Universal 20 restriction reloaded: the view from Old Italo-Romance

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Abstract

In this work we show that Old Italo-Romance varieties have two types of pragmatic related movement to the left periphery of both the clausal and nominal domains: one that focuses the moved constituent itself and another that marks the moved constituent as background, resulting in emphasis of the non-moved portion. While Focus fronting does not obey the U20 restriction originally proposed in Cinque (2005),

(back)grounding does. This counters the idea that only meaningless movements (i.e., movements deriving the canonical word order of a language) need to obey the U20 restriction, since some meaningful movements do as well. After having examined the properties of both types of constructions, we derive the distinction on the basis of the type of feature that triggers the movement. While operators like Focus have their own feature, which is read by the labeling algorithm, all other cases of movement must use the label of the lexical head, which therefore must be contained in the moved subtree. Hence, (back)grounding must drag along the lexical head to be labeled, while Focus does not need to.

Keywords: Focus fronting, Ground, Old Romance, labeling, U20 restriction.

1. Introduction

Cinque (2005, 2023) discusses a restriction on syntactic movement whereby movements deriving canonical word orders must obligatorily include the lexical head of the hierarchy (1).

(1)   […] a condition on movement whereby only the head of each (sub)hierarchy can move (by itself or in one of the possible ways movement can take place).[1]
                                                                    (Cinque 2023: 4)

This restriction is designed to account for the longstanding typological observation that not all plausible canonical word orders are attested. This is represented for the nominal domain by Greenberg's Universal 20 (hereafter U20) (2).

(2)   When any or all of the items (demonstrative, numeral, and descriptive adjective) precede the noun, they are always found in that order. If they follow, the order is either the same or its exact opposite.
                                                                    (Greenberg 1963: 87)

       Cinque contends that U20 (and other similar restrictions) can be derived by assuming that (i) there is a universal base merge word order for each syntactic hierarchy and (ii) canonical word order is derived from this universal base merge word order by movements conforming to the restriction in (1) (hereafter U20 restriction).
       Following Cinque (2023), movements deriving the canonical word order (and thus conforming to the U20 restriction) do not have a semantic import and are therefore dubbed as *meaningless movements*. This is intended in opposition to *meaningful movements*, that is cases of feature driven movements with a semantic import like

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[1]   Movement can take place either by moving just the target, by moving the target and lower non-target material (the so-called "whose picture" pied piping) or by moving the target and higher non-target material (the so-called "pictures of whom" pied piping). See Cinque (2023: 4-5).

focus/wh-movement or movement of arguments to case positions (i.e., the classic cases of A´ and A movement).[2]

In this contribution, we investigate the domain of application of the U20 restriction in (1) and contend that it does not only apply to meaningless movements but extends to some cases of meaningful movement too. The discussion is based on two Old Italo-Romance varieties, Old Florentine (OFl) and Old Venetian (OVen). We show how these varieties present cases of meaningful movement which do not involve the lexical head of the hierarchy, i.e., no U20 restriction applies, as expected for meaningful movements. However, there are also cases of meaningful movement which obligatorily obey the U20 restriction, which in a Cinquean view is unexpected for meaningful movements. This is shown to be valid for both the nominal and the verbal domain. We argue that the reason why some meaningful movements must follow the U20 restriction and therefore pattern with meaningless movements is that they do not involve an operator. In other words, we propose that the U20 restriction does not follow the divide between meaningless and meaningful movement but rather only applies to movements that do not involve an operator: only movements involving an operator can therefore escape such restriction (the only apparent exception being subject and Topic movement, discussed in Section 5).

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we present cases of meaningful movements that escape the U20 restriction. After some methodological remarks in Section 3, in Section 4 we present cases of meaningful movements that obey the U20 restriction. In Section 5 we put forward and discuss our proposal. Section 6 draws some conclusions.

2. Scrambling inside the DP

In OFl, Poletto (2014) reports cases of scrambling inside the DP/PP of PP complements as *di dolore* 'of sorrow' in (3), and as *a madonna* 'before my lady' in (4) (for further examples see Andreose 2010).

(3)   Old Florentine (Dante, *Vita nuova*, c. 1292-93, 8.8-11 / v.2 / 30.2)
        Di dolor   madre   antica.
        of sorrow mother ancient
        'The ancient mother of sorrow'

(4)   Old Florentine (Dante, *Vita nuova*, c. 1292-93, 12.10-15 / v.1 / 46.1)
        Ballata, i' voi   che   tu   ritrovi Amore, / e   con lui
        Ballad I   want.1sg that   you   find.2sg love   and with him
        vade   a   madonna davante …
        go.2sg   to my-lady   before
        'Ballad, I want you to find Love and with him go before my lady…'

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[2]   We use movement referring to what is often called "internal merge", that is a case of syntactic merge where the material is already present in the derivation, so that no access to the lexicon is needed.

Interestingly, these types of preposing are only possible if there is no definite article, which suggests that they target the highest Specifier in the DP, whose head is generally assumed to be occupied by the definite article. We adopt here Koopman's (2000) condition that a D head and its specifier are never both lexically filled unless there is an agreement relation between the two. Since no agreement relationship between the PP and the definite article is attested, the latter cannot be realized if the former is preposed. The fact that the PP can be moved without having to drag the N lexical head with it shows that, as expected, this phenomenon does not obey the U20 restriction. Note that the presence of the postnominal adjective *antica* 'ancient' in example (5) shows that these are indeed cases of movement to the left periphery of the DP: since adjectives are modifiers that occur on the left-hand side of the head noun, this means that the noun must also have moved higher than its basic position, but clearly not with the PP.[3]

