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# ITALIAN VERB PARTICLES AND CLAUSAL POSITIONS\*

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## 1 Italian particle verbs

### 1.1 Semantic transparency of Italian particle verbs

In the literature on verb-particle constructions in Germanic, it is generally claimed that at least two classes of particle verbs exist: transparent (i.e., compositional) and non-transparent (i.e., non-compositional, ‘idiomatic’) particle verbs (cf. McIntyre (2015) for a recent overview). It is not clear whether the class often referred to as ‘aspectual particle verbs’ can be subsumed under one of the two classes (cf. Jackendoff (2002) for treating aspectual cases as transparent; and Wurmbrand (2000) for a different proposal). Trotzke et al. (2015) propose a new classification of particle verbs that provides a more fine-grained notion of semantic transparency for particle verbs in German.

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Compared to the literature on Germanic particle verbs, research on Italian particle verbs is certainly less rich, as also pointed out by Iacobini (2015: 627) who states that “PVs in the Romance languages has been a neglected topic until quite recently.” This holds especially for formal syntactic approaches. Among the few studies that deal with Italian particle verbs within a formal framework are Mateu and Rigau (2010), Benincà and Poletto (2006), and Quaglia (2012, 2016). In this paper, we explore word order patterns of Italian particle verbs from a cartographic perspective by taking seriously the degree of semantic transparency exhibited by different particle verb classes.

For Italian, Quaglia (2016: 59) proposes the following classification which relies on the descriptive work by Iacobini and Masini (2006), Schwarze (1985), and Simone (1997):

- (1) Classes of Italian Particle Verbs:
- a. **pleonastic:** *entrare dentro* ‘to enter’ (lit. to enter inside)  
*uscire fuori* ‘to exit’ (lit. to exit outside)  
*scappare via* ‘to flee’ (lit. to flee away)
  - b. **locative:** *andare dentro* ‘to go in’  
*portare fuori* ‘to bring out’  
*volare via* ‘to fly away’
  - c. **idiomatic:** *fare fuori* ‘to kill’ (lit. to do outside)  
*tirare su* ‘to cheer up’ (lit. to lift up)  
*buttare giù* ‘to depress’ (lit. to throw down)
  - d. **aspectual:** *lavare via* ‘to wash away’

In (1a), the particle verbs encode a specific spatial indication of the motion event twice (e.g., the ‘inner/inside’-region encoded by the verb *entrare* and the particle *dentro*). Italian and Italo-Romance display a complete paradigm of such redundant constructions, whereas Germanic languages are lacking this type of elements. On the contrary, the class in (1b) comprises a pattern more familiar from Germanic languages, where the spatial information is encoded by the particle, while the verb is either a generic motion verb (e.g., *andare*) or a manner of motion verb (e.g., *volare*). The cases in (1c) exemplify verb-particle combinations with an (semi-)idiomatic meaning. As has been pointed out also for German (see Trotzke et al. 2015), a closer look at this subclass in Italian reveals a fine-grained transparency spectrum (cf. also Masini 2005: 154-155). The final class in (1d) contains particles that force the attainment of the result in a telic event. In contrast to Germanic languages though, Italian does not feature a veritable system of aspectual particles (cf. Iacobini 2015: 636-638).

Turning back to the interplay between word order and semantic transparency of particle verbs, we observe that in Germanic some rules of syntax are not sensitive to the transparency divide, e.g., particle shift in English:

- (2) a. John kicks {out} the dog {out}. (= transparent)  
 b. John calls {up} his friend {up}. (= non-transparent)

However, other processes are sensitive to the transparency distinction, typically particle fronting (cf. Jackendoff 2002: 75; and Zeller 2001: 89-90).

- (3) a. Up marched the sergeant.

- b. \*Up blew the building.
- (4) a. Auf hat er die Tür gemacht (und nicht zu).  
 PART(open) has he the door made and not PART(closed)  
 ‘He closed the door.’
- b. \*Auf hat Peter mit dem Trinken gehört.  
 PART(up) has Peter with the drinking heard  
 ‘Peter stopped drinking.’

In (3a), according to Jackendoff, the directional particle *up* is part of a non-idiomatic, transparent configuration and is thus licit in the locative inversion construction. In contrast, the idiomatic particle *up* in (3b) lacks directional semantics and cannot be fronted. A similar situation obtains in German: observe the cases in (4) featuring the transparent *aufmachen* and the non-transparent *aufhören*.

