ON A-BAR SYNTAX IN EASTERN LOMBARD: SUCCESSIVE-CYCLICITY AT THE PHASE-EDGES

ANDA AMELIA NEAGU

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Abstract

This thesis investigates A-bar phenomena in Eastern Lombard, an endangered Gallo-Italic language characterized by internal variation and a history of contact with standard Italian within a diglossic/dilalic setting. Focusing on the syntax of wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus, the study addresses the extent to which the syntactic optionality observed in these types of constructions is structurally constrained. While Eastern Lombard exhibits multiple coexisting strategies for interrogative formation, including wh-fronting, wh-doubling, and clause-internal wh-elements, contrastive focus strongly favors the clause-internal strategy over focus-fronting.

Adopting the Minimalist Program, as well as phase theory, this thesis argues that the apparent optionality observed in Eastern Lombard A-bar phenomena is not unconstrained variation, but rather, it reflects the interaction between phase-based syntactic computation and contact-induced grammatical competition. Specifically, the study proposes that clause-internal wh-elements and contrastive foci occupy positions at the left edge of the *v*P phase, whereas fronted constituents target the CP domain. Moreover, this structural asymmetry is shown to be sensitive to the base-generated positions of the different constituents, where elements generated within the predicate domain favor local licensing at the *v*P edge due to economy principles regulating movement.

The empirical component of this study combines traditional elicitation methods across five different Eastern Lombard dialects (Darfense, Monnese, Castenedolese, Soltino, and Bergamasque) with a formal two-alternative forced-choice experimental study focusing only on Darfense interrogatives. The experimental results reveal an overall preference for clause-internal strategies alongside systematic structural asymmetries across wh-phrases, thus providing further empirical support for the proposed phase-based analysis. Ultimately, this work contributes to broader theoretical debates surrounding syntactic optionality, Romance microvariation, and the central role of intermediate phasal domains in the computation of A-bar dependencies.

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List of abbreviations

AUX = auxiliary

CL = clitic

DAT = dative

DEM = demonstrative

F = feminine

FUT = future

IMP = imperative

INF = infinitive

M = masculine

NEG = negation

OCL = object-clitic

PL = plural

PRT = participle

PST = past

REFL = reflexive

SCL = subject-clitic

SCLI = subject-clitic inversion

SG = singular

SUBJ = subjunctive

1. Introduction

This dissertation investigates A-bar phenomena in Eastern Lombard, with particular emphasis on the syntax of wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus. Eastern Lombard is an endangered Gallo-Italic language spoken in Northern Italy and characterized by extensive internal dialectal variation.[1] Although traditionally classified as an "Italian dialect", Eastern Lombard does not descend from standard Italian, but rather constitutes a genealogically related Romance language belonging to the Gallo-Romance linguistic group. Like many local vernaculars spoken on the Italian peninsula, Eastern Lombard has undergone a long process of contact with standard Italian, within a dilalic setting where regional and standard Italian increasingly dominate everyday communication.[2] As a consequence, the language presents a particularly rich context for the study of syntactic optionality, microvariation, and the interaction between competing grammatical systems.

The dissertation focuses on one specific aspect of this variation: the distribution of wh-elements and contrastively focused constituents in Eastern Lombard syntax. Across Romance languages, interrogatives are commonly associated with movement to the left periphery of the clause. Standard Italian, for example, generally requires wh-fronting in canonical information-seeking questions. Eastern Lombard, however, exhibits a broader range of strategies. Depending on the dialect and the wh-category involved, interrogatives may be formed through wh-fronting, wh-doubling, or a clause-internal wh-element. These strategies often coexist within the same dialect and may display a considerable degree of optionality. Similar properties emerge in the domain of contrastive focus, where Eastern Lombard strongly favors clause-internal focus over focus-fronting, contrary to what is observed in standard Italian.

The central question addressed throughout this dissertation is therefore the following: to what extent is the optionality characterizing Eastern Lombard A-bar phenomena truly free? More specifically, what grammatical principles constrain the distribution of fronted and clause-internal

[1] More on the terminology concerning the concepts of language in dialects in chapter 2.
[2] Section 2.1 provides more details concerning the use of the term *dilalia* in the Italian linguistic tradition. For now, it suffices to say that it is a form of bilingualism akin to diglossia, with a less strict delineation of the contexts of use.

constituents in A-bar constructions? The dissertation argues that this optionality is not fully unconstrained variation, but rather reflects the interaction between syntactic structure, phase-based computation, and the coexistence of competing grammatical systems associated with Eastern Lombard and standard Italian.

From a theoretical perspective, the dissertation adopts the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1993; 1995 and subsequent work), with particular attention to phase theory and successive cyclicity. Under this approach, syntactic derivations proceed cyclically through local computational domains known as phases, most notably *v*P and CP. A-bar movement is therefore constrained by locality conditions and proceeds through the edges of these domains. Building on this framework, the dissertation proposes that clause-internal wh-elements and clause-internal contrastive focus in Eastern Lombard occupy positions at the edge of the vP phase, while fronted constituents occupy the CP domain. Consequently, the distribution of A-bar constituents reflects the interaction between these two phasal domains rather than optional movement to a single left-peripheral position. The analysis developed throughout the dissertation is motivated by several empirical observations emerging from the Eastern Lombard data. First, clause-internal wh-elements consistently surface at the left edge of the predicate domain, immediately following the finite verb and preceding aspectual adverbs and lower complements. Second, different wh-categories display different degrees of preference for fronted versus clause-internal realizations. Third, only specific dialects and wh-types allow for wh-doubling, and doubling systematically coexists with both fronting and clause-internal strategies. Finally, contrastive focus strongly favors a clause-internal realization, with focus-fronting being marginal or strongly dispreferred. Taken together, these properties suggest that the clause-internal domain plays a much more central role in Eastern Lombard grammar than is generally assumed for Romance interrogatives.

The dissertation further argues that these asymmetries are sensitive to the base-generated position of the wh-phrase. Constituents generated within the predicate domain, such as direct objects and certain adjuncts, strongly favor clause-internal realization because they can be licensed locally at the *v*P phase edge. Constituents generated higher in the structure, such as subjects and temporal adjuncts, display greater variability and more frequent fronting because of their increased accessibility to the CP domain. Under this view, the observed variation follows from economy principles regulating movement and feature-checking, according to which derivations favor the

shortest computational path available. At the same time, purely structural considerations are insufficient to account for the full range of variation observed in the data. Eastern Lombard speakers are bilingual in both the local language and standard Italian, and the coexistence of these systems plays an important role in shaping interrogative strategies. The dissertation therefore adopts the notion of *dilalia* to account for the interaction between the local vernacular and the dominant national language. In particular, the greater availability of fronted structures in certain contexts is argued to partially reflect the influence of standard Italian, where fronting constitutes the canonical interrogative strategy. Consequently, optionality emerges from the interaction between phase-based syntactic computation and contact-induced grammatical competition.

The empirical component of the dissertation combines traditional elicitation methods with a formal experimental study. Data collection involved speakers of multiple Eastern Lombard dialects, including Darfense, Monnese, Castenedolese, Soltino, and Bergamasque. The methodology included translation tasks, informal acceptability judgments, and preference-ranking tasks. Moreover, a two-alternative forced-choice experiment was conducted focusing only on the Darfense interrogatives. The experimental component was designed to test whether speakers systematically prefer clause-internal or fronted strategies once contextual and sociolinguistic factors are more carefully controlled. The results show a clear overall preference for clause-internal interrogatives, while also revealing systematic asymmetries across wh-types. In particular, direct-object wh-phrases display a categorical preference for the clause-internal strategy, whereas subjects exhibit considerably greater variability. These findings provide empirical support for the phase-based analysis proposed throughout the dissertation.

Beyond its descriptive contribution to Eastern Lombard syntax, this dissertation contributes more broadly to the study of Romance interrogatives, dialect syntax, and syntactic microvariation. First, it provides a generative analysis of Eastern Lombard A-bar phenomena across multiple dialects. Second, it contributes to the literature on optionality by arguing that apparently free variation may emerge from highly constrained structural configurations. Third, it supports approaches to syntax in which intermediate phasal domains play a central role in the computation of A-bar dependencies. Finally, the dissertation highlights the importance of integrating experimental methods into dialect syntax research, particularly in contexts where grammatical competition and sociolinguistic pressure may obscure underlying structural generalizations.

The dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 introduces Eastern Lombard within the Italian linguistic landscape and presents the main morphosyntactic properties relevant to the analysis. It also introduces the interrogative and focus data under investigation, together with the methodology employed during the informal data collection process. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework adopted throughout the dissertation, focusing on the Minimalist Program, the Cartographic Approach, phase theory, successive cyclicity, and previous analyses of A-bar phenomena in Romance and Northern Italian dialects. Chapter 4 develops the syntactic analysis of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives and argues that clause-internal wh-elements occupy the edge of the *v*P phase, while fronted wh-items are in Spec,CP. Chapter 5 extends the analysis to contrastive focus constructions and examines the relationship between focus and interrogative syntax. Chapter 6 presents the experimental component of the dissertation and discusses the implications of the results for the theoretical analysis. Finally, the conclusion in Chapter 7 summarizes the main findings of the dissertation and discusses their broader implications for phase theory, microvariation, and Romance syntax.

2. Eastern Lombard

Eastern Lombard is a minority language spoken in Italy. It is one of the many local vernaculars spoken on the peninsula and, because of its non-official status, it is endangered (Moseley 2010). Together with Western and Alpine Lombard, it constitutes one of the three linguistic areas in the Italian region of Lombardy. It is not, however, a monolithic language, but rather a mosaic of local dialects that are characterized by a high degree of variation on a base of shared core linguistic features (Scala 2021). Geographically, the Eastern Lombard area is located in Northern Italy in the provinces of Bergamo and Brescia, as well as the northern parts of the Cremona and Mantua provinces. As part of the Northern Italian group of vernaculars, Eastern Lombard and its dialects are spoken north of the La Spezia-Rimini isogloss, which divides Italy into two separate groups, with Italo-Romance in the South and Gallo-Italic in the North (Rohlfs 1972). This northern genealogic group includes – in addition to the Lombard varieties – Piedmontese, Ligurian, Emilian, and Romagnol (Biondelli 1853; Loporcaro 2009). For clarity, Figure 1 illustrates a map of Italy showing the La Spezia-Rimini line in green, together with some of the relevant locations cited throughout this chapter. Lombardy is highlighted in purple.

Figure 1

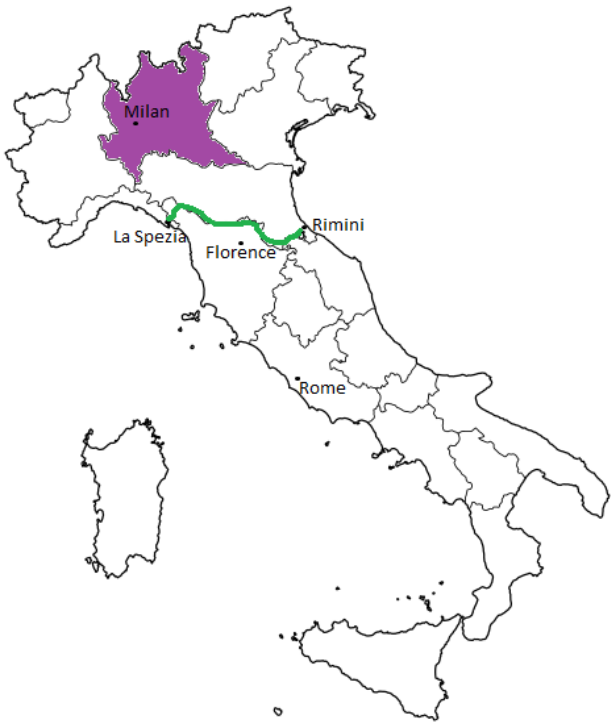
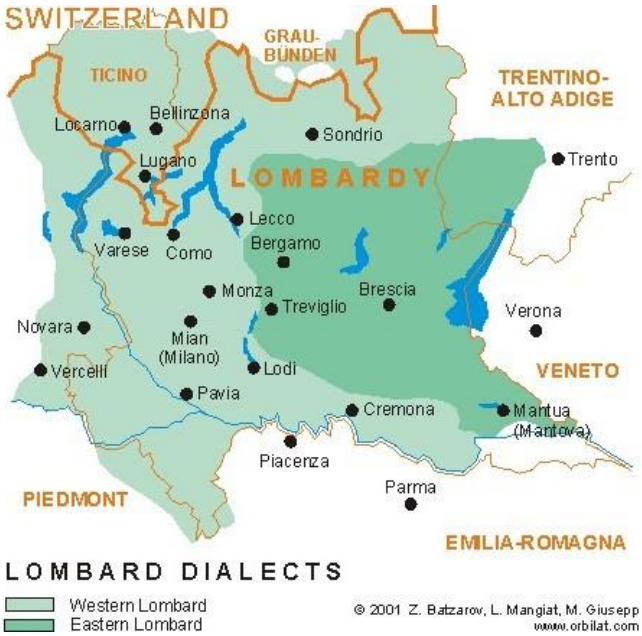


Figure 2, on the other hand, shows a map of Lombardy, with the Eastern Lombard area highlighted in a darker shade of green.

Figure 2



The terminology employed throughout this dissertation to refer to Eastern Lombard spans from "dialect" to "vernacular" to "language". That is because, while the local vernaculars spoken on the Italian territory have traditionally been referred to as "dialects", they are not dialects of standard Italian in the traditional sense. The term "dialect" was borrowed from the Greeks, where it was used to refer to the written varieties employed in Greece during the classical period. In modern times, it has been used as a hyponym of "language" (see Haugen 1966 for a more in-depth discussion). In other words, it is intended that a dialect is a sub-category or a variety of a given standard language that branches out of the latter. This is not the case for Italian dialects. These do not derive from standard Italian, so the latter does not constitute a hypernym for the former (cf. Maiden & Parry 1997). They are genealogically related to each other, but horizontally rather than vertically, with standard Italian being a cousin language of the so-called "dialects" (Pellegrini 1970). Despite this, the local vernaculars spoken in Italy have mostly been referred to as "Italian dialects" (Loporcaro 2009), a term that hints at a hyponymic relationship with standard Italian. In other words, Eastern Lombard is often labeled as a Northern Italian dialect (henceforth NID), especially in the syntax literature focusing on this linguistic area (cf. Munaro 1999; Poletto & Pollock 2004; Manzini & Savoia 2011; Bonan 2021a). Finally, Eastern Lombard represents an umbrella term employed to categorize a sub-group of NIDs that are closely connected to each other linguistically, and which constitute varieties of Eastern Lombard. Put differently, Eastern Lombard, despite being referred to as a (Northern) Italian dialect, is itself comprised of a series of strongly related local dialects (Coluzzi et al. 2018). In particular, the Eastern Lombard dialects under consideration in this dissertation are the following: Darfense, Monnese, Castenedolese, Soltino, and Bergamasque.

Returning to the terminology issue, the following terms will be used to categorize these different vernaculars: "language" will be generally used to talk about Eastern Lombard, as well as other larger Italian linguistic areas, e.g., Western Lombard, Venetan, Ligurian, Tuscan, etc. "Dialect" and "variety" will be employed to refer to the different related dialects that constitute the Eastern Lombard language, but they will also be used to indicate the local vernaculars constituting other macro linguistic areas, e.g. Bellunese and Trevigiano as dialects of Venetan; "Northern Italian dialect" (NID) and "vernacular" will be applied more broadly to talk about both Eastern Lombard

as a unitary language and the single local dialects that constitute it, as well as all the other languages and dialects spoken in (Northern) Italy.[3]

The rest of this chapter is dedicated to introducing Eastern Lombard and its core linguistic features in the context of NIDs and, more broadly, the local languages spoken in Italy.

2.1 Eastern Lombard in the Italian linguistic landscape

A description of Eastern Lombard cannot do without a comparison with other varieties spoken on the Italian peninsula. On the one hand, a comparative approach enables us to define the features that distinguish Eastern Lombard from other languages; on the other hand, comparing the language under investigation with neighboring ones helps clarify the typological group to which it belongs. Moreover, languages are not fossilized, impenetrable entities. Contact with other varieties is an unavoidable, natural phenomenon that contributes, among other processes, to the evolution of natural languages and dialects. A comparison of Eastern Lombard with the surrounding varieties is a way to establish what brought, for example, to its separation from Western Lombard and to determine the linguistic features that either make them diverge into two separate subgroups or converge as dialects of Lombard. A comparative approach can also be adopted in diachrony to analyze the Northern Italian linguistic *koine* of which Eastern Lombard was part of around the Middle Ages (Sanga 1990; Brown 2018).[4] It is also a way to determine what synchronic characteristics make it part of the Gallo-Italic group, as opposed to the varieties spoken south of the La Spezia-Rimini isogloss. Lastly, this kind of analysis can also be applied to Eastern Lombard itself, and to the subgroups forming it. Since Eastern Lombard is not linguistically homogeneous, a comparison of the properties characterizing each subgroup is a way to distinguish the common features that make them a unitary language from their closely related varieties.

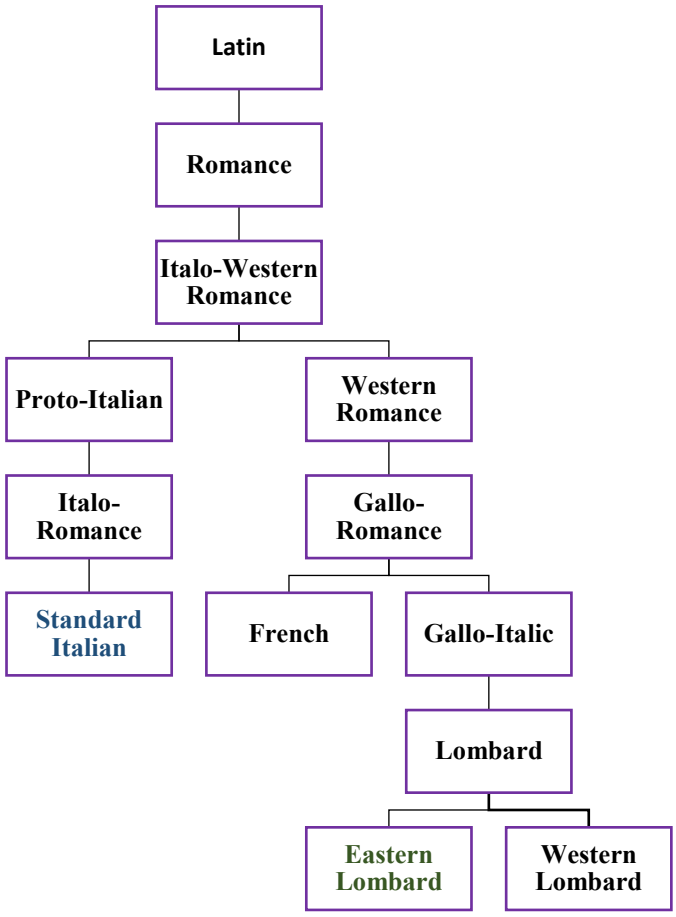
As a first step, this comparison relies on a brief diachronic overview of the Northern Italian linguistic landscape. Both Eastern Lombard and standard Italian descend from Italo-Western

[3] The choice of using the NID label for both Eastern Lombard and its local varieties is in line with the previous syntax literature focusing on the Northern Italian geographic area.

[4] I adopt the definition of *koine* outlined in Benincà et al. (2016) according to which it may refer to "an unstable set of varieties showing clear traces of merging and simplification" (Benincà et al. 2016: p. 185), as this is the description best fitting the situation of the Northern Italian group of vernaculars to which Eastern Lombard belongs.

Romance (Hall 1950). As a Gallo-Italic variety, Eastern Lombard descends from Gallo-Romance, while standard Italian descends from Italo-Romance. Consequently, Eastern Lombard is genealogically closer to French than to standard Italian, as seen in Figure 3, and both have a common Celtic substratum.

Figure 3



Gallo-Italic languages exhibit a certain degree of linguistic unity that was observed ever since Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (1302-1305). Up until the 13th century, Lombard was a unitary language that had not yet developed the linguistic features that brought it to the present-day division into three main subgroups (Sanga 1984; 1997). The split between Eastern and Western Lombard is attributable to the adoption of a more "rustic" variety by the former, which resulted in a distancing from the Milanese area of influence (Sanga 1997; Bonfadini 2015). However, before

these local languages started to split, they formed a unitary group often analyzed as a *koine* (Tamburelli 2010). In the case of NIDs, this *koine* can be intended as a composite variety (Siegel 1985), i.e., as a variety formed by the combination of languages and dialects sharing common linguistic features and which are spoken in the same geographic area.

A series of factors contributed to the formation of this *koine*-like group, such as a common base of shared linguistic features facilitated, inter alia, by the already mentioned Celtic substratum, the geographic region shared by these varieties, and the literature circulating in the area in the late Middle Ages. Their genealogical relationship means that these languages share similar phonological and morpho-syntactic features, as well as lexical similarities. A further contribution to the development of the *koine* was the geographic region in which these varieties are spoken. It is delimited to the North by the Alps and by the Apennines to the South, while the Eastern side of the Padan Plain, which occupies most of this region, is delimited by the Adriatic Sea. It is therefore easy to see how the geography of this region, with its natural borders, could become a contributing factor in the formation of some sort of linguistic unity. Moreover, despite the lack of a political unity in the area until the second half of the 19th century, with the Unification of Italy, a shared linguistic background was desirable for cultural and commercial relationships between the linguistic communities sharing this geographic area (Regis 2012).[5] It is also worth mentioning that the Franco-Italian literature circulating in the late Middle Ages (i.e., 13th-15th centuries) in the region was written in a mixed variety that incorporated linguistic features from both Northern Italian dialects and French (see Morgan 2002 for a more detailed account). These linguistic and extra-linguistic factors contributed to the formation of a linguistic unity. This unity, however, was gradually lost, giving rise to the current linguistic landscape in Northern Italy, with Eastern Lombard starting to deviate from the Milanese sphere of influence around the 13th century (Sanga 1984).

At the same time, another vernacular was developing in Italy in the Tuscan region around Florence, as writers across the peninsula started to employ vulgar Romance instead of Latin for literary and artistic purposes (Marazzini 2004; Serianni 2015). Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio all lived and wrote between the 13th and the 14th centuries. They all wrote in both Latin and the

[5] If we exclude two short-lived occurrences: the Roman province called Gallia Cisalpina around the 1st century B.C.E. and the Napoleonic Cisalpine Republic between 1797 and 1815.

Florentine vernacular, the language in which their most famous masterpieces were written. Because of the influence they exerted over the literature produced throughout the following centuries, and especially during the Renaissance, their 14th century Florentine was considered as the supreme language, which all writers and "literati" should aim for (Trovato 2012). This vernacular, that would eventually become the standard Italian spoken today, remained just a literary language for centuries before being adopted as the official language once Italy became a unitary political entity in 1861.[6] This latter event initiated the process that eventually brought the Italian population to a certain linguistic uniformity. Use of the standard language was extremely limited in the first decades of the newborn Italian nation, with most of the population employing their own local language (De Mauro 1963), and reaching a linguistic unity was not a short or straightforward process. After Italy became a consolidated political entity, it took several more decades before the Italian population reached some linguistic uniformity, with most people still using their local languages in most of their interactions. This is a trend that continued until the middle of the 20th century, after World War II (De Mauro 1963; Berruto 2017).[7] Eventually, the opposite trend took over: standard Italian started replacing the local vernaculars, first, for official purposes and then for everyday occasions (Berruto 2018).[8]

One of the main consequences of this parallel linguistic evolution is the development of a diglossic relationship between standard Italian and local dialects, with standard Italian as the high (H) code and the dialects as the low (L) code (Tamburelli 2010).[9] Using Ferguson's (1959) definition of diglossia, the current Italian linguistic situation appears ambiguous, given the author's assertion that diglossia exists only when H is not regularly used in everyday speech. This was true

[6] The Florentine vernacular from Dante's period, despite its differences with contemporary Italian, bears numerous similarities to the latter. Indeed, when reading Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio's works today, readers are able to grasp much of it.

[7] Several factors have contributed to the linguistic unification of Italy: the widespread introduction of radios first and, subsequently, that of national television in Italian homes; internal migration, especially from the agricultural south to the industrialized north; the army enrolment system which required individuals to train in regions different from their region of birth; the building of new transportation infrastructure; among other factors (De Mauro 2014). All these occurrences could not have happened earlier in the unification process because they often represent either technological advancements or sociopolitical reforms that could not be implemented in the first decades of the newborn Italian state.

[8] By "official purposes" I here refer to, e.g., bureaucratic reasons, official communications, the language employed in schools, documents, etc.

[9] Diglossia is a linguistic phenomenon involving a speech community that employs two different languages at the same time, with each language specializing in a specific register. Of the two coexisting languages, the superposed one is referred to as the "high code" (H) and the local one is referred to as "low code" (L) (Ferguson 1959).

in Italy until recent decades; however, younger generations now use standard Italian in daily communication. Despite this shift, the standard Italian spoken in informal contexts remains heavily influenced by local dialects, leading to regional variants (Berruto 2018). This reflects standard Italian's transition from a primarily written, "elevated" language to one adopted for everyday use. Because of this, Berruto (1987) coined the term "dilalia" (from Greek ès 'twice' and laléo 'speak, talk'), describing a linguistic situation similar to diglossia but with less rigid separation of language use. Thus, while older generations (baby boomers (1946-1965), early Gen X (1966-1975)) may still exhibit diglossic traits, younger generations (late Gen X (1976-1980), millennials (1981-1996), etc.) demonstrate a shift towards dilalia.[10] This matter had to be elaborated upon, as it is relevant to the analysis, particularly in examining the high level of optionality observable in the data, as well as to the experimental results.

Turning our attention back to Eastern Lombard, we can now examine how diglossia vs. dilalia relate to the language under consideration in this dissertation. Native speakers of Eastern Lombard can be found across generations, but the most fluent speakers, and those who employ it on a daily basis, are typically baby boomers. Baby boomers were born at a time when the diglossic relationship between standard Italian and local vernaculars was still strong, the former being employed in official contexts and the latter for everyday purposes.[11] This is no longer the case; regional Italian has now taken over from Eastern Lombard as the informal language of communication, with standard Italian becoming more prevalent.[12] The direct and unfortunate consequence of this process is that Eastern Lombard, similarly to the other local vernaculars, has now become endangered (De Mauro 1963; Sanga & Baggioni 1981; Coluzzi 2009).

