SUBJECT CLITIC INVERSION IN A LOMBARD DIALECT

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1. Introduction

This talk deals with the syntax of Subject Clitic Inversion (SCI) in Comunuovese (a Northern Italian dialect spoken in Comun Nuovo, a little town near Bergamo, Italy). It elaborates on a link between wh-items, SCI structures and temporal values. The main goals of this work are:

a) Section 2 addresses the syntax of wh interrogation in Comunuovese (CN). CN displays up to three forms of the same wh element: besides clitic, weak, and strong forms (Poletto/Pollock 2006), we focus on a fourth type, dubbed *super strong* (Pescarini/Donzelli 2017). They have different morphological structures and a different syntactic placement. The combination of wh-items and their placement gives rise to Special or Standard interpretation of wh interrogations.

b) Section 3 provides a description of the system of subject clitics in Comunuovese. Comunuovese is a null-subject language (Rizzi 1986), but subject clitics are obligatory with certain persons. The paradigm of subject enclitic is richer than the one of proclitic forms (Renzi/Vanelli 1983).

c) Section 4 deals the occurrence of SCI; this strategy is restricted to wh interrogation and, in particular, when a ClWh occurs. This interrogative syntactic strategy is rare and pragmatically marked.

d) Section 5 elaborates on a link between SCI and the deictic temporal value of verbs. Building on a parallelism with a Southern Italian dialect, this section provides an analysis based on informational content, level of presupposition and deictic temporal value.

SCI is restricted to certain wh-ex situ interrogation. These syntactic structures are a particular type of special Qs, which I term *JustificationQs*: the answer is already 'given', while the speaker expects a justification of the event that is happening. The special SCI Qs provides a deictic temporal value of the verb.
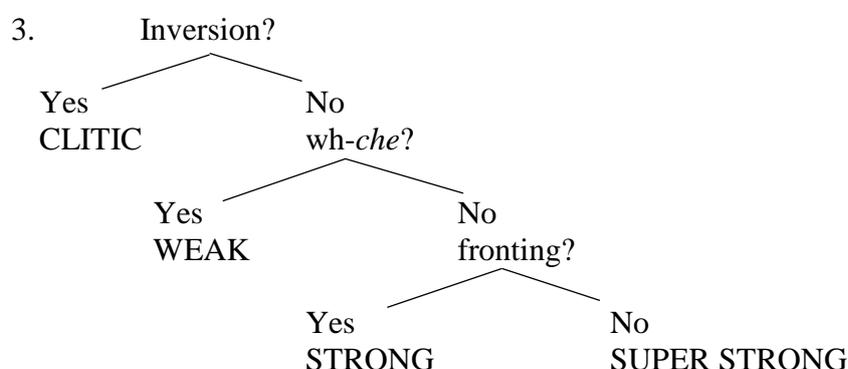
1. a. sa fa-l?   What   ClWh ex situ + SCI
   what do=he
   'what is he doing?'

   b. cosa   fa-l   ol Mario?   What   StrongWh ex situ + SCI
   what   do=he   the M.
   'what is Mario doing?'

   c. ndo   core-l?   Where   ClWh ex situ + SCI
   where run=he
   'where is he running?'

2. An aside on interrogatives in CN

Comunuovese exhibits different syntactic strategies to build a wh interrogation (wh ex situ, wh in situ, pseudoclefting, wh + COMP, Subject Clitic Inversion) and various types of wh-items, e.g. *ndo, indoe, indoè* 'where'. The combination of morphological and syntactic structures yields different interpretations of the same interrogative sentence, i.e. (2) It. 'dove corre?', 'where does he run to / is he running?'.

2. a. inˈdoˑe (a)l kor?　　　　　Strong Wh ex situ　　　　StQs
　　 where he= runs
　　 'where does he run?'
　 b. ndo　 ˈkorɛ-l!?　　　　　　Clitic Wh + SCI　　　　　JustificationQs
　　 where runs=he
　　 'where and WHY is he running!?'
　 c. al　　　kor inˈdoˑe!?　　　Strong Wh in situ　　　　SDQs
　　 he=　　runs where
　　 'where (on earth) does he run!?'
　 d. al　　　kor indoˈɛ!?　　　Super Strong Wh in Situ　ExlIntQs
　　 he=　　runs where
　　 'where does he run!?'