A similar type of phenomenon is found with adjectives, which can occur in the left periphery of the DP, leaving their modifier behind. This is exemplified in (5), where the adjective *vergognosa* 'shameful' and its modifier *molto* 'much' are respectively found on the left and on the right of *cosa* 'thing', the lexical head of the nominal phrase. This movement is most probably fed by a previous movement of the adjective above its modifier within the adjectival phrase, as exemplified in (6).
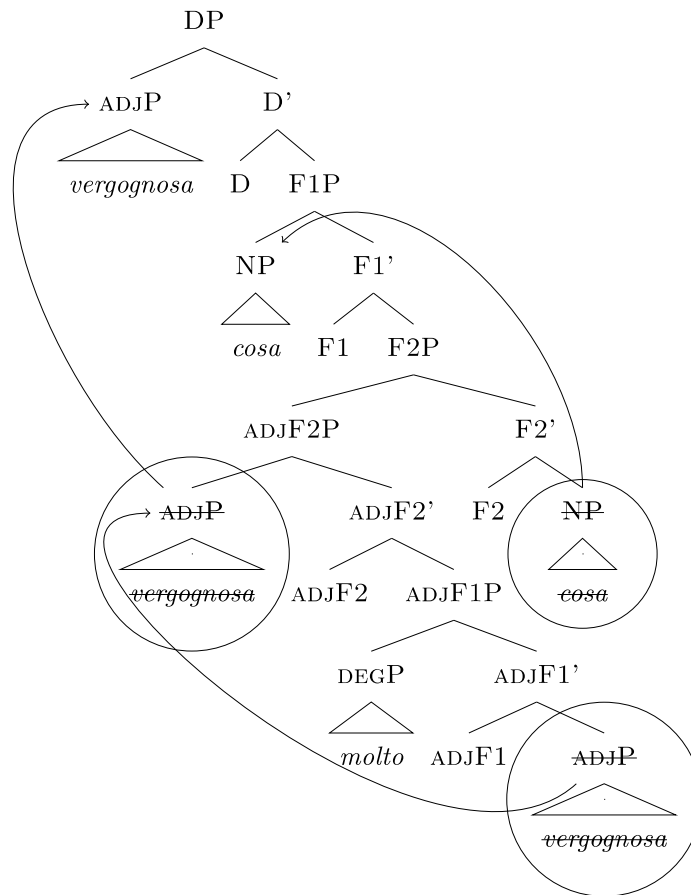
(5)   Old Florentine (*Tesoro volg.* (ed. Gaiter), XIII ex, 7-31.3 / 338.19)
        chè   ciò è vergognosa cosa molto.
        because this is shameful   thing very
        'because this is a very shameful thing.'

(6)   Old Florentine (Dante, *Vita nuova*, c. 1292-93, 19.1-3 / 72.14)
        uno rivo chiaro molto.
        a   river clear   very
        'a very clear river.'

Hence, the syntactic representation of a case like (5) is something like the structure in (7).

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[3]   The phenomenon looks like Saxon genitive, i.e., a case of structural subject genitive *à la* Longobardi (1996), but we will not pursue this any further here, since our aim is rather other types of movements that do obey the U20 restriction.

(7)

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                        DP
                    /        \
           →  ADJP          D'
              /    \        /   \
        vergognosa       D     F1P
                              /     \
                          NP       F1'
                         /         /    \
                      cosa       F1    F2P
                                     /        \
                             ADJF2P           F2'
                            /       \        /    \
                    → ADJP      ADJF2'    F2    NP
                    /    \      /    \           /
            vergognosa  ADJF2  ADJF1P        cosa
                              /        \
                          DEGP        ADJF1'
                         /            /    \
                     molto     ADJF1      ADJP
                                        /     \
                                    vergognosa
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The fact that the modifier of the adjective remains below the N shows not only that scrambling also occurs inside the AP – as also shown by (6) – but also that the adjective must have moved by itself to the left periphery of the DP without dragging the N with it, i.e., in violation of the U20 restriction in (1). These kinds of PP/AP scrambling constitute a clear modification of the canonical word order inside the DP, so that they can be classified as meaningful movements. Hence, we can conclude – following Poletto (2014) – that Old Italo-Romance displays meaningful movements to the left periphery of the DP of both PP-objects and adjectives that are not possible in the modern languages, and that these movements violate the U20 restriction. This is consistent with Cinque's idea that only meaningless movements must obey it. In the following sections, we show a set of movements deriving non-canonical orders, both in the nominal and the verbal domain, where the lexical head must move with the rest of the constituent in compliance with the U20 restriction.

3. Methodology

The data we analyze in Section 4 come from two sources, the TLIO corpus (http://tlioweb.ovi.cnr.it) for OFl and the MICLE corpus for OVen. While the TLIO corpus is an established resource for diachronic studies on Old Italo-Romance, the MICLE corpus is currently under development and requires some introductory notes.

The corpus is developed within the MICLE project and contains a comparable set of legal/administrative texts for Old/Middle French and OVen.[4] The texts are tagged for Part of Speech (PoS) and syntactically parsed according to the PRESTO, UD and UPenn guidelines, with a sequence of conversion scripts taking care of the integration of the different tagsets (for a more detailed description of the methodology see Goux and Pinzin 2023). Each tagged and parsed text is encoded in XML-TEI format, which allows for the coexistence of the different tagsets and conventions.

The OVen data have been extracted from the currently available texts in the MICLE corpus:[5]

a.	Stussi	(1253-1321)	$\cong$65000 tokens
b.	Tomasin 15	(1300-1310)	$\cong$7000 tokens
c.	Lio Mazor	(1311-12)	$\cong$14000 tokens
d.	Zucchello	(1336-1350)	$\cong$6000 tokens
e.	Statuta Veneta	(first half of the 14th c. CE)	$\cong$55000 tokens
f.	Senato deliberazioni terra	(1440-1455)	$\cong$36000 tokens
g.	Statuti di Murano	(1502)	$\cong$17000 tokens
h.	Senato incanti	(1525-1529)	$\cong$17000 tokens

From each text we extracted all instances of modal verbs (V_{mod}) + infinitive (V_{inf}) and quantifiers (Q) + nouns (N), for both possible relative orders.[6] The data have been further analyzed for the presence and relative position of the other elements potentially occurring in the respective phrases: direct/indirect arguments, adverbials and clitics for the verbal domain; determiners, adjectives, and prepositional modifiers for the nominal domain.

The TLIO corpus, the source for the OFl data, is not tagged for PoS nor syntactically parsed and hence does not allow for the same type of granularity in the extraction mechanism. To collect comparable data, we then resorted to a partially different methodology. For extraction from the TLIO corpus we used GATTOWEB (http://gattoweb.ovi.cnr.it). Verse was excluded as metrics may bias morphosyntax. We also restricted our search to the texts marked as original Florentine, thereby excluding translations and vulgarizations of non-Florentine texts, as the grammar of the original might play a role in determining unexpected patterns. We partitioned the entire period covered by the TLIO (early 13th c. - early 15th c.) into four subperiods: 1200-1295 (period I), 1296-1320 (period II), 1321-1370 (period III), 1371-1402 (period IV). The subperiods are not homogenous from the point of view of the number of years they cover, but our working hypothesis is that they are homogenous from the point of view of the language they represent, since the turn of the century is also a turning point for the change of the language, which loses V2, establishes a non-strict negative concord system and restructures the pronominal system altogether (this observation also arises from previous studies – Poletto 2010, 2014, 2015).

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[4]   For the MICLE project (DFG: PO 1642/10-1; ANR: ANR-20-FRAL-0001-01), see https://www.unicaen.fr/projet_de_recherche/micle/.

[5]   For the references to the texts see the direct sources section.

[6]   The choice of quantifiers is driven by the fact that these elements, differently from most determiners in the nominal domain, are not clitic and allow for modification of the informational structural relations within the DP (e.g.., to focalize quantifiers is possible, and especially so with the least vague ones, as *no*, *every*, *all* etc.).