As we will show in the next section, Italian patterns with the Germanic data above in displaying syntactic operations that are sensitive to the transparency divide. However, we demonstrate that not only particle movement to the left periphery as in (3) and (4), but also particle shift phenomena as in (2) are sensitive to semantic transparency in this Romance language.

## 1.2 Word order patterns of Italian particle verbs

In Italian, the discontinuous word order appears to be more constrained than for instance in English. In particular, locative particle verbs allow both the continuous and the discontinuous word order (5a), whereas idiomatic particle verbs are only grammatical in the continuous order (5b), as first noticed in Simone (1997):

- (5) a. Franco ha mandato {fuori} i cani {fuori}. (= transparent)  
 F. has sent PART(outside) the dogs PART(outside)  
 ‘Frank let {out} the dogs {out}.’
- b. Il killer ha fatto {fuori} il boss {\*fuori}. (= non-transparent)  
 the killer has done PART(outside) the boss PART(outside)  
 ‘The killer killed the boss.’

Data like the discontinuous version of (5a), V – DP<sub>Object</sub> – PART, have often been deemed as degraded, since their special information-structural import has not been considered. At least since Masini’s (2008) corpus investigation, however, there is consensus that these constructions are perfectly acceptable and can be found especially in spoken language (cf. also Iacobini 2015: 630). Nevertheless, it is uncontroversial that idiomatic cases like *fare fuori* ‘to kill’ (5b) do not license the discontinuous word order option in (5b): *Il killer ha fatto il boss fuori* is clearly ill-formed.

Note that if the discontinuous word order in Italian is chosen, the idiomatic reading of particle verbs is often blocked and replaced by a spatial reading, as shown in (6):

- (6) a. La nutrice ha tirato su il bambino.  
 the foster.mother has pulled PART(up) the child  
 #1: ‘The foster mother raised the child.’  
 #2: ‘The foster mother lifted up the child.’
- b. La nutrice ha tirato il bambino su.  
 the foster.mother has pulled the child PART(up)  
 #1: ‘\*The foster mother raised the child.’  
 #2: ‘The foster mother lifted the child up.’

While in the continuous order in (6a) both the spatial (#2) and the metaphorical reading (#1) are available, only the spatial interpretation is accessible in the discontinuous order in (6b).<sup>1</sup>

We thus see that reordering of verb particles and objects is restricted to non-idiomatic particle verbs. Crucially, reordering seems to be associated with a special information-structural configuration. The order V – DP<sub>Object</sub> – PART seems to be chosen if (i) the speaker wants to focalize the verb particle or the whole predicate denoted by the particle verb and/or if (ii) the DP<sub>Object</sub> needs to be defocused. This is corroborated by corpus evidence from Masini (2008). Consider first the example (7), where the predicate *tirasse su* (‘to drag up’) is focalized:

- (7) Viveva in un torrione, su un orto, a Firenze, tra via Laura e via della Colonna. Aveva studio in cima alla costruzione. Lassù dimorava col tempo buono e caldo. Ci saliva con una **scala** a pioli attraverso un caterattone aperto nel pavimento. Più spesso accadeva che **tirasse la scala su**, sbarrasse la cataratta, e agli amici che bussavano di sotto, Bronzino ad esempio, non rispondesse.  
 ‘(He) used to live in a fortified tower above a garden, in Florence, in between Laura and Colonna street. (He) had a place on top of the building. Up there, he lived when the weather was good and warm. (He) climbed up there with a ladder, through a big hole in the floor. Quite often he used to drag the ladder up, to tap the hole, and not to answer to his friends, for example Bronzino, who were knocking down below.’

Observe also that the noun *scala* has already been introduced into the discourse and its referent is thus backgrounded. This effect is even clearer in cases such as (8), where the the object *lira* (the former Italian currency) has already been ‘activated’ many times in the previous discourse:

- (8) La **lira** era malata prima e malata è oggi, [...]. Ma c'è di peggio (e qui veniamo all storia delle due **lire**). [...] se la **lira** scivola fino a quota 1060 contro il marco [...]. Gli stranieri, come Soros, venderebbero **lire**, [...] Sono già lì, pronti: una mano è sul telefono (per mandare le **lire** fuori) [...]  
 ‘The lira was ‘ill’ before and it is ill today [...]. But there's something worse (and here we come to the story of the two liras). [...] if the lira slides down until reaching the level of

<sup>1</sup> In this context, it is worth mentioning that the grammar of Italian does not rule out discontinuous idiomatic structures in principle (cf. Vietri 2014: 217). In (i), for example, the non-idiomatic, free part of the VP is sandwiched between two parts of the idiom (appearing in boldface). The resulting sentence is flawless:

- (i) Luigi ha **trattato** i suoi dipendenti **a pesci in faccia**.  
 L. has treated the his employees at fish-PL in face  
 ‘Luigi mistreated his employees.’