Following (Cardinaletti/Starke 1999) and (Poletto/Pollock 2006), we argue that in Comunuovese there are four kinds of wh-items: clitic, weak, strong and super strong (Pescarini/Donzelli 2017). The taxonomy is based on three parameters: (I) if the wh element can co-occur with Subject-Clitic Inversion, (II) if they can co-occur with the complementizer *che*, 'that' and (III) if they can be placed in fronting:

3.　　　　Inversion?
　　　／　　　　＼
　Yes　　　　　　No
　CLITIC　　　　wh-*che*?
　　　　　　　／　　　＼
　　　　　Yes　　　　　No
　　　　　WEAK　　　　fronting?
　　　　　　　　　　／　　　＼
　　　　　　　Yes　　　　　No
　　　　　　　STRONG　　　SUPER STRONG

The inventory of wh-items is summarized in (4):

4.

	clitic	weak	strong	super strong
what	sa	-	ˈkɔza	koˈzɛ
where	ndo	-	ˈndoˑe	ndoˈɛ
how	-	-	ˈkome	koˈmɛ
who		Ki		-
when	-	-	ˈkwando	-
which	-	-	ˈkwal	-
why	-	-	perˈkɛ	-
how much	-	-	kwat	-
how many	-	-	ˈkwatʃe	-

The **clitic** wh-words *sa* 'what', *ndo* 'where' cannot be stressed, cannot occur in situ and cannot be isolated (Poletto/Pollock 2006). ClWh are the only wh-items that can co-occur with Subject Clitic Inversion – except for the StrWh *cosa* which could co-occur with SCI (cfr. § 4.1). Furthermore, ClWh cannot occur in PPs:

5. a. de ˈndoˑe/*de ndo   l   ve?
      from where   he=   comes
      'where is he from?'
   b. al   ve   de   ndoˈɛ?
      he= comes   from   where
      'where is he from?'

6. a. *de ˈkɔza/* de sa   l   ɛ   dre a parlà?
      of what   he=   is talking
      'what is he talking about?'
   b. l   ɛ   dre a parˈla   de koˈzɛ?
      he= is talking   of what
      'what is he talking about?'

ClWh are banned in embedded clauses, (7a).

7. a. ma sa   doˈmande ˈkoza/*sa   (a)l dis.
      me REFLX   ask   what   he= says
   b. ma sa   doˈmande al   dis   koˈzɛ.
      me REFLX   ask   he= says   what
   'I wonder what he is saying'

[ki] 'who' is the only **weak** wh-form, in the sense of (Cardinaletti/Starke 1999) and (Poletto/Pollock 2006) as it may co-occur with the complementizer *che* 'that' in main interrogatives, (8).

8. a. ki/*kɔza   ke   l   ɛ!?
      who/*what   that he=   is
      'who is he?'

The wh-items *cosa* 'what', *ndoe* 'where', *come* 'how', etc. can be focused, can occur in situ and in isolation and can occur either ex situ or in situ, (9). These wh-items will be therefore referred to as **strong** wh (StrWh) – in the sense of (Poletto/Pollock 2006).

9. a. ˈkɔza?
      what?
   b. al   ˈmandʒa ˈkɔza?
      he= eats   what
      'what does he usually eat?
   c. ˈkɔza   al   ˈmandʒa?
      what   he= eats
      'what does he eat?'

Super strong forms (SupStrWh) occur only in situ, although they cannot occur in isolation or be coordinated, (10a) and (10b).

10. a. *kozɛ?
      'what?'
    b. *koˈmɛ   e   ndoˈɛ   ta   set indaʧ?
       how   and where you= go
       'how and where did you go?'

SupStrWh have a characteristic stressed final [ɛ]. We hypothesise that they result from clefts (Pescarini/Donzelli 2017). This analysis is supported by data from other Lombard Alpine dialects, such as the one of Cavergno (Switzerland). In this dialect, special questions are obtained by reversing the order of wh clefts; crucially, both structures exhibit Subject-Clitic Inversion, which means that the sentence in (11b) is not a plain case of wh in situ.

11. a. *kuz ɛ-u*   ke   t   ɛ   fɛʧ?
       what is=it   that you have do
    b. t   ɛ   fɛʧ   *kuz ɛ-u!*?
       you= have do   what is=it
       'what did you do!?'

To recapitulate, different types of wh-items have different behaviours: ClWh in (12) is ex situ and co-occur with SCI, StrWh occur either in fronting or in situ and SupStrWh occur only in situ, (13) (14).