[10] This is because the term diglossia could still apply to the Italian linguistic situation during the first few decades or so of the Republic, i.e., the form of government adopted in Italy after WWII, until the factors listed in note 5 fully took over and brought the current linguistic setting.
[11] I.e., right in the aftermath of WWII.
[12] Regional Italian is a term which refers to the diatopic variation of standard Italian based on the linguistic region where it is spoken. Thus, standard Italian is affected both in terms of mental grammar and in terms of lexicon by the local vernaculars. In our case, Eastern Lombard and its dialects have affected standard Italian, yielding regional linguistic forms and characteristics that are typical of this area, e.g., the extended usage of analytic past forms as opposed to a mixture of synthetic and analytic ones like in standard Italian.

2.1.1 Summing-up

Eastern Lombard is a local endangered language spoken in Northern Italy. It is part of a bigger group of local languages characterized by significant variation, i.e., the Northern Italian dialects. Additionally, Eastern Lombard has its own internal dialectal variation due to the presence of several local dialects spoken in its geographic area. This language is distinct from standard Italian, as they have followed different evolutionary paths, with Eastern Lombard constituting a cousin language of standard Italian. The historical development of Eastern Lombard involved a gradual divergence from Western Lombard, influenced by geographic and cultural factors, which led to a complex linguistic landscape. In particular, as a local language spoken in Italy, Eastern Lombard entered first in a diglossic and subsequently a dilalic relationship with standard Italian, a consequence of the linguistic unification efforts made in the newborn Italian nation in the second half of the 19th century. More recently, the increasing dominance of standard Italian, particularly after WWII, has resulted in a shift where regional Italian is now preferred also for informal communication, further endangering Eastern Lombard.

2.2 Eastern Lombard typology: morphosyntax

This section is dedicated to illustrating the main morphosyntactic properties characterizing Eastern Lombard, from a typological perspective. Since Eastern Lombard is not a dialect of standard Italian, but belongs to the Gallo-Italic group, it is closer to standard French than to the national language of Italy. This is reflected in the common morpho-syntactic properties between Eastern Lombard and French, which diverge from the standard Italian ones.

However, an important property they all share is verb raising, a phenomenon that bears consequences on the syntactic distribution of wh-items and contrastive foci, which are introduced later in this chapter. Verb raising is attested in multiple Romance languages (see Edmonds 1978; Pollock 1989; Dobrovie-Sorin 1994; Cinque 1999; i.a.) and it refers to a phenomenon involving the lexical verb moving from its base-generated position into the inflectional field of the clause. This can be observed in (1), where the finite lexical verb (in bold) is seen to the left of *v*P adjoined

adverbs (underlined), and in (2), where the past participle (in bold) is seen to exhibit a similar behavior.[13]

(1) a. Mario **tʃama** <u>hemper</u> la Giulia. *Eastern Lombard*
Mario call.PRS always the Giulia
'Mario always calls Giulia.'

b. Florian **joue** <u>souvent</u> avec les chats. *French*
Florian play.PRS always with the cats
'Florian often plays with the cats.'

c. La ragazza **legge** <u>ancora</u> lo stesso libro. *Standard Italian*
the girl read.PRS still the same book
'The girl still reads the same book.'

(2) a. O-l **majat** <u>de hpeh</u> la polenta *Eastern Lombard*
have.PRS=SCL.3SG eaten of often the cornmeal
kwan k' era en montagna.
when that be.PST in mountain
'He often ate cornmeal while on the mountain.'

b. Pierre a **mis** <u>presque</u> fin au conflit. *French*
Pierre have.PRS put almost end to-the conflict
'Pierre has almost put an end to the conflict.' (Adapted, Pollock 1989: p. 417, ex. 132)

c. Maria ha **letto** <u>ancora</u> lo stesso libro. *Standard Italian*
Maria have.PRS read again the same book
'Maria read the same book again.'

The examples in (1) involve synthetic verb forms, while those in (2) involve analytic verb forms where the lexical verb is a past participle. As can be observed, in all instances the lexical verb is followed by an aspectual adverb in linear order.[14] These aspectual adverbs have been argued to occupy the inflectional field (Cinque 1999), thus indicating that the past participle has also raised in this area of the clause.

The following sections focus on the similarities between Eastern Lombard – and NIDs in general – and French, as well as on its differences with standard Italian.

[13] Chapter 4 discusses this matter more thoroughly.
[14] Note, however, that past participle raising is a more limited phenomenon than finite verb raising across Romance.

2.2.1 Negation particles

A common feature of NIDs and French is the presence of negation particles.[15] These particles are often the result of a grammaticalization process involving content words, specifically negative polarity items indicating small quantities (Jespersen 1917). In French, for example, the negation particle *pas* derives from the word for 'step'. In Gallo-Italic, on the other hand, these items tend to derive from the word for 'crumb': cf. Lombard *minga*/*mica*/*mia* or Emiliano *brisa*.[16] The examples (3), (4), and (5) below illustrate the behavior or some of these particles:

(3) L' a **mia** majat al pom. *Eastern Lombard*
SCL have.AUX NEG eaten the apple
'He/she didn't eat the apple.'

(4) A= n= 'dorum **'briʒɐ**. *Bolognese*
SCL NEG sleep.FUT NEG
'I shan't sleep.' (Adapted, Benincà et al. 2016: p. 201, ex. 20b)

(5) Il (n') a **pas** lu le livre. *French*
SCL NEG have.AUX NEG read the book
'He didn't read the book.'

There are two main differences that can be observed in the examples above: the syntactic position of the negation items and their nature. These elements occupy different functional positions within the clause, a consequence of a diachronic grammaticalization process known as Jespersen's Cycle (Jespersen 1917).[17] The Bolognese and the French examples represent two different intermediate stages: in Bolognese the obligatory preverbal negator is paired with a postverbal negation particle, while in French the preverbal negation item is optional – and almost non-existent in informal language – indicating that the postverbal negation has become the main negator. The Eastern Lombard one, instead, illustrates a more advanced/final stage of this cycle, where the negative

[15] Negation particles are common in Piedmont, Lombardy, and Emilia Romagna (Benincà et al. 2016).
[16] Interestingly, older varieties of French also possess a postverbal negation derived from 'crumb', i.e., *mie*.
[17] Jespersen's cycle is a diachronic process involving negation. It describes the evolution of negation items in certain languages in which 1) the negator starts as a preverbal element; 2) undergoes an intermediary stage in which it is strengthened by a post-verbal negation particle; and 3) in some cases, the preverbal negator is lost in favor of the postverbal negator which has become fully grammaticalized.

particle has become the only element denoting negation, thus substituting the Latin derived negator which is no longer used. Moreover, the particle *mia* is not fixed, and can occupy other functional positions, but always following the finite verb, which is also the most common syntactic distribution in colloquial French.[18] See, for example, (6):

(6) a. L' a (**mia**) majat (**mia)** al pom. *Eastern Lombard*
SCL have.AUX NEG eaten NEG the apple

b. Il a **pas** mangé la pomme. *French*
SCL have.AUX NEG eaten the apple
'He/she didn't eat the apple.'

None of the characteristics illustrated here for Eastern Lombard and French negation can be observed in standard Italian, which maintained the Latin-derived preverbal negation, as illustrated in (7).

(7) (Lei) **non** ha mangiato la mela. *Standard Italian*
she NEG have.AUX eaten the apple
'She didn't eat the apple.'

2.2.2 Subject clitics

Another morphosyntactic feature characterizing Eastern Lombard and French, but not standard Italian, is the presence of subject clitic pronouns and their degree of obligatoriness. This characteristic is present not only in Gallo-Italic, but in Northern Italian varieties in general, as well as in some vernaculars spoken in Tuscany, below the La Spezia-Rimini line. From a diachronic point of view, these subjects have evolved from weak non-clitic pronouns and their obligatoriness has been argued to be linked to the V2 requirements in early Romance (Benincà et al. 2016; Vai 2018).

[18] Note, however, that while in Eastern Lombard *mia* can occur both between the finite verb and the past participle, as well as following both the finite verb and the past participle, in French, *pas* cannot follow the past participle but can only occur between the finite verb and the past participle.

The behavior of these subject clitics is illustrated in (8), which shows the co-occurrence of proclitic and enclitic subjects.

(8) a. (**Te**) kante-*(**t**). *Eastern Lombard*
SCL.2SG sing.PRS=SCL.2SG
'You sing.'

b. (**Noter**) kanto-*(**m**).
SCL.1SG sing.PRS=SCL.1PL
'We sing.'

c. *(**Me**) kante-Ø
SCL.1SG sing.PRS
'I sing.'

In Eastern Lombard, there are two types of clitic subjects: proclitics and enclitics. The latter are affected by subject-clitic inversion (SCLI) and may look like inflectional morphemes, but it has been shown that this is not the case. Enclitic subjects appear to derive from constructions involving inverted word order, such as interrogatives (Haiman 1991). The subjects were initially tonic and eventually cliticized onto the verb ending, becoming akin to inflectional morphemes (Cardinaletti & Repetti 2011). That said, it appears evident that they are not exactly inflectional morphemes if we observe, e.g., the second person singular *-t* in (8a). If this were an inflectional morpheme, it would be expected to resemble the Latin morpheme *-s*, instead of *-t*, which appears closely related to its proclitic counterpart *te*. Proclitic subjects may combine with enclitic subjects, and the degree of obligatoriness of the two differs: the proclitic subjects are optional, while the enclitic ones are obligatory, as shown in (8a) and (8b). However, in cases in which the enclitic subject is not available, the proclitic one becomes obligatory. This is the case for example (8c), where there is no enclitic morphology available, and in embedded clauses, where there is no V2.[19] The prominence of enclitic subjects in Eastern Lombard goes against the general trend that affects the Northern Italian linguistic area and French, where inversion is being lost and only occurs in specific environments, e.g., interrogatives and optatives (Poletto & Tortora 2016).[20]

[19] First and second persons plural seem to have impoverished subject-clitic morphology in the whole Northern Italian group. As for the lack of enclitic subjects in embedded clauses, it will be better discussed in the analysis section.
[20] But also in other Lombard varieties and in Rhaeto-Romance.

Another significant characteristic is the limited inflectional morphology of subject clitics in NIDs, in which they tend to form an incomplete paradigm (cf. Benincà 2017). The latter point is well-illustrated by Bolognese in (9).

(9) a. *(**A**) kaŋt. *Bolognese*
SCL sing.PRS.1SG
'I sing.'

b. *(**A**) kantaŋ.
SCL sing.PRS.1PL
'We sing.'

c. *(**A**) kante.
SCL sing.PRS.2PL
'You sing.'

Example (9) shows the obligatoriness of the proclitic subjects as well as their poor inflectional morphology. In fact, only one form is available across the paradigm. This was shown to not be the case for Eastern Lombard, and it is also not the case for French, as illustrated in (10), where the clitic paradigms are richer and cover all persons. Moreover, (10) shows that these subjects are also obligatorily realized.

(10) a. *(**Je**) chante. *French*
SCL.1SG sing.PRS
'I sing.'

b. *(**Nous**) **c**hantons.
SCL.1SG sing.PRS
'We sing.'

c. *(**Tu**) chantes.
SCL.1SG sing.PRS
'You sing.'

None of the traits described in this section apply to standard Italian, whose subject pronouns are tonic, as observable in (11), where the subject pronoun is shown to be optional, thus making it a pro-drop language.

(11) (**Lei**) parla molte lingue. *Standard Italian*
she speak.PRS many languages
'She speaks many languages.'

2.2.3 Synthetic vs analytic verb forms

An additional feature that Eastern Lombard shares with colloquial French and other NIDs regards the relationship between synthetic and analytic verb structures and the auxiliaries employed in the latter[21]. Up until the Renaissance period, NIDs preferred synthetic forms to analytic ones in the expression of perfect tenses, although the situation is normally the opposite today (Benincà et al. 2016). In particular, the preferred form during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was the preterite. Today, this synthetic form has disappeared in favor of a compound past form which employs both the auxiliaries 'have' and 'be', based on type of verb they combine with: 'have' is employed with transitive and unergative verbs, 'be' with unaccusative verbs. While the latter generalization also applies to standard Italian, the preference for analytic forms is not as clear-cut: northern regional variants of standard Italian behave like NIDs, but central, and especially southern regional variants, as well as the prescriptive norm, alternate analytic and synthetic forms[22]. Examples (12) and (13) illustrate the usage of the analytic past respectively in Eastern Lombard and French, while example (14) illustrates the usage of both the analytic and the synthetic past and standard Italian:

(12) a. **A**-l **majat** al pom[23]. *Eastern Lombard*
have.AUX=SCL.3SG eaten the apple
'He ate the apple.'

b. Al gat l' **è** **burlat** do.
the cat SCL.3SG be.AUX fallen down
'The cat fell.'

(13) a. Il **a** **mangé** la pomme. *French*
SCL.3SG have.AUX eaten the apple
'He ate the apple.'

[21] Prescriptive French grammars often include the preterite as an available past tense, but this form has been replaced by the analytic past form in most contexts, especially in everyday language use (Caudal & Vetters 2007).
[22] The regional Italians spoken in southern Italy, however, tend to prefer synthetic forms.
[23] Note that the two *al* are homophonous, but do not cover the same grammatical function.

b. Le chat **est** **tombé**.
the cat be.AUX fallen
'The cat fell.'

(14) a. (Lui) **ha** **mangiato** la mela. *Standard Italian*
he have.AUX eaten the apple
'He has eaten the apple.'

b. (Lui) **mangiò** la mela.
he eat.PRET the apple
'He ate the apple.'

c. Il gatto **è** **caduto**.
the cat be.AUX fallen
'The cat has fallen.'

d. Il gatto **cadde**.
the cat fall.PRET
'The cat fell.'[24]

All three examples above illustrate how the auxiliary changes from 'have' in the transitive verb instances (12a; 13a; 14a) to 'be' in the unaccusative ones (12b; 13b; 14c). Moreover, examples (12) and (13) show the analytic forms of Eastern Lombard and colloquial French respectively, while example (14) illustrates how standard Italian has both forms available for past tense formation, further demonstrating that Eastern Lombard and French behave more similarly than Eastern Lombard and standard Italian do.

2.2.4 Wh-interrogatives

Turning to wh-interrogatives, I briefly show that Eastern Lombard is once again closer to French than it is to standard Italian. In particular, when it comes to canonical wh-interrogatives, the position of the wh-word may be clause-internal in Eastern Lombard as in French, but not in standard Italian, where it is fronted. By clause-internal, I mean that the wh-word surfaces in a position that is right-adjacent to the lexical verb, which has been shown to raise to the inflectional

[24] I chose to translate the analytic form with the English present perfect and the synthetic one with the simple past to emphasize that the two standard Italian verb forms are prescriptively employed in different past contexts. The Italian analytic and synthetic forms, however, do not directly correspond to the English present perfect and simple past respectively. Both Italian verb forms can be translated by both English verb forms, depending on more refined considerations concerning tense and aspect that are beside the scope of this section.

field earlier in this chapter. Conversely, the fronted position means that the wh-word surfaces at the beginning of the clause. I only briefly introduce the matter, which will be elaborated upon in section §2.3. Wh-questions in Eastern Lombard are characterized by a high degree of cross-dialectal variation and dialect-internal optionality. Leaving aside cleft-interrogatives, which are vastly more popular in French (Guilliot & Oiry 2011) and Eastern Lombard (Manzini & Savoia 2005) but also present in standard Italian, Eastern Lombard has three different strategies available: wh-doubling, (15a), wh-fronting, (15b), and a clause-internal wh-item, (15c).[25]

(15) a. **Ke** fe-t fa **kwé**? *Eastern Lombard*
what do.AUX=SCL.2SG do what
'What are you doing?'

b. **Kwando** l' e-t tʃapada?
when OCL be.AUX=SCL.2SG gotten
'When did you get it?'

c. Maje-t **ke** al sera?
eat.PRS=SCL.2SG what in-the evening
'What do you eat in the evening?'

Neither standard French nor standard Italian can form interrogatives via wh-doubling, however, French canonical questions allow both fronting (16a) and the clause-internal strategy (16b).

(16) a. **Que** manges-tu le soir? *French*
what eat.PRS you the evening

b. Tu manges **quoi** le soir?[26]
SCL.2SG eat.PRS what the evening
'What do you eat in the evening?'

This is not the case for standard Italian, where fronting is the only available strategy (17a), and the clause-internal position denotes an echo-interpretation (17b).

[25] However, not all dialects and wh-categories allow for doubling, and some only allow for wh-fronting or a clause-internal wh-item. This will be better explained in section §2.3.
[26] Note that structures like (16b) have also been analyzed as presuppositional (Rowlett 2007).

(17) a. **Cosa** mangi la sera? *Standard Italian*
what eat.PRS the evening
'What do you eat in the evening?'

b. Mangi **COSA** la sera? (echo interpretation)
eat.PRS what the evening
'You eat WHAT in the evening?'

In sum, the data in (15) – (17) clearly indicates once again that Eastern Lombard behaves more similarly to French than it does to standard Italian.

All the morphosyntactic features introduced in this section are useful in supporting Eastern Lombard as a Gallo-Italic language only diagonally related to standard Italian and more directly related to French. However, they also play a crucial role in determining the best possible analysis for the data under investigation in this dissertation. The following section focuses on A-bar phenomena in Eastern Lombard, spanning from wh-questions to focus, and discusses how they interact with the morphosyntactic features introduced so far.

2.3 Data under investigation

This section is dedicated to the main Eastern Lombard data that I analyze in the dissertation. I introduce the wh-interrogatives and the contrastive focus phenomena that characterize Eastern Lombard, by looking at their behavior in some of the dialects from the area. Before doing so, however, I briefly discuss the data collection methodology.

2.3.1 Methodology for data collection

I first conducted a preliminary data collection whose purpose was to provide insight into how Eastern Lombard behaves with regards to A-bar phenomena. Since I am not myself a native speaker of Eastern Lombard, during this phase of the data collection, I interviewed a total of 5 native Eastern Lombard speakers, one for each dialect under investigation, on linguistic data related to wh-interrogatives, contrastive focus, and related traits. Specifically, I wanted to observe the behavior of different types of wh-items, e.g., argument vs. adjunct whPs, as well as A-bar occurrences, such as relative clauses and islands. In order to do so, I made use of elicitation tasks

aimed at prompting the Eastern Lombard speakers to utter the type of structures under investigation. This was not always an easy task, as the main language of communication between me and my consultants was a combination of standard and regional Italian. Considering that the participants were (Italian and Eastern Lombard) bilinguals, this created the risk of priming. In other words, I had to emphasize the importance for the participants to stay in their role of native Eastern Lombard speakers and to make sure that the elicited constructions were not affected by standard Italian. The task involved both direct translations from standard/regional Italian and informal grammaticality judgements on already constructed Eastern Lombard structures. [27] For example, I asked the participants to translate constructions like the ones depicted in (18) and (19), where they had to think of interrogatives with argument whPs, (18a), adjunct whPs, (18b), or restrictive, (19a), and non-restrictive, (19b), relative clauses.

(18) a. Chi ha scritto la lettera? *Standard Italian*
who have.AUX written the letter
'Who wrote the letter?'

b. Dove sei andato in vacanza?
where be.AUX gone in holiday
'Where did you go on holiday?'

(19) a. La signora che ho incontrato ieri era molto simpatica.
the lady that have.AUX met yesterday be.IMPF very nice
'The lady that I met yesterday was very nice.'

b. Questo libro, che è amato da molti, è il mio preferito.
this book which be.AUX loved by many be.PRS the my favorite
'This book, which is loved by many, is my favorite.'

In addition to the type of structures illustrated in (18) – (19), I also elicited more complex constructions involving, among other things, negation, discourse particles, and adverbs, as well as declaratives, in order to have a clear idea of the syntactic distribution of all the elements within the clause. Once the translation task was concluded, I provided the consultants with already constructed A-bar structures that they had to rate. Once again, I emphasized the importance of

[27] Whenever it was possible to use regional Italian, this was the preferred variety, as it deviates from standard Italian and gravitates towards Eastern Lombard.

thinking strictly in Eastern Lombard and rate the sentences as either acceptable or unacceptable in this language. For example, I asked the participants to rate interrogatives like the ones in (20), one of which had the wh-item fronted, (20a), and the other one clause-internal, (20b). [28] Like in the first elicitation task, I increased the complexity by adding other elements, e.g., adverbs and discourse particles.

(20) a. **Ki** l' a biida la bira? *Eastern Lombard*
who OCL have.AUX drunk the beer
'Who drank the beer?'

b. M' a tʃamat **ki** al telefono?
OCL have.AUX called who at-the phone
'Who called me on the phone?'

Once I submitted my dissertation proposal and I had a better idea of the approach I wanted to adopt for my analysis, I conducted a second data collection. The purpose of this second round was both to elicit more data that could confirm the linguistic evidence collected earlier, and to add a formal experimental component aimed at investigating the role played by the clause-internal domain in Eastern Lombard A-bar phenomena. While the latter will be illustrated and discussed in Chapter 6 dedicated to the experimental results, I introduce the second round of elicitation tasks here. This time, while I still relied on the type of interviews presented earlier (translation and informal acceptability judgements), I added a third methodology, whose aim was to understand the preferred strategy when it comes to wh-questions and contrastive focus. I provided the consultants with sets of A-bar constructions, which had to be rated from the most to the least preferred. Given the high degree of cross-dialectal variation for interrogatives, I provided examples of wh-doubling, wh-fronting, and clause-internal whPs to those participants whose native vernacular adopts all three strategies, while I limited the examples to fronting and clause-internal instances for those participants whose native variety does not allow for doubling. Example (21) illustrates the type of interrogative constructions participants had to classify from the most to the least preferred.

[28] Doubling constructions were also rated, but I do not include an example here because they only occur in certain dialects. On the other hand, all dialects have both strategies in (20) available.

(21) a. **Ke** e-t majat **kwé**?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten what

b. **Ke** e-t majat?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten

c. E-t majat **kwé**?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten what

'What did you eat?'

As for the focus data, I gave them two options: focus fronting and clause-internal contrastive focus. Example (22) shows the type of contrastive focus structures they had to rank.

(22) CONTEXT: Mario e Giovanni stanno parlando di Marco e della sua famiglia. Mario informa Giovanni che la figlia di Marco ha preso la patente. Giovanni, che ha parlato con Marco il giorno prima, lo corregge, specificando che è stata invece la moglie a prendere la patente. [29]
'Mario and Giovanni are talking about Marco and his family. Mario informs Giovanni that Marco's daughter got her driving license. Giovanni, who spoke to Marco the day before, corrects him, specifying that instead of the daughter it was the wife who got a driving license.'

a. LA HO FONNA l' ha tʃapada la patente (mia la ho pina).
the his wife OCL have.AUX got the driving-license NEG the his girl

b. L' ha tʃapada LA HO FONNA la patente (mia la ho pina).
OCL have.AUX got the his wife the driving-license NEG the his girl

'It was HIS WIFE who got the driving license (not his daughter).'

This component of the data collection allowed me to investigate the A-bar sentence structure of different Eastern Lombard dialects and to have a clearer idea of the approach I wanted to adopt for my theoretical analysis. The data collected through these interviews also serves as the database for the experimental component that will be introduced in the dedicated chapter.

Section 2.3.2 summarizes the main linguistic patterns observed with interrogatives from both data collections.

[29] Once again, since the provided contexts were in Italian, I had to emphasize the importance of strictly thinking in Eastern Lombard when it came to the data ranking.

2.3.2 Wh-interrogatives

The data concerning wh-interrogatives was collected from speakers of five different Eastern Lombard dialects: Darfense, Monnese, Castenedolese, Soltino, and Bergamasque. They all exhibit a certain degree of optionality and variation, which I illustrate in this section. However, given their status as dialects of Eastern Lombard and the common patterns found in their expression of wh-questions, I treat them overall as a unitary group. As mentioned earlier, Eastern Lombard employs three main strategies in the formation of interrogative structures: wh-doubling, (23a), wh-fronting, (23b), and a clause-internal wh-item, (23c).

(23) a. **Ke** fe-t majà **kwé** te?[30] *Monnese*
what do.PRS=SCL.2SG eat what you
'What are you eating?'

b. **Ki** l' a biida la bira? *Castenedolese*
who OCL.3SG have.PRS drunk the beer
'Who drank the beer?'

c. He tʃame-j **kome** i to genitur? *Darfense*
CL.Refl call.PRS=SCL.3PL how the your parents
'What's your parents' name?'

Not all varieties adopt all three strategies. In particular, Monnese and Castenedolese allow for doubling, as well as singular fronting and use of a clause-internal wh-item, while Darfense, Soltino, and Bergamasque only adopt the fronting and the clause-internal strategies. Even in doubling dialects only specific wh-constituents seem to allow for doubling; in particular, 'what' and 'where' in Monnese, and 'what' in Castenedolese.[31] Example (24), from Monnese, illustrates how doubling wh-items can behave.

[30] The Monnese variety uniquely employs the (auxiliary) support verb *fa* 'do' in interrogative constructions, a feature not found in the other varieties under consideration. Although this phenomenon is not entirely absent in other Eastern Lombard dialects spoken in the Lombard valley known as Val Camonica, its usage varies in optionality depending on the specific dialect. However, this dissertation does not examine those other dialects (for a more extended study on 'do'-support in Camuno varieties, see Swinburne [2024]).

[31] Note that, while this is the case for the dialects I collected my data from, other Eastern Lombard dialects allow for doubling with more wh-categories. In particular, from my own data collection coupled with previous studies dealing with some Eastern Lombard data (notably Poletto & Pollock, 2004; Munaro & Pollock, 2005; Manzini & Savoia, 2005; 2011), I was able to observe that 'why' and 'when' are the only wh-categories that cannot be doubled.

(24) a. **'Ngo** l' e-t vist **'ngont**? *Monnese*
where OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG seen where

b. **'Ngo** l' e-t vist?
where OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG seen

c. L' e-t vist **'ngont**?
OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG seen where

'Where did you see him/it?'

In (24), it can be observed that 'where' allows optionality between wh-doubling, (24a), wh-fronting, (24b), and a clause-internal wh-element, (24c). Example (25), on the other hand, shows how the same dialect behaves with a different wh-constituent, such as 'when', which cannot be doubled. In that case, optionality is only possible between fronting, (25a) and the clause-internal option, (25b).

(25) a. **Kwando** l' e-t tʃapada? *Monnese*
when OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG got

b. L' e-t tʃapada **kwando**?
OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG got when

'When did you get it?'

The data depicted in (24) and (25) indicate that there is a common pattern: whenever a dialect/wh-item allows for wh-doubling, wh-fronting and clause-internal wh-elements are also available strategies; at the same time, whenever a dialect/wh-item disallows doubling altogether, fronting and clause-internal are the only available strategies.