According to the hierarchy in (9), the adverb *già* ‘already’ should precede the adverb *completamente* ‘completely’, as in (10a). Nonetheless, *già* can appear in the postcomplement space, where it appears in the morphologically more complex form *di già* and bears heavy stress ((10b); see Cinque (1999: 13-14) for this general pattern). (10c) indicates that the ordering is reversed due to movement of *completamente* as part of the larger constituent *completamente perso la testa* across (*di*) *già*.

In what follows, we show how the adverb hierarchy sketched above can be a useful diagnostic for identifying the clausal position occupied by verb particles in both the continuous and the discontinuous order.

## 2.2 Functional positions and verb particles

### 2.2.1 The new observation: Verb particles and adverb classes

As for the connection between adverb placement and the positions of verb particles in Italian, it has already been observed that adverbs can intervene between V and PART in the continuous order V – PART – D<sub>Object</sub>. This holds for all particle verbs classes introduced in Section 1, cf. e.g. Cordin (2011: 14-15), Iacobini (2009), Simone (1997):

- (11) a. Luca riporta {già // ancora // sempre} indietro i libri.  
L. re-brings already still always PART(back) the books  
‘Luca {already // still // always} brings back the books.’
- b. Questo bambino tira {già // ancora // sempre} fuori la lingua.  
this kid pulls already still always PART(outside) the tongue.  
‘This kid {already // still // always} stretches out his tongue.’
- c. Laggiù fanno {già // ancora // sempre} fuori i nemici.  
there-down do-3PL already still always PART(outside) the enemies  
‘Down there, they {already // still // always} kill their enemies.’
- d. Maria lava {già // ancora // sempre} via la macchia.  
M. wash-3SG already still always PART(away) the stain  
‘Mary {already // still // always} washes away the stain.’

The sentences in (11) show that verb and particle can be separated by an adverbial phrase irrespective of the degree of semantic transparency exhibited by the verb-particle combination. This suggests that in Italian, verb and particle cannot be represented as a complex head of the form [ $v^0V^0$  Prt<sup>0</sup>]. If verb and particle had been merged as a complex head, we would expect adverb phrases not to be able to intervene between verb and particle.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, this situation

<sup>2</sup> Of course, it might be possible to propose an analysis where  $V^0$  and PART build a complex  $V^0$  inside VP, and where  $V^0$  is subsequently forced to excorporate (see Dehé (2002: 239-246) for an analysis along these lines for English). However, we will put this hypothesis aside because of the lack of corroborating evidence in Italian. Most importantly, Italian particle verbs never show up as input to morphological operations (as has first been noted by Simone (1997)), which would be expected under the complex-head approach. This possibility is in fact given in English, (cf. McIntyre 2015), and is even more productive in German (Lüdeling 1999: 55-102).

is in sharp contrast to what one finds in English particle verbs, where verb and particle cannot be separated if the continuous word order is chosen (see Dehé (2002: 10-11) for a discussion):

- (12) a. \* Bill has kicked already out the dog.  
 b. \* Bill is kicking still out the dog.  
 c. \* Bill kicks always out the dog.
- (13) a. \* Bill has turned already down the job.  
 b. \* Bill is turning still down the job.  
 c. \* Bill turns always down the job.

Observe that the interposition of adverbs like *already*, *still*, or *always* yields ungrammatical results not only with idiomatic combinations like *turn down* (13), as it could be expected, but also with fully transparent particle verbs like *kick out* (12).

After illustrating these differences between English and Italian particle placement, we now turn to the issue of the clausal position of Italian verb particles in more detail. If we take Cinque's (1999) hierarchy sketched in Section 2.1 seriously, the data in (11) could be interpreted as indicating that the particle occupies a clausal position below the functional projections hosting the adverbs *già*, *ancora*, and *sempre*, as shown in (14). As illustrated in (15)-(17), as soon as the relative order of particle and adverb is reversed, we obtain a 'focusing' use of the adverbs (cf. Cinque 1999: 30-32), that is, the adverb can only take scope over the adjacent constituent and thus exhibits narrow scope.