12. sa/*ˈkɔza/*koˈzɛ   ˈmajɛ-l?
    what   eats-he=
    'what does he eat?'
13. sa/ˈkɔza/*koˈzɛ   al   ˈmanʤa?
    what   he=   eats
     'what does he eat?'
14. al   ˈmanʤa *sa/ˈkɔza/koˈzɛ?
    he=   eats   what
    'what does he eat?'

2.1. Special questions

Different types of wh-items (see above) may occur in different types of interrogatives: the resulting combinations often express special questions (SpecQs). Building on Obenauer 2006, I assume the following classification of 'special questions' (see also Garzonio 2004):

- StrWh in situ → *Surprise-Disapproval Questions*
  Qs expressing 'an attitude of surprise with a negative orientation' (Obenauer 2006).

- SupStrWh in situ → *Esclamative Interrogatives*
  'very similar to surprise question on one hand and to rhetorical question on the other' (Garzonio 2004). Differently from SDQs, they do not have a disapproval interpretation.

- ClWh with SCI → *Justification Qs*
  Qs in which, besides the answer, the speaker expects a justification.

3. Subject clitics in Comunuovese

Like all the Northern Italian dialects, CN displays subject clitics, which can be either proclitic or enclitic. It is interesting to notice that, in accordance with (Renzi/Vanelli 1983), the inventory of the enclitic forms is richer than the one of proclitic, (15).

15.

		stressed	proclitics	Enclitics
sg.	I	*me*	*(a)*	Ø
	II	*te*	*ta*	*-et*
	III m.	*ly*	*al*	*-l*
	III f.	*le*	*la*	*-la*
pl.	I	*ˈnotɛr*	*an*	*-i*
	II	*ˈvotɛr*	Ø	*-f*
	III	*lyr*	*i*	*-i*

Subject clitics co-occur with DP subjects:

16. a. ol   ʤjoˈan   al   ˈbala
        (the) John   he=   dances
        'John dances'
    b. ly   al   ˈbala
        he   he=   dances
        'he dances'
    c. al   ˈbala
        he=   dances
        'he dances'

Subject proclitics are obligatory with 2 sg, 1 pl and 3 person subjects:

17. Luka   *(al)   bif   ol   vi
    Luca   he=   drinks   (the) wine
    'Luca drinks wine'
18. te   *(ta)   ˈmanʤɛt   trɔp
    you   you=   eat   too much
    'you eat too much'
19. lyr   *(i)   va   e   ˈnotɛr   *(an)   ˈrɛsta
    they   they=   go   and   we   we=   stay
    'they go and we stay'

The first person subject clitic is not obligatory. It normally occurs in negative clauses when the subject, in (20a), is focalised, but not in (20b).

20. a. ME (a)   ˈmanʤe   ˈmia, te   ta   ˈpødɛt fa kɛl ke   ta   ˈølɛt
       I   I=   eat   not you   you= can   do what   you= want
       'I don't eat, you can do what you want'
    b. me, la   ˈtyrta, (*a)   la   ˈmanʤe   ˈmia
       I   the cake   I=   IT.F. eat   not
       'I do not eat the cake'

There is not an enclitic form for the 1 sg. person, (21).

21. ndo   ndo?
    where go
    'where am I going!?'

The 2 pl. person proclitic subject is not present. The enclitic form is obligatory in "special questions", (22b), in the sense of (Obenauer 2006).

22. a. ˈvotɛr   koˈri
       you   run
       'you run'
    b. ndo   koˈri-f   (ˈvotɛr)!?
       where run=you   you
       'where are you running!?'

4. Subject Clitic Inversion

SCI is the most conservative interrogative structure in the Northern Italian dialects (NID) and it is really rare and marked in CN.
SCI is permitted in wh interrogation when it co-occurs with ClWh ex situ, (23).

23. a. ndo a-l?
       where go=he
       'where is he going?'
    b. sa mange-l?
       what eat=he
       'what is he eating?'

SCI cannot occur in declarative clauses:

24. a. *mange-l tròp
        eats=he   too much
    b. al mangia tròp
       he=eats   too much
       'he eats too much'

Differently from other NID, such as some dialects spoken in Veneto or Friuli, see (Poletto 2000), SCI in CN cannot occur in exclamatives, (25a), counterfactual, (25b), hypothetical (25c), and disjunctive clauses, (25d):

25. a. *ri(a)-el!
        come=he
        'he is coming!'
    b. *(gh) er-el   de rià!
        had= was=he   to come
        'had he come!'
    c. *se mang-el,   an và   vià
        if eats=he,   we=go   away
        'if he eats, we go'
    d. *e-l   gial   o e-l   ros
        is=it yellow   or is=it red
        'it is yellow or it is red'

SCI is ungrammatical in yes/no interrogatives, (26a).