4. When meaningful goes with U20

As observed in Section 2, Old Italo-Romance varieties present cases of meaningful movements inside the DP, where a modifier of the noun (either an adjective or a PP) is displaced to the left without dragging along the noun itself. This kind of movement does not follow the U20 restriction in (1), as expected under the proposal that only meaningless movements fall under its scope. In this section, we present data showing that some meaningful movements too fall under the scope of the U20 restriction. More concretely, we show that some movements giving rise to a non-canonical order must include the lexical head. We present data for both the verbal and the nominal domain for both languages we investigated, OVen and OFl.

In OFl and OVen, a modal verb generally precedes its infinitival complement. This is exemplified in (8) and (9).

(8)   Old Venetian (*Statuta Veneta*, cap. presumpt.)
       e   no   **vole vinire**.
       and not want come.INF
       'and he doesn't want to come.'

(9)   Old Florentine (Bono Giamboni, *Vizi e Virtudi*, a. 1292, 44, p. 79, line 18)
       Se voi da   capo   **volete fare**   nuova legge […].
       if you from beginning   want   do.INF new   law
       'if you want to create a new law from the beginning'

In both languages, however, it is also possible to find the reverse order, as in (10) and (11).[7]

(10)   Old Venetian (*Statuta Veneta*, I, 50)
       En qual   manera **çurar   de'** queli che vorà   scoder li
       in which   manner swear.INF must those that want.FUT redeem the
       beni
       assets
       'How who wants to redeem the assets must swear […].'

(11)   Old Florentine (Brunetto Latini, *Rettorica*, c. 1260-62, p. 156, line 11)
       Adunque **provedere dee** il   buono dittatore […].
       therefore provide.INF must the good   rhetorician
       'therefore the good rhetorician has to […]'

We see a similar pattern when we consider the nominal domain and the order between quantifiers and the nominal head. The canonical order is Q > N (12)-(13), but we find the reverse order too, N > Q (14)-(15).

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[7]   Note that the same is attested for the order between auxiliaries and past participles, where the regular order aux>V_{ppt} can be reversed. In OVen, this happens less frequently than with modals/infinitives (for an overview of the data and a comparison with Old/Middle French, see Poletto et al. in prep.).

(12)   Old Venetian (*Statuta Veneta,* prologo)
        si […] **alguna chosa** simel   ven   trovada […].
        if   any   thing similar gets found
        'if any similar thing is found'

(13)   Old Florentine (Bono Giamboni, [1292], *Trattato di Virtù e di Vizi*, 29.149)
        ora ti   voglio   **alcuna cosa** dire.
        now you.DAT want.1SG some   thing say.INF
        'now I want to tell you something'

(14)   Old Venetian (*Statuta Veneta*, II, 6)
        lo mato   è cognosudo aver   **rason alguna**.
        the mad.man is known   have.INF reason any
        'the mad man is known to have any reason.'

(15)   Old Florentine (Filippo da Santa Croce, *Deca prima di Tito Livio*, 1323, 6C: 10/18, b393)
        per lui non fu   fatta **cosa alcuna** di grande pregio.
        for him not was done thing any   of great   value
        'for him nothing of great value was done'

Henceforth, we will label the first type of reversal as Infinitival Fronting (Inf-Fronting) and the second as Noun Fronting (N-Fronting). Both are minority patterns in both languages, representing around 2-10% of the total occurrences of $V_{mod}+V_{inf}$ and Q+N (for more detailed data see Section 4.2).[8]

In Section 4.1 we present the syntactic properties of the phenomenon, while in Section 4.2 we consider its distribution in terms of diachrony and text, leading to a potential analysis in terms of emphatic marking plus backgrounding.

4.1. The syntactic features of N- and Inf-Fronting

As a first point, (16)-(17) show that both V_{mod} and Q do not have to appear in final position when V_{inf} or N precede them. Other XPs internal to the constituent can follow the modal or the quantifier.

(16)   Old Venetian (*Statura Veneta*, I, 50)
        En qual   manera **çurar de'** queli che vorà   scoder li
        in   which manner swear.INF must those that want.FUT redeem the
        beni.
        assets
        'How who wants to redeem the assets must swear.'

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[8]   These fronting phenomena are known to exist in the literature. For the verbal domain see Fischer (2014) for Old Spanish, Franco (2017) for Old Florentine, Labelle & Hirschbühler (2017), Mathieu (2006, 2013), Olivier et al. (forthcoming) for Old and Middle French. For the nominal domain see Martins (2014, 2015) for old and modern varieties of European Portuguese and Spanish, Baglioni & Basaldella (2020), Giusti (2002, 2010, 2016) for OFl, and Gianollo (2018, 2020) for an overview from Latin to different Romance languages.

(17)   Old Florentine (Dante, *Convivio*, 1304-1307, II, 8.103.6)
        che in noi sia   **parte alcuna** perpetuale.
        that in us be.SUBJ.3SG part   some   perpetual
        'that in us there is some perpetual part.'

This is particularly relevant for Inf-Fronting, where one could in principle attempt an analysis of these patterns as an instance of an OV syntax, in which the finite verb appears as the last element in the clause. The examples provided here would be problematic for such an analysis: other than V$_{inf}$ (plus in some cases the Object, see (19) below), all the other constituents follow V$_{mod}$ in the regular order usually attested in the language. This is exemplified in (18)-(20), where complements (*a lloro aiuto*) and other adjuncts (*per vincere la terra, per ogni rezimento [...], giorni novanta*) are regularly found after V$_{mod}$.

(18)   Old Florentine (Matteo Villani, *Cronica*, 1348/63, 2, 36.1, 257.27)
        che **venire   dovieno** a   lloro aiuto per vincere la terra.
        that come.INF   must   to   their help   to win.INF the land
        'Who had to come to their help to conquer the land'

(19)   Old Venetian (*Statuti di Murano*, I, 12)
        et   oltra   dicto salario **haver   debia** una bereta rosa per ogni
        and besides said salary   have.INF must   a   cap   red   for each
        rezimento de precio de lire tre.
        regiment of price of lire three
        'and, besides said salary, he must receive a red cap for each regiment costing three lire

(20)   Old Venetian (*Senato incanti*, 14.01.1529, f 11r-13r)
        dove   **star debano** giorni novanta […]
        where stay must   days   ninety
        'Where they must remain for ninety days'

Considering this, an analysis in which the infinitival verb crosses over the modal seems to be the least complex approach in terms of further assumptions needed. An OV analysis, whether derived by means of a low position of V$_{mod}$ or by moving the whole complement of V$_{mod}$ over it, would require additional consideration to account for (16)-(20).
         A second relevant issue is the status of these fronting phenomena as head or phrasal movements. Since the U20 restriction is formulated in terms of phrasal movements, determining the phrasal status of these Frontings is crucial. In what follows, we will present some data which show how V$_{inf}$ and N move as part of a bigger constituent, VP/NP, and not as terminal heads. As first evidence, note that if we were dealing with head-movement, these structures would violate the Head-Movement Constraint (Travis 1984), since V$_{inf}$/N would move past another head (V$_{mod}$/Q) in the

same extended projection.[9] A head movement analysis could only be maintained if we were dealing with cases of incorporation, where the two heads occupy a single terminal node. However, such an analysis is ruled out by the fact that the two heads do not need to be adjacent: whenever a clitic (negation and/or argumental clitics) is present, it always appears in between V_{inf} and V_{mod} (21).