An interesting factor to consider is the fact that both in doubling and with single wh-questions the same wh-constituent may present different morphology (i.e. wh-forms) depending on the position of the wh-element within the clause. In particular, in wh-doubling varieties, fronted elements tend to be shorter, thus giving rise to non-identical doubling, as observable in (24a).[32] A

[32] Although identical doubling in Eastern Lombard is possible, as shown by Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011), but not present in the Eastern Lombard varieties I collected the data from.

similar phenomenon can be observed in some non-doubling varieties, where the fronted element takes a different form in comparison to the clause-internal one.

The dialects under investigation have two strategies to differentiate the fronted element from the clause internal one. The first is illustrated in the Bergamasque example in (26), where it is shown that the fronted element takes the form of what I call, to simplify, a "generic operator". By this I mean that the fronted wh-element in (26a) does not have the form of a typical wh-constituent. Rather, *se* in (26a) has the same form as the word for 'if', as seen in (26b). The clause-internal wh-item in (26c) maintains its wh-form *ke*.

(26) a. **Se** mangeri-v encò a mezdé? *Bergamasque*
what eat.FUT=SCL.2PL again at noon
'What are you eating again at noon?'

b. A' **se** te gh' é tort, al te dà resù.
even if you PRT have.PRS wrong he you.DAT give right
'Even if you are wrong, he backs up your point.'

c. Mangeri-v **ke** encò a mezdé?
eat.FUT=SCL.2PL what again at noon
'What are you eating again at noon?'

In example (27), on the other hand, a different strategy is observable. Both the fronted, (27a), and the clause-internal, (27b), wh-elements possess morpho-phonological properties typical of Eastern Lombard wh-items. In particular, the fronted item is shorter and the clause-internal one is longer, akin to the distribution of these elements seen in doubling constructions such as (24).

(27) a. **'Ndo** l' e-t tʃapada la tusa? *Soltino*
where OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG taken the wife

b. L' e-t tʃapada **'ndoe** la tusa?
OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG taken where the wife
'Where did you meet your wife?'

A related phenomenon is the fact that, when two wh-forms are available, they are rigidly distributed, with one only being able to occupy the fronted position, and the other only being able

to occupy the clause-internal position. This is the case both for varieties allowing for doubling constructions, Monnese (28), and for those disallowing them, Bergamasque in (29).

(28) a. **Ke** e-t sumenà **kwé**? *Monnese*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG planted what

b. ***Kwé** e-t sumenà **ke**?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG planted what

'What did you sow?'

(29) a. **'Ndo** 'nde-t in vacansa? *Bergamasque*
where go.PRS=SCL.2SG in holiday

b. *'Nde-t **'ndo** in vacansa?
go.PRS=SCL.2SG where in holiday

c. 'Ndet **indoe** in vacansa?
go.PRS=SCL.2SG where in holiday

d. ***Indoe** 'ndet in vacansa?
where go.PRS=SCL.2SG in holiday

'Where are you going on holiday?'

The property that I am about to introduce next concerns subject clitics. Specifically, as seen in section 2.2.2, subject-clitic inversion is a phenomenon characterizing all NIDs in so far as interrogative clauses are concerned. While it is true that Eastern Lombard has the peculiarity of allowing for enclitic subjects in other types of main clauses, emphasizing the importance of SCLI in interrogatives is also crucial. This is because SCLI bears important consequences on the syntactic analysis of these interrogatives. These structures involve an enclitic subject attached to the finite verb, thus yielding a word-order where the subject clitic follows the inflected verb – the lexical verb in synthetic verb tenses and the auxiliary in analytic verb tenses – in terms of linear order. This can be observed in (30), where SCLI involves the second person singular clitic and the auxiliary 'do':

(30) **Ke** fe-**t** majà **kwé** te? *Monnese*
what do.PRS=SCL.2SG eat what you
'What are you eating?'

Finally, the last trait illustrated in this section concerns the clause-internal wh-element, which appears at the left edge of the predicate domain. This observation is supported by constructions involving aspectual adverbs, as well as in ditransitives. With aspectual adverbs the wh-phrase must precede, as illustrated in example (31), which indicates movement outside of the predicate.

(31) a. Fe-t **kozé** de spes la sera? *Bergamasque*
do.PRS=SCL.2SG what of often the evening

b. *Fe-t de spes **kozé** la sera?
do.PRS=SCL.2SG of often what the evening

'What do you often do in the evening?'

Example (31) uses the aspectual adverb *de spes* 'often', which, since Emonds (1978), indicates left edge of predicate domain. In (31) the wh-item must be to the left of this adverb.[33] The same principle can be observed in (32) and (33), which depict ditransitives. In ditransitive constructions, the direct and indirect object can be freely reordered in declarative clauses, as shown in (32). In interrogatives with one of the objects as the wh-item, this flexibility is not an option. Rather, the wh-object must always linearize first, so it is higher in the structure, as shown in (33). In addition, this wh-object is to the right of the lexical verb, which has raised into the inflectional domain of the clause. This, coupled with the observation in (31), indicates that the low wh-position is at the left edge of the predicate.

(32) a. L' a dat a Paolo **esta letera** al sera. *Monnese*
SCL.3SG have.PRS given to Paolo this letter the evening

b. L' a dat **esta letera** a Paolo al sera.
SCL.3SG have.PRS given this letter to Paolo the evening

'He gave a letter to Paolo yesterday evening.'

[33] Note that while example (31) illustrates a finite lexical verb, the same principle applies to analytic verb forms with a past participle. That is because, as shown in section 2.2, the lexical verb always raises, so the aspectual adverb 'often' would still surface to its right. It goes without saying that, since there is a right-adjacency requirement for the wh-item, the aspectual adverb would surface to the right of the latter as well.

(33) a. **K'** e-t dat **kwé** a Paolo al sera?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG given what to Paolo the evening

b. ***K'** e-t dat a Paolo **kwé** al sera?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG given to Paolo what the evening

'What did you give to Paolo yesterday evening?'

c. E-t te scrit **a ki** esta letera se bé?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG you written to whom this letter so well

d. *E-t te scrit esta letera **a ki** se bé?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG you written this letter to whom so well

'To whom did you write this letter so carefully?'

The only exception to this right-adjacency requirement occurs in the presence of certain discourse particles, as observable in (34).

(34) Al beker a-l dat po' (amò[34]) **ke** (amò) a la hʧèta? *Darfense*
the butcher have.PRS=CL.3SG given PO AGAIN what AGAIN to the girl
'What else did the butcher even give to the girl?'

All the linguistic phenomena described in this section represent crucial traits of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives and, as such, serve as the basis for the analysis component. They are not, however, the only A-bar phenomenon I explore in the dissertation, and the next section introduces contrastive focus in order to provide a more comprehensive presentation of the data.

2.3.3 Contrastive focus

Cross-linguistically, contrastive focus has been shown to be realized in different ways: either syntactically, through fronting, accompanied by a specific prosodic contour, or phonologically, where the focused element is mainly marked by prosody, but remains clause-internal (Rizzi 1997; É Kiss 1998). A third option is clefting. These strategies are common to many Romance languages, including French, standard Italian, Romanian, and Spanish (Rizzi 1997; Alboiu 2004; Cruschina 2022). Eastern Lombard is no different from other Romance languages

[34] Note that, while this element has the same form as the adverb 'again', it is here used as a discourse particle rather than with its adverbial value.

from this point of view, and contrastive focus in this language is possible in two different syntactic configurations: clefting and clause-internally.[35] Specifically, while standard Italian, in addition to these two strategies, also adopts focus-fronting, the latter is highly dispreferred in Eastern Lombard (35b), which favors the clause-internal configuration, where focus is marked prosodically (35a).[36] I was not able to observe differences in the behavior of the various Eastern Lombard dialects when it comes to these syntactic constructions, hence I assume that there is more uniformity when compared to the dialectal variation observed for the interrogatives. In example (35), the focused constituent *LA HO FONNA* 'his wife' represents a specific member of a set, contrasting with another member of the same set, in this case *la ho pina* 'his daughter', who is also a family member.

(35) a. L' ha tʃapada LA HO FONNA *Darfense*
OCL.3SG have.AUX gotten the his woman
la patente (, mia la ho pina).
the driving-license NEG the his child.F

b. ??LA HO FONNA l' ha tʃapada
the his woman OCL.3SG have.AUX gotten
la patente (, mia la ho pina).
the driving-license NEG the his child.F

'It is HIS WIFE that got the driving license (not his daughter).'

In addition to both being able to surface clause-internally, a related characteristic shared with the wh-interrogatives is the position of contrastive foci to the left edge of the predicate domain. This is observable in ditransitive constructions such as (36), which are better discussed in section 5.2:

(36) a. O miti HOL TAOL al liber, mia hol let. *Darfense*
have.PRS.1SG put on-the table the book NEG on-the bed

[35] I concentrate on the latter, as it is the type of construction that best matches the wh-interrogatives illustrated earlier.
[36] As example (35b) shows, focus fronting is not fully ungrammatical, but it is strongly disfavored. Keeping in mind that the consultants are bilingual, I attribute this to the influence of standard Italian, where focus fronting is a highly productive strategy.

b. *O miti al liber HOL TAOL, mia hol let.
have.PRS.1SG put the book on-the table NEG on-the bed
'It is on the table that I put the book, not on the bed.'

Overall, this section has briefly illustrated the behavior of contrastive focus in Eastern Lombard, showing that the preferred strategy for contrastive focus in this language is the clause-internal one. In its preferred configuration, Eastern Lombard contrastive focus is primarily marked by a heavy prosodic contour. Chapter 5, dedicated to the analysis of the focus Operator in the dialects under consideration, discusses these properties more in-depth.

2.4 In sum

This chapter has introduced Eastern Lombard within the Italian linguistic landscape and has provided an overview of the data both from a typological point of view and by observing the behavior of the different Eastern Lombard dialects in terms of A-bar phenomena.

Sections 2 and 2.1 show that Eastern Lombard is an endangered Gallo-Italic language spoken in Northern Italy, north of the La Spezia-Rimini isogloss, and which is comprised of different dialects. In particular, it is shown that this language evolved independently and in parallel to standard Italian. In fact, historically, Eastern Lombard first entered a diglossic relationship with standard Italian during the linguistic unification efforts following Italy's formation as a state in the second half of the 19th century. Over time, however, this relationship changed into a dilalic one. The rise of the predominance of standard Italian, particularly after World War II, has led to its increased use in both formal and informal settings, causing it to overshadow the local languages spoken on the peninsula, including Eastern Lombard.

Section 2.2, on the other hand, focuses on providing a general overview of Eastern Lombard morphosyntax and on how it can be classified genealogically and typologically. It is shown that several morphosyntactic traits of Eastern Lombard are distinct from their standard Italian counterpart and align more with French, another Gallo-Romance language. Some of these key features are the usage of post-verbal negation particles, the presence of subject clitics, and the

ability to construct wh-interrogatives with a clause internal wh-phrase. These features are also shared with other NIDs.

Section 2.3 presents the wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus data that are at the center of this dissertation. Specifically, in section 2.3.2 the interrogative constructions are shown to be characterized by a certain degree of cross-dialectal variation and dialect-internal optionality, with three main strategies being available for their formation in Eastern Lombard: (i) wh-doubling, (ii) wh-fronting, or (iii) a clause-internal wh-item. Not all dialects allow for all three strategies, and the usage of the three patterns may be generalized in the following way: whenever an Eastern Lombard dialect allows for wh-doubling, wh-fronting, and the clause-internal wh-phrase option are also available strategies; at the same time, whenever a dialect disallows wh-doubling altogether, wh-fronting and the clause-internal wh-element are the only available strategies. Put differently, there appears to be no dialect that allows wh-doubling while disallowing the single-wh strategies. Finally, section 2.3.3 shows that contrastive focus also prefers the clause-internal distribution, with fronting being highly dispreferred.

3. Theoretical background: review of relevant studies

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework of the dissertation and presents a review of previous works addressing A-bar phenomena from a broader theoretical perspective. The structure of the chapter is outlined below.

In section 3.1, I first introduce the relevant theoretical concepts related to Generative Grammar and the Minimalist Program by providing an overview of the representational and computational devices employed under this research model. Then, in section 3.2, I provide a comparison between the Minimalist Program and the Cartographic Approach, a framework focusing on the fine-grained representation of syntactic structures. The introduction of both frameworks is necessary to the extent that the analysis developed throughout the dissertation is more Minimalist in nature, whereas the Cartographic framework is often adopted in previous studies of NIDs. Section 3.3 introduces some of the literature pertaining to A-bar phenomena: successive-cyclicity, island effects, phasal domains, wh-interrogatives, and contrastive focus. Finally, Section 3.4 provides a general summary.

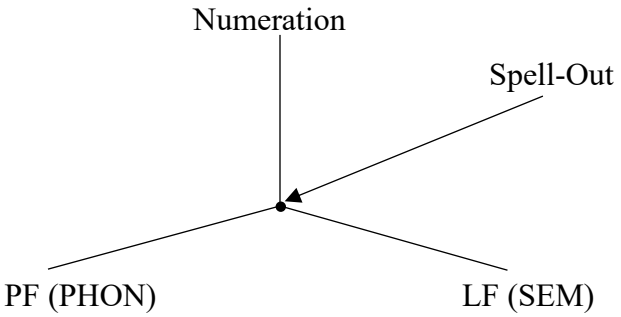
3.1 The Minimalist Program

The Minimalist Program, as first developed in Chomsky (1993; 1995), builds on earlier developments within Transformational Generative Grammar, in particular the Principles and Parameters framework and its implementation in the Government and Binding (GB) theory. Within the GB model, syntactic derivations are assumed to involve four levels of representation: D(eep)-Structure, S(urface)-Structure, Phonological Form (PF), and Logical Form (LF), which are related through derivational operations (Lasnik 2002).

The Minimalist Program departs from this architecture by questioning the theoretical necessity of D-Structure and S-Structure as independent levels of representation. As noted by Lasnik (2002), once copies (rather than traces) are assumed, the information previously attributed to D-Structure can be recovered from derived representations. Consequently, Minimalism reduces the representational devices and reconceptualizes syntactic derivation as a bottom-up, economy-

driven process, where narrow syntax interacts with the sensory-motor (PF) and conceptual-intentional (LF) systems. Under this approach, lexical items are not inserted in a single initial step, but are instead selected gradually from a Numeration, i.e., a set of lexical items specified for the derivation, each associated with a given number of occurrences. Structure is then built via generalized transformations applying cyclically. A crucial stage in the derivation is Spell-Out, at which point the computation splits, sending the relevant information to the Phonological (PF) and the Semantic (LF) components, respectively, as represented in (1).

(1)



The computational system, under this model, operates through a restricted set of fundamental operations, i.e., Merge, Move, and Agree. Merge applies when two distinct syntactic objects are combined, whereas Move re-merges an element already present in the structure, thus deriving displacement effects and yielding copies. Agree, by contrast, is a feature-valuing operation establishing a relation between a probe and a goal, subject to locality constraints. As formulated by Chomsky (2000), Agree requires that the goal be within the domain of the probe and enter into a matching relation with it. Through this operation, uninterpretable features, i.e., features that cannot be interpreted at the interfaces, are valued and subsequently deleted, ensuring convergence of the derivation.

Feature theory plays a central role in the Minimalist Program: lexical items are specified as bundles of semantic, syntactic, and phonological features, which are further classified as interpretable or uninterpretable. Uninterpretable features must be checked and eliminated in the course of the derivation, and this requirement drives syntactic operations such as movement and agreement. In particular, probe-goal relations enable feature valuation, while so-called edge

features are commonly assumed to trigger movement operations. Another property concerns the timing of feature checking, which correlates with the visibility of movement. In some languages, feature-driven movement is overt, yielding observable displacement at PF; in others, it is covert and only detectable at LF. This contrast is captured in terms of strong versus weak features. Strong features must be checked before Spell-Out, resulting in overt movement, whereas weak features may be checked after Spell-Out, giving rise to covert movement. This asymmetry is regulated by economy principles, in particular, procrastinate (Chomsky 1993, 1995), which favors delaying operations whenever possible.

Turning to clause-structure, Minimalism adopts a reduced clausal architecture. Rather than positing a proliferation of functional projections motivated by morphological considerations, the theory assumes a minimal set of heads, typically C°, T°, *v*°, and V°, yielding the following representation (2):

(2) [CP C° [TP T° [*v*P *v*° [VP V°]]]]

Within this system, traditional configurational notions such as head-complement and head-specifier relations are included under the more general notion of *minimal domain*. The minimal domain of a head includes all positions structurally associated with it and can be further subdivided into internal domains (associated with complements) and edge domains (associated with specifiers).

Taken together, these assumptions define a model of the computational system in which syntactic structure is generated through a highly constrained set of operations, guided by interface conditions and general principles of economy. Within this framework, cross-linguistic variation is not attributed to differences in representational levels, but rather to the feature composition of lexical items and to the timing of operations within the derivation. This perspective provides the theoretical foundation for the analysis developed in the following chapters, where the interaction between feature valuation, movement, and interfaces will be examined in more detail.

3.2 The Minimalist Program vs the Cartographic Approach

Towards the end of the same decade in which the Minimalist Program was first introduced, another line of inquiry, known as the Cartographic Approach (Rizzi 1997), was gaining popularity. Both deal with the same core principles: the central importance of structure building and the related syntactic operations triggered by the presence of formal features. Moreover, both are direct evolutions of the Principles and Parameters framework from the previous decade.

The 1980s had given rise to a series of studies focusing on the hierarchical structures that constitute the bare bones of syntactic derivation and how these interact with cross-linguistic variation (Chomsky 1981; 1986b), with a focus on uncovering the functional heads and projections that constitute the building blocks of sentence structure. Thus, to this decade belong the studies conducted by Abney (1987) and Pollock (1989) aimed at investigating the hierarchical projections constituting the DP and the IP systems, respectively. These investigations conducted in the 1980s brought us to Minimalism and Cartography, which adopt the same core principles, but diverge in their approaches to the study of syntax. The former focuses on the "minimal" projections involved in sentence formation and on the related operations (Chomsky 1995), while the latter focuses on the representation of detailed maps hosting numerous functional projections that are assumed to be necessary in the understanding of structure building (Rizzi 1997; Cinque 1999; Belletti 2004). Since the core principles of Minimalism were already introduced at the beginning of the chapter, this section is mostly dedicated to presenting the Cartographic Approach.

3.2.1 The Cartographic Approach

Cartography maintains the key minimalist ideas that sentences are built via syntactic operations triggered by formal features. Unlike Minimalism, however, which employs a simpler structural mapping, the Cartographic Approach presupposes that there are several independent functional projections dedicated to hosting as many morphosyntactic features (Cinque & Rizzi 2008). There are two main perspectives to this matter within the cartographic literature. The more radical point of view is that the number and order of these functional projections are universal, with cross-linguistic differences being ascribed to the use of different syntactic operations or the degree of overtly realized functional projections. The more moderate point of view, on the other hand, is that different languages select different functional projections from UG (Cinque & Rizzi 2008).

When it comes to the type and distribution of these functional projections, three main works have initiated the cartographic investigation of three different areas of the clause: Rizzi (1997) of the left periphery, Cinque (1999) of the IP area, and Belletti (2004) of the low periphery.[37]

Rizzi's (1997; et seq.) study focuses on the CP area, also known as the left periphery of the clause. In particular, the author investigates the functional projections that are part of this domain by looking at standard Italian, which presents an articulated left periphery, hosting elements such as contrastive focus, topic, and wh-phrases. The main conclusion is that, especially for morpho-syntactically complex languages, like most Romance varieties, a single CP projection is not enough to explain such complexity. Instead, the CP should be considered as an "umbrella node" that can be expanded to include multiple functional projections dedicated to elements occupying the left periphery.

Cinque's (1999) work, on the other hand, focuses on the IP area of the clause. Building on the observation already made by Pollock (1989) that adverbs tend to occupy fixed positions within the clause, Cinque (1999) suggests that these adverbs are located in the specifier positions of dedicated functional projections in the IP domain. Similar to Rizzi's (1997) CP, the IP is also assumed to be a label given to a subset of phrasal constituents relevant to the inflectional field, which hosts items related to mood, tense, and aspect. Hence, aspectual, modal, or tense-related adverbs occupy the specifier positions of an extended array of functional projections dedicated to hosting inflectional elements.

Finally, Belletti's (2004) work mirrors Rizzi's (1997) in that, in a parallel way to the left periphery of the CP, the author suggests the existence of a left periphery of the *v*P. This area, referred to as the low periphery of the clause, has been shown to mirror the CP domain by hosting topicalized or focused items. Thus, between the inflectional and the verbal domains, there is assumed to be more complexity related to the presence of multiple functional projections able to accommodate elements like those introduced for the CP area.[38]

In conclusion, the Cartographic Approach puts emphasis on representation and its complexity across languages, while the Minimalist Program is more concerned with the derivation

[37] I briefly illustrate each work in this section, before making a more in-depth comparison, in section 3.3.4, between cartographic studies and minimalist ones as far as A-bar phenomena are concerned.

[38] Cartography also extends beyond clausal structure to the DP domain (see Giusti & Iorvino 2014; inter alia).

of syntactic operations. There is an apparent dichotomy between the two lines of inquiry, with the former presenting a much more articulated delineation of the array of projections constituting the clause, and the latter focusing on the simplicity of the generative devices behind structure building. The two approaches, however, do not contradict each other, but rather offer two different perspectives that may complement each other (Cinque & Rizzi 2008), with many authors combining the two.

The following section provides an overview of previous works focusing on A-bar phenomena, both from a minimalist and a cartographic perspective.

3.3 A-bar phenomena in Generative Grammar

Generative Grammar distinguishes between two types of movement: 'A' and 'A-bar'. The term 'A-bar movement' was first introduced in the 1980s within the Government and Binding theory to distinguish it from and contrast it to A(rgument)-movement (Chomsky 1986a, 1993, 1995; Müller 1995; Richards 2014), that is, DP-movement. A-movement typically targets positions such as Spec,TP, the grammatical subject position in many languages, including English; whereas A-bar movement typically targets positions in Spec,CP (Richards 2014), and is not limited to DP arguments.

A-bar movement encompasses a variety of syntactic phenomena involving, but not limited to, wh-interrogatives, contrastive focus, and relative clauses. These phenomena are associated with quantificational/Operator relations that target the CP domain (Chomsky 1977; Cinque 1990; Rizzi 1990; 1997). Specifically, these dependencies involve movement of XPs functioning as syntactic Operators, whose traces/copies (Bošković & Nunes 2007) are variables specified as [- anaphoric; - pronominal] (Cinque 1990; Haegeman 1994).[39] That copies left behind in A-bar movement are variables is supported by the presence of parasitic gaps and by crossover effects. According to Engdahl (1983), parasitic gaps are only licensed by variables that are the result of overt A-bar movement. Consider the structures in (3):

[39] Going forward, I will be employing the term 'copies' to refer to the traces left behind by syntactic movement, following current terminology in the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995; Nunes 1995).

(3) a. What$_i$ did I arrange t_i [CP without cleaning e_i]?

b. *I arranged the dishes$_i$ [CP without cleaning e_i].

c. *The dishes$_i$ were arranged t_i [CP without cleaning e_i].

The examples in (3) involve a parasitic gap e_i, which is coindexed with the object of the matrix verb *arrange*. While the presence of this gap is grammatical in (3a), which involves overt A-bar movement of *what*, whose copy t_i is a variable, it is ungrammatical in both (3b) and (3c). In (3b), the object of the matrix verb does not move, while in (3c), it undergoes A-movement. Thus, the copy t_i in (3c) is not a variable and therefore cannot license the parasitic gap e_i.

As far as crossover effects are concerned, they can be subcategorized into Weak and Strong Crossover Effects (Wasow 1979). I illustrate the latter in (4):

(4) a. Who$_{i/*j}$ does she$_j$ usually clean $t_{i/*j}$?

b. Jean$_i$ se$_i$ lave t_i.

The object copy left behind by wh-movement in (4a) is c-commanded by the subject *she* and is seen to need a distinct index (i.e., it cannot be bound by it). In the French example in (4b), on the other hand, which does not involve Operator movement, coindexation of the object copy is possible.

Another key feature of A-bar movement is that it proceeds step-by-step, or successive-cyclically (Chomsky 1977; 2008; Richards 2014; van Urk 2020), a concept explained in the following section.

3.3.1 Successive-cyclic movement

Successive-cyclic movement is a syntactic phenomenon pertaining to locality. An initial approach to this concept comes from the first decades of Generative Grammar, when Chomsky (1964) observes that syntactic rules must be local. Later, Chomsky (1973; 1977) elaborates on this locality condition by showing that elements undergoing long-distance movement (i.e., movement encompassing more than one clause) must pass through Spec,CP of each clause. To this observation, we owe the formulation of two of the main constraints on movement in Generative

Grammar: the *Subjacency Principle* and the *Superiority Condition* (Chomsky 1973). According to the *Subjacency Principle*, "movement across more than one bounding node is prohibited" (Chomsky 1973), where S/IP is a bounding node. This is observable in (5):

(5) a. [**CP** What$_i$ did Mary think [**CP** t_i John ate t_i]]?
b. *[**CP** What$_i$ did Mary think [**CP** when$_j$ t_j John ate t_i]]?

Example (5) demonstrates the *Subjacency Principle* applied to a long-distance dependency. A long-distance dependency is a syntactic construction involving embedding, in which a moved XP is syntactically related to its original position within another clause. The asymmetry in (5) is explained by the fact that the element undergoing A-bar movement, *what*, can first pass through the CP domain of the embedded clause before continuing on its path to Spec,CP in the matrix clause. If the intermediary specifier position is already occupied, like in (5b), by *when*, successive-cyclic movement of *what* cannot occur, *Subjacency* is violated, and the structure is ungrammatical.

Successive-cyclicity through the edge of embedded clauses is also confirmed by long-distance dependencies in Germanic languages other than English, where an intermediate copy is not just theorized, but overtly realized. This is the case of long-distance wh-interrogatives in certain German and Dutch dialects. In these varieties, an intermediate copy is visible at PF, a phenomenon known as wh-doubling (Beck 2006; Barbiers 2014). There are two main strategies associated with this phenomenon: one in which the doubled wh-phrases are identical (identical doubling), as in (6a), and one in which they diverge (non-identical doubling), as in (6b).