26. a. *ly majɛ-l?
         he eats=he
    b. al maia?
       he=eats
       'does he eat?'

In CN there is *clitic doubling*, but restricted to the 1 pl. person, (27)a. Also other NID, for example some dialects of Piedmont, permit the co-occurence of proclitic and enclitic forms of the subject, see (27c) – from (Parry 1997).

27. a. sa   n   fa-i   (notèr)?   CN   1pl.
       what we= do=we   us
       'what are we doing?'
    b. sa   fa-i   (lyr)?   CN   3pl.
       'what do=we   they
       'what are they doing?'
    c. cos   a   fal-lo?   Piedmont
       what   he= do=he?
       'what is he doing?'

In conclusion SCI in CN is an interrogative structure that occur in restricted syntactic and pragmatic contexts.
Let's now check the contexts in which we can find SCI when it co-occurs with the wh 'what' and 'where' – the only wh-items that have a clitic form.

4.1. *WHAT?*

SCI occur only when the wh 'what' is a direct object, (28a).

28. a. sa   cant-el?
        what sing=he
        'what is he singing?'
    b. *sa/cosa sun-el?
        what   ring=it
        'what is it ringing? (the bell?..)'

SCI is permitted with the ClWh *sa*, but there are few cases, with a really special pragmatic import, in which some speakers accept SCI also with the StrgWh *cosa*. This structure is anyway marked and rare.
SCI with StrWh must occur with DP subjects, (29a), otherwise DP subjects are not obligatory in SCI with ClWh, (29b).

29. a. cosa fa-l   *(ol Mario)?
       what do=he   the M.
    b. sa   fa-l   (ol Mario)?
       what do=he   the M.
       'what is Mario doing?

Differently from some other NID, SCI is not always obligatory in the context where it is permitted (Poletto 2000): SCI must occur with ClWh, (30)c, but it is not obligatory with the StrWh, (30)d.

30. a. sa   mange-l/mange-la?
      what   eats=he/=she
      'what is he/she eating?'
   b. cosa   mange-l *(ol Mario)?
      what   eats=he   the M.
      'what is Mario eating?'
   c. *sa   al/la   mangia?
      what   he=/she=   eats?
      'what does he/she eat?'
   d. cosa   al/la   mangia?
      what   he=/she= eats?
      'what does he/she eat?'

There is a pragmatic difference between (30b) and (30d). If SCI co-occur with StrWh we have a JustificationQs; if SCI is not present, we have a StQs:

i)   + ClWh, + SCI   JustificationQs
ii)   + StrWh, + SCI   JustificationQs
iii)   + StrWh, - SCI   StandardQs

4.2. *WHERE?*

SCI can occur only with the ClWh *ndo*, (31a,b).

31. a. ndo   a-l?
      where   go=he?
      'where is he going (now)?'
   b. ndo   e-l?
     where   is=he
     'where is he (now)?'

SCI in WhereQs is restricted to: (i) simple verbal forms, (ii) verbs of movement, (iii) 'to be' and 'to have' – when they do not appear with auxiliary function.
In (32) you can see an example of minimal pairs of WhereQs with progressive and deictic temporal values.

32.

	Ès – 'to be'	
	deictic	*progressive/deictic*
I S	ndo so?	ndoe so?
II S	ndo se-t?	ndoe ta set?
III S	ndo e-l/e-la?	ndoe (a)l è?
I P	ndo n sèi?	ndoe (a)n sè?
II P	ndo si-f?	ndoe sì?
III P	ndo e-i?	ndoe i è?

WhereQs with the verb 'to be' in progressive and stative forms

5. A deictic temporal value

The interpretations of Qs with SCI could be associated to the position of the verb, which differs from the position occupied by the verb in wh ex/in situ, wh-che and cleft interrogative structure. The left rising of the verb provides a different pragmatic value of the Qs (Munaro 2016).

The SCI ClWh Qs in CN are SpecialQs marked in terms of *presupposition*: the information is 'given' and the speaker presupposes a strong common informational background with the listener (Calabrese 1982).

As you can see in (33), the most natural answer to a question with SCI is not the one which explains the real situation, (33A(ii)), but an answer that continues the presuppositional content of the Qs, (33A(i)).