(21)   Old Venetian (*Statuta Veneta*, promiss., 12)
        s' illi   no confenserà , o **provar** no se   **porà**,   sia
        if they not confess.FUT or prove.INF not self.CL can.FUT   be.SUBJ
        condenpnati.
        condemned
        'if they will not confess, or it will not be possible to prove it, may they be condemned'

As an additional point in favor of the phrasal movement analysis, notice that head-movement has a questionable status in current linguistic theories, leading part of the literature to propose to dispense with it in favor of a generalized phrasal approach to all kinds of movements (see Poletto and Pollock 2009).
        Further evidence that we are dealing with the fronting of a complex phrase is the fact that weak indefinite direct objects can be found on the left of the fronted V_{inf}. This is shown in (22).

(22)   Old Venetian (*Statuta Veneta*, I, 42)
        se chella femena **alguna causa açonçer vorà** […].
        if that   woman any   thing add.INF   want.FUT
        'If that woman […] will want to add anything'

As frequently shown in the literature (Cinque 1990 a.o.), weak indefinites are not good topic material. There is therefore no straightforward reason for assuming an autonomous movement of [$_{DPobj}$ *alguna causa*] 'anything' to the left of V_{inf}. If this were the case, we would have two movements to the low left periphery, the one of the quantified object and the long head movement of the infinitival. Anticipating what we will discuss in Section 4.2, we would have two independent foci in the left periphery, a case which is never given since Calabrese's (1982, 1992) generalization that in Italian varieties there never are two independent foci realized in the same clause. As we will propose in Section 4.2., the contexts where Inf-fronting occurs emphasize the modal and not the preceding infinitival verb or its object. This favors an analysis in which [$_{DPobj}$ *alguna causa*] 'anything' is dragged along as part of the VP, which is moved above V_{mod} in one swoop maintaining the initial merge order ([$_{VP}$ [$_{DPobj}$ *alguna causa*] *açonçer*]).[10] Hence, Inf-Fronting can only be a case of VP movement, not a

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[9]   Whether the head movement constraint can be derived as a standard case of relativized minimality or not, is not relevant here. The problem is that the head movement constraint has been long noted to hold, except for precisely structures of this type.
[10]   See Cinque (2023) and Haider (2000) for evidence in favor of OV as the merge order and Balsemin et al. (in preparation) for a complete analysis of the phenomenon under discussion, which is orthogonal to the argument at stake.

case of long head movement (plus an independent movement of the direct object to a higher position). The same can be said of the movement inside the nominal constituent, which drags along the complement PP to the left of the quantifier as in (23), keeping the head final order.

(23)   Old Florentine (Giovanni Villani (ed. Porta), a. 1348 (fior.), 6.1, 1.227.5)
        non avendo **del   papa   novella niuna**.
        not having of.the pope   news   any
        'not having any news of the Pope'

Once the phrasal status of these fronting movements has been established, let us pin down their respective landing sites in the verbal and nominal domain. To do so, we consider their distribution and relative position. Starting from the verbal domain, we notice that (i) Fronting is attested both in main (see (16)) and subordinate clauses (see (18), (20)-(22), (24) and (25)) and (ii) the fronted material, when in an embedded clause, follows the complementizers *che* 'that' (see (18) and (24)) and *se* 'if' (see (22) and (25)).

(24)   Old Venetian (*Statuta Veneta*, IV, 6)
        vollemo che quella **demandar e   scoder   possa** li   redi   so.
        want.1PL that that   ask.INF   and redeem.INF can   the heirs   his
        'We want his heirs to be able to ask and redeem that.'

(25)   Old Florentine (*Stat. fior.*, 1333, ch. 22, p. 27, line 2)
        se aconciamente **fare** si   **potrà**
        if appropriately do.INF self.CL can.FUT
        'if it can be done appropriately'

The fact that Inf-Fronting is not only a main clause phenomenon shows that it is not dependent on having an accessible high left periphery. This is further confirmed by the lower position with respect to complementizers. This evidence points to a position in the low CP area, i.e., the area where we know Focus and wh-items occur in Italian varieties.
        As for the nominal domain, it can be shown that when the N precedes the Q, it always follows any preposition introducing the whole DP (26)-(27). This attests that also in the case of N-fronting we are dealing with a peripheral position which is not the highest one of the nominal constituent (note that this contrasts with the cases illustrated in (4), where the moved nominal material bypasses the preposition).[11]

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[11]   Note that, since we are dealing with weak Qs, we cannot test for the relative position of the N with respect to D heads, which are generally located higher in the left periphery of the DP. In addition, the overt realization of the D head in OFl is a complex phenomenon, as the literature shows that the D head can remain unexpressed even with a definite maximal referent (Giorgi & Giusti 2010).

(26)   Old Venetian (*Senato deliberazioni terra*, 11.09.1452, f.37r)
   non   die   cazer   a   **pena alguna**.
   not   must   fall.INF   to   fine   any
   'Should not be subject to any fine.'

(27)   Old Florentine (Dante, *Vita nuova*, c. 1292-93, 11.1-3, p. 4, line 5)
   Dico   che   quando ella apparia   da   **parte alcuna**.
   say.1SG   that   when   she appeared   from   part   any
   'I say that when she appeared from any place.'

All this considered, the syntactic properties of our Fronting structures point toward an analysis in terms of phrasal movement of the VP/NP containing V_{inf}/N to a position higher than V_{mod}/Q but lower than, respectively, the high layers of the left periphery of the clause and the case layers above the DP. In the next section we will address the distribution of such cases of Fronting in terms of diachrony/text and propose an analysis.