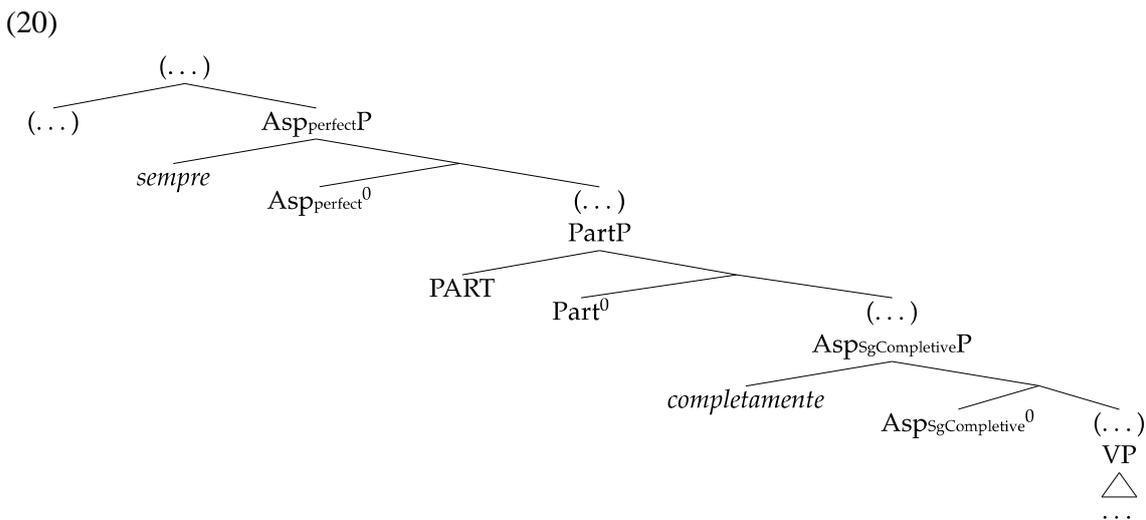
(14) [già T<sub>anterior</sub> [... [ancora Asp<sub>continuative</sub> [sempre Asp<sub>perfect</sub> [...PART ...]]]]]

- (15) \* PART > già  
 Gianni porta fuori già il dessert.  
 G. bring-3SG PART(outside) already the dessert  
 'Gianni already serves the dessert (and not the main dish).'
- (16) \* PART > ancora  
 Gianni porta fuori ancora il dessert.  
 G. bring-3SG PART(outside) still the dessert  
 'Gianni is still serving the dessert (and not yet the coffee).'
- (17) \* PART > sempre  
 Gianni porta fuori sempre il dessert.  
 G. bring-3SG PART(outside) always the dessert  
 'Gianni always serves the dessert (and never the main dish).'

However, this is not the whole story. When we take into account even lower adverb classes than the ones given in (14), then we observe that the unmarked relative order of the particle and the adverb is exactly the opposite. That is, the particle must precede the adverb, as shown in (18)-(19). As soon as the particle does not precede the adverb, as in (18b) and (19b), the adverb is forced to scope over the verb particle only and can thus no longer be interpreted as in the unmarked word order given in (18a) and (19a). This might result in a plausible reading as in (18b), but can also yield a non-felicitous interpretation as in (19b).

- (18) PART > completamente ‘completely’
- a. Questa stufa butta fuori completamente i fumi di scarico.  
 this tiled.stove throws PART(outside) completely the gases of unload  
 ‘This tiled stove completely emits the exhaust gases.’
- b. Questa stufa butta completamente fuori i fumi di scarico.  
 ‘This tiled stove completely emits the exhaust gases (i.e., if the stove emits any gas, then the gas does not get stuck partway inside the escape).’
- (19) PART > bene ‘well’
- a. Ha spinto dentro bene la chiave.  
 has pushed PART(inside) well the key  
 ‘S/He pushed in the key well.’
- b. ??Ha spinto bene dentro la chiave.

Accordingly, we see that violation of the relative order of particle and adverb can result either in a marked interpretation or even in ill-formedness. This shows that the particle clearly occupies a position within the Asp(ect) field indicated in (9). More precisely, the particle is located above  $Asp_{SgCompletive}$ , hosting elements like *completamente*, but below  $Asp_{perfect}$  which contains adverbs like *sempre*. This is illustrated in (20):



Further evidence for this structural claim is that structures like (21), where particles appear with a (higher) AdvP on their left and a (lower) AdvP on their right (here: the manner adverb *male*, sitting in VoiceP like *bene*), are perfectly grammatical and can easily be found on the internet:

- (21) [...] in questi casi si mette **sempre** giù **male** il piede  
 in that cases one puts always PART(down) badly the foot  
 ‘[...] in those cases one always puts down his foot in a wrong way.’  
 (<http://forum.animaguzzista.com/viewtopic.php?f=1andt=14372andstart=100>)

One crucial consequence that follows from our discussion so far is that Italian verb particles can occupy a position external to the  $vP/VP$ . A further piece of evidence for this claim comes from

sentences involving ‘Subject Inversion’ (e.g., Belletti 2004). In these structures, the particle is positioned to the left of the inverted subject (given in boldface).