(6) a. [CP **Wen** glaubst du [CP **wen** sie getroffen hat]]?
who believe.PRS you who she met have.PRS
'Who do you believe she has met?' (Adapted, van Urk 2020: ex. 10a, p. 118)

b. [CP **Was** glaubt Hans, [CP **wen** Karl gesehen hat]]?
what believe.PRS Hans whom Karl seen have.PRS
'Who does Hans believe that Karl saw?' (Adapted, Miyagawa 2004: p. 10)

In the two constructions illustrated in (6), it is shown that the intermediate copy at the edge of the embedded clause is overtly realized. Specifically, in (6a) we observe a case of identical doubling,

where the wh-phrase in matrix Spec,CP and the one in embedded Spec,CP are phonologically the same. In (6b), on the other hand, non-identical doubling is exemplified. The type of construction in (6b) has been analyzed as possessing an Operator occupying the scope position in Spec,CP of the matrix clause, and an intermediate copy, bearing a different PF form, in embedded Spec,CP (Miyagawa 2004).[40] The most important takeaway here, despite the dichotomy between identical and non-identical types, is that both the wh-Operator and an intermediate copy are visible at PF (van Urk 2020). Alternatively, such non-identical structures can be treated under an indirect dependency analysis *à la* Dayal (1994; 2000) and Lipták (2004). Rather than positing a direct syntactic chain, this approach treats the matrix wh-phrase as an existential quantifier over propositions, while the embedded clause stands as a full-fledged interrogative that semantically restricts the domain of the matrix quantifier.

Returning to the *Superiority Condition*, which states that "if an operation can apply to more than one constituent, it has to be applied to the one that is superior" (Chomsky 1973), I offer an illustration in (7):

(7) a. **Who**$_{\mathbf{i}}$ will t_i eat **what**?
b. ***What**$_{\mathbf{i}}$ will **who** eat t_i?

Examples (7a) and (7b) show a multiple wh-interrogative. In particular, they show that, in the presence of two wh-phrases in the same sentence, the movement operation must always apply to the hierarchically higher element. In (7a), *who* moves from its base-generated position as the subject of the matrix verb into Spec,CP. If we try to move the lower wh-phrase into Spec,CP, like in (7b), the structure becomes ungrammatical, as it would constitute a violation of the *Superiority Condition*.

In Minimalism, these properties of successive-cyclicity are understood in terms of locality and in relation to the concept of phases. Moreover, syntactic islands, another phenomenon observed

[40] This is crucial since Eastern Lombard also has similar cases of non-identical doubling, where the Operator has a phonological form resembling that of a different wh-word than the one used as an intermediate copy.

in relation to A-bar movement (Ross 1967), can also be understood via phases, as discussed in the next section.

3.3.2 Locality, phases, and islands

This section provides an overview of phases and islands by examining the interactions between locality conditions, phasal domains, and island effects. Islands have been an object of investigation ever since Ross's (1967) seminal work on this topic. In his study, Ross (1967) observes that certain transformational rules cannot take place out of specific environments, defined as islands. These constructions are exemplified in (8), which shows a subject island, (8a), an adjunct island, (8b), a complex NP island, (8c), and a wh-island, (8d).

(8) a. *[$_{CP}$ [Of which country]$_i$ did [$_{DP}$ the author t_i] release a new novel]? (Subject Island)
b. *[$_{CP}$ [Which pasta]$_i$ did you leave [$_{CP}$ before eating t_i]]? (Adjunct Island)
c. *[$_{CP}$ What$_i$ do they suspect [$_{DP}$ the fact Mary that said t_i]? (Complex NP)
d. *[$_{CP}$ Where$_i$ did the student wonder [$_{CP}$ whether to do the homework t_i]]? (Wh-Island)

In (8), movement of the indexed wh-constituents cannot take place, as it is blocked by various elements, depending on the structure under consideration: in (8a), it is shown that extraction out of a subject (bracketed DP) is disallowed; example (8b) illustrates that the same applies to extraction out of adjuncts (embedded CP); (8c) shows that movement out of a complex NP (also known as the complex NP constraint) is forbidden; while in (8d) movement is depicted to be blocked across another wh-word (*whether*).

The study of islands has evolved over time, with Ross (1984) himself introducing negative islands, as illustrated in (9), which shows that movement across negation (*didn't*) is prohibited.

(9) *[$_{CP}$ How$_i$ didn't you [$_{vP}$ behave t_i on vacation]]? (Negative Island)

One important study on the topic comes from Rizzi (1990), who introduced the concept of *Relativized Minimality*. According to the latter, islands are the result of intervening elements along the path of extraction, where the intervening element is similar in nature and c-commands the

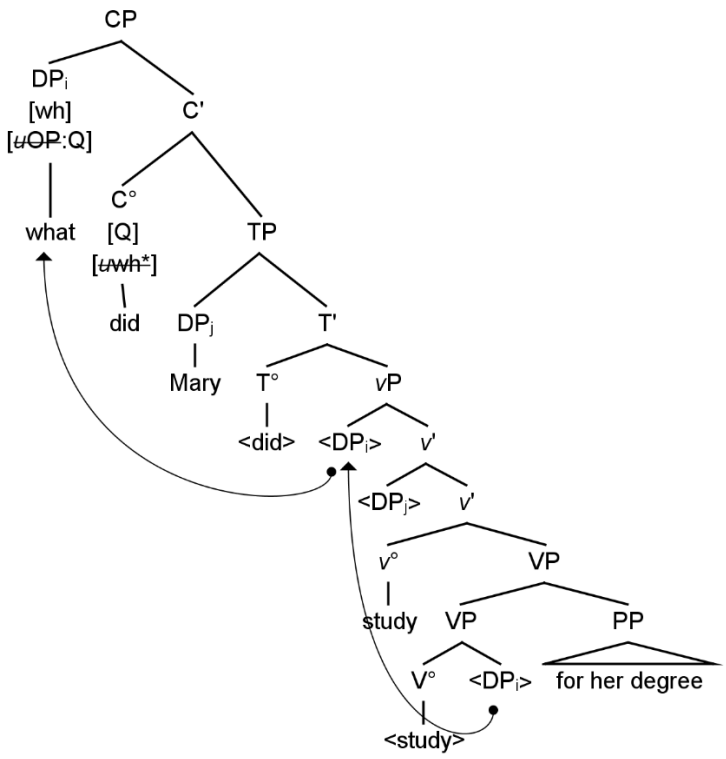
extracting item. In Minimalist terms, this can be translated as a ban on extraction of a syntactic item possessing the same set of formal features as the intervening element and the landing site (cf. Boeckx 2012). This is clearly observable in (6d), where extraction of the interrogative wh-phrase *where* from the island is shown to be blocked by the wh-item *whether*. Thus, the intervener and the item to be extracted are both Quantifiers possessing the same Operator and wh-features.

In Minimalism, the notion of 'islands' has been integrated into the concept of 'phases' (Chomsky 1993; 1995). Phases can be defined as semantically and phonologically coherent and independent domains, specifically CP, *v*P, and some types of DP, that often constitute points of Spell-Out/transfer to the interfaces (Chomsky, 1995; 2004; 2008).[41] Phases have been categorized into weak and strong. Weak phases do not correspond to a transfer point to the interfaces, due to the fact that they lack an "edge feature", i.e. a feature providing a specifier position at the edge of the phase to be used as an escape hatch from the phasal domain (Chomsky 2001; 2005). Strong phases, on the other hand, are transfer points to the interfaces. They possess specifier positions that allow elements undergoing movement or feature-checking operations (e.g. A-bar phenomena) to escape the phase from which they moved or were base-generated in, and interact with the higher phasal domain (Chomsky 2001; 2005; 2008). Since the A-bar constructions I analyze in chapters 4 and 5 mostly correspond to strong phases, I focus here only on the latter.

Assuming an inverted Y model of the architecture of grammar, as illustrated in (1), once a phasal domain is built, its complement is transferred to the interfaces with the semantic (LF) and the phonological (PF) components. In other words, phases are cyclic syntactic domains that serve as points of transfer to the interfaces. Consequently, at Spell-Out, the complement of the head of the phase becomes inaccessible for further feature-checking operations, as it is transferred to the interfaces (Chomsky 1995; 2008). This explains successive-cyclicity at the CP level, as argued in section 3.1.1. It is now also widely accepted that the edges of all phases, including that of *v*P, are available for successive-cyclic movement (van Urk 2020). This process is exemplified in (10), which illustrates an English wh-interrogative involving an object wh-phrase crossing the *v*P strong phase boundary to check its [wh] and [*u*OP] formal features against C°.

[41] Abels (2012) has also argued for the existence of PP phases.

(10)

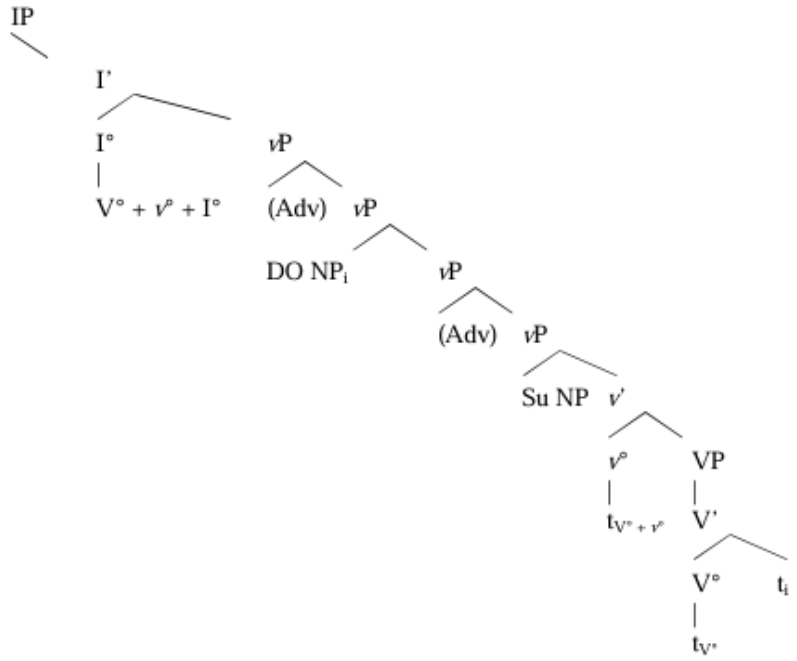


The tree in (10) shows that *what* moves from its base-generated position in order to check its features against the CP domain, as expected from Operators. Since, once *v* is completed, it is spelled-out together with its complement, *what* needs to move to its edge to remain visible to the C° probe, a step allowed by the presence of an edge feature on *v*P, creating a dedicated escape hatch (Chomsky 2001; Nunes 2021).[42] In fact, strong phases are characterized by a property known as the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC), according to which, "in phase α with head H, the domain of H is not accessible to operations outside α, only H and its edge are accessible to such operations" (Chomsky 2001; 2008). Therefore, movement to Spec,CP requires an intermediary position and does not proceed in a single step. Note, however, that the PIC is not always as straightforward as it may seem. Critiques of this property point out that the PIC is either too strong, if no escape hatch is provided, or too weak, if the phase-head can project as many specifiers as needed (Boeckx 2012). Thus, Spec,*v*P may not always correspond to the "ideal" intermediary step

[42] The tree in (10) involves multiple specifiers of *v*P that may be used as escape hatches from the lower phase, in line with Chomsky (2001; 2008), Gallego (2010), among others; however, I remain agnostic as to whether tucking in (Richards 2001) is involved or not.

at the left-edge of the lower phasal domain, especially in Romance. In this language group, the left edge of *v*P is adjoined, not a specifier, as argued by Alboiu (2002) for Romanian. This is observable in (11), where the author illustrates an alternative configuration of the left-edge of the *v*P phase:

(11)



(Alboiu 2002: ex. 45, p. 150)

As seen in (11), the only specifier position in *v*P is occupied by the subject, while its left edge possesses a series of left-adjoined positions that may host, among other things, the DO and adverbials.

Moving to the relationship between phases and islands, island effects are also partially accounted for due to the PIC: whenever the goal surfaces in a different phase than its probe, the two are unable to satisfy their feature-checking requirements because the goal is outside the search domain of its probe (Chomsky 2008). The matter, however, is more nuanced than it appears, as the PIC does not fully explain how extraction from adjuncts (a type of island) is blocked, while extraction from complements (non-islands, as in (5a)) is allowed. Take, for instance, the adjunct island depicted in (12):

(12) *[$_{CP}$ Which book$_i$ did Mary finish a novel [$_{CP}$ before she read t_i]]?

In example (12), the embedded CP is an adjunct clause. It is shown that extraction from this domain is forbidden, resulting in an ungrammatical construction. The temporal adjunct introduced by *before* attaches to the matrix TP projection. In doing so, the embedded CP becomes a sister node of the matrix TP, and the elements inside its domain are outside the search domain of the matrix C probe. Given the PIC, the only way for the wh-item inside the adjunct clause to interact with matrix CP is to move to the edge of the phase it is base-generated in, similarly to the wh-word *what* in the tree in (10), which first moved to the edge of the *v*P phase. However, this is impossible, as adjuncts, unlike complements, are opaque (i.e., impenetrable) phasal domains with inaccessible edges.[43] [44] Thus, the wh-item cannot escape the phase constituting the CP adjunct before it is sent to the interfaces, and the derivation crashes.

Having shown the importance of concepts such as successive-cyclicity, locality, phases, and island effects, I next introduce the two main types of A-bar dependencies at the center of this dissertation: wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus.

3.3.3 Two types of A-bar dependencies: wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus

This section is an overview of wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus from a typological perspective. I first discuss interrogative structures, followed by contrastive focus.

As previously mentioned, wh-interrogatives are a type of A-bar dependency that involves a wh-Operator and a variable (i.e., a copy), as exemplified in (13):

[43] The debate around island effects and their relationship with phases is too long and complex to be the focus of this section. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning two approaches to the matter that can help clarify why adjunct islands are opaque phasal domains.

(i) One comes from Uriagereka (1999), who suggests that, e.g., subject and adjunct islands are the consequence of early transfer to the interfaces, as they are first Spelled-Out and then returned to the tree as a compact, monolithic item from which it is impossible to extract sub-constituents.

(ii) The second comes from Gallego (2010), according to whom Case and Agree are responsible for island effects (cf. Boeckx 2012 for a similar account on agreement). According to this author, Case is what allows a probe to initiate agreement with another constituent: "it is unvalued T (Case) on D that allows the ϕ-features of D to engage in an Agree dependency, making the matched DP transparent" (Gallego 2010: p. 255). Adjuncts, which are often introduced by prepositions, are inactive and cannot Agree because T (Case) has already been valued. Hence, the adjunct is opaque and disallows sub-extraction.

[44] However, see "sideward movement" as discussed in Nunes (2001).

(13) [CP **What**$_i$ did Phoebe and Gigato [vP t_i [v eat t_i]]]?

The way wh-interrogatives behave is language-dependent, meaning that the wh-item may surface in different dedicated syntactic slots, depending on the language under consideration (Cheng 1997). Thus, in the English example in (13), the wh-phrase is merged in the object theta-role position of the VP headed by *eat*; however, it moves to the left periphery of the clause into the CP domain, transiting through the *v*P phase edge. This movement operation is triggered by feature checking requirements. Specifically, while C° is endowed with an interpretable Operator feature, [Q], also responsible for clause-typing, and an uninterpretable wh-feature, [*u*wh], the wh-constituent bears an interpretable wh-feature, [wh], and an uninterpretable Operator feature, [*u*OP] (Miyagawa 2001, Kotek 2014). Under this configuration, the CP domain acts as the probe, while the wh-phrase acts as the goal that needs to agree with its probe in order to value and delete the uninterpretable features before the structure is sent to Spell-Out. In (13), where wh-movement has occurred, either the [*u*OP] or the [*u*wh] must be strong (Chomsky 1995). In this case, it is the [*u*wh*] feature in C° that is strong, as English lacks multiple wh-fronting. This is observable in (14):

(14) a. **Who** read **what**?
b. ***Who what** read?

In example (14a), only one element is shown to raise to the CP field, subject to the Superiority Condition. If both wh-phrases were to move, like in (14b), the structure would be ungrammatical. This means that, once the feature checking requirements of [*u*wh*] in C° are satisfied by *who*, the [*u*OP] feature in *what* can be checked via Agree, with no need for the movement operation to take place.

Not all languages, however, behave like English. Another typology of languages constructs wh-interrogatives by keeping the wh-phrase clause-internally, or *in-situ*. Take, for instance, the interrogative in (15) from Japanese, an SOV language:

(15) John-wa **nani**-o yonda-no?
John-TOP what-ACC read-Q
'What did John read?' (Cheng, 2009: p. 774)

In the example in (15), the wh-item is shown to surface *in-situ* between the subject *John-wa* and the verb *yonda-no*. Unlike English, Japanese does not overtly move the wh-element from its base-generated, theta-role assigning position. Instead, the relevant formal features are checked under c-command via the operation Agree (Kotek 2014). Consequently, in a minimalist framework, Japanese belongs to the typology of languages whose uninterpretable features associated with wh-interrogatives are weak. Specifically, both the [*u*wh] feature on C° and the [*u*OP] feature on the wh-phrase are weak. Movement to the CP domain is not necessary for those features to be valued and deleted, as the operation Agree suffices (Mathieu 2016).

There is a third typology of languages when it comes to strong vs weak interrogative-related features. Their behavior, however, is mostly visible in multiple wh-questions, as these are languages in which all the wh-phrases move overtly to CP. This is the case for Romanian, as shown in (16):

(16) a. **Cine$_i$ ce$_j$** a t_i citit t_j?
who what have.PRS read

b. ***Ce$_j$ cine$_i$** a t_i citit t_j?
what who have.PRS read

'Who read what?'

In example (16), both wh-items are shown to raise into the CP domain from their base-generated, theta-role assigning positions, but linearization obeys Superiority (Alboiu 2000). Hence, both uninterpretable features associated with interrogative constructions are strong (Alboiu 2000; Bošković 1997; 2001); the strong [*u*wh*] feature on C° and the strong [*u*OP*] feature on the wh-phrases require the Move operation in order for them to be valued and deleted before Spell-Out; otherwise, the derivation crashes.[45]

[45] It should be noted that, while there is a general agreement on the strength of the formal features triggering multiple wh-fronting, there is no universal consensus on the type of operator involved in this operation. Bošković (1999), for

I now turn my attention to contrastive focus, which also involves A-bar movement and presents cross-linguistic typological differences. There are different types of focus constructions observed in the syntax literature, but the main split is between new information focus and operator/contrastive focus (Guéron 1980; Rizzi 1997; Kiss 1998; Kratzer & Selkirk 2020). The type of focus that is generally referred to as information focus corresponds to the rheme of the sentence, which is the element conveying new information pertaining to what has already been introduced in the discourse (topic/theme) (Raposo & Uriagereka 1995). For the purpose of this section (and throughout the dissertation), however, we are concerned with corrective/contrastive focus. The latter type of focus is employed to define a member of a pre-established set of syntactic units (Erteschik-Shir 1997; Kiss 1998). More specifically, its main function is to represent a specific, complete subset that contrasts with and can be distinguished from all the other elements belonging to a contextually or situationally given set for which the predicate holds true. Another crucial factor tied to the semantics of contrastive focus is its uniqueness: contrastive foci cannot co-occur with other such elements within the same clause (Rizzi 1997).

Contrastive focus is cross-linguistically associated with different properties pertaining to different modules of the grammar. Phonologically speaking, contrastively focused constituents tend to possess a heavily marked prosodic contour (Zubizarreta 1998; Samek-Lodovici 2015; Rizzi & Bocci 2017). Morphologically, focus may be indicated via a morpheme marker accompanying the focused unit (Zimmermann & Onea 2011). At the semantic level, contrastive focus possesses the status of Quantifier (Rizzi 1997; Kiss 1998; Herburger 2000). With respect to pragmatics, focus is employed to describe a class of elements that have a prominent role in information structure. In very simplified terms, focus is employed to convey new information, but it is not limited to this function (Rizzi 1997; Kiss 1998; Rizzi & Bocci 2017). Finally, syntactically, (contrastive) foci are associated with a [FOC] feature that needs to be checked (Horvath 1995; Rizzi & Bocci 2017).

Similarly to the picture depicted for wh-interrogatives, contrastive focus exhibits cross-linguistic variation concerning its syntactic distribution and the relationship between the latter and formal features (É. Kiss 1998). The example in (17) illustrates a capitalized contrastively focused constituent and its variable in its base-generated position:

---

example, argues in favor of the presence of a focus feature. Since this section serves merely as an introduction to wh-interrogatives, I remain, for now, agnostic concerning the type of Operator involved.

(17) WATER$_i$ I forgot to buy t_i (, not bread).[46]

In example (17), contrastive focus surfaces in the specifier position of CP, while its base-generated position is in the object of the verb *buy*. Similarly to wh-interrogatives, movement to the CP domain of focused constituents is also triggered by formal feature-checking requirements (Rizzi 1997; Rizzi & Bocci 2017). In this case, C° is endowed with a [FOC] feature that is checked against by an XP, generated in a clause-internal position, that possesses a matching [*u*FOC] feature. The situation, however, is slightly more complicated than with wh-phrases, as the latter act as the goal of a C° that is already endowed with interrogative features from the lexicon (Aboh 2010) that are involved in clause-typing specifications (Cheng 1991). When it comes to focused constituents, Focus seems to be an optional feature added to the relevant XP as it enters the numeration (Aboh 2010).

In addition to the fronting configuration, depending on the language under consideration, contrastive focus may also appear clause-internally, which has been traditionally defined as *in-situ*. For example, English and Romance languages allow this type of focus construction, which, especially in the latter language group, tends to optionally alternate with focus fronting. Other languages only employ the clause-internal configuration. Example (18) illustrates this syntactic distribution in English:

(18) I forgot to buy WATER (, not bread).

Thus, contrastive focus appears to behave similarly to wh-interrogatives; however, unlike the interrogative structures, the focused constituents in (17) and (18) are able to *optionally* surface either in a fronted position or *in-situ*. One could either argue that movement is triggered by a strong focus feature (Frascarelli 2000) or that other factors are at play. For instance, Alboiu (2004) argues

[46] Note, however, that, while acceptable, this type of focus configuration is not common in English, which prefers to convey contrastive focus *in-situ* or via clefting, as in (i):

(i) It's the water that I forgot to buy (, not the bread).

that optionality in contrastive focus movement arises from the optionality of the [FOC] feature to be associated with an OCC(urrence) feature. The latter is assumed to be optionally encoded by [FOC] in the numeration and to be the actual trigger of a moved contrastive focus, with relevant shift in meaning.

In addition to the syntactic properties described so far, contrastive focus possesses a series of characteristics associated with the SEM and PHON components, as explained earlier in the section. Semantically, contrastive focus is a Quantifier/Operator binding a variable. Focus has been analyzed as an element evoking alternatives, no matter its subtype (Rooth 1992). Furthermore, the notion of contrast associated with focus is strongly tied to information structure and refers to contrasting entities in the ongoing discourse (Kratzer & Selkirk 2020). Thus, in examples (16) and (17), the context involves a grocery list where the focused DP *WATER* contrasts with other potential members of said grocery list, e.g., the DP *bread*. Additionally, unlike wh-Operators, which can be recursive, as shown in examples (13) and (15), contrastive focus is unique, i.e., it is incompatible with other elements of its kind (Rizzi 1997). This is exemplified in (19):

(19) *MARY(, not John) forgot to buy WATER(, not bread).

If one were to apply a prosodic contour where the two capitalized DPs in (19) are more prominent than the other constituents in the sentence, the latter would result ungrammatical. This is because both DPs would be interpreted as contrastive foci, and this goes against the uniqueness requirements of this type of Operator dependency.

This section has provided an introduction to wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus from a typological point of view. Concerning the interrogatives, it was shown that the crosslinguistic variation observed for these constructions can be explained by the relationship between formal features and Operator movement. As for the contrastive focus overview, this section has shown that all the different modules tackled in the previous paragraphs – syntax, semantics, phonology, pragmatics – are intertwined when it comes to its expression. In sum, the presence of contrast tends to involve movement to the CP domain, or a specific prosodic contour when there is no discernible overt movement of the focused XP, or both. The following section introduces some of the same phenomena according to the Cartographic Approach.

3.3.4 A-bar phenomena according to Minimalism and Cartography

This section addresses A-bar movement by presenting a comparison between Minimalism and Cartography. Given the types of constructions I analyze, I mainly focus on work by Rizzi (1997, et seq.) and Belletti (2004, et seq.).

While the theoretical concepts introduced in this chapter apply to both the Minimalist Program and the Cartographic Approach, the representation of A-bar constructions differs, with Cartography presenting a more detailed array of functional projections. The latter are quite simple in Minimalism, and are schematized in (20):

(20) CP > TP > *v*P > VP

As observable in example (19), under Minimalism, we get the core projections constituting the clause spine. When it comes to A-bar phenomena, the most relevant areas of the clause are the CP and the edge of the *v*P projections. In particular, the specifier positions of these two projections constitute the landing sites of Operator movement, as shown, e.g., in (10). Furthermore, if successive-cyclic movement through the *v*P edge is crucial for C-probing, this position not only acts as a transition site, but must also be the landing site in languages whose wh-phrases in canonical interrogatives appear clause-internally, but not quite in their base-generated positions, i.e., *in-situ*. This has been argued for Malayalam, a Dravidian SOV language, by Jayaseelan (1996). Consider (21), where the wh-constituent is seen to occupy a position between the clause-initial object and the clause-final verb. This yields an OSV word-order, instead of the canonical SOV, constituting evidence of clause-internal A-bar movement.

(21) a. Nin-ne **aar** talli?
you=ACC who beat.PAST

b. ***Aar** nin-ne talli?
who you=ACC beat.PAST

'Who beat you?' (Adapted, Jayaseelan 1996: ex. 7, p. 65)

Data like (21) provide empirical support for the parallel between the CP and the *v*P phases.

Cartography expands the CP and *v*P phases to accommodate languages that exhibit more articulated structures in those areas of the clause. Rizzi (1997) expands the left periphery, in order to provide an appropriate representational device for the complex syntactic structures observed for standard Italian. The author observed that, in this language, the CP domain can host a number of rigidly ordered functional elements disposed hierarchically. Rizzi (1997, et seq.) concludes that this functional domain comprises the following projections, (22):

(22) ForceP > TopP* > FocP > TopP* > FinP = CP

In example (22), I show that all the functional projections on the left correspond to an "exploded" CP node. ForceP is the locus of illocutionary force, or clause-type, and it hosts complementizers like Italian *che* 'that'. The specifier of TopP* is the landing site of topicalized elements, and it is marked by an asterisk to show that it is recursive. FocP, on the other hand, hosts contrastively focused elements in its specifier position, as well as wh-phrases, and it is a unique position. Lastly, FinP is occupied by items pertaining to the finiteness of the clause, such as the Italian complementizer *di* 'to/for'. The initial mapping has been expanded to accommodate even more functional projections (Rizzi & Bocci 2017), yielding a hierarchy like the one in (23):

(23) ForceP > TopP* > IntP > TopP* > FocP > TopP* > ModP > TopP* > Q_{emb}P > FinP

In (23), in addition to the already introduced projections, a crucial landing site is IntP, which hosts complementizers such as Italian *se* 'if' and, most importantly, it is the projection where the wh-phrase *why* is base-generated. ModP is the locus of (non-topical and non-focal) preposed adverbs, while Q_{emb}P is only employed in embedded questions to host wh-items.