4.2. Fronting as meaningful movement

As previously remarked, the Fronting option is less frequent than its counterpart. *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* show, respectively, the share of N- and Inf-Fronting in the OVen texts we analyzed.[12]

Figure 1. Share of N-Fronting in the OVen texts analyzed.
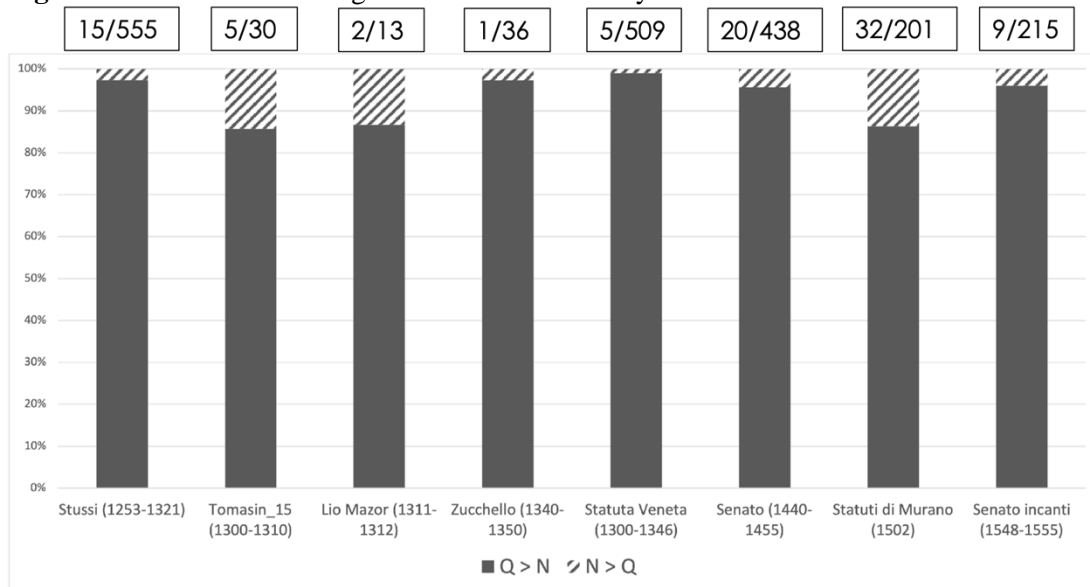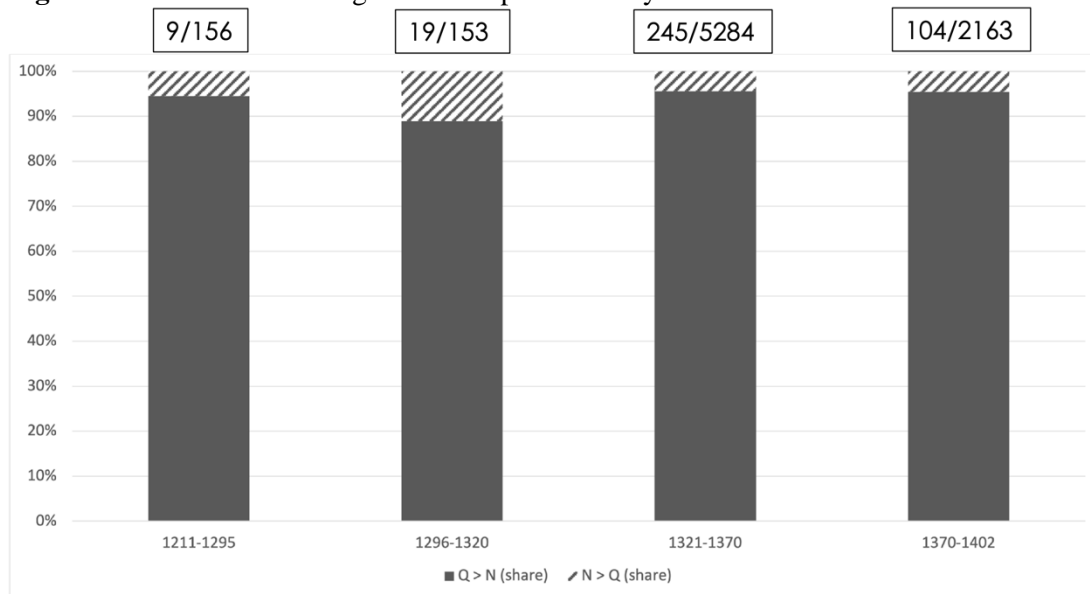
Figure 2. Share of Inf-Fronting in the OVen texts analyzed.
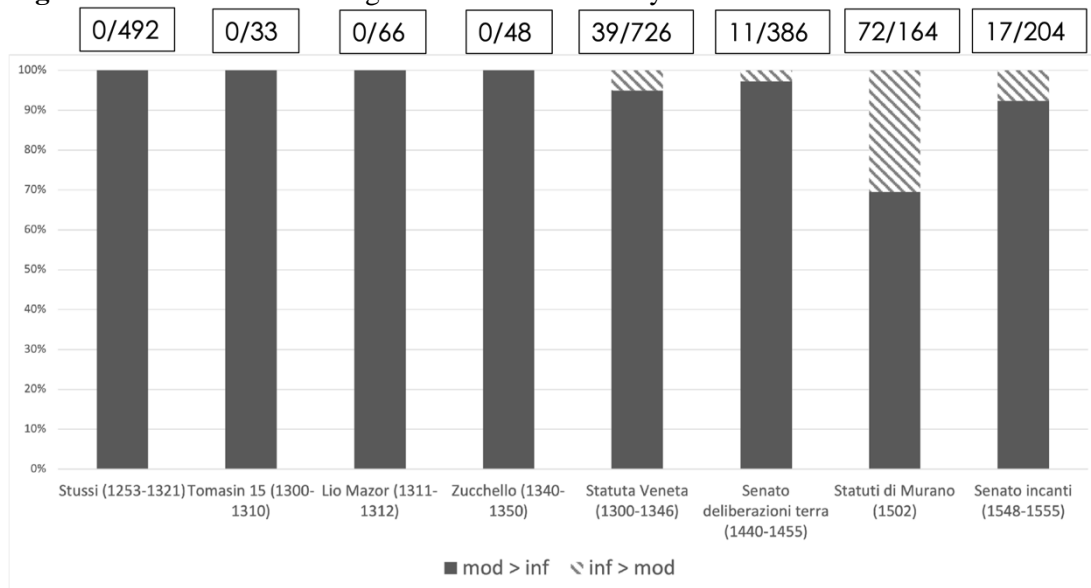
N-Fronting is a consistently attested option in the texts we analyzed, so that we see no clear diachronic path in its development/demise. As for Inf-Fronting, the data show that the phenomenon is only attested from the half of the 14th c. onwards, with a peak in the early 16th c. This is due to the asymmetry in the position of the finite V in main clauses in the two sets of texts, i.e., Force in the older texts and Fin (or a lower head) in the later ones.[13] As we showed in Section 4.1, Inf-Fronting targets the low layers of the left periphery, so that we do not expect it to be compatible with a grammar where the finite verb moves higher than that, as independently provable for the first texts. Since this discussion is orthogonal to the present argumentation, we refer to Poletto et al. (in preparation) for further data and a more precise definition of the interaction between Inf-Fronting and the position of the finite V.