- (22) a. Mi ha portato indietro **Jorma**.  
 CL.ACC.1SG has brought PART(back) Jorma.  
 ‘Jorma drove me back.’
- b. È uscito fuori **un omino vestito di rosso**.  
 is exited PART(outside)a little.man dressed of red  
 ‘A little man dressed in red came out.’

If, according to Belletti (2004), inverted subjects sit in the specifier of a dedicated Focus projection internal to the  $vP$  left periphery, we must conclude that the particle is placed either (i) outside of  $vP$  or (ii) within the ‘low left periphery’, too. However, it is not clear how the hypothesis (ii) could be motivated, given that the particle has no particular information-structural import in sentences displaying the continuous order  $V - PART - DP_{Object}$ .

Based on our discussion so far, we now turn to the issue of deriving both the unmarked and the marked (discontinuous) word order ( $V - DP_{Object} - PART$ ) of Italian verb-particle constructions.

### 2.2.2 The derivation of verb-particle constructions in Italian

In the previous section, we provided evidence for the claim that Italian verb particles must appear in a fixed position within the Asp(ect) field above VP. According to standard assumptions, verb and particle first combine inside the VP. Several pieces of evidence can be adduced to support this claim. On the one hand, in semantically transparent particle verbs the particle saturates an argument slot of the verb (23a), much like PPs can do (23b); see Quaglia (2016) for further discussion.

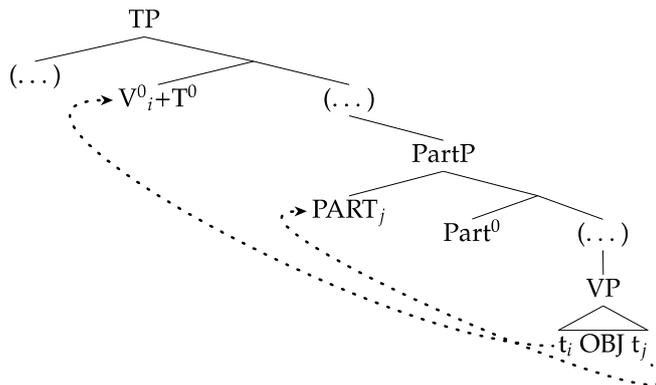
- (23) a. Lo zio mette fuori la spazzatura.  
 the uncle puts PART(outside) the trash  
 ‘The uncle brings out the trash.’
- b. Lo zio mette la spazzatura nel contenitore apposito.  
 the uncle puts the trash in-the container specific  
 ‘The uncle puts the trash in the specific container.’

On the other hand, if we turn to semantically non-transparent particle verbs featuring the same verb *mettere*, we see that as soon as *mettere* is combined with a different particle (here: *su*), we also observe a different argument structure. In particular, *mettere* ceases to be a three-place verb and no longer theta-marks the particle for a Goal-like theta role as in (23a), but the whole verb+particle combination takes two arguments, as in (24):

- (24) Il DJ ha messo su un bel disco.  
 the deejay has put PART(on) a nice record  
 ‘The deejay put on a nice record.’

The evidence in (23) and (24) taken together suggests that the particle of both transparent and non-transparent verb-particle combinations originates inside the VP and is then moved to a phrasal position within the functional adverb hierarchy above VP, as our discussion in Section 2.2.1 has shown. In addition, V moves to the TP zone, while the direct object remains in the VP domain.

(25)



The derivation sketched in (25) results in the unmarked word order V – PART – DP<sub>Object</sub>. Supporting evidence for movement of the particle to the Asp field within the functional hierarchy comes from Trentino, a variety spoken in Northern Italy. In this variety, as Cordin (2011: 69-81) shows, the link between verb particles and aspect is even more obvious than in Standard Italian. This variety features a richer inventory of purely aspectual particles (e.g., *su* ‘up’ in *giustar su* ‘to fix up’; *fora* ‘outside’ in *morir fora* ‘to die out’). As indicated in (1), in Standard Italian this subclass contains only one item (namely *via* ‘away’). Based on data from Trentino, Cordin (2011) elaborates on the general fact that prima facie non-aspectual particles encoding a path of motion are often associated with telic events. Accordingly, she suggests that not only aspectual, but also locative particles in Trentino move to the Asp field.

