polarity quantifier (in this case it selects a DP as its complement) or as a postverbal reinforcer of negation. The main piece of evidence for this claim is that punto, even when it is used as a reinforcer of negation, can optionally display morphology of agreement with the internal argument. Phenomena suggesting that there is a relation between (some) argumental positions and sentential negation are not rare. Manzini & Savoia (2005, III-206), reporting a fact already noted by Meyer-Lübke (1889), show that in Old French, the postverbal negative element mie (in origin a minimizer, meaning ‘crumble’ like the Italian mica), sometimes triggered a partitive direct object, even if it was not quantifiable at all:

(28)  De s’espee ne volt mie guerpir. (Chanson de Roland 465)
of his sword NEG wanted MIE leave
‘He did not want to leave his sword.’

Similar structures can be found in modern Italo-Romance varieties. The following example is reported by Manzini & Savoia (2005, III-279f.) for the Piedmontese variety of Quarna Sotto:

(29)  Na caman mia d a te frial.
NEG-SCL call MIA of the your brother
‘They do not call your brother.’

In this section, I will propose an analysis for the fact that the “adverb” punto agrees with the internal object.

Firstly, it must be said that punto seems to occupy a position which is lower than the positions Neg2 and Neg3 individuated by Zanuttini (1997) for postverbal negation in Romance. In fact, as it was shown in the examples in (13), punto must follow temporal and aspectual adverbs. In (30) I show the position of punto in the adverbial hierarchy of Cinque (1999):

(30)  […[T Anterior *già [Asp Terminative più [Asp Perfective sempre/mai [ punto [Asp Completive *tutto]]]]]]

I argue that punto is higher than tutto ‘all’ because tutto, contrary to punto, cannot appear between the auxiliary and the past participle in Italian and in Modern Florentine.

(31)  a. Un ho punto capito.
    NEG have PUNTO understood
    ‘I have not understood at all.’
    b. *Un ho tutto capito.
'I have not understood all.'

c.  Un ho capito tutto.

Neg2 and Neg3 are higher than the position of *punto*. According to Zanuttini (1997), Neg2 is higher than T Anterior (*già*), while Neg3 is between T Anterior and Asp Terminative (*più*). As we have seen, *punto* is not compatible with *già* but follows *più*. Neg2 is the position occupied by postverbal negations which derive from minimizers, while Neg3 is the position occupied by postverbal negations which derive from negative quantifiers (Poletto 2008). Thus, *punto* has not become a true negative marker and, therefore, occupies a different position from true negative markers.

In (30) I have proposed that *punto* is higher than *tutto* because the latter cannot precede the past participle. Notice, however, that *punto* and *tutto* seem to encode the same aspect: a Completive one. Cinque (1999, 104) already noted that positive and negative adverbs encoding the same aspect seem to occupy different positions. We can assume that *punto* is in some sense the negative counterpart of *tutto*. Furthermore, it must be pointed out that *tutto* is a quantifier and that, even if it can be analyzed as an aspectual adverb, at the same time it is one of the arguments of the predicate. I will not analyze further the properties of *tutto* and the similarities with *punto*, but it is evident that the encoding of Completive aspect interacts with the argumental structure of the predicate.

Following a proposal by Poletto (2007) about dedicated positions for quantifiers in the clause structure, I propose the analysis represented in (32):

(32)  *Un ho punta sentita questa storia*  (26b’’)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{NegP} \\
\text{TP} \\
\text{CompletiveP} \\
\text{vP} \\
\text{QP} \\
\text{DP} \\
\end{array}
\]

*Punto* is merged in a position for universal quantifiers of the internal argument. The object DP is moved to this position and the phi-features of the DP are copied onto the quantifier. From this position, the quantifier is moved to the IP layer where
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it checks its aspectual feature. When there is no internal argument, we can assume that no element is moved to the quantifier position, and punto agrees with a silent element with unmarked phi-features. From a diachronic point of view, this configuration is the starting point of the grammaticalization of minimizers and negative quantifiers into negation markers. As proposed by Poletto (2008), negation has an articulated structure and always involves the presence of a scalar component (the minimizer). However, as I have argued in the preceding section, a minimizer can get a negative feature only if it has no phi-features. While this was the case of minimizers selecting a PP as complement, punto’s grammaticalization was inhibited by its adjectival morphology.

6. Conclusions

In this article I have examined the diachronic development of the element punto in Florentine. In Old Florentine it was a DP used at first as a minimizer and then as a reinforcer of sentential negation. In Modern Florentine it is a polarity quantifier and an adverbial element meaning “at all”. I have proposed that it has failed to become a true postverbal negation marker because it has developed agreement morphology. If a head has phi-features, it cannot grammaticalize into negation. In other words, it cannot acquire a(n interpretable) negative feature if it has phi-features that need to be valued. This analysis entails that in the grammar of Florentine there has always been a unique punto, i.e. the quantifier and the adverb are not separate elements. Furthermore, I have proposed that punto (and possibly similar elements in Romance) occupies a precise position in the adverbial hierarchy, which is between Perfective Aspect (sempre/mai) and Completive Aspect (tutto). I argue that this position is for negative adverbs encoding Completive Aspect.

Many facts await for further refinement of this analysis. Among these, the fact that adverbial punto is not compatible with any other aspectual adverb, but it can only combine with adverbs that have to be licensed by an operator (for instance negation). It seems that adverbs which do not need to be licensed block the licensing process. Similar cases of NPIs with “licensing chains” are described by den Dikken (2002).

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Notice that the order punto-past participle is possible only if punto is used alone (i.e. if it does not quantify over a DP). It seems, thus, that further movement of the participle is obligatory if some element moves to the punto phrase.
References


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