Besides the motivated absence of Inf-Fronting in the first texts, the Fronting phenomenon is consistently attested in all other texts we analyzed, showing considerable stability as a grammatical feature of OVen. The same set of observations is valid for OFl, modulo the fact that this language does not seem to have gone through a consistent phase where the finite V is in Force, by contrast to OVen (at least in the attested stages). *Figure 3* and *Figure 4* show how both N- and Inf-Fronting are consistently attested through time in OFl.[14]

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[13]   The asymmetry is assessed along the following lines. The OVen texts up to the half of the 14th c. (*Stussi*, *Tomasin 15*, *Lio Mazor* and *Zucchello*) show a high frequency of enclisis to the finite V ("Tobler-Mussafia", see Benincà 1984, 2006), a low rate of V3 orders and V>2 orders only with frame-setters in first position. On the contrary, the other texts (*Statuta Veneta*, *Senato deliberazioni terra*, *Statuti di Murano* and *Senato incanti*) show a low frequency of enclisis to the finite V, a higher proportion of V3 and V4 orders, and V>2 orders with topicalized arguments in first position. No asymmetry is attested, on the other hand, for the rate of subject inversion and null subjects, which are both consistently more frequent in main than in subordinate clauses in all texts. A complete overview of the data is presented in Poletto et al. (in preparation).

[14]   The high number of texts in the sample (225) does not allow for presenting a readable text-by-text figure as for the OVen data. We resort to the subdivision in diachronic periods

Figure 3. Share of N-Fronting in the OFl periods analyzed.

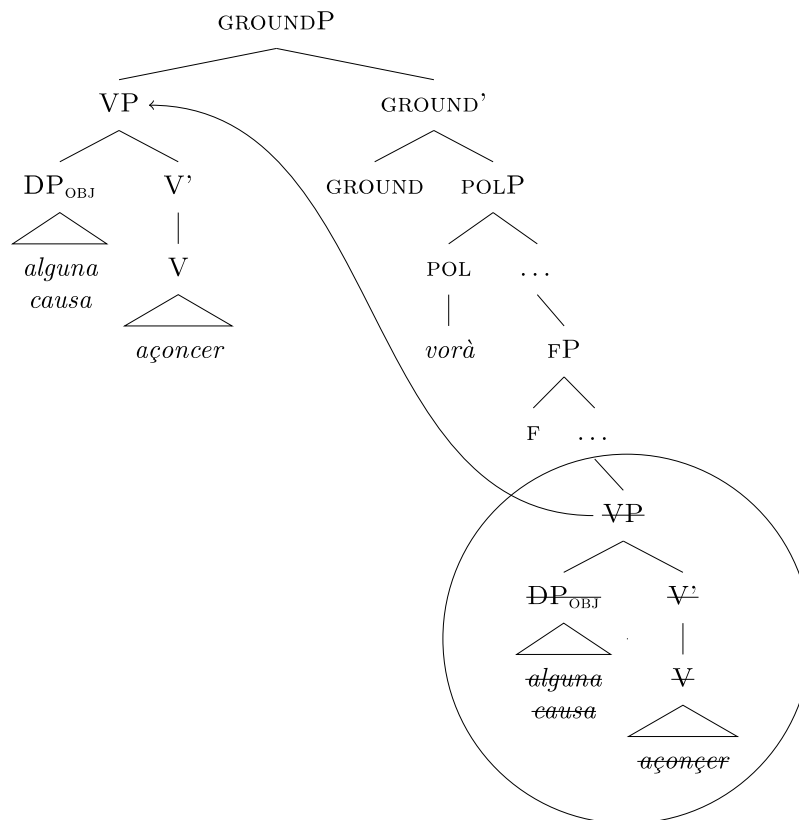**Figure 4.** Share of Inf-Fronting in the OFl periods analyzed.
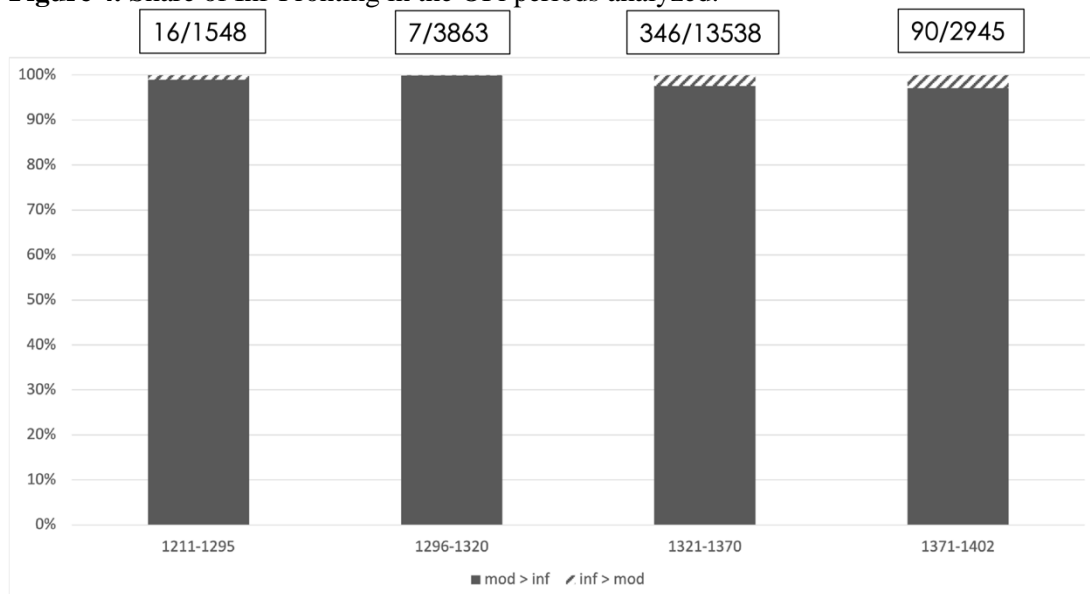
already introduced in the methodological section. The OFl data only show the shares of N-Fronting with Qs *alcuno* 'any' and *neuno/nessuno* 'nobody'. Fronting with other Qs as *molto* 'much' and *tutto* 'all' is possible but extremely infrequent. For the full dataset in .csv format see footnote 12. For *nessuno* 'no one', we tagged the whole set of examples we extracted. For *alcuno* 'someone/anyone', we tagged everything for the first two periods but not for the last two. For these periods, given the high number of examples we found (8174), we approximated the share of N-Fronting by generating 4 random samples of 200 examples for each of the two periods. We counted the occurrences of N > Q, Q > N and the irrelevant examples (e.g., Q with no N, predicative uses, and other similar occurrences). We then calculated the shares for each sample, the mean of the shares across the 4 samples, and generalized the result for the total number of non-irrelevant examples attested for the period.