Let us now turn to the discontinuous order. Recall from Section 1.2 that idiomatic particle verbs allow only for the continuous order, whereas non-idiomatic particle verbs can alternatively appear in the order V – DP<sub>Object</sub> – PART. We now sketch a proposal that accounts for this asymmetry. As pointed out in Section 1.2, reordering of particle and object in transparent verb-particle combinations is associated with special information-structural effects (cf. Masini 2008 for corpus evidence). In particular, the object is in many cases backgrounded and the particle thereby receives a focal interpretation. As we showed in Section 2.1, a similar information-structural configuration obtains when a constituent is moved across an adverb, consider (26):

- (26) a. A Natale, credo che avesse già perso la testa.  
 at Christmas believe-1SG that had already lost the head  
 ‘At Christmas, I think he already had lost his mind.’
- b. A Natale, credo che avesse [perso la testa]<sub>i</sub> di GIÀ<sub>ti</sub>.  
 at Christmas believe-1SG that had lost the head already  
 ‘At Christmas, I think he had lost his mind already.’

Cinque (1999: 22) states that “everything preceding the postcomplement ‘space’ of ‘lower’ AdvPs is necessarily presupposed, the AdvP(s) being the only element(s) in focus.” Crucially, Cinque (1999:15) also notes that movement of constituents across AdvPs is not licensed if the crossed adverb is inherently not compatible with a focus reading. This is for instance the case in (27), where the adverb *probabilmente* cannot evoke a set of alternatives:

- (27) a. Probabilmente prenderò il treno.  
 probably catch-FUT-1SG the train  
 ‘I will probably catch the train.’  
 b. \* [Prenderò il treno]<sub>i</sub> probabilmente<sub>t<sub>i</sub></sub>.  
 catch-FUT-1SG the train probably

Turning to verb particles again, we claim that the same lexical distinction between focusable and non-focusable elements can explain the different syntactic behavior of transparent and non-transparent verb-particle combinations. Specifically, while *fuori* in (28) can evoke a set of alternatives and can thus be crossed, the same particle within an idiomatic particle verb is non-focusable and can therefore not appear in a postcomplement position where it would end up being the only element in focus, cf. (29).

- (28) a. Franco ha mandato fuori i cani.  
 Franco has sent PART(outside) the dogs  
 ‘Frank let out the dogs.’  
 b. Franco ha mandato [i cani] FUORI t<sub>i</sub>.  
 Franco has sent the dogs PART(outside)  
 ‘Frank let the dogs out.’  
 (29) a. Il killer ha fatto fuori il boss.  
 the killer has done PART(outside) the boss  
 ‘The killer killed the boss.’  
 b. \* Il killer ha fatto [il boss]<sub>i</sub> FUORI t<sub>i</sub>.  
 the killer has done the boss PART(outside)

Given these parallels to adverb syntax, we propose that the derivation of the discontinuous word order in verb-particle constructions involves movement of the DP<sub>Object</sub> across the fixed position of the particle given in (20). The following data show that this position must be located within the functional field depicted in (9).