33. Q.   sa fa-l!?
        'what is he doing!?'
    A(i).   eh. Tal sét che l'è 'n po màt!
        'eh. You know that he is a little bit crazy!'
    A(ii). l'è dre a cor
        'He is running'

SCI in CN is allowed with a deictic present tense, (34a). Conversely, the structures without inversion occur with a futurate and habitual present, (34b), and with past/future tense, (34c).

34. a. ndo   corɛ-l   (*a nedal/*tocc i martedè sira)?
     where   running=he   (*at Christmas/*every Tuesday evening)
      'where is he running (*at Christmas/*every Tuesday evening)?'
    b. ndoe   al   cor   (a nedal/tocc i martedè sira)?
     where   he=   runs   (at Christmas/every Tuesday evening)
      'where does he run (at Christmas/every Tuesday evening)?'
    c. ndoe   l a koˈrit / koreˈra   (a nedal/tocc i martedè sira)?
     where   he=run   / will run   (at Christmas/every Tuesday evening)
      'where did he run? / where will he run?'

The unmarked progressive verbal structure is realized in CN with the periphrastic form [*ès dre a +* INF] – literally EN 'to be after to'. This periphrastic structure is permitted in declarative clauses, (35), and in polar or wh Qs, (36).

35. a. Maria l'è   dre   a laàs so
      Maria she=is after   to REFLXwash
      'M. is washing herself'
    b. adès l'è   mia   dre   a piof
     now it=is not   after to rain
      'at the moment is not raining'
    c. l'è   mia   dre a cantà
     he=is   not   after to sing
      'he is not singing'

36. a. l'è   dre   a mangià?
     he=is   after to eat
      'is he eating?'
    b. cosa   l'è   dre   a mangià?
     what   he=is after to eat

'what is he eating?'

SCI is never permitted with the progressive periphrastic structure. It is not permitted in yes/no Qs, (37a), and also in wh-ex situ Qs, (37b).

37. a. *e-l   dre a bif?
        is=he   after to drink?
        'is he drinking?'
    b. *sa/cosa   e-l   dre a fa?
        what   is=he after to do
        'what is he doing?'

SCI is permitted in pseudocleft and it is mandatory with a deictic present tense, see (38). With past or future tenses, where inversion is not permitted, pseudo-clefts are marginal, see (39).

38. a. Chi   *l'è/e-l chèl   che   l è   dre a durmì?
        who   he=is   the.one that he=is sleeping

39. a. ?Cosa   l éra   chèl   che ta   séret dre a mangià?
        what   it=was   the.one that you=   were eating
    b. ?Cosa   l éra   chèl   che   l   era   dre a sunà?
        what   it=was   the.one that he=   was   playing

It is possible now to establish *minimal pairs* based on different informational value given by the wh Qs, (40). Both structures express the imperfective progressive aspect of the verb, but (40a) is a JustificationQs, with a deictic temporal value, while (40b) is a StandardQs.

40. a. cosa fa-l   ol M.?
        what do=he   the M.
    b. cosa   l'è   dre   a fa   ol M.?
        what   he=is after to do the M.?
        'what is Mario doing?'

A parallelism is now useful. The NID are not the only Italian dialects to show subject clitic paradigms; in (Loporcaro, D'Ancona, Fatini 2010) the presence of pronominal proclitic subjects is also attested in Pantesco, the dialect of Pantelleria – a Sicilian island in the south-west of Italy.
    The subject clitics present in PAN have a semantic function: they mark the progressive aspect in finite verbs, as shown with the *minimal pair* in (41): the progressive aspect is expressed in (41a) through the periphrastic structure 'stare (be) + gerundio', in (41b) through the presence of the subject proclitic *ddu*.

41. a. ku   sta vvenennu?
        who   be coming
    b. ku   *ddu*   veni?
        who SbjCl   come
        'who is coming?'

There are obviously some differences between CN and PAN: in PAN the two progressive structures have the same restriction and use, in CN the inversion is permitted only in ClWh Qs and only with a deictic temporal value; whereas the periphrastic structure is always possible if the verbs have the progressive aspect.

The position of the verb with a deictic value seems to be different from the position of verb with a progressive aspect: in CN the deictic form seems to be higher than the progressive ones.

To sum up, SCI in CN:

- is a syntactic strategy to build a wh interrogation
- is permitted only if it co-occurs with ClWh ex situ interrogative – though there are few residual cases of SCI in co-occurence with the StrWh *cosa*.
- occurs in SpecQS called JustificationQS
- is permitted in informational context where there is a high level of *presupposition*
- provides a deictic temporal value of the verb

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