The stability and nonetheless markedness of the construction lead us to categorize it as a grammatical option actively used to highlight a specific informational feature of the clause/nominal phrase within the larger discourse.[15] In this respect, Fronting leads to a deviation from the canonical word order and can therefore be subsumed under the label *meaningful movement*. As usual for written samples from languages for which native speakers are not available, it is however complex to pin down the specific informational correlate of the construction, which might be different from what a modern speaker could assume to be the correct interpretation. As a working hypothesis, we consider the proposal in Poletto & al. (in preparation), which treats this kind of antepositions as marking emphatic Polarity (see Laka 1990, Zanuttini 1997, Poletto and Zanuttini 2013). PolP is considered in a whole trend of research as the syntactic locus where the truth value of the sentence is marked as positive or negative, as it is also considered to be the position where adverbs marking the truth value of the clause in relation to the former discourse are located. On this basis, we propose that (emphatic) PolP, which is standardly located at the border between the CP and the IP domains, is also the locus where you can mark emphasis on the type of modality (possibility or necessity) the clause has. We analyze these cases of VP fronting as movement of the inflected modal to the head of PolP, while the VP is fronted to a higher GroundP position (see Poletto and Pollock 2009 on this) in the low CP area, which conveys that the event is presupposed. Emphatic polarity marking, as interrogative marking in Poletto & Pollock (2009), splits the sentence between what is emphatically marked and what is not (and therefore presupposed). Such configuration activates the GroundP position. By this analysis, we get the effect of a focused modal without having to resort to the Focus projection itself, which is generally used to focalize arguments or adverbs but not predicates, at least in Old and Modern Italo-Romance varieties.[16] The structure we propose is in (28).

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[15]   This militates against a potential analysis of Inf-Fronting in terms of "competing grammars", intending with this a competition among the OVen/OFl grammar and the Latin one, commonly mastered by the writers at the time (Tomasin 2019, a.o.). The unmarked Latin order for a structure containing $V_{mod} + V_{inf}$ is $V_{inf} > V_{mod}$ (Danckaert 2017), that is, the Inf-Fronting order under discussion. One could then hypothesize that such order surfaces as a crosslinguistic influence of the Latin one, in a sort of competition of two unmarked orders for the same $V_{mod} + V_{inf}$ structure. If this were the case, we would then expect high variability in the respective frequencies, the choice being unconstrained by specific grammar internal features. On the contrary, instead, we see that the rate of Fronting tends to be constant through time, once it is an established feature in the texts (in all periods for OFl; in all texts after the mid 14th c. for OVen). Furthermore, from the point of view of the "competing grammars" hypothesis, one would have to justify why in OVen Inf-Fronting starts appearing in the texts presenting the grammatical features connected to a low-V2/Fin-V2 grammar. If we were dealing with the surfacing of a competing unmarked order for the $V_{mod} + V_{inf}$ structure from a parallel grammar (i.e., Latin), we would expect such order to appear independently of other characteristics of the other grammar (OVen), as the position of the finite V. This shows that the Fronting structure is well integrated with the rest of the grammatical system of these Italo-Romance varieties and that an analysis autonomous from the one proposed for Latin is desirable.
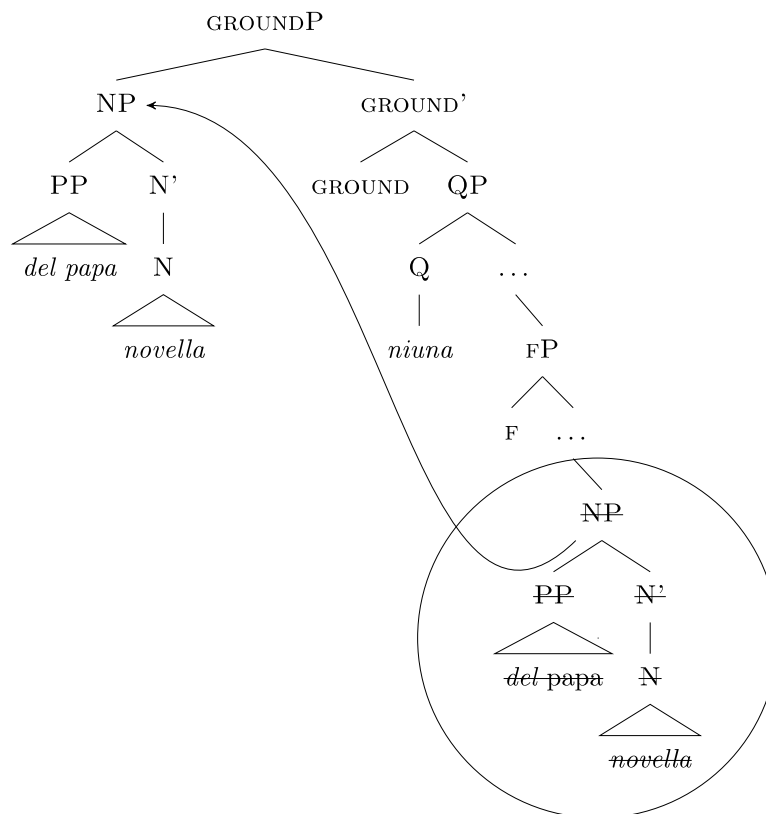
[16]   Alternatively, one could capture the pattern in terms of (non-contrastive) Verum Focus (Höhle 1988, 1992, see Lohnstein 2016). However, we opted for an analysis which exploits a syntactic head (Pol°) whose structural position has been already independently argued for.

(28)

GROUNDP
├── VP ←
│   ├── DP_OBJ
│   │   └── *alguna causa*
│   └── V'
│   └── V
│   └── *açoncer*
└── GROUND'
    ├── GROUND
    └── POLP
        ├── POL
        │   └── *vorà*
        └── . . .
            └── FP
                ├── F
                └── . . .
                    └── ~~VP~~
                        ├── ~~DP_OBJ~~
                        │   └── ~~*alguna causa*~~
                        └── ~~V'~~
                            └── ~~V~~
                                └── ~~*açonçer*~~

As for the nominal domain, we have a similar effect: while the fronted NP is presupposed, the quantifier is underlined. Also in this case, we then have an effect of emphasis on the quantifier which, however, does not seem to have the typical semantics of Focus, as formalized by Krifka (2006) in terms of sets of alternatives (i.e., the quantifier does not seem to be chosen out of a set of alternative quantifiers). We surmise that the NP is moving to a peripheral position inside the DP layer, which is presumably also a GroundP, i.e., a position that syntacticizes the fact that the NP is presupposed in the discourse. What is not presupposed is the quantifier, which is then emphasized without being focused (for a partially different analysis in terms of emphatic Focus see Gianollo 2018, 2020). The structure corresponding to this is in (29).

(29)

GROUNDP
- NP
  - PP — *del papa*
  - N' — N — *novella*
- GROUND'
  - GROUND
  - QP
    - Q — *niuna*
    - …
      - FP
        - F
        - …
          - ~~NP~~
            - ~~PP~~ — *del* ~~papa~~
            - ~~N'~~ — ~~N~~ — *~~novella~~*

Besides the precise formalization of the movements and the functional heads involved – partially orthogonal to the present discussion – we can conclude that OFl and OVen present Fronting movements within the nominal and verbal domain which follow the U20 restriction without being meaningless, in the sense that they give rise to non-canonical orders that are pragmatically relevant (in a way similar to how Topic and Focus movements are in the modern languages). From this point, we draw the general conclusions in the next section.