A similar approach was adopted by Belletti (2004) for the *v*P. The author proposes an extended low periphery of the clause, hosted at the edge of the *v*P phase, and which partially mirrors the left periphery depicted above. In particular, Belletti (2004) claims that the edge of the *v*P phase may host topicalized and focused constituents, each targeting a dedicated projection. The low periphery is schematized in (24):

(24) […] > TP > TopP* > FocP > TopP* > *v*P > […]

Example (24) shows two recursive topic projections hosting topicalized items, and a focus projection hosting focused elements and clause-internal wh-items in canonical interrogatives.

In sum, when it comes to A-bar phenomena, the generating devices at the basis of constructions such as wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus are the same for both Minimalism and Cartography. Nonetheless, while the former puts more emphasis on those very generating devices, i.e., on the Move, Merge, and Agree operations and their triggers, the latter concentrates on the representation of those structures. Thus, in Minimalism, A-bar movement is set off by feature-checking, requiring the Agree and Move operations. The landing sites of these operations are either at the left of the CP domain or at the left of the *v*P domain, with the latter constituting an intermediate landing site where elements move in order to escape the lower phase. While a similar approach is adopted by Cartography, the landing sites differ, with the Cartographic Approach adopting an array of dedicated projections such as FocP and IntP, whose specifiers are the landing/generating sites of A-bar moved wh-items and contrastive focus. Lastly, while these elements move to the edge of the *v*P phase because of an edge feature under Minimalism, under Cartography, e.g., Bonan (2021) argues that a focus feature is responsible for this movement.

The purpose of this section was to provide a general comparison between the Minimalist Program and the Cartographic Approach by looking at A-bar movement. It was shown that, while apparently contradictory, the two research programs in fact complement each other. The differences and similarities between them are crucial in understanding some of the previous research on A-bar phenomena in NIDs. Given that most of the past studies are cartographic in nature, the comparison introduced in this section is crucial.

3.4 Summing up

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework adopted throughout the dissertation by introducing the Minimalist Program and the Cartographic Approach, and by reviewing the core properties of A-bar phenomena.

From a Minimalist perspective, as shown in section 3.1, syntactic structures are analyzed as the output of a constrained computational system, in which hierarchical representations are built through operations such as Merge, Move, and Agree, and are regulated by interface conditions and principles of economy. Within this framework, feature valuation and locality constraints play a central role in determining the distribution of syntactic dependencies.

The comparison with the Cartographic Approach from section 3.2 highlights a complementary perspective, in which the fine-grained representation of functional projections provides a more detailed mapping of the syntactic domains targeted by A-bar movement. While Minimalism emphasizes the derivational mechanisms underlying structure building, Cartography offers a richer representational map of the clause, particularly within the CP and *v*P peripheries. This comparison provides a framework for situating previous analyses of A-bar syntax in NIDs, introduced in chapters 4 and 5, within the two main lines of inquiry.

Building on these theoretical foundations, section 3.3 discusses A-bar phenomena, showing that dependencies such as wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus are shaped by the interaction of feature-driven movement, locality constraints, and phase-based computation. In particular, successive-cyclicity, island effects, and the behavior of phasal domains have been shown to follow from general principles involving the accessibility of syntactic constituents during the derivation.

With respect to the two main phenomena analyzed in this dissertation, the main similarities and differences between wh-interrogatives and contrastive foci are summarized in *Table 1*.

Table 1

	Operator-Variable Dependency	**Formal Features**	**Uniqueness**	**Prosodic Contour**	**Clause-Typing in C°**
whP	✓	*u*OP > ~~*u*OP~~:Q; wh	X	X	✓
contrastive focus	✓	*u*OP > ~~*u*OP~~:FOC	✓	✓	X

Taken together, these approaches provide a framework in which A-bar dependencies can be analyzed as the result of the interaction between computational operations, representational structure, and interface conditions. This framework is adopted in the following chapters to account for the distribution and interpretation of A-bar constructions in Eastern Lombard.

4. Interrogative Operators in Eastern Lombard

This chapter develops the core analysis of the Eastern Lombard interrogative data. First, I summarize some of the main studies on wh-interrogatives in NIDs by reviewing the three main approaches to these constructions: remnant movement, developed within the Cartographic Approach; wh-*in-situ*, within the Minimalist framework; and short-movement, which combines both Cartography and Minimalism. Then, I provide an in-depth account of wh-interrogatives in the Eastern Lombard dialects under consideration, and, since a comprehensive analysis of these constructions cannot be provided in isolation, I briefly discuss other A-bar phenomena in Eastern Lombard, such as islands and relative clauses. The chapter's organization is outlined below.

Section 4.1 constitutes a literature review of previous studies focusing on wh-interrogatives in NIDs. Then, section 4.2 provides a syntactic analysis of the three possible strategies for wh-interrogatives in Eastern Lombard exemplified in (1), and first introduced in sections 2.2.4 and 2.3.2: wh-doubling, (1a), wh-fronting, (1b), and a clause-internal wh-phrase, (1c). It also accounts for the observable cross-dialectal variation and dialect-internal optionality by presenting a unified account.

(1) a. '**Ngo** se-t naʃut '**ngont**? *Monnese*
where be.PRS=SCL.2SG born where
'Where were you born?'

b. '**Ndo** e-t disnat? *Soltino*
where have.PRS=SCL.2SG have-dinner
'Where did you have dinner?'

c. S' e-t conuʃit **endoe** con la to fonna? *Castenedolese*
CL.REFL have.PRS=SCL.2SG known where with the your wife
'Where did you meet your wife?'

Section 4.3 provides a comparison between previous works and the analysis at the center of this chapter, by showing similarities, but especially where they diverge. Finally, it concludes the chapter.

4.1 Previous analyses of wh-interrogatives in NIDs

This section is dedicated to the literature review of studies focusing on wh-interrogatives in NIDs. Some of these studies include a number of Eastern Lombard dialects (Manzini & Savoia 2005; et seq.), while others engage with adjacent dialects and varieties, most prominently those spoken in Veneto (Bonan 2017, et seq.; Munaro 1999, et seq.; Poletto 2000, et seq.; inter alia). Most of these analyses are carried out within the cartographic framework, with Manzini & Savoia (2005, et seq.) adopting Minimalism. In particular, as far as the cartographic studies are concerned, a group of them argues in favor of multiple dedicated functional projections in the left periphery hosting not only the moved wh-phrases, but also the moved remnant IP (Munaro 1999, et seq.; Poletto 2000, et seq.). Bonan (2017, et seq.), on the other hand, is an advocate for short movement to the low periphery of the clause. The following subsections provide an overview of these analyses: first, I summarize those dealing with remnant movement, followed by the ones adopting a Minimalist framework, and I conclude with Bonan's short movement analysis.

4.1.1 Cartographic approaches: remnant movement analyses

Some of the most prominent pioneering studies on A-bar phenomena in NIDs were carried out within the Cartographic Approach.[47] One of the first descriptive analyses mentioning Cartography in the context of NIDs comes from Munaro (1999), who focuses on Veneto varieties, notably Bellunese, as well as Lombard ones. The adoption of Cartography for the investigation of these phenomena becomes even more prominent in subsequent years, with a string of studies investigating wh-interrogatives and related structures that have been conducted since the early 2000s (Poletto & Pollock 2000; Munaro & Pollock 2005; Poletto 2000; Poletto & Pollock 2004; Munaro & Poletto 2023).

In addition to their adoption of the Cartographic Approach, a common feature of these studies is their reliance on the extended left periphery of the clause as the locus of not only A-bar moved wh-phrases, but also of the remnant of the clause. In particular, no matter the strategy

[47] However, interrogative structures in NIDs had already been the object of previous studies (see, e.g., Benincà & Vanelli 1982).

adopted – doubling, fronting, or clause-internal whP – the wh-constituents are assumed to occupy dedicated projections in the CP domain. I summarize below each approach to these three strategies.

4.1.1.1 Poletto & Pollock (2000)

In the context of NIDs, wh-doubling seems to be particularly productive in Lombard varieties, (2a), but is also present in certain dialects from Veneto, (2b).

(2) a. **Ke** pode-i fa **ki**? *Franciacorta*
what can=SCL.1SG do what
'What can I do?' (Adapted, Munaro 1999: ex. 3.21b, p. 163)

b. '**Ndo** e-lo 'ndat **endoe**? *Illasiano*
where be.PRS=SCL.3SG went where
'Where did he go?' (Adapted, Poletto & Pollock 2004: ex. 1b, p. 242)

The wh-patterns in (2) resemble those illustrated in Chapter 2 for Eastern Lombard. Specifically, the interrogatives in (2) involve non-identical doubling, where the fronted wh-item is typically distinct and shorter.[48] In Cartographic approaches arguing in favor of remnant movement, both wh-constituents are analyzed as occupying the left periphery of the clause. One of the first such analyses comes from Poletto & Pollock (2000), who, among other phenomena, analyze wh-doubling in Bellunese, a dialect from Veneto, (3).[49]

(3) **Kossa** ha-lo fat **ke**? *Bellunese*
what have.PRS=SCL.3SG done what
'What did he do?' (Adapted, Poletto & Pollock 2000: ex. 38, p. 262)

[48] Note that, while identical doubling is also present across NIDs, it seems to be less prevalent, so most previous analyses tend to focus on the non-identical counterpart. This strategy is touched upon in the analysis section, and is illustrated in (i):

(i) **Ke** ghe-t da finì **ke**?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG to finish.INF what
'What do you have to finish?' (Adapted, Munaro 1999: ex. 3.20e, p. 162)

[49] The authors also tackle Monnese (Eastern Lombard) in their discussion, but the Bellunese data are more central to their analysis.

According to these authors, the left periphery of the clause hosts two distinct wh-positions, Op1P and Op2P, each occupied by a wh-item in doubling interrogatives. The left-peripheral layers proposed by Poletto & Pollock (2000) are illustrated in (4):

(4) [$_{Op2P}$ Op2° [$_{ForceP}$ F° [$_{GroundP}$ G° [$_{TopP}$ Top° [$_{Op1P}$ Op1° IP]]]]]

The configuration in (4) includes two of the functional projections discussed in section 3.3.4, i.e., ForceP and TopP, in addition to two operator positions, as well as a GroundP hosting presupposed information. Given (4), the higher wh-item *kossa* in (3) is analyzed as occupying the specifier of Op2P, while the lower one *ke* moves to the specifier of Op1P, with the remnant of the clause being attracted to the projections between the two operators. Specifically, the derivation according to Poletto & Pollock (2000) proceeds as follows:

(5) i. Op1° and IP are merged and Spec,Op1P attracts the two wh-items **[ke [kossa]]**;
ii. TopP and Op1P are merged, and the past participle *fat* is attracted to Spec,TopP;
iii. G° is merged, with the subject-clitic *-lo* moving to Spec,GP;
iv. Force and GroundP are merged, and the IP moves to Spec,ForceP;
v. Finally, Op2P and ForceP are merged and Spec,Op2P attracts **[kossa]**.

The final result of the derivation summarized in (5) is offered in (6):

(6) [$_{Op2P}$ **Kossa$_{m}$** Op2° [$_{ForceP}$ [t_k **ha** t_j]$_i$ F° [$_{GroundP}$ **lo$_{k}$** G° [$_{TopP}$ **fat$_{j}$** Top° [$_{Op1P}$ [**ke** t_m] Op1° t_i]]]]]

Poletto & Pollock (2000) argue that not only Bellunese, but also French and standard Italian, account for a split analysis of the CP. Their analysis discusses wh-interrogatives, D-linking[50], Stylistic Inversion, and subject clitics, inter alia. For the sake of simplicity, let us focus on wh-interrogatives as discussed for Bellunese.

[50] D(iscourse)-linking is a syntactic property involving wh-phrases such as *which* + DP (vs bare wh-constituents such as *what*), that refer to contextually salient elements (Pesetsky 1987).

Firstly, the authors claim that the two Operator positions have to be postulated on the basis of doubling constructions like those illustrated so far in the section; however, each OpP has its own function. Op1P is assumed to be the locus of "bare" wh-items in Bellunese (and other NIDs), as well as the projection through which French and standard Italian whPs move before reaching Op2P. When discussing "bare" wh-words, Poletto & Pollock (2000) mean clause-internal wh-elements such as the ones in (7):

(7) a. Ha-tu magnà **ke**? *Bellunese*
have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten what
'What did you eat?'

b. Se-tu 'ndat **andè**?
be.PRS=SCL.2SG gone where
'Where did you go?' (Adapted, Poletto & Pollock 2000: ex. 94, p. 282)

It is clear, then, that Op1P is both the locus of the lower wh-item in doubling interrogatives like (3), but also the landing site of clause-internal wh-elements in interrogatives like (7). Moreover, the authors claim that, even when the clause-internal strategy is involved, the structure of the whP still resembles the one shown in (5i) for doubling: [andé [Rest]], with Rest = Restrictor. Therefore, Op1P hosts wh-operators such as *andé* 'where'. Op2P, on the other hand, is the locus of wh-items like *kossa* 'what' in (6), as well as the surface position of French and Italian whPs. Additionally, it also attracts Rest in configurations like (7), thus making the highest OpP the Restrictor position, and not the wh-operator one.

In sum, as far as wh-interrogatives in NIDs are concerned, Op1P and Op2P are the dedicated projections hosting wh-items. By looking at Bellunese, which, aside from D-linking constructions, seems to lack wh-fronting, each position has a specialized function: Op1P hosts the clause-internal wh-items in both doubling (3) and "simple" clause-internal constructions (7), while Op2P hosts the higher wh-element when wh-doubling is involved, or the Rest when only the clause-internal whP is present. In addition, TopP is analyzed as the spell-out position of participles and infinitives in SCLI, ForceP is the locus of the remnant IP, while GroundP is argued to be obligatory in the exploded CP of Romance wh-interrogatives, and, in Bellunese, it hosts subject clitics, which are assumed to constitute presupposed information.

4.1.1.2 Poletto & Pollock (2004)

Another account relying on remnant movement comes from Poletto & Pollock (2004), who analyze the NIDs spoken in Illasi (Veneto) and Monno (East Lombardy). Their analysis also relies on the premise that the left periphery is formed by a series of functional projections, two of which are dedicated to hosting the wh-items in wh-doubling interrogatives, while the others attract the remnant IP into the CP domain. One crucial distinction from the previous study comes from the analysis of doubling interrogatives as the A-bar counterpart of pronominal clitic doubling, thus providing more information concerning the nature and behavior of wh-elements.

Given that the analysis in this dissertation also deals with Monnese, I illustrate Poletto & Pollock's (2004) main arguments by relying on this dialect. The type of data at the center of the article is illustrated in (8).

(8) a. **K'** e-t fat **kwé**? *Monnese*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG done what

b. **K'** e-t fat?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG done

c. E-t fat **kwé**?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG done what

'What have you done?' (Adapted, Poletto & Pollock 2004: ex. 2, p. 242)

The authors posit that wh-clitics exist. This claim is based on French and NIDs, which show that certain wh-words, such as French *que*, cannot be separated from the verb it attaches to (9a). This is unlike French *qui*, which does not require V-adjacency, so it is not analyzed as a clitic. This is shown in (9b):

(9) a. ***Que**, d' après toi, a vu Jean? *French*
what of after you have.PRS seen Jean
'What, according to you, has Jean seen?'

b. **Qui**, d' après toi, a vu Jean?
who of after you have.PRS seen Jean
'Who, according to you, has Jean seen?' (Adapted, Poletto & Pollock 2004: ex. 7, p. 245)

The clitic element in the A-bar chain is assumed to be the phonologically lighter wh-item, e.g., *k(e)* 'what' in (8). This conclusion is generalized for similar non-identical doubling constructions in NIDs, where the higher wh-element tends to have less phonological content than its clause-internal counterpart. According to Poletto & Pollock (2004), the cliticization site of wh-clitics is in the IP area of the clause, in the same section where pronominal, negative, and adverbial clitics are located. This means that the wh-elements in Northern Italian interrogatives are first assumed to undergo a form of successive-cyclic movement from their base-generated position to the IP area in order to be cliticized, before landing in the CP field.

The clause-internal wh-item is assumed to merge together with the wh-clitic, yielding a complex phrasal constituent headed by the wh-clitic, whose specifier is occupied by the phonologically longer wh-element, as in (10a). If we take, for example, object wh-elements from (8), this complex phrasal constituent has the LF form exemplified in (10b).

(10) a. [$_{ClP}$ WhP wh-cl]
b. [$_{ClP}$ Kwé, k(e)]

Poletto & Pollock (2004) also acknowledge and account for the optionality between doubling, fronting, and clause-internal wh-items. Specifically, they claim that "bare" wh-fronting and the clause-internal strategy involve null wh-items at the PF interface. Therefore, even though the LF form of the complex XP encompassing the wh-items stays the same, the PF form changes based on the strategy employed: (i) in doubling constructions, LF and PF forms go hand in hand, (10b; 11a); (ii) when only the higher wh-element surfaces, the clause-internal "strong" form is silent, (11b); (iii) when only the clause-internal wh-item surfaces, the clitic is silent, (11c).

(11) a. [$_{ClP}$ Kwé, k(e)]
b. [$_{ClP}$ ∅, k(e)]
c. [$_{ClP}$ Kwé, ∅]

Lastly, regarding the spell-out positions of the elements in (10)-(11), as in earlier work, Poletto & Pollock (2004) assume two distinct dedicated positions in the left periphery: WhP1 and WhP2, with the clitic moving into WhP1 and the "strong" form moving into WhP2. The authors acknowledge the dichotomy intrinsic to these wh-clitics, which are both clitics and operators that must move to CP. Therefore, they assume that SCLI, which is obligatory in wh-interrogatives in NIDs, is responsible for carrying the wh-clitics into the left periphery. Finally, the remnant IP is attracted to the ForceP, GroundP, and TopP positions between WhP1 and WhP2.

In sum, Poletto & Pollock's (2004) analysis expands on the one provided in Poletto & Pollock (2000), by providing more depth to the investigation of the nature of the wh-elements involved in Northern Italian interrogatives. Nevertheless, the main claims persist: whether the wh-item surfaces in a clause-initial or a clause-internal position (or both), they always occupy two dedicated positions in the left periphery of the clause.

4.1.1.3 Munaro & Pollock (2005)

Munaro & Pollock (2005) focus on interrogative syntax in French and some NIDs. While the authors place special emphasis on wh-interrogatives in cleft constructions, they also offer further insights into the type of wh-interrogatives illustrated so far in this chapter. Still, one premise that does not change from the studies described in the two previous sections is the assumption that the left periphery of NIDs (and Romance) is comprised of two dedicated positions hosting wh-items, as well as a series of in-between layers where the remnant IP moves to. In particular, based on considerations surrounding sensitivity to island effects and the word order of the declarative counterparts to the interrogatives, Munaro & Pollock (2005) argue that the wh-word in (12a) raises into the left periphery and is not IP internal. Likewise, both wh-items in the doubling construction in (12b) are analyzed as raising into the CP domain.

(12) a. A-tu parecià **ke**? *Bellunese*
have.PRS=SCL.2SG prepared what
'What have you prepared?' (Adapted, Munaro & Pollock 2005: ex. 20, p. 7)

b. **K'** e-t fat **kwé**? *Monnese*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG done what
'What have you done?' (Adapted, Munaro & Pollock 2005: ex. 28, p. 9)

Given the existence of doubling, and given that, even in non-doubling constructions, French and NIDs interrogatives spell out wh-words in different syntactic slots, the authors postulate an Op1P and an Op2P position in the left-periphery of the clause, each with a dedicated function. Op1P is the wh-position that surfaces lower in the structure, and it is the locus of existential Quantifiers. Op2P, on the other hand, is the wh-position surfacing higher than ForceP and is the locus of disjunction Operators. Additionally, the authors discuss the existence of silent Operators. Other than these implementations, the derivation of structures like those in (12) is virtually the same as what was illustrated in work by Poletto & Pollock: (i) the wh-items move to the left periphery, with Op1P attracting *ke* (12a) and *kwé* (12b), and Op2P attracting either a null disjunction operator (12a) or a wh-clitic (12b); (ii) the remnant IP moves into ForceP, while some of its contents are attracted to intermediate positions between the two Operator positions.[51] Finally, Munaro & Pollock (2005) also acknowledge the importance of SCLI in "helping" the wh-clitic move to its left-peripheral position.

4.1.1.4 Munaro & Poletto (2023)

In Munaro & Poletto (2023), the authors discuss wh-interrogatives in NIDs, claiming that the constructions involving doubling and those involving a clause-internal wh-item are not always unitary phenomena. In particular, they claim that there are different types of doubling at work in NIDs and that certain kinds of doubling are more similar to certain kinds of wh-*in-situ* than others. As far as doubling is concerned, Munaro & Poletto (2023) identify three different types based on the whPs that allow for doubling and the form of the doubled whP, as shown in (13):

(13) a. **S'** a-lo fat **ke**? *Illasiano*
what have.PRS=SCL.3SG done what
'What has he done?'

b. **Kuma** ta l' è cusinaa **kumé**? *Mendrisotto*
how you it have.PRS cooked how
'How did you cook it?'

[51] It goes without saying that, when simple fronting is involved, it is the existential Quantifier position that hosts a silent item, while Op2P attracts the wh-clitic; however, since simple fronting tends to be a less popular strategy in NIDs, analyses tend to focus on doubling and on the clause-internal wh-element.

c. **Kossa** inviti-to **ki**? *Paduan*
what invite.PRS=SCL.2SG who
'Who are you inviting?' (Adapted, Munaro & Poletto 2023: ex. 1, p. 2)

The authors analyze (13a) as a construction involving a clitic, *s'*, and a tonic form of the wh-item, *ke*, (13b) as one involving a phonologically weaker form, *kuma*, and a stronger form, *kumé*, while (13c) involves a form of the operator 'what', *kossa*, as the higher wh-element.

A second criterion used by the authors to categorize doubling constructions involves interpretative differences between doubling and other strategies used to convey wh-interrogatives, particularly the clause-internal strategy. For example, Munaro & Poletto (2023) argue that clitic wh-doubling and wh-*in-situ* are connected phenomena, as shown, among other things, by the full optionality (i.e., without interpretative differences) attested in Monnese wh-interrogatives, (14).

(14) a. **'Ngo** fe-t majà (**'ngont**)? *Monnese*
where do.PRS=SCL.2SG eat where

b. Fe-t majà **'ngont**?
do.PRS=SCL.2SG eat where
'Where do you eat?' (Adapted, Munaro & Poletto 2023: ex. 2-3, p. 3)

The optionality observable in (14) is therefore analyzed by the authors as involving "copying of some features" (p. 3), where optionality arises from the alternation between phonetically silent and phonetically realized copies.

Munaro & Poletto (2023), however, also discuss a different type of Northern Italian interrogatives, which lacks the interpretation of a canonical question like in (14), and conveys instead either surprise/disapproval or a presuppositional meaning. Consider Paduan in (15). Example (15a) illustrates a Paduan interrogative conveying a presuppositional interpretation, where the speaker assumes the existence of a value for the variable in the set of answers, while (15b) has a surprise/disapproval interpretation, is prosodically marked, and involves a "what-operator" in the left periphery, instead of a wh-clitic or a short phonological form of the wh-element under consideration.

(15) a. E te la ghe magnà **dove**? *Paduan*
and you.SCL it.OCL have.PRS eat where
'Where did you eat it?' (Adapted, Munaro & Poletto 2023: ex. 8b, p. 5)

b. **Kossa** ve-to **dove**?!
what go.PRS=SCL.2SG where
'Where (the hell) are you going?!' (Adapted, Munaro & Poletto 2023: ex. 13, p. 5)

Consequently, the authors conclude that wh-doubling is typologically different across NIDs: (i) if there is a different semantic interpretation, like in Paduan, doubling involves feature splitting where the higher copy spells-out the modal feature required for the interpretation of such interrogatives; (ii) in cases of identical interpretation between doubling and *in-situ* constructions, like in Monnese, there is full or partial feature copying between wh-forms. Finally, the authors suggest the projections in (16) as applicable to all wh-items:

(16) [DisjunctionP [Existential [RestrictorP]]]

In (16), DisjunctionP represents the operator providing the set of alternatives whose value needs to be chosen by the addressee, while the Existential projection containing the RestrictorP is the locus of classifier-like elements. Returning to Monnese in (14) and Paduan in (15), the authors suggest two different types of derivation: for Monnese, they argue that this type of doubling copies or splits the Disjunction and the Existential projections, but not the Restrictor, thus being defective in the most lexical portion of the constituent; for Paduan, they argue that only the Disjunction feature gets split.

In sum, Munaro & Poletto (2023) return to some of the data and analyses previously carried out, concluding that not all Northern Italian doubling is the same and that different kinds of doubling require different analyses. Lastly, not all kinds of doubling are seen as corresponding to their *in-situ* counterparts.

In the next section, I summarize the accounts provided in Manzini & Savoia (2005; et seq.) and Bonan (2017; et seq.), which differ from the ones illustrated so far in that they do not adopt the remnant movement approach to wh-interrogatives in NIDs.

4.1.2 Concurrent approaches: wh-in-situ & short wh-movement analyses

Having introduced, in the previous sections, the studies analyzing Northern Italian wh-interrogatives as involving movement to the left periphery of both the wh-items and the remnant IP, this section summarizes two alternative approaches to analyzing these constructions. In particular, section 4.1.2.1 deals with the analysis of Lombard and Veneto dialects provided in Manzini & Savoia (2005; et seq.), which has a Minimalist spirit. Conversely, section 4.1.2.2 overviews the analysis of Trevisan (Veneto) from Bonan (2017; et seq.), which, while having a cartographic core, does not rely solely on the CP periphery.

4.1.2.1 Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) & Manzini (2014)

To my knowledge, the first alternative to the remnant movement analyses comes from Manzini & Savoia (2005), who provide an extensive analysis of wh-interrogatives in NIDs in a comprehensive 3-volume work focusing on Italian dialectology. Additionally, the authors resume their analysis in Manzini & Savoia (2011), while Manzini (2014) offers a further account of wh-pronouns. The major difference, compared to the previous studies, is that Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) analyze the wh-items as occupying positions in two distinct areas of the clause: the higher wh-element moves to CP, while the lower one remains *in-situ*. Specifically, the analyses provided in Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) challenge the Cartographic approaches and adopt, instead, a Minimalist point of view, prioritizing syntactic operations over syntactic representation. In particular, they focus on the lower wh-item, and the probe-goal relationship C and the wh-element enter thanks to the operation Agree.