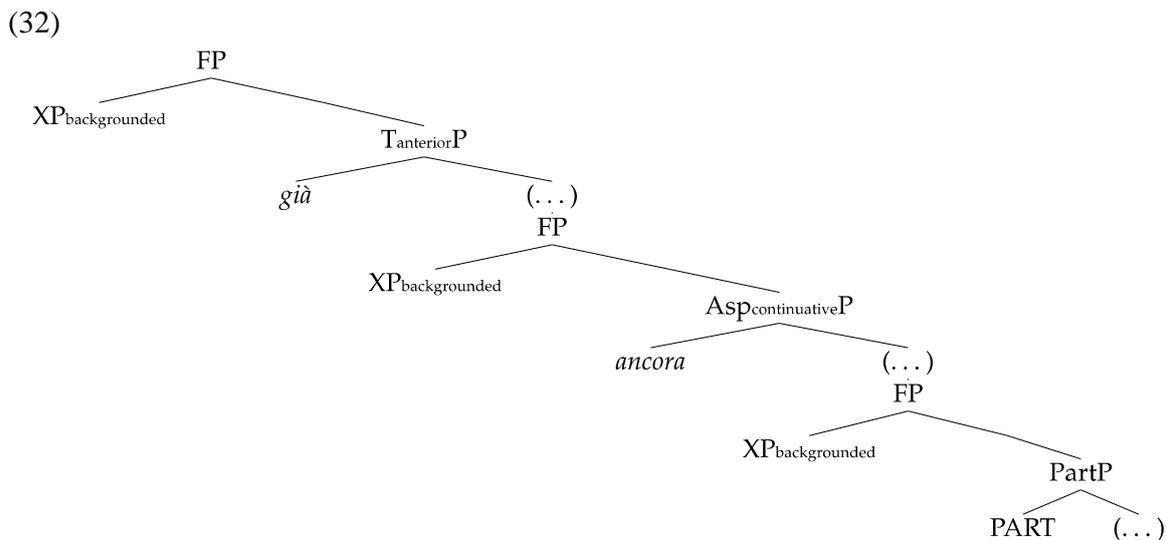
- (30) Franco manda sempre [i cani]<sub>i</sub> FUORI t<sub>i</sub>.  
 Franco sends always the dogs PART(outside)  
 ‘Frank always lets the dogs out.’

In (30), the backgrounded DP *i cani* is placed between the adverb *sempre* and the particle *fuori* and therefore must target a position below *sempre*. The obvious question to be raised now concerns the precise nature of such a position. In light of (30), consider now again the example given in (26b), repeated here for ease of reference:

- (31) A Natale, credo che avesse [perso la testa]<sub>i</sub> di GIÀ <sub>ti</sub>.  
 at Christmas believe-1SG that had lost the head already  
 ‘At Christmas, I think he had lost his mind already.’

In (31), the backgrounded XP targets a position to the left of *già* ‘already’, whereas the DP<sub>object</sub> in (30) is placed below *sempre* ‘always’. Given the precedence relation *già* > *sempre* (cf. (9)), we can conclude that the material undergoing the movement in these two cases does not land in the same position, given the structure in (20).

The structure in (20) suggests that verb particles are nothing more but an additional adverb-like class located within the functional hierarchy. However, the topic movements illustrated above reveal a crucial difference. While backgrounded constituents land in different positions for different adverb classes, only one topic position can be postulated for all particle classes – and this is the difference between verb particles and adverbs. In other words, it is possible to assume individual topic positions (represented as ‘FPs’ in (32)) in the functional hierarchy for, e.g., *già* and *ancora* (‘still’), but not for *probabilmente* and *onestamente* ‘honestly’. In the case of particles, on the other hand, backgrounded constituents can only target one position c-commanding PartP.



Whether the FP position immediately dominating PartP can be used or not depends on the lexical semantics of the particle. We already saw that in idiomatic verb-particle combinations, the particle cannot be contrasted and thus cannot be crossed by backgrounded material (29b). In these configurations, the FP position is not available as is also the case for adverbs like *probabilmente*. As has been proposed for Italian by Quaglia (2016: 97-109) and for Germanic by several authors (e.g., Svenonius 2007), if verb particles are P(reposition)s with respect to their categorial status, a broad spectrum of semantic polysemy and variation is predicted. This might be the reason why differences for adverbs can be syntactically encoded, whereas differences for particle verbs in general are notoriously difficult to represent syntactically. This difficulty is a topic we will address from a cross-linguistic perspective in the following section.

### 3 Discussion

In the previous section, we demonstrated that particles of all verb-particle classes originate inside the VP and must then move to a fixed dedicated position in the Asp(ect) field ('PartP'). This movement derives the continuous word order V – PART – DP<sub>Object</sub>. In order to derive the discontinuous word order V – DP<sub>Object</sub> – PART, the DP<sub>Object</sub> crosses the particle to reach a projection hosting backgrounded material. We argued that this is nothing but an instantiation of a movement operation independently needed for marked word order patterns involving adverbs. Nonetheless, we concluded that verb particles are not similar to adverbs in every respect. Crucially, in the context of verb particles we cannot motivate the availability of this movement operation structurally, but only by taking into account the lexical idiosyncrasy of verb particles (cf., e.g., McIntyre 2002). This idiosyncrasy of verb particles is widely attested also in other languages.