5. Towards an analysis

The data we have considered so far pose an interesting problem for a theory *à la* Cinque that seeks to derive the properties of meaningful (i.e., feature driven) movement as well as those of meaningless movement (i.e., the movements that derive the canonical word order of a language starting from a universal merge order). Cinque considers this divide to be the one that defines the application of the U20 restriction. However, we have seen so far that OFl and OVen display two types of meaningful movements found in both the nominal and the verbal domain: a) the first type (Section 2) is the standard type of meaningful movement, which takes a focalized XP and places it into the left periphery of the clause/nominal expression. Here, in accordance with Cinque´s hypothesis, no U20 restriction is operative: complements and specifiers can move by themselves without having to drag along the lexical V/N head; b) the second type of movement is indeed as meaningful as Focus movements are, since it is pragmatically relevant, being movement to a Ground position. Nevertheless, we

observe that in this case the movement includes the lexical head with the possible addition of objects or specifiers, i.e., it obeys the U20 restriction. This means that the original split proposed in Cinque (2023) between meaningful and meaningless movement as the basis for the application of the U20 restriction is not entirely correct.

The data above shows that the U20 restriction has a broader span of application than just meaningless movements deriving the canonical word order, since there are indeed meaningful movements that must obey it. At this point, one wonders what the difference between the cases illustrated in Section 2 and those in Section 4 could be. Since the divide between feature driven and non-feature driven movement is not the right one and we see that the movements escaping the restriction are Focus or wh-related, our proposal is that only operator movements can escape the U20 restriction. This is true of Focus, wh-movement, quantifier movement etc. with two notable exceptions: subject movement to SpecTP and Topics. These movements do escape the U20 restriction although they are not generally considered to be standard cases of operator movements. As for subject movement, there are various possibilities to explain this fact: the first is to assume that subjects are not located in SpecTP, but higher in the left periphery of the clause, so they do not move for reasons of Agree or Case. This is most probably true of languages like Italian, where the SpecTP position is occupied by a pro(nominal feature), but most probably not for non-pro drop languages (e.g., English). The second possibility is to assume that subject movement is a sort of operator-like type of movement, which checks the referential or quantificational properties of the nominal expression. This is similar to the approach proposed in Beghelli & Stowell (1997), who also treat referential expressions as a type of quantifier and show that different types of quantifiers move to different syntactic positions where they are interpreted. Referential nominal expressions would move to occupy the highest ones, where they are interpreted as referential elements. This evidently requires a restatement of what we usually consider to be subject movement and a detailed analysis of the various positions where different types of subjects can land in the spirit of Beghelli & Stowell (1997), an enterprise which is not possible to undertake here. We nonetheless think that it is required independently from the problem discussed here, since there is empirical evidence that quantified subjects do not occupy the same position as referential subjects.[17] The second problem concerns Topics, and the debate on whether Topics in languages like Italian are base generated or moved, which is still not settled. We think that there are various possibilities according to various languages; in English topics are most probably related to a null operator in the left periphery (as they were in OFl and OVen[18]) while Modern Italian probably does not have movement of topics, which are base generated as Cinque

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[17]   See Poletto (2023) on this.

[18]   There is empirical evidence that topics are related to an operator in OVen. OVen has a very interesting pattern of null-pro distribution: null-pro is only possible in declarative clauses, while main as well as embedded interrogatives always display a lexical pronoun. Assuming with Sigurdsson (2012) that null-pro is bound by a null topic, this declarative/interrogative asymmetry is straightforwardly explained by assuming that the wh-operator is a relativized minimality intervener in the relation between the null-pro and the null topic. This is however only possible assuming that OVen topics are operator-like. This is also shown by the fact that in OVen, as in all old Romance languages, topics are not necessarily resumed by a clitic pronoun. This also includes topicalization of direct objects, which would yield ungrammaticality in the modern varieties. See Poletto (2020) for a detailed discussion.

(1990) originally proposed. In this case, Topics would be outside the application of the restriction on movement discussed here. Suppose then that what we propose is on the right track: the split between those feature-driven movements that obey the U20 restriction and those that do not would thus be due to the type of feature triggering it: movement to a position that marks that the moved XP is presupposed in the discourse – i.e., a type of movement that is purely pragmatic and has no semantic import whatsoever – would not qualify as triggered by the right type of feature for escaping the U20 restriction. On the contrary, pragmatic-related movements with a semantic correlate, as for instance Focus which opens a set of alternatives (see Krifka 2006), would be triggered by the right kind of feature which exempts them from dragging along the lexical head.

This brings us to a more general problem, i.e., what the U20 restriction really depends on. A tentative way to account for it would be to derive it from the labeling algorithm: suppose that labeling requires the lexical head feature to be visible at the edge of the phase. Hence there must be a mechanism that copies this feature up the structural tree to get the effect of an extended projection *à la* Grimshaw. This mechanism goes up to at least the edge of the phase. If you take out a portion of structure that does not include the lexical head, then the copy mechanism is blocked, and the moved subtree is not recognized as part of any extended projection. This means that the moved subtree cannot be labeled as part of any extended projection. Operator-feature movements would be exempted, because they have an additional feature visible for labeling, since any operator must be independently computed from the extended projection it is inserted in. In other words, only operators have an additional semantically active feature internal to their sequence that needs to be computed in the syntax and at LF. Pursuing this line of thought, we might argue that features stop being copied when you reach the phase edge. So, if you move a subtree, it must have an operator feature by itself; if it does not, the visible feature that determines its labeling is still the one of the lexical head, so that the lexical head must be part of the moved subtree. This is a tentative analysis that requires to be further refined and checked on the various types of movement in different languages, but it seems to us a promising avenue to consider for future developments.

6. Conclusions

In this work we have shown that Old Italo-Romance varieties have two types of pragmatic related movement: one that focuses the moved element itself and does not obey the U20 restriction. The other is movement to a GroundP projection and has the effect of emphasizing the modal verb / Q without having to focus it. This second type must obey the U20 restriction. This shows that it is not only meaningless movement that needs to obey the restriction. We have provisionally proposed that the domain of application of the U20 restriction can be derived by the requirements of the labeling algorithm: while operators like Focus have their own feature that is read by the labeling algorithm, all other cases of movement must use the label of the lexical head, which then must be contained in the moved element. Moving a non-operator without the lexical head thus results in the impossibility to label the moved subtree. This analysis is a first attempt to derive the still rather mysterious U20 restriction proposed by

Cinque (2005) and is still to be tested on a sufficiently wide array of languages to be validated.

Author's contribution

Tommaso Balsemin: Sections 2, 4, 4.2 and the collection of the Old Florentine data. Francesco Pinzin: Sections 3, 4.1, 5 and the collection of the Old Venetian data. The categorization and analysis of the data has been conducted jointly by Tommaso Balsemin and Francesco Pinzin. Cecilia Poletto: Sections 1, 6.

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