The data come from different NIDs, including from Eastern Lombard, and Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) provide a unified analysis for these local vernaculars. The first step in their 2011 analysis is to account for SCLI in the presence of wh-*in-situ*, given Rizzi's (1996) Wh-Criterion. According to Rizzi (1996), verb movement and wh-movement in interrogative structures go hand in hand. Specifically, wh-movement targets Spec,CP, while, simultaneously, verb movement targets C. Given this premise, it becomes hard to reconcile the absence of wh-movement with SCLI in *in-situ* constructions, and the authors reject the Wh-Criterion in favor of Chomsky's (1995) approach to this issue, which assumes long-distance feature-checking. Hence, Manzini & Savoia (2011) follow the assumption that wh-movement and verb movement constitute two

possible independent ways to check the Q feature in CP. The evidence they provide for this comes from Cologno (Eastern Lombard), where wh-*in-situ* may or may not involve SCLI. See (17a), with SCLI, and (17b), without SCLI:

(17) a. Fa-l **kohe**? *Cologno*
do.PRS=SCL.3SG what
'What does he do?'

b. L' a fatʃ **kohe**?
SCL.3SG have.PRS done what
'What has he done?' (Adapted, Manzini & Savoia 2011: ex. 28, p. 22)

Given data like (17), the authors conclude that SCLI is an independent process and that Northern Italian wh-*in-situ* may be analyzed as getting scope assigned at the interface with SEM, without overt movement to the left periphery.

As far as the fronting strategy is concerned, Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) analyze the wh-item as undergoing movement to Spec,CP. Consider the example below from Cologno, which involves wh-fronting in the presence, (18a), and absence, (18b), of SCLI:

(18) a. **Koha** fa-l? *Cologno*
what do.PRS=SCL.3SG
'What does he do?'

b. **Koha** l' a fatʃ?
what SCL.3SG have.PRS done
'What has he done?' (Adapted, Manzini & Savoia 2011: ex. 28, p. 22)

Example (18) illustrates the same interrogatives from (17), but involving wh-fronting instead of wh-*in-situ*.[52] Given such data, and after providing a series of considerations concerning subject-clitics, island sensitivity, and the interfaces with LF and PF, Manzini & Savoia (2005; et seq.) determine that the optionality between the two strategies exemplified above can be explained by the parameter between LF-assigned scope, (17), and overtly assigned scope, (18).

[52] While Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) provide data for these two strategies from a variety of NIDs, I chose to illustrate the examples from Cologno for both wh-*in-situ* and wh-fronting as they are also a clear indication of the optionality observed across these local languages.

Moving to the wh-doubling strategy, Manzini & Savoia (2011) do not analyze the two wh-elements as multiple spell-out of copies, nor do they analyze this strategy as the doubling counterpart of wh-*in-situ*. Crucially, they consider the wh-items to be independently merged into the structure. In order to justify their point, Manzini & Savoia provide evidence from data exhibiting a lower wh-item embedded in a PP doubled by a bare wh-word in the left periphery. They argue that, if multiple spell-out were present, pied-piping would be predicted. Consider the examples below from Grumello (Eastern Lombard), (19a), and Olgiate (Western Lombard), (19b), showing that the lower PP constituent is doubled by a bare wh-element in CP:

(19) a. **Koha** 'l fe-t **con kohe**? *Grumello*
what OCL.3SG do.PRS=SCL.2SG with what
'What do you do it with?' (Adapted, Manzini & Savoia 2011: ex. 31, p. 27)

b. **Se** 'l fe-t cun **kuze**? *Olgiate*
what OCL.3SG do.PRS=SCL.2SG with what
'What do you do it with?' (Adapted, Manzini & Savoia 2011: ex. 32, p. 27)

Manzini & Savoia (2011) consider the two wh-elements in (19) to be part of the same A-bar chain, with each of them possessing a distinct function: the fronted wh-item is a scope marker, while the *in-situ* one is its variable.[53]

Concerning the left-peripheral element, Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) challenge the idea of a wh-clitic; however, Manzini (2014) acknowledges that whPs like *se* 'what' in (19b) are clitics, while those like *koha* 'what' in (19a) are not. Moreover, Manzini (2014) suggests that wh-elements in the left periphery are not only associated with scope, but also with wh-properties. As for the lower wh-item, Manzini & Savoia (2011) posit that it is Focus-bearing, as well as associated with nuclear stress (cf. Manzini 2014).[54] The evidence they provide for this comes from the morpho-phonological form of the wh-item under consideration, which tends to have the coda ending in stressed [ɛ]. Thus, if we take the Cologno and Grumello examples, the IPA transcription of the wh-*in-situ* is [koh'ɛ]. Manzini & Savoia (2011) claim that ['ɛ] etymologically corresponds to the 3SG form of *be*, whose focusing function in clefts provides further evidence for their Focus role in the

[53] No deeper explanation is given as to where the scope marker starts from.
[54] The type of focus properties assigned to the wh-*in-situ* by Manzini & Savoia (2011) is sentential focus as opposed to predicative focus.

doubling constructions under consideration. Hence, the authors infer that it must morphologically encode focus properties. Since the same ending is present in the majority of the doubling data analyzed by Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011), the authors conclude that this Focus-bearing analysis can be generalized to NIDs.

Summing up, Manzini & Savoia (2005; et seq.) diverge from the Cartographic analyses relying on remnant movement to explain wh-interrogatives in NIDs. In particular, they offer an analysis that keeps a more Minimalist spirit, relying on both the CP domain and the argumental positions of the wh-items. The authors analyze the left-peripheral whP as a scope-bearing element associated with wh-properties, while the whP surfacing at the right edge of the interrogative is analyzed as a focus-bearing wh-*in-situ* item.

The next section overviews the approach to Northern Italian wh-interrogatives coming from Bonan (2017; et seq.), who provides an analysis of Trevisan data as involving short movement to the low periphery of the clause.

4.1.2.2 Bonan (2017; 2018; 2021)

Bonan (2017; et seq.), unlike the analyses reviewed so far, adopts the Cartographic Approach to the low periphery of the clause. In earlier work (Bonan 2017; 2018), the author focuses on wh-interrogatives in Trevisan (Veneto), extending the analysis to other NIDs and beyond, in later work (Bonan 2021a; 2021b).

Bonan (2017; 2018) shows that, like many NIDs, Trevisan exhibits optionality between wh-fronting (20a) and wh-*in-situ* (20b).[55]

(20) a. **Kossa** a-tu leto? *Trevisan*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG read

b. A-tu leto **kossa**?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG read what
'What did you read?' (Adapted, Bonan 2017: ex. 3, p. 50)

The author draws comparisons with neighboring NIDs, notably Bellunese and Lombard, claiming that they do not behave uniformly, thus requiring different analyses. For example, Bonan

[55] It lacks, however, wh-doubling.

(2017) shows that, while Bellunese only allows D-linking in the fronting strategy, Trevisan allows it both fronted and clause-internally;[56] or that Trevisan and Lombard dialects do not show sensitivity to islands when the whP is clause internal, while Bellunese does. The D-linking differences between Trevisan and Bellunese are illustrated below. Example (21) shows that D-linking is allowed in the presence of fronting in both dialects, while (22) shows that, while Trevisan allows for it *in-situ*, Belllunese does not.

(21) a. **Kuanti libri** a-tu leto? *Trevisan*
how-many books have.PRS=SCL.2SG read

b. **Kuanti libri** a-tu ledest? *Bellunese*
how-many books have.PRS=SCL.2SG read
'How many books did you read?' (Adapted, Bonan 2018: ex. 6', p. 22

(22) a. A-tu leto **kuanti libri**? *Trevisan*
have.PRS=SCL.2SG read how-many books

b. *A-tu ledest **kuanti libri**? *Bellunese*
have.PRS=SCL.2SG read how-many books
'How many books did you read?' (Adapted, Bonan 2018: ex. 5', p. 22)

Such contrasts lead Bonan (2017; 2018) to consider a distinct analysis, one that differs from both remnant movement accounts and Minimalist accounts. In particular, the author notices that, in Trevisan, the word order in interrogatives differs from that in declaratives, whose word order is argued to be rigid. For example, Bonan (2021a) shows that indirect objects must follow direct objects in declarative clauses, (23), while in interrogatives, the indirect object wh-item raises higher than its direct counterpart, (24).

(23) a. Ge go dato i pomi **a Gianni**. *Trevisan*
OCL.3SG have.PRS given the apples to Gianni

b. *Ge go dato **a Gianni** i pomi.
OCL.3SG have.PRS given to Gianni the apples
'I gave the apples to Gianni.' (Adapted, Bonan 2021a: ex. 10, p. 9)

[56] See footnote 4 for a definition of D-linking.

(24) a. Ge gatu dato **a ki** i pomi?
OCL.3SG have.PRS given to whom the apples

b. *Ge gatu dato i pomi **a ki**?
OCL.3SG have.PRS given the apples to whom
'Who did you give the apples to?' (Adapted, Bonan, 2021a: ex. 12, p. 9)

Given data such as (23) and (24), inter alia, the author concludes that the whPs in Trevisan are not *in-situ* and must move to a clause-internal position, which Bonan (2017; et seq.) identifies as the low periphery, following Belletti's (2004) representation of the *v*P area of the clause. In particular, Bonan (2017; 2018) suggests that the clause-internal whP moves to the low Focus position, which, for interrogatives, she labels as *whP*. The optionally fronted wh-item, on the other hand, is canonically placed in the CP domain.

Bonan (2021a; 2021b) extends this analysis to other NIDs, thus providing an account that also includes the wh-doubling strategy. The more recent analysis relies on Cable's (2010) grammar of Q, which the author implements by looking at the interaction between the left and the low periphery of the clause. As far as [Q] is concerned, Bonan (2021a; 2021b) follows Cable's account of Tlingit interrogatives, whose wh-fronting strategy is analyzed as involving the fronting of a Q-particle pied-piping the actual wh-item. Specifically, this particle can either (i) adjoin to the wh-item, in which case [Q] moves to the CP on its own, or (ii) take the wh-item as its complement, in which case [Q] moves to the CP covertly. The two are schematized in (25).

(25) a. **QP-adjunction**: [XP [XP wh-word] Q]
b. **QP-selection**: [QP [XP wh-word] Q]

Given the configurations in (25), Cable (2010) identifies two types of wh-*in-situ* languages: those involving QP-adjunction and those involving QP-selection. In the former group, which includes, e.g., Japanese and Korean, the Q-particle moves to the CP on its own to check [Q], while the wh-item remains in a clause-internal position. In the latter group, which includes, e.g., Sinhala, the computation is similar to wh-fronting in Tlingit, except that, this time, it involves covert movement. Bonan (2021a; 2021b) relies on Cable's (2010) grammar of Q in order to account for the Trevisan and, more broadly, Northern Italian data. Specifically, for wh-fronting, she posits that they involve

a silent Q-particle endowed with the [Q] feature, and that this strategy is the result of QP-selection, as in (25b). The QP + wh-item cluster is base-generated in its theta-role assigning position, and its final landing site is Spec,FocP in the left periphery of the clause.

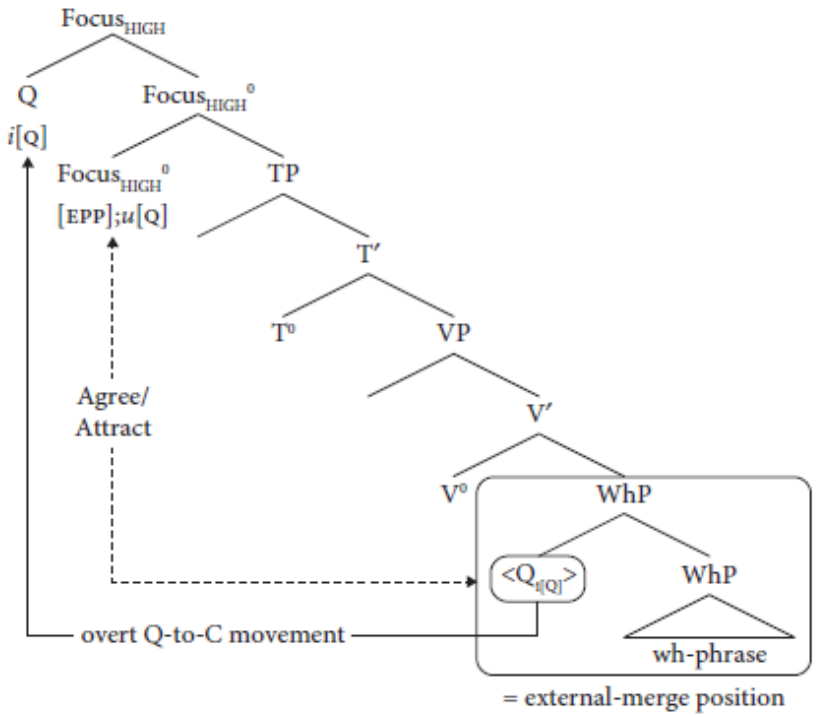
Bonan (2021a; 2021b) accounts for the optional wh-*in-situ* in Trevisan by relying on the same framework. The derivation of this strategy, according to the author, involves QP-adjunction, as in (25a), and entails the following steps, (26):

(26)

i. The wh-item moves from its base-generated position into the low peripheral Focus in order to check [FOC], thus constituting the locus where the wh-element adjoined to the silent Q-particle is probed.
ii. In the low peripheral Focus position, the wh-item is frozen in place following Criterial Freezing (Rizzi 1997).
iii. Following Cable's grammar of Q, the Q-particle Agrees with the left peripheral Focus, thus moving into high Spec,FocP independently.

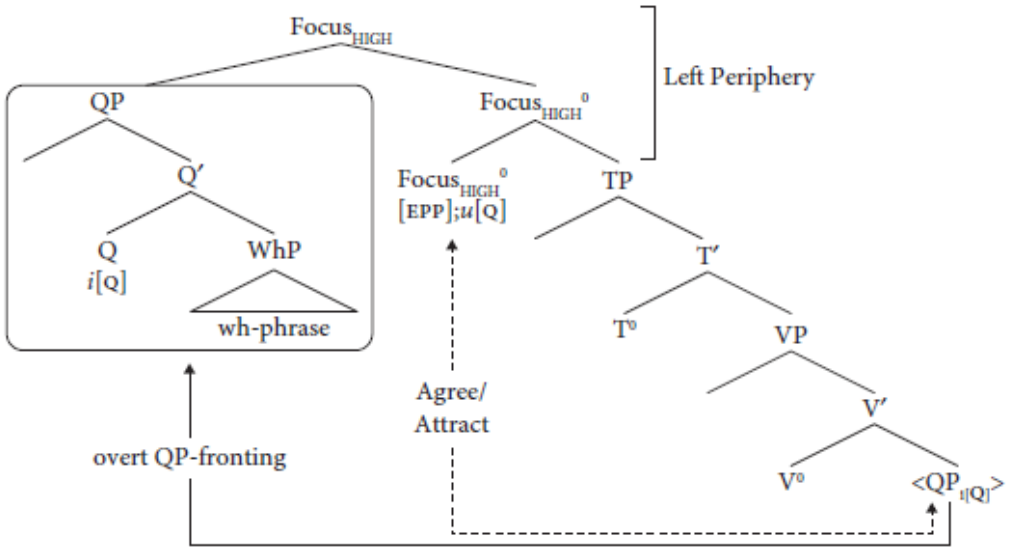
This process is illustrated in Figure 4, while Figure 5 shows the derivation proposed for wh-fronting.

Figure 4



(Bonan 2021b: ex. 4, p. 224)

Figure 5



(Bonan 2021b: ex.3, p. 224)

Thus, given the two interrogative strategies present in Trevisan, wh-fronting and "fake" wh-*in-situ*, each periphery of the clause plays a separate role: the left periphery is where [Q] gets checked, while the low periphery is where [FOC] gets checked. The latter, in particular, plays a prominent role in Bonan's (2021a; 2021b) analysis, as the author claims that wh-movement to the low Focus position is Focus-driven. Specifically, the author states that, since wh-words are inherently focused, they must also carry a [FOC] feature, which is checked in the low periphery. Bonan (2021a; 2021b) bases this claim on previous literature showing the parallel between focus movement and clause-internal movement of wh-items (Jayaseelan 1996; Kahnemuyipour 2001; Aboh 2006; Sinopoulou 2008; inter alia). What these authors have in common is the fact that they argue in favor of TP-internal wh-movement as focus-driven. Particular emphasis is given to Kahnemuyipour's (2001) analysis of Persian interrogatives, whose wh-items are accounted for in terms of focus movement to a position at the edge of *v*P. Bonan (2021a; 2021b) integrates this analysis by positing that the landing site is, in fact, in low FocusP in the Cartographic framework. A crucial difference with respect to the aforementioned authors, however, is the fact that, in Bonan's analysis, both [Q] and [FOC] co-exist in Trevisan interrogatives and play central roles, while the others tend to concentrate only on the focal properties of wh-interrogatives.

The result is that Bonan's (2021a; 2021b) analysis relies on both [Q] and [FOC] features, which she considers to be "scattered" between the left and the low periphery in NIDs. The author, however, claims that a unified account is not possible for the different wh-strategies observable in NIDs, and that each strategy is a consequence of the different ways of dealing with [Q]: QP-adjunction is responsible for wh-*in-situ* because the adjoined Q-particle can undergo covert movement independently, as shown in Figure 4; while QP-selection is responsible for total fronting, given that the interrogative probe targets the [Q] feature, as shown in Figure 5. As for wh-doubling, the foundations laid by the author for the other two strategies are still valid, with the addition of an optionally realized [wh] feature depending on the type of doubling interrogative under consideration. Take, for example, (27):

(27) a. '**Ngo** fe-t majà '**ngont**? *Monnese*
where do.PRS=SCL.2SG eat where
'Where do you eat?' (Adapted, Bonan 2021b: ex. 63b, p. 123)

b. **Ke** ni-f **endoe** oter? *Passiranese*
what go.PRS=SCL.2SG where you
'You, where are you going?' (Adapted, Bonan 2021b: ex. 64b, p. 123)

The author states that the left-peripheral *'ngo* in (27a) is morphologically specified for the wh-category under consideration (matching the clause-internal *'ngont*), while (27b) involves a "simple" default Operator, *ke*, in the left periphery (contrasting with the clause-internal *endoe*). Thus, doubling is analyzed as the result of a particular case of QP-adjunction, where a [wh] feature is associated with the Q-particle. Specifically, constructions like (27a) involve a left-peripheral Q-particle (*'ngo*) that carries an overt [wh] feature, while constructions like (27b) involve a silent [wh] feature carried by Q (*ke*). It follows that FocusP in the left periphery is considered to be endowed with both [Q] and [wh] in doubling constructions, as opposed to only [Q], like in the other two strategies.

In sum, Bonan's (2017; et seq.) analysis differs from previously illustrated Cartographic approaches by relying on both the left periphery of the clause and its low periphery. Each periphery plays a distinct role: the CP/left periphery is "in charge of" [Q] (and occasionally [wh]) and the *v*P/low periphery of [FOC]. The optionality between the three strategies is then dealt with in the grammar of Q framework proposed by Cable (2010), where the wh-items in each strategy have a distinct relationship with the Q-particle, yielding different types of wh-interrogatives.
This sub-section concludes the review of the main analyses pertaining to A-bar phenomena in NIDs, while the next section provides a summary of the entire section 3.3.

4.1.3 Summary

In short, the three main approaches to wh-interrogatives in NIDs mostly diverge in their analyses of clause-internal wh-phrases and the clausal areas they target. Cartographic accounts relying on remnant movement (Munaro 1999; Poletto & Pollock 2000, 2004; Munaro & Pollock 2005; Munaro & Poletto 2023) assume that both fronted and clause-internal wh-items occupy dedicated Operator positions within the articulated left periphery of the clause. Under this view, there is no wh-in-situ, as even the lower wh-element moves into a low Operator projection in CP, while the remnant IP is attracted to intermediate layers such as TopP, GroundP, and ForceP.

In contrast, the Minimalist analyses of Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) and Manzini (2014) maintain wh-fronting as an available option, but treat clause-internal wh-words as truly *in-situ*, interpreting them at LF. For these authors, the two wh-elements in doubling are independently lexicalized items, with the left-peripheral whP acting as a scope marker and the clause-internal whP functioning as a focus-bearing variable.

A third analysis, developed by Bonan (2017; 2018; 2021a; 2021b), argues that clause-internal whPs in Trevisan are neither CP-internal nor truly in situ, but instead undergo short movement to Belletti's (2004) low peripheral FocusP. This approach maintains that wh-fronting targets CP only when the Q-particle associated with the wh-item is overtly realized, while clause-internal wh-strategies involve Focus-induced movement within the *v*P periphery rather than the CP domain.

Consequently, these three approaches, summarized in *Table 2* below, differ in whether clause-internal wh-phrases undergo movement or not (and if so, to which area of the clause), while agreeing on the idea that NIDs systematically employ multiple wh-strategies that are a by-product of information structure and feature interactions.

Table 2

	Wh-fronting	**Clause-internal whP → CP**	**Pure wh-*in-situ***	**Clause-internal whP → *v*P**
Cartography (Remnant Movement)	✓	✓	X	X
Minimalism	✓	X	✓	X
Cartography (Short Movement)	✓	X	X	✓

4.2 Analysis

This section provides a general overview of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives. The data come from five different dialects of the Eastern Lombard area: Darfense, Monnese, Castenedolese, Soltino, and Bergamasque. Despite some differences, especially lexical and phonological in nature, the core grammatical features of these vernaculars are the same, indicating that a unified analysis of the three wh-strategies is not only possible, but also expected. The central claim of this analysis is that Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives reflect the cyclical nature of phasal domains, with two wh-constituents bearing the [wh] and [Op] features marking the edges of the vP and CP phases, respectively.

Before illustrating an integrated account of these constructions, I first discuss each type of wh-interrogative individually, starting with wh-fronting, which is the focus of the next section.

4.2.1 Wh-fronting

Wh-fronting is the strategy most resembling standard Italian interrogatives and, while it occurs in all the dialects under consideration, it is also the least frequent. Example (28) illustrates this strategy in the five aforementioned vernaculars:

(28) a. **Koha**$_{i}$ fara-i i pì t_i an vacanha? *Darfense*
what do.PRS=SCL.3PL the children in holiday
'What are the children going to do during the holidays?'

b. **K'**$_{i}$ e-t regalà t_i a la Maria? *Monnese*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG gifted to the Maria
'What did you give to Mary?'

c. **Kwando**$_{i}$ 'ne-t t_i 'n ferie? *Castenedolese*
when go.PRS=SCL.2SG in vacation
'When are you going on vacation?'

d. **'Ndo**$_{i}$ e-t disnat t_i? *Soltino*
where have.PRS=SCL.2SG have-dinner
'Where did you have dinner?'

e. **Kwando**$_{i}$ preferese-t t_i laurà? *Bergamasque*
when prefer.PRS=SCL.2SG work.INF
'When do you prefer to work?'

The examples in (28) show that not only is wh-fronting possible across Eastern Lombard dialects, but it can also occur in the presence of different wh-types: *koha/k(e)* 'what' in Monnese and Darfense, *kwando* 'when' in Castenedolese and Bergamasque, and *'ndo* 'where' in Soltino. As mentioned, this strategy was the least preferred among the three, indicating that it plays a lesser role in the overall picture of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives. In fact, this type of construction appears mostly as an optional alternative to the preferred clause-internal wh-phrase (29) or, when available, to wh-doubling (30).

(29) a. Egne-l **ki** con noter? *Bergamasque*
come.PRS=SCL.3SG who with us

b. **Ki** egne-l con noter?
who come.PRS=SCL.3SG with us

'Who comes with us?'

(30) a. **Ke** ghe-t majat **ki** [57] encò? *Castenedolese*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten what again

b. **Ke** ghe-t majat encò?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten again

'What did you eat again?'

Another important feature of wh-fronting – which was already introduced in Chapter 2 and observable in (30a) – is that the fronted wh-item sometimes takes a different morpho-phonological form compared to its clause-internal counterpart. This property is further constrained by the fact that the two wh-items differ not only in form, but also in their rigid distribution, with only one of them being allowed to occupy the fronted position. This is the case both in doubling constructions, (31), and in interrogatives with a single wh-element, (32).

(31) a. **Ke** fa-l uolé comprà **kwé** al Mario? *Monnese*
what do.PRS=SCL.3SG want buy what the Mario

[57] While homophonous, the two *ki* in examples (4) and (5) belong to two distinct wh-phrases: 'who' in Monnese and 'what' in Castenedolese.

b. ***Kwé*** fa-l uolé comprà **ke** al Mario?
what do.PRS=SCL.3SG want buy what the Mario

'What does Mario want to buy?'

(32) a. **'Ndo** ta pias lesir? *Soltino*
where you.DAT like.PRS read.INF

b. Ta pias lesir **'ndoe**?
you.DAT like.PRS read.INF where

c. ***'Ndoe** ta pias lesir?
where you.DAT like.PRS read.INF

d. *Ta pias lesir **'ndo**?
you.DAT like.PRS read.INF where

'Where do you like to read?'

Note that both (31) and (32) show that the wh-word in the fronted position (*ke*, *'ndo*) tends to have a shorter form compared to the one appearing clause-internally (*kwé*, *'ndoe*). Moreover, their rigid distribution can be taken as evidence that the two wh-elements specialize for different functions: the function of the fronted wh-word is that of being the Operator, which is not the case for the clause-internal one, as discussed in the next section. Furthermore, as already shown in chapter 2, the fronted item sometimes takes a more "generic" Operator form, whose morphology, *se*, resembles that of the word 'if', rather than a typical wh-item. This provides further empirical evidence that the element in Spec,CP is not only specialized for a different function, but is indeed the constituent checking the clause-typing feature. Consider the interrogative in (33a), using the interrogative Operator *se*, and the declarative in (33b), using 'if'.[58] [59]

(33) a. **Se** preferese-t? *Bergamasque*
what prefer.PRS=SCL.2SG
'What do you prefer?'

[58] In my data collection process, I only encountered this operator form in the dialect of the Bergamasque consultant, however, see Manzini & Savoia (2005) for more data with a fronted *se* operator.

[59] It should be noted that *se* is also used to introduce indirect interrogatives, in which case it corresponds to English *whether*. However, unlike English *whether*, *se* in Eastern Lombard does not carry wh-features. For this reason, I use a hypothetical construction with *if*, in order to avoid confusion when discussing *se* as a "generic" Operator.

b. A' **se** te gh' é tort, al te dà resù.
even if you PRT have.PRS wrong he you.DAT give right
'Even if you are wrong, he backs up your point.'