Turning to Germanic again, it is reasonable to assume that predicate-argument relations of particle verbs are structurally represented inside the VP. However, as Trotzke and Quaglia (2016) point out, it is conceptually unattractive to postulate the existence of designated projections for the encoding of, e.g., the lexical feature of the contrastability of a verb particle. In particular, Trotzke and Quaglia argue that interpretive features like contrastability are checked at a later stage of the derivation. This is in accordance with Zeller (2001: 204), who argues that 'special' verb meanings that are only activated in the context of verb-particle combinations are not licensed before the structure is spelt out at LF. Consider examples like the following:

- (33) a. sich den Pullover anziehen  
REFL the sweater PART(on).pull  
'put on the sweater'  
b. den Anhänger in die Garage ziehen  
the.ACC trailer into the garage pull  
'drag the trailer into the garage'

In (33a), the verb *ziehen* ('to pull, to drag') adopts a special meaning that is only conceptually compatible with a subset of the possible internal arguments licensed by the literal interpretation we see in (33b). This suggests that features like contrast, deciding between literal or special readings, should be formulated as LF constraints. Our discussion of Italian has shown that the lexical feature of contrastability/focusability decides whether certain syntactic operations can apply or not. Notably, this also holds for left peripheral options. As is known from the literature on Germanic, contrastable particles may undergo focus fronting (cf. Trotzke et al. 2015 for an acceptability study testing German data). Consider the pattern given in (4), repeated here for convenience with capitals indicating focal stress:

- (34) a. AUF hat er die Tür gemacht (und nicht zu).  
PART(open) has he the door made and not PART(closed)  
'He closed the door.'  
b. \*AUF hat Peter mit dem Trinken gehört.  
PART(up) has Peter with the drinking heard  
'Peter stopped drinking.'

In the literature on Italian particle verbs, similar data have been neglected for a long time. However, Quaglia (2016: 78-80) discusses cases like the following, which also demonstrate the option of focusing the particle only (35a); see also Spreafico (2009: 103):

- (35) a. FUORI<sub>i</sub> stava spingendo t<sub>i</sub> le persone (, non dentro).  
 PART(outside) was pushing the people not PART(inside)  
 ‘(S)He was pushing the people out (, not in).’  
 b. \*FUORI<sub>i</sub> hanno fatto t<sub>i</sub> gli ostaggi.  
 PART(outside) have-3PL done the hostages  
 (with unmarked order: ‘They killed the hostages.’)

The fronting data both in Germanic and in Italian show that a phrasal representation for verb particles is in principle available in both languages.<sup>3</sup> Our movement analysis of the Italian continuous word order V – PART – DP<sub>Object</sub> in Section 2 provides additional evidence for the phrasal status in these contexts. In particular, the particle, according to our approach, targets a specifier position within the functional hierarchy of the clause.

This general approach can also be confirmed cross-linguistically. For instance, Svenonius (2004) analyzes so-called ‘lexical prefixes’ in Russian (such as *vy* ‘out’ in (36)) as elements that are generated inside the VP and then move to a dedicated aspectual projection outside VP.

- (36) On vy<sub>i</sub>-šel t<sub>i</sub> iz-za stola.  
 he PART(out)-went out.of-behind table.GEN  
 ‘He got up from the table.’

After this cross-linguistic outlook bearing on our Italian data, let us now take stock. In this paper, we presented a derivational approach to Italian verb-particle constructions, which have rarely been investigated from a formal syntactic perspective. We addressed word order patterns of Italian particle verbs by using adverb placement in Italian as a diagnostic. Specifically, we made use of the fine-grained approach to adverb syntax provided by the cartographic program. As a result, we identified the position occupied by verb particles in the functional structure of the clause. After the derivation of the unmarked (continuous) word order (V – PART – DP<sub>Object</sub>), we then addressed the marked (discontinuous) word order (V – DP<sub>Object</sub> – PART). In this context, we pointed out both parallels and differences between marked word orders involving verb particles and adverbs. As for the parallels, we argued that backgrounded constituents have to cross either the particle or the adverb and move to a topic position within the functional field. As for the differences, however, we observed that backgrounded constituents land in different positions for different adverb classes, whereas only one topic position can be postulated for all particle classes, the availability of this position depending on the contrastability of a given particle (class). We suggested that this might be due to the notorious lexical idiosyncrasy of verb particles, which is probably a reflex of their prepositional nature. Finally, we highlighted that our Italian data, seen from a cross-linguistic perspective, provide additional evidence for the availability of a phrasal representation of verb particles.

<sup>3</sup> Note that data on particle modification in Italian confirm this conclusion:

(i) Il cameriere porta [ancora più avanti] il carrello.  
 the waiter brings even more PART(forward) the trolley  
 ‘The waiter pushes the trolley even further forward.’

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