One final piece of evidence comes from the fact that the fronted wh-item has the same form used for relative Operators within these dialects. Examples (34) and (35) illustrate this contrast through a comparison between a wh-interrogative and a free relative clause, as in (34b; 34c), and a restrictive relative clause, as in (35b; 35c).[60]

(34) a. **'Ngo** s' e-t naʃut **'ngont**? *Monnese*
where REFL have.PRS=SCL.2SG born where
'Where were you born?'

b. Varda **'ngo** te mete-t i pé.
look.IMP where you put.PRS=SCL.2SG the feet

c. *Varda **'ngont** te mete-t i pé.
look.IMP where you put.PRS=SCL.2SG the feet
'Watch your step.'

(35) a. **Ke** ghe-t majat **ki** encò? *Castenedolese*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten what again
'What have you eaten again?'

b. La pasta **ke** go majat jer l' era buna.
the pasta which have.PRS eaten yesterday it be.PST good

c. *La pasta **ki** go majat jer l' era buna.
the pasta which have.PRS eaten yesterday it be.PST good
'The pasta that I ate yesterday was good.'

Given all these properties, including the fact that wh-fronting is the typical Pan-Romance strategy of forming interrogatives, it is clear that the wh-phrase moves from its base-generated position into the CP field – Spec,CP in Minimalist terms, and Spec,FocP according to the Cartographic approach. Example (36) illustrates the positions occupied by each element in the interrogative in (28c), under Minimalism.[61]

[60] Although note that Rizzi (1997) distinguishes between the two types of Operators.
[61] However, it only shows a partial derivation of the clause. The full derivation of the wh-elements is addressed starting with section 4.1.3, once the properties of the other two strategies have been introduced.

(36) [$_{CP}$ **Kwando** [$_{C'}$ [$_{C°}$ ‘ne$_i$-t][$_{TP}$ [$_{T°}$ t_i] [$_{vP}$ [$_{v°}$ t_i] [$_{VP}$ [$_{V°}$ t_i] [$_{PP}$ ‘n ferie]]]]]]?

Finite V-to-T-to-C in wh-interrogatives, as observable in (36), is fairly uncontroversial for Romance, while pronominal clitics adjoin to T (Kayne 1991; among others). This can be either interpreted under Rizzi’s (1991) Wh-Criterion, or under Chomsky’s (1995) Agree operation. According to the former, wh-phrases move to the Spec,CP/Spec,FocP in a specifier-head configuration, with the head of CP/FocP being occupied by the finite verb, often giving rise to subject-V_{FINITE} inversion. As for the latter, it assumes that movement of the finite verb to C° results from feature-checking requirements. In the Gallo-Romance context, the finite verb has been shown to move into C° in French SCLI structures by Rizzi & Roberts (1989), yielding the V_{FINITE} + subject clitic word order. It is equally assumed to move into the CP domain in Cartographic approaches, as well as in Minimalist approaches to Northern Italian interrogatives (cf. Poletto 2000; Manzini & Savoia 2005; 2011; Bonan 2021a; 2021b).

The subject clitic *-t* ‘2SG’, on the other hand, appears in a subject clitic inversion (SCLI) configuration, encliticizing to the finite verb.[62] Although Northern Italian subject clitics have been extensively studied (e.g., Benincà 1994; Goria 2004; Munaro 2001; Poletto 1993, 1998, 1999, 2000; Poletto & Tortora 2016; Rizzi 1986), the representation adopted here is chosen for simplicity, rather than following a pre-established one, as it allows a clearer treatment of A-bar movement and phasal domains within a Minimalist framework.

As for the wh-phrase itself, recall from chapter 3 that wh-items like the ones depicted in this section are cross-linguistically analyzed as Operators entering A-bar dependencies. As previously explained, the Operator feature responsible for triggering movement to the CP domain in interrogatives is the interpretable [Q] in C°, which also has clause-typing properties. The wh-item, on the other hand, carries the uninterpretable feature [*u*OP]. Overt fronting of wh-phrases to Spec,CP is the result of the clause-typing requirements linked to interrogative Operators, thus triggering the word-order observable in the simplified derivation in (36).

[62] See section 2.2.2 for an introduction to Eastern Lombard subject-clitics.

This section has discussed the properties of the fronted wh-element and its role in the Eastern Lombard interrogatives under consideration, concluding that it is an Operator moving to Spec,CP in order to check the [Q] feature, thus marking the higher phasal domain. The next section focuses on the clause-internal wh-element, its properties, and its role in the A-bar chain.

4.2.2 Clause-internal strategy

According to my data collection, this is by far the most popular interrogative strategy in Eastern Lombard. It consists of a wh-item occurring in a clause-internal position that I argue corresponds to the edge of the *v*P phase. The data pertaining to this strategy is illustrated in (37), which shows the clause-internal wh-element in the five Eastern Lombard dialects under consideration.

(37) a. Parlerà-l **ki** co' la Maria? *Darfense*
talk.FUT=SCL.3SG who with the Maria
'Who will talk to Maria?'

b. L' e-t tʃapada **kwando** la patente? *Monnese*
OCL.3SG have.PRS=SCL.2SG got when the driving-license
'When did you get the driving license?'

c. S' e-t conuʃit **endoe** con la to fonna? *Castenedolese*
REFL have.PRS=SCL.2SG known where with the your woman
'Where did you meet your wife?'

d. E-t disnat **kosé**? *Soltino*
have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten what
'What did you eat?'

e. Se-t dré a fa **per kosé** 'sto laurà? *Bergamasque*
be.PRS=SCL.2SG PROG to do for what this work
'Why are you doing this?'

The data in (37) shows that the clause-internal wh-strategy is possible not only with a variety of wh-words, like in the case of wh-fronting, but with virtually any wh-constituent: *ki* 'who', *kosé* 'what', *kwando* 'when', *endoe* 'where', and even *per kosé* 'why'.

The occurrence of *why* in a clause-internal position in a standard, unmarked interrogative is particularly striking, as *why* is often analyzed as being directly merged into the CP domain in

Romance languages (Rizzi 2001; Shlonsky & Soare 2011). It is, however, not an unfamiliar configuration in the Northern Italian group. The clause-internal *why* has already been discussed by Bonan & Shlonsky (2021) (but see also Munaro (2005); Poletto (1993); i.a.), who show that the Trevisan wh-constituent *parcossa*, which is morpho-phonologically similar to Eastern Lombard *per kosé*, may optionally appear either fronted or clause-internally. The authors conclude that this wh-item is merged in a TP-internal position, and may optionally move to the left periphery, akin to regular wh-constituents. The clause-internal position of *why* is consistent with analyses that distinguish between two types: one that surfaces in the CP domain, and one that may surface clause-internally (Rizzi 1990; Stepanov & Tsay 2008). The former is analyzed as a sentential Operator expressing "reason", while the latter is analyzed as a *v*P adverbial that is subject-oriented and that expresses "purpose".

Crucially, if *per kozé* is analyzed consistently with the other clause-internal wh-items, it surfaces at the edge of *v*P, in a position comparable to the one suggested by Stepanov & Tsay (2008) for "purpose" *why*. Moreover, the dialects under consideration possess two more forms for this wh-phrase, which must obligatorily surface in a fronted configuration. These forms follow the canonical pattern of CP-merged *why*-constituents discussed, e.g., in Rizzi (2001), in contrast to the "reason" *why* discussed in Stepanov & Tsay (2008).[63] The examples below show the contrast between *per kozé* (38) and the other two *why*-forms (39), namely *a ke foda* and *parkwé/perké*, indicating that Eastern Lombard has two different kinds of *why*-constituents: one, (13), which patterns with the other wh-words and exhibits optionality between clause-internal and fronted positions, and one, (39), which patterns with left-peripheral *why*-words in Romance, thus being directly merged into the CP domain.

(38) a. La tee-t **per kozé** kel erba ke? *Bergamasque*
OCL.3SG cut.PRS=SCL.2SG for what this grass here

b. **Per kozé** la tee-t kel erba ke?
for what OCL.3SG cut.PRS=SCL.2SG this grass here

'Why are you mowing this grass?'

[63] Bonan & Shlonsky (2021) discuss this contrast as well, since Trevisan also exhibits two different wh-words meaning *why*, namely *parcossa* and *perché*. The latter patterns with the Eastern Lombard wh-words that may only appear in the CP domain.

(39) a. **Parkwé** e-t fat zo l' ort? *Monnese*
why have.PRS=SCL.2SG done down the garden

b. *E-t fat zo **parkwé** l' ort?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG done down why the garden
'Why did you start a vegetable garden?'

c. **A ke foda** e-t majat isé tat? *Soltino*
at what foda have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten so much

d. *E-t majat **a ke foda** isé tat?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG eaten at what foda so much
'Why have you eaten so much?'

While optionality is tricky when it comes to *why* for the reasons explained above, the other wh-words in Eastern Lombard pattern with (38), in that they may appear either clause-internally or fronted, but also in a doubling configuration when allowed by the dialect/type of wh-constituent. Section 4.2.1 shows that the fronted constituent may take a more "generic" form, i.e., one which does not encode the morpho-phonological characteristics typical of Eastern Lombard wh-words; however, this is not the case for the clause-internal wh-form, which is always marked as a wh-element. This contrast is evident in example (40) from Bergamasque.

(40) a. Mangeri-v **ke/*se** encò a mezdé? *Bergamasque*
eat.FUT=SCL.2PL what again at noon

b. **Se/Ke** mangeri-v encò a mezdé?
what eat.FUT=SCL.2PL again at noon
'What are you eating again at noon?'

Moreover, in data from other Eastern Lombard varieties, while the Operator may adopt a non-specific wh-form, the clause-internal constituent has a specific form denoting the particular wh-word at the center of the interrogative. Take, for example, (41), which represents a doubling construction from Passiranese.

(41) **Ke** ni-f **endoe** oter? *Passiranese*
what come.PRS=SCL.2PL where you
'Where are you going?' (Adapted, Manzini & Savoia 2011: ex. 34, p. 29)

As Manzini & Savoia (2011) point out, the type of construction represented in (41) resembles partial wh-movement in Germanic languages, already illustrated in section 3.1.1 and shown in (42), possessing an invariable wh-item in the left peripheral position, and a full wh-constituent clause-internally.[64]

(42) **Was** hast du gesagt, **wie** sie geschlafen hat? *German*
what have.PRS.2SG you said how she slept have.PRS.3SG
'How did you say that she slept?' (Adapted, Rizzi 1992: ex. 14°, p. 370)

Taken together, these facts suggest that the clause-internal element is specified for the [wh] feature, unlike its fronted counterpart. Not only the data, but also previous literature on wh-interrogatives indicates that this analysis is on the right track. Rizzi (1992), for example, proposes that, in partial wh-movement in German, only the Operator portion of the A-bar chain moves to Spec,CP of the matrix clause, while the rest of the wh-phrase does not.[65] Additionally, Miyagawa (2001), working on Japanese, suggests that a realization of [Q] and [wh] as separate entities is possible. The author partly builds on Watanabe (1992), whose analysis of wh-*in-situ* languages posits a null Operator that moves into the CP field, with the rest of the wh-constituent remaining *in-situ*. Miyagawa (2001) also builds on Chomsky's (2000) claim that the EPP feature associated with the CP must be satisfied by a syntactic unit that either moves into C° or into its specifier, i.e., the landing site of wh-constituents in interrogative structures. According to Miyagawa (2000), languages characterized by wh-fronting satisfy the EPP on C° by moving a wh-phrase whose [Op] and [wh] features are morphologically inseparable. On the other hand, languages characterized by wh-*in-situ* satisfy the EPP feature by only raising the Operator into the CP domain, while the constituent associated with the [wh] feature remains *in-situ*, or raises into the TP domain, as the author argues that, in Japanese, the wh-feature is on T°.

If, in Eastern Lombard, [Q] is checked via movement to the CP domain, what remains to be determined is the role played by this [wh] feature. While I believe that an analysis akin to the

[64] Note, however, that, while Eastern Lombard doubling interrogatives are monoclausal, German ones have a matrix clause and a subordinate, and the wh-phrases occupy Spec,CP of each clause.
[65] Although Rizzi (1992) suggests that the Operator in Spec,CP in the matrix clause is akin to an expletive, an analysis I do not adopt for Eastern Lombard.

one discussed in Miyagawa (2001) can be applied to Eastern Lombard, there are some differences between the constructions analyzed by the author and the data presented in this chapter. First, Miyagawa (2001) compares wh-fronting in languages like English and wh-*in-situ* in Japanese, characterized by a Q particle, while the Eastern Lombard data involve optionality between various wh-strategies. Second, the author assumes that the Japanese Q particle moves into C°, unlike the Eastern Lombard Operator, which I analyzed as moving into Spec,CP. Lastly, the author concludes that Japanese items bearing the wh-feature are either *in-situ*, or may raise into Spec,TP, while, as shown in the next paragraph, I analyze the clause-internal wh-item as surfacing at the edge of *v*P. Despite the due differences, my key takeaway from Miyagawa's (2001) discussion is that the [Q] and [wh] features may be morphologically encoded on two separate entities in the same A-bar chain. Given the earlier discussion on the differences in the morpho-phonological forms adopted by the fronted vs the clause-internal elements in Eastern Lombard, I believe that Miyagawa's (2001) observations apply to the data discussed in this chapter, and that the clause-internal item is the one bearing the [wh] feature.

Once the function of the clause-internal item is determined, we need to establish the exact syntactic position in which it surfaces. Chapter 2 has shown that Eastern Lombard is characterized by verb raising, where the lexical verb in a clause, whether finite or in past participle form, moves into the inflectional field. It was equally indicated that, in interrogatives, the clause-internal wh-item surfaces at the left-edge of the predicate domain and that it tends to be right-adjacent to the lexical verb. This configuration is most observable in the presence of aspectual adverbs and ditransitive constructions. Example (43) depicts a Soltino interrogative involving the habitual adverb *usually*.

(43) a. Fe-t **ke** de solit la sera? *Soltino*
do.PRS=SCL.2SG what of usual the evening

b. *Fe-t de solit **ke** la sera?
do.PRS=SCL.2SG of usual what the evening

'What do you usually do in the evening?'

The construction in (43) shows that the wh-element linearly precedes the aspectual adverb *de solit* 'usually'. This type of adverb has been analyzed as surfacing to the left of the predicate domain, in

an area between the latter and the functional inflectional field (Emonds 1978; Ernst 2002; Ernst 2014).[66] In Minimalist terms, the area in which these adverbs surface is at the *v*P phase edge between the latter and the TP domain, thus indicating that *ke* 'what' in (18) is not *in-situ*, but has raised to a higher clausal position.

Another piece of evidence comes from ditransitive constructions. In Eastern Lombard ditransitives, declarative clauses allow the direct and indirect objects to appear in either order, (44), while in interrogative clauses the wh-element must obligatorily precede the remaining object, by surfacing right-adjacent to the lexical verb, (45).

(44) a. Go scriit **la letera** a la Maria. *Castenedolese*
have.PRS.1SG written the letter to the Maria

b. Go scriit a la Maria l**a letera**.
have.PRS.1SG written to the Maria the letter

'I wrote the letter to Maria.'

(45) a. Ghe-t scriit **ki** a la Maria?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG written what to the Maria

b. *Ghe-t scriit a la Maria **ki**?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG written to the Maria what

'What did you write to Maria?'

c. Ghe-t scriit **a ki** la letera?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG written to whom the letter

d. *Ghe-t scriit la letera **a ki**?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG written the letter to whom

'To whom did you write the letter?'

In (44), we can see the word order to be rather free, with the DO and the IO being able to surface as the first element to the right of the lexical verb. In (45), on the other hand, it is clear that the word-order of the two is more rigid, and that only the one bearing the wh-feature can appear immediately after the lexical verb. I take this to mean that the wh-item must move from its base-

[66] But see also Cinque (1999) et seq. for a Cartographic Approach to adverb study, where aspectual adverbs are assumed to occupy dedicated specifier positions in the inflectional domain.

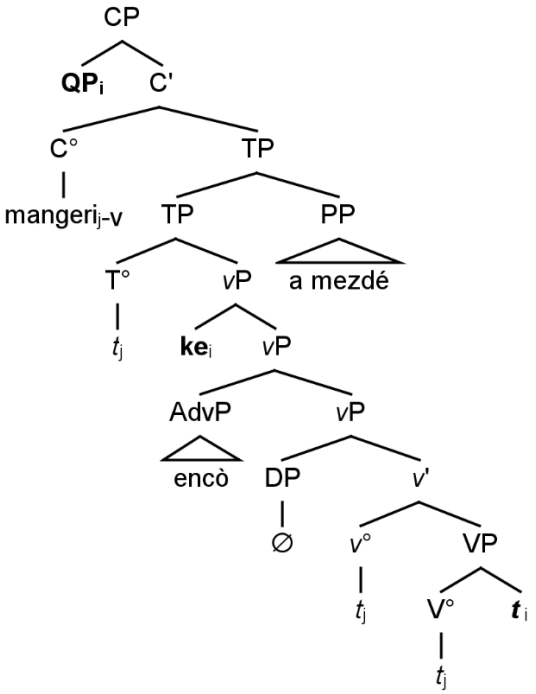
generated position. Keeping in mind the previous discussion on verb raising (including past participle raising) in Eastern Lombard, this, again, indicates that the clause-internal wh-constituent must land at the edge of the *v*P domain.

Finally, parasitic gaps licensing is an additional proof that the wh-constituent moves higher in the clause. Since, as explained in section 3.1, parasitic gaps may only be licensed by a variable left behind by overt movement (Engdahl 1983), the grammaticality of (46) can be explained if we assume that e_i is licensed by the copy t_i, which must have been left behind by wh-movement.

(46) E-l lesit **ke**$_i$ al Mario t_i sensa capì e_i?
have.PRS=3SG read what the Mario without understand.INF
'What did Mario read without understanding?'

Given the evidence presented from the data, it is rather safe to assume that the clause-internal wh-element is base-generated in a theta-role assigning position before raising to the left edge of *v*P. This configuration is represented in (47), which illustrates a partial derivation of the interrogative in (40a).

(47)



Alboiu (2002) argues that, in Romanian, *v*P adjunction serves as a landing site for various XPs that evacuate the predicate. Following Alboiu (2002), I take the *v*P edge in Romance more generally to be an adjunct rather than a specifier position. In particular, example (47) illustrates an interrogative involving a clause-internal wh-element, *ke* 'what', as well as the aspectual adverb *encò* 'again' and the temporal PP *a mezdé* 'at noon'. I assume that the whP headed by *ke* left-adjoins above the position occupied by *encò* 'again', which is *v*P-adjoined, while the temporal PP *a mezdé* 'at noon' adjoins to TP, and the null subject occupies Spec,*v*P. Lastly, the example also depicts the coindexed QP, and verb movement into C°.

Taken together, the derivation in (47) shows an articulated left-edge of the *v*P phase, where the whP occupies a left-adjoined position in the *v*P periphery – akin to Bonan's (2017; et seq.) analysis of Trevisan wh-*in-situ* as occupying the low periphery – after escaping the lower phase. Specifically, movement to the left-edge of *v*P is triggered by its need to move out of the *v*P phase, so that it remains active for further computation. Given the discussion in chapter 3 concerning phases and successive-cyclicity, I assume that this Move operation is purely dictated by the need to respect local conditions on syntactic operations, so that the wh-constituent can interact with the CP domain. As a matter of fact, I suggest that not only the Operator portion of the A-bar chain, but also the wh-one must check its formal features in the left periphery. The wh-portion, in particular, must move to check its [wh] feature, which I assume to occur against C° via Agree. Since C° can "see" the clause-internal wh-item only once it has escaped the phase it is base-generated in, movement to the periphery of *v*P ensures that the feature-checking operation takes place.

It should not come as a surprise that the left edge of *v*P is the locus where the clause-internal wh-element lands, as this area of the clause has already been observed to be a fruitful domain for both A-bar and discourse-related phenomena (Jayaseelan 1996; Alboiu 1999; 2002; Kahnemuyipour 2001; Belletti 2004; Pesetsky 2007; Chomsky 2008; Gallego 2010; Bonan 2021a). Chapter 3 has also highlighted the similarities between the CP and the *v*P phase edges, including their availability for successive cyclic movement and their ability to host Operators. These features of the periphery of *v*P are clearly visible in Eastern Lombard, not only in the presence of clause-internal A-bar movement, but also in the presence of discourse particles like *po* and *amò*, as in (48).

(48) Al beker a-l dat po' (amò) **ke** (amò) a la htʃeta? *Darfense*
the butcher have.PRS=SCL.3SG given PO AGAIN what AGAIN to the girl
'What else did the butcher even give to the girl?!'

In example (48), the finite verb + SCL cluster surfaces in C°, while all the elements between the past participle *dat* 'given' and the IO *a la htʃeta* 'to the girl' occupy the lower phase edge. In addition to the wh-item *ke* 'what', this area also hosts the discourse particles *po* and *amò*. The former conveys a presuppositional meaning with a mirative flavor, while the latter, literally 'again', is used to convey a counterfactual meaning (Fiorini 2023; 2024b). These two discourse particles are relatively free-ordered in declaratives, as they surface in different slots depending on their scope; however, in wh-interrogatives, they normally appear at the left *v*P boundary, and are the only elements allowed to intervene between the past participle and the wh-element. All of this points towards an articulated edge of the lower phasal domain in Eastern Lombard, an observation discussed more thoroughly in section 4.2.4.

This section was dedicated to the analysis of the clause-internal wh-item, showing that it occupies a position at the periphery of *v*P and that it bears the [wh] feature within the A-bar chain. Having established, so far, the main properties of wh-fronting and of the clause-internal wh-interrogatives, only one strategy remains to be discussed: wh-doubling.

4.2.3 Wh-doubling

The third and final strategy employed by Eastern Lombard to convey wh-interrogatives is wh-doubling. As previously discussed, this type of construction, unlike the previous two, is only available in certain dialects and with specific wh-words (see Manzini & Savoia 2005 for an extensive overview of these constructions across the Northern Italian group). The only wh-words that cannot be doubled in Eastern Lombard dialects, and in NIDs more generally, seem to be *why* and *when*. The former presents some peculiarities already discussed in the previous section, so it should not come as a surprise that *why*'s behavior is an exception. *When*, on the other hand, while optionally surfacing either fronted, (28c), or clause-internally, (37b), corresponds to a temporal adverbial. As such, it must already be base-generated to the left of the predicate domain, as opposed to inside the predicate domain itself, like the rest of the wh-items. Therefore, it is not merged in a

separate phase from C°, so it does not need to move to the phase edge for higher visibility, further supporting the analysis under discussion.

In my data collection process, I encountered the doubling strategy in Monnese, where it applies to *what* and *where* (49), and in Castenedolese, where it applies to *what* (50).

(49) a. **Ke** t' a-i dit **kwé**? *Monnese*
what OCL have.PRS=SCL.3PL said what
'What did they tell you?'

b. **'Ngo** l' e-t vist **'ngont**?
where OCL have.PRS=SCL.2SG seen where
'Where did you see him?'

(50) **Ke** ole-t **ki** te? *Castenedolese*
what want.PRS=SCL.2SG what SCL
'What do you want?'

Examples (49) and (50) show that wh-doubling in the dialects under consideration is of the non-identical type, where the Operator is doubled clause-internally by either a longer form (49) or by a short, but morpho-phonologically different form (50). Eastern Lombard, however, also exhibits identical doubling in certain dialects, despite its absence in the data I collected. In such cases, the Operator and the clause-internal wh-element possess the same Spelled-Out form. This type of construction is visible in (51).

(51) a. **Ki** tʃame-t **ki**? *La Strozza*
who call.PRS=SCL.2SG who
'Who are you calling?' (Adapted, Manzini & Savoia 2005: ex. 154c, p. 589)

b. **Kome** fe-t fa' **kome**? *Vezza d'Oglio*
how do.PRS=SCL.2SG do.INF how
'How do you do it?' (Adapted, Manzini & Savoia 2005: ex. 166b, p. 603)

As seen in (51), identical doubling can be found either with argument wh-constituents, like in the dialect from La Strozza (51a), and with adjunct wh-items, like in the dialect spoken in Vezza d'Oglio (51b), and, crucially, only with *v*P-internal wh-items. While non-identical doubling is far more productive in Eastern Lombard, constructions like those in (51) indicate that something akin

to multiple Spell-Out of copies must be at the base of the interrogatives under analysis or that, at the very least, the two wh-elements are structurally related to one another.

Like the other two strategies, wh-doubling (52a) is also characterized by optionality with wh-fronting (52b) and a clause-internal wh-item (52c):

(52) a. '**Ngo** se-t naʃut '**ngont**? *Monnese*
where be.PRS=SCL.2SG born where

b. '**Ngo** se-t naʃut?
where be.PRS=SCL.2SG born

c. Se-t naʃut '**ngont**?
where be.PRS=SCL.2SG born where

'Where were you born?'

As well, the two wh-elements are rigidly distributed, as already discussed earlier in the chapter, and as shown in (53).

(53) a. **K'** e-t regalà **kwé** al Marco? *Monnese*
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG gifted what to-the Marco

b. ***Kwé** e-t regalà **ke** al Marco?
what have.PRS=SCL.2SG gifted what to-the Marco

'What did you gift to Marco?'

Finally, the clause-internal wh-item occupies the same syntactic position as its counterpart in non-doubling constructions, i.e., at the left edge of the predicate domain, as shown in the following Castenedolese interrogative involving an aspectual adverb, (54):

(54) **Ke** fe-t **ki** de solit (***ki**) la sera? *Castenedolese*
what do.PRS=SCL.2SG what of usual the evening
'What do you usually do in the evening?'

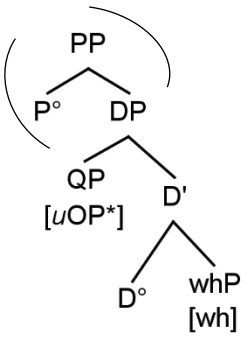
Considering that the higher and the lower wh-elements in doubling constructions exhibit virtually the same behavior as the fronted and the clause-internal wh-items, respectively, I propose

that they cover the same function: the higher wh-element is the Operator, while the lower one bears the [wh] feature. Moreso, as I argue in the next section, the three strategies are in fact variants of the same derivation stemming from interface-related and language-specific reasons. That is to say, the analysis I adopt applies to all three strategies, with the difference that sometimes only the Operator is pronounced (wh-fronting), other times only the element carrying the wh-feature (clause-internal strategy) is present at PF, and, elsewhere, both elements are pronounced (wh-doubling). I further explore the implications of my claim in section 4.2.4. For now, let us discuss the syntactic derivation of the interrogatives under consideration.

For this analysis, I am relying on the concept of partial copying as proposed by Barbiers & al. (2008; 2010) for non-identical doubling in Dutch dialects.[67] The authors build their argument on the copy theory of movement (Chomsky 1995), suggesting that, if syntax can copy a constituent and re-merge it higher in the structure, then it should also be possible to copy a sub-constituent of a more complex XP and re-merge it higher in the structure. In other words, I propose that, in Eastern Lombard, there are two chain links within the same A-bar chain, which are merged together as a macro-constituent, but bear two distinct syntactic functions. Partial copying only targets one chain link (i.e., one subconstituent), which is then moved to the front of the interrogative clause.[68]

My main claim is that the two wh-items discussed so far – the Operator and the [wh] feature-bearing element – are merged into the derivation as a single complex XP possessing the form in (55):

(55) a.



[67] Which may form interrogatives like the German one illustrated in section 3.3.1 and in example (42).
[68] Note that this is the main aspect in which my analysis aligns with that proposed in Barbiers et al. (2008, 2010).

b. [$_{DP}$ [$_{QP}$ **ke**] [$_{D'}$ [$_{D°}$] [$_{whP}$ **ki**]]] ‘what’

c. [$_{PP}$ [$_{P°}$] [$_{DP}$ [$_{QP}$ **‘ngo**] [$_{D'}$ [$_{D°}$] [$_{whP}$ **‘ngont**]]]] ‘where’

Example (55) shows both the phrasal categories involved in the layered XP (55a), i.e., an optional PP taking a DP complement, as well as its configuration when the two phrasal constituents whP and QP are lexicalized, as in (55b) for argument wh-phrases and (55c) for adjunct wh-phrases. The latter are formed by the QP element *ke/’ngo*, bearing the [*u*OP] feature, and the whP constituent bearing the [wh] feature and headed by *ki/’ngont*. Therefore, as argued in the previous section, Eastern Lombard is a language where the Operator and the wh-feature are Spelled-Out separately, unlike, e.g., standard Italian, where they are realized as a single constituent. I further propose that, in the interrogatives under analysis, the [*u*OP] feature on *ke/’ngo* is involved in clause-typing checking, thus being the one targeted by partial copying and re-merged in the CP field. At the same time, the [*u*wh] feature in interrogative C° is weak, thus making Agree a sufficient operation for probe-goal matching with the wh-item *ki/’ngont*. The derivation proceeds as outlined in (56):

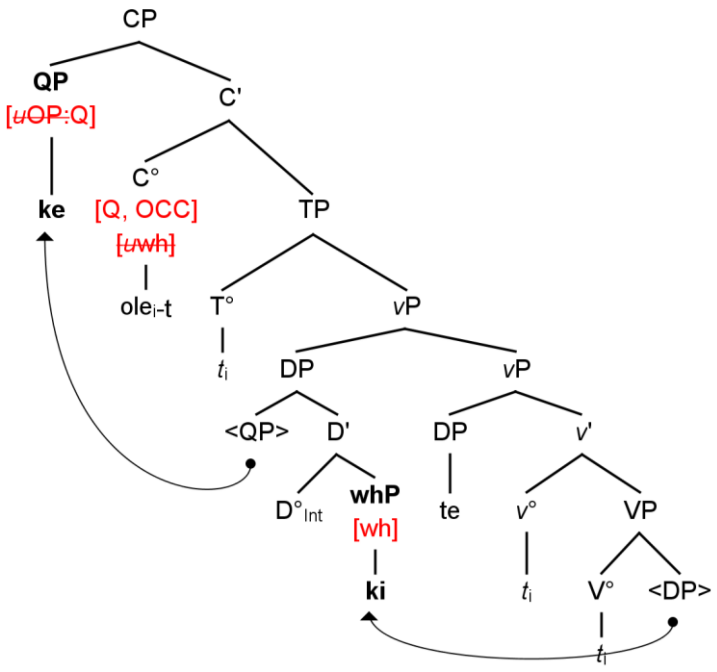
(56)

1. The two wh-elements enter the derivation as a layered XP: [$_{DP}$ [$_{QP}$ **ke**] [$_{D'}$ [$_{D°}$] [$_{whP}$ **ki**]]].
2. This complex XP undergoes a first step to the left edge of the *v*P phase, given its [*u*Fs].
3. Here, partial copying targets only the Operator portion [$_{QP}$ **ke**], which raises to Spec,CP.
4. The wh-portion [$_{whP}$ **ki**] is realized in an intermediate clausal position, at the edge of *v*P.

As shown throughout this chapter, the two wh-items possess different functions, while still being thoroughly interconnected to one another, making it safe to assume, in a similar fashion to the Cartographic approaches discussed in chapter 3 (but without any clitic-status related implications), that these two elements are initially merged together in the structure. By undergoing the first, short movement to the left-edge of *v*P, the layered XP escapes the lower phase before it is sent to the interfaces. Here, *ki* is stranded, marking the edge of the *v*P phase. Recall that the left of the *v*P phase in Eastern Lombard is targeted, among other things, by the clause-internal wh-element, discourse particles, and contrastive focus (not yet illustrated), thus indicating not only its

propensity to behave like the left periphery, but also its central role in A-bar constructions. The [*u*OP] feature on QP, on the other hand, is checked against [Q], thus requiring the QP portion of the layered XP to be copied and re-merged in Spec,CP to satisfy clause-typing requirements, as well as the [OCC] feature. The two elements are also part of the same A-bar chain, and both check their formal features in C°, while occupying two distinct positions at the phase edges: the Operator at the edge of CP and the wh-element at the edge of *v*P. This derivation is illustrated in (57), which resumes the construction from (50):

(57)



As argued earlier in the section, the derivation shown in (57) for wh-doubling also applies to the other two strategies. Particularly, when only one of the wh-elements is pronounced, it is because the other is interpreted at LF, but not at PF. Therefore, the computational devices behind the Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives are the same, no matter the strategy. What changes is the internal structure of the layered whP, where either the Operator or the wh-element may be silent. Thus, this macro-constituent may take the following forms, yielding wh-doubling (58a), wh-fronting (58b), or the clause-internal strategy (58c).

(58) a. [$_{DP}$ [$_{QP}$ **ke**] [$_{D'}$ [$_{D°}$] [$_{whP}$ **ki**]]]

b. [$_{DP}$ [$_{QP}$ **ke**] [$_{D'}$ [$_{D°}$] [$_{whP}$ **Ø**]]]

c. [$_{DP}$ [$_{QP}$ **Ø**] [$_{D'}$ [$_{D°}$] [$_{whP}$ **ki**]]]

When it comes to the unpronounced elements in (58b) and (58c), I do not assume that these strategies involve the base-generation of null heads or silent Operators in the narrow syntax. Rather, following the copy theory of movement (Chomsky 1995; Nunes 2004), I propose that the syntactic macro-constituent entering the derivation is structurally identical across all three surface configurations. Therefore, the computational devices behind the Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives are the same, no matter the strategy. What changes is how the chain links of this layered whP are linearized and deleted at the PF-interface during Spell-Out (cf. Bošković & Nunes 2007).

Having presented the analysis and derivational mechanisms proposed for the three types of Eastern Lombard *wh*-interrogatives, the next section addresses the implications of this analysis and offers an explanation for the behavior of these constructions.

4.2.4 A unified account

This section proposes a unified analysis of the Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives, accounting for the three distinct strategies outlined in the previous sections. As we know, Eastern Lombard is a regional language composed of different dialects, which exhibit many similarities and juxtapositions in terms of diachronic evolution and synchronic grammatical features. As seen in their behavior so far, the various Eastern Lombard dialects analyzed here mostly differ in terms of phonetic traits and vocabulary, while the grammatical aspects tend to remain the same. Because of this, I propose a unitary analysis of Eastern Lombard interrogatives, no matter the variety under consideration or the strategies available. While a sole analysis may not be possible for the whole Gallo-Italic group/NIDs, I believe it to be justifiable in the case of vernaculars delimited by smaller linguistic regions, like Eastern Lombard.

The first thing I would like to discuss is the A-bar chain that arises from the successive-cyclic derivation illustrated in (57) and its relationship with the SEM and PHON components. The fact that the two constituents that surface at the phase edges are part of the same A-bar chain is

observable in the presence of islands. Example (59) shows that a NEG item degrades the acceptability of both "simple" (59a) and doubling interrogatives (59b).

(59) a. *Maje-la *mia* **ke** la ho hpuda? *Darfense*
eat.PRS=SCL.3SG NEG what the his wife
'What doesn't his wife eat?'

b. ***Ke** fe-t *miga* majà **kwé**? *Monnese*
what do.PRS=SCL.2SG NEG eat.INF what
'What don't you eat?'

As seen in chapter 3, negative islands block the extraction of wh-constituents over a NEG Operator. In (59a), the negation *mia* acts as an intervening element, disrupting the A-bar chain between the wh-feature-bearing item and the silent Operator located in the CP field. In (59b), the same phenomenon is observable in the presence of doubling, with the difference that the Operator is pronounced at PF. The only way to obviate intervention effects like (59) is by constructing a cleft interrogative, as shown in (60).

(60) a. **Koha** l' e ke la maja *mia* lo ho spuda? *Darfense*
what it be.PRS.3SG that SCL.3SG eat.PRS.3SG NEG the his wife
'What is it that his wife doesn't eat?'

b. **Ke** e-l **kwé** ke l' a *miga* majà? *Monnese*
what be.PRS=SCL.3SG what that SCL.3SG have.PRS.3SG NEG eaten
'What is it that he hasn't eaten?'

Assuming that there is only one A-bar chain where the Operator and the [wh] features are Spelled-Out at the edges of CP and *v*P, respectively, it remains to discuss their properties and the possibility of only pronouncing one of the two at PF, while both are interpreted at LF. Under the analysis proposed here, the three interrogative strategies attested in Eastern Lombard derive from a single syntactic derivation whose outcomes change at the PF interface. According to the Minimalist Program, syntactic objects must be evaluated at both the SEM and PHON components, which in turn impose different conditions on interpretation and pronunciation (Chomsky 1995; 2000). Crucially, belonging to an A-bar chain does not entail obligatory phonological realization of all the chain links: the theory allows for elements to be interpreted at LF while remaining silent

at PF, as long as their formal features are licensed during the derivation (Nunes 2004; Fox 2000). In the case of Eastern Lombard, both the Operator and the whP are part of a single A-bar dependency and are interpreted at LF; however, language-internal factors (Eastern Lombard's dilalic linguistic profile) and interface-related aspects (stress alignment at PF), both to be discussed, determine whether one or both links of the chain are realized at PF. Optionality among these strategies is therefore not syntactic in nature. Instead, it reflects PF choices over which portion of an otherwise identical derivation is pronounced, a pattern consistent with previous accounts of partial pronunciation, feature splitting, and interface-driven variation in wh-dependencies (Cheng 2000; Felser 2004).[69] These choices are conditioned by interface-related factors, most notably prosodic stress alignment in Eastern Lombard, and broader language-internal pressures favoring the *v*P periphery over the CP domain.

First off, the preference for this area of the clause is not only apparent from the single-clause interrogatives discussed so far, but is particularly visible in long-distance dependencies. In this type of interrogative, the item bearing the wh-feature is stranded at the edge of *v*P of the embedded clause. This, once again, differs from similar constructions in, e.g., Dutch and German, which mark the CP phase of the embedded clause as an intermediate position in A-bar movement. The same does not apply to Eastern Lombard, where the lower wh-item can never surface in Spec,CP, not even in long-distance interrogatives, as shown in the ungrammatical sentence in (61b), nor can the Operator occupy Spec,CP in the embedded clause, as shown in (61c). Instead, whP must surface at the periphery of *v*P (61a).

(61) a. **Ke** fe-t cunt ke[70] abia vist *Monnese*
what do.PRS=SCL.2SG reckon that have.SUBJ.3SG seen

kwé il Giosef?
what the Giosef

[69] Interestingly, Cheng (2000) analyses partial wh-movement in German as involving only movement of the [wh] feature into the matrix scope position, while the rest of the A-bar chain is stranded in an intermediary position in the embedded Spec,CP.

[70] Note that, even though this element is homophonous with the interrogative wh-Operator, it is actually the *that*-complementizer, similarly to what occurs in standard Italian and other Western Romance languages.

b. ***Ke** fe-t cunt **kwé** ke abia
what do.PRS=SCL.2SG reckon what that have.SUBJ.3SG

vist il Giosef?
seen the Giosef

c. ***Ke** fe-t cunt **ke** ke abia
what do.PRS=SCL.2SG reckon what that have.SUBJ.3SG

vist il Giosef?
seen the Giosef

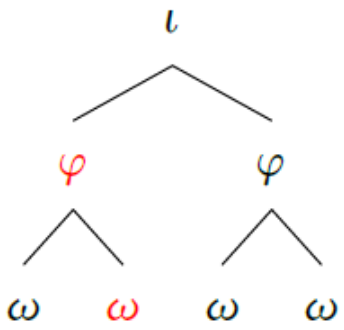
'What do you think that Giosef saw?'

Additionally, as mentioned earlier in the section, one crucial aspect behind the optionality discussed so far is related to stress-alignment at PF in Eastern Lombard, and its effects. In particular, there is a strong link between the Eastern Lombard proclivity to mark the *v*P phase edge and the prosody adopted by its speakers. Stress assignment in Eastern Lombard is one of the contributing factors to its preference for the clause-internal strategy and, more generally, for A-bar and discourse-related items surfacing at the edge of *v*P. Neagu & Fiorini (2026) discuss this aspect of wh-interrogatives in Camuno, a group of related Eastern Lombard varieties, to which Darfense and Monnese belong. The authors show that, in these dialects, stress aligns with the most informationally prominent element in the clause, which tends to occupy the left edge of the predicate domain. Moreover, based on the prosodic analysis of both unmarked and marked structures, it is shown that stress falls on the rightmost constituent of the relevant phonological phrase. The latter is considered to correspond to an entire phasal domain, assuming that prosodic structures are built cyclically, i.e., phase-by-phase (cf. Chomsky 1995, 2001; Kahnemuyipour 2009; among others). The prosodic scheme of a Darfense interrogative is shown in (62).

(62) a. Parlerà-l **ki** co' la Maria? *Darfense*
talk.FUT=SCL.3SG who with the Maria
'Who will talk to Maria?'

b. [[Parlerà-l **ki**] φ [co' la Maria] φ] ι

c.



(Neagu & Fiorini 2026: ex. 50, p. 28)

The main stress in (62c) is marked in red. As shown in the example, it falls on the phonological word *ω* at the right edge of the phonological phrase on the left. If each phonological phrase *φ* roughly corresponds to a phasal domain, as in (62b), then *ki* is the word that is prosodically the most prominent. In other words, not only does this wh-word surface at the left edge of the *v*P phase, where it landed to escape transfer to the interfaces, but it also occupies a position at the right edge of the CP phase, where it is assigned its prominent prosodic contour, as this area corresponds to the rightmost constituent of the relevant phonological phrase.[71] This may also explain why the clause-internal item in wh-doubling constructions tends to be phonologically heavier than its fronted counterpart.

The preference for the *v*P phase edge over the CP one for A-bar movement and the prosodic contour adopted by Eastern Lombard is also due to the diachronic evolution of this language. Linguistic change within the Gallo-Romance group seems to have often favored the lower phase over the higher one with respect to A-bar phenomena. Wolfe (2022), for example, argues that early Romance had a maximally active left periphery, similar to Latin, which was subsequently altered through successive re-analyses. Although the author focuses on French and Venetan, given the close genealogical relationship between these varieties and Eastern Lombard, the same development plausibly applies to the dialects under consideration. By examining these two varieties, Wolfe (2022) shows how, after the 11th century, these languages increasingly restricted the types of constituents able to occupy the CP field, limiting, among other things, contrastive focus movement. Given this weakened C setting (also observed by Ledgeway (2020) with respect to V-

[71] Remember that the phasal domain is the complement of the phase head. When it comes to the *v*P phase, this corresponds to the complement of *v*°, which is why the wh-item at the left-edge of *v*P belongs to the higher phasal domain.

to-C movement), it follows naturally that the other domain available for A-bar elements is the lower phase at the edge of *v*P.

Finally, optionality may also be explained by the dilalic linguistic situation between standard Italian and Eastern Lombard. In particular, it has been argued that, much like free variation in phonology, the coexistence of competing grammars within the same individual or speech community gives rise to optionality, as speakers draw on two or more grammatical systems (Lightfoot 1999; Kopf & Weber 2023). The presence of competing grammars may also account for why fronting tends to be restricted in its usage compared to the clause-internal strategy. Put differently, I propose that Eastern Lombard is currently undergoing a transitional stage, in which standard Italian has gradually been replacing the local languages not only in formal contexts, but increasingly in informal ones as well. Therefore, while Gallo-Romance tends to favor the *v*P periphery, Italo-Romance prefers the CP periphery. This tension is the culprit of the heterogeneous behavior and the high degree of optionality on Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives: while earlier stages of Eastern Lombard might have been more conservative in their Gallo-Romance syntactic features, the past century has brought this language to acquire more Italo-Romance traits. Because of this, the grammar of the speakers of the dialects under consideration is still adapting, thus resulting in optionality between multiple interrogative strategies.

The main points raised in section 4.1 are resumed in section 4.2, dedicated to contrastive focus. Here, I provide an overview of this A-bar phenomenon by showing that, once again, the *v*P periphery is the preferred area of the clause for contrastively focused constituents.

4.2.5 Summary

This section has provided a unified analysis of wh-interrogatives in Eastern Lombard. Its central claim is that these constructions show the importance of phasal edges, particularly the *v*P periphery, in the syntax of Eastern Lombard. More specifically, I argue that the two phase-edges host distinct components of a single A-bar chain.

The analysis examines wh-interrogatives across five Eastern Lombard dialects (Darfense, Monnese, Castenedolese, Soltino, and Bergamasque). It identifies three interrogative strategies: wh-fronting, clause-internal wh-phrases, and wh-doubling. Despite their surface differences, these constructions are argued to derive from a single syntactic derivation. Thus, Eastern Lombard

interrogatives involve a layered wh-constituent in which the Operator and the wh-features are realized as separate syntactic units. The Operator moves to check the [Q] feature in the CP domain, while the element bearing the [wh] feature is stranded at the edge of *v*P.

The availability of these strategies varies across dialects and wh-types. *Table 3* schematizes the distribution of the interrogative strategies across the dialects considered in this study.

Table 3

Dialect	**Clause-internal**	**Wh-fronting**	**Wh-doubling**
Darfense	✓	✓	X
Monnese	✓	✓	✓
Castenedolese	✓	✓	✓
Soltino	✓	✓	X
Bergamasque	✓	✓	X

The three interrogative strategies can therefore be understood as different PF realizations of the same A-bar chain. The Operator in the CP domain and the [wh] feature-bearing constituent at the edge of *v*P may be pronounced independently, yielding the patterns summarized in *Table 4*.

Table 4

Strategy	**QP in CP**	**whP in *v*P**	**Surface pattern**
Wh-fronting	pronounced	Silent	fronted wh-item
Clause-internal	silent	Pronounced	clause-internal wh-item
Wh-doubling	pronounced	Pronounced	fronted + clause-internal wh-item

Taken together, the findings of this chapter show that Eastern Lombard systematically employs both phase edges in the derivation of wh-interrogatives. The interaction between these

domains, together with prosodic factors and the effect of competing grammars in the Italian dilalic context, accounts for the distribution and optionality observed across the dialects under consideration.

4.3 Comparison with previous literature & conclusions

This section aims to place the analysis illustrated so far in the landscape of syntax literature on wh-interrogatives in NIDs. Because of the many similarities between the constructions discussed here and those analyzed by past works, there are some points of convergence between the present analysis and those reviewed in section 4.1. The differences, however, are just as crucial. Below, I discuss them by looking at one theoretical approach at a time, starting with the remnant movement analyses.

Concerning the Cartographic approaches adopting an analysis of wh-interrogatives undergoing remnant movement, the present analysis aligns with them on a single crucial aspect: they both propose a unified analysis for all three wh-strategies, and the availability of a complex XP that enters the derivation. The similarities, however, end there. These authors analyze the two wh-elements either as two different kinds of Operators, or as the A-bar counterpart of pronominal doubling in Romance. Moreover, in later work, Munaro & Poletto (2023) suggest that a unitary analysis for all NIDs is not possible, thus revising their previous claims. Although my analysis is restricted to Eastern Lombard (a subset of NID), I maintain that the same account may extend to all canonical wh-interrogatives in this dialect, and that only one wh-item, the Operator, moves to the CP domain. Finally, one of the diagnostics they employ to detect overt movement is sensitivity to islands (Munaro 1999; Munaro & Pollock 2005). Islands, however, are not a reliable diagnostic for overt movement, since wh-*in-situ* languages like Chinese also exhibit island effects, typically attributed to LF movement (Phillips 2013; Lu et al. 2020). A similar account is proposed for French, where island effects arise from covert movement of the Operator within the wh-phrase to the left periphery (Mathieu 1999). Other similar issues with this approach are extensively discussed by Manzini & Savoia (2011), whose main points I concur with.

Moving to the minimalist approach adopted by Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011), the present analysis aligns more closely with their work. In particular, both analyses assume the presence of an interrogative Operator in Spec,CP and a clause-internal wh-item. The authors, however, disregard the possibility of these two constituents being merged together and assume instead that they are base-generated independently. While a viable analysis, the previous sections have shown that the complex XP hypothesis introduced to account for the Eastern Lombard data seems to be the most viable approach. Moreover, Manzini & Savoia (2005; 2011) analyze the clause-internal wh-element as purely *in-situ*, which was shown not to be the case for the data discussed here. They also assume this constituent to be a variable in wh-doubling interrogatives and a wh-Operator when *in-situ*. In other words, the authors conclude that a unified analysis of the three available options is not possible, another point of divergence with the present dissertation. Lastly, Manzini & Savoia (2011) propose that the wh-constituent *in-situ* carries Focus, as shown in section 4.1.2.1. In this regard, the next paragraph better discusses why I consider an analysis involving both Q and Focus within the same clause not ideal.

As far as Bonan (2021a; 2021b) is concerned, this is the analysis that most resembles my own at first glance. In fact, our analyses overlap when it comes to the postulation of a Q Operator whose features are checked in C°. Moreover, both Bonan's (2017; et seq.) analysis and the one presented here show that the clause-internal wh-element raises to the low periphery/edge of the *v*P phase, instead of remaining *in-situ*. The author, however, analyzes this constituent as a [FOC] feature-bearing element. This is where our analyses diverge, as I claim that the clause-internal wh-element is the one carrying the [wh] feature, a possibility Bonan (2021a; 2021b) considers without adopting. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the co-occurrence of both a [Q] and a [FOC] feature within the same derivation is theoretically problematic. The parallelism between [Q] and [FOC] has been extensively observed (Rizzi 1997 et seq.; É Kiss 1998; among many others), from both elements being mutually exclusive, to both being the new discourse-related element within a sentence, to similar morphological marking (Horvath 2013). Given these shared characteristics, [Q] and [FOC] can be analyzed as instances of the same broader class of discourse-related Operators, with their main difference being that [Q] bears clause-typing properties, while [FOC] does not. If that is the case, and given the mutual exclusivity pointed out earlier, by checking the [Q] feature via Move of the fronted wh-element (or a silent Q in clause-internal configurations),

the [FOC] feature should also be satisfied, without the need to posit an additional probing relation. Given, however, that wh-constituents serving as interrogative Operators possess a [wh] feature, in addition to the [*u*OP] feature, it is consistent with the theory to posit that the element in the *v*P periphery is the one bearing the [wh] feature. This feature differs from both [Q] and [FOC], in that it is a morpho-syntactic feature introducing variables or restrictions (Marquis & Tremblay 1998; Miyagawa 2001; Cable 2010).

To conclude, the analysis proposed in this chapter has argued for a decomposition of interrogative structures in Eastern Lombard into distinct but communicating components, whereby the interrogative Operator is associated with a [Q] feature in C°, while the clause-internal wh-element is analyzed as a morpho-syntactic constituent at the edge of *v*P bearing a [wh] feature. Crucially, this entails a separation between Operator-related features and morpho-syntactic features: while [Q] encodes interrogative force at the interface, [wh] is not itself Operator-like, but is rather morpho-syntactic in nature and is associated with variables. By distinguishing between [Q] and [wh], the present analysis captures the syntactic patterns of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives while refining previous accounts of A-bar movement in NIDs, which often conflate these features or distribute them differently across the clause spine.

5. Focus Operators in Eastern Lombard

This chapter expands the theoretical analysis from the previous one by discussing contrastive focus. Analyzing contrastive focus serves to consolidate the analysis provided for the wh-interrogatives and provides a more comprehensive outlook on Eastern Lombard A-bar phenomena. The type of focus phenomena discussed here were previously introduced in section 2.3.3 with examples repeated in (1), which shows a preference for clause-internal focus:

(1) a. La Maria l' a iht AN GAT gier (mia an ka). *Darfense*
the Maria SCL have.PRS seen a cat yesterday not a dog

b. ??AN GAT la Maria l' a iht gier (mia an ka).
a cat the Maria SCL have.PRS seen yesterday not a dog

'It was A CAT that Mary saw yesterday (not a dog).'

The chapter is organized as follows. Section 5.1 summarizes previous works on focus Operators in NIDs. In section 5.2, I illustrate the analysis proposed in the present work for Eastern Lombard and I compare the derivation advanced in chapter 4 for wh-interrogatives with the one at the center of this chapter. Finally, section 5.3 provides a comparison between the present analysis and the previous ones, and concludes the chapter.

5.1 Previous analyses of contrastive focus in NIDs

Unlike the wh-interrogatives discussed in chapter 4, contrastive focus has received less attention in the Northern Italian A-bar literature over the years. Bonan (2021a; 2021b), for example, briefly mentions this type of construction in support of the *v*P movement analysis applied for the clause-internal wh-constituent. The author shows that not only whPs move to the low periphery in Trevisan, but also contrastive focus, as in (2):

(2) a. So ke te ge ga presta el to libro a Piero. *Trevisan*
know.PRS that SCL.2SG OCL.3SG have.PRS lent the your book to Piero
'I know that you lent your book to Piero.'

b. Ge go presta A TONI el libro, no a Piero.
OCL.3SG have.PRS lent to Tony the book NEG to Piero

c. ?Ge go presta el libro A TONI, no a Piero.
OCL.3SG have.PRS lent the book to Tony NEG to Piero

'I lent the book TO TONY, not to Piero!' (Adapted, Bonan 2021a: ex. 43, p. 18)

In (2), it is shown that the word order in the presence of contrastive focus, as in (2b), differs from that found in unmarked structures, such as (2a), whose word order is claimed to be rigid. As discussed in earlier paragraphs, Bonan (2021a) shows that, in unmarked declarative clauses, indirect objects must follow direct objects, as in (2a). Given the contrast between (2b) and the infelicitous structure in (2c), the author concludes that, to derive contrastively focused clauses, the preferred strategy is movement of the focused XP from its base-generated position to a higher, clause-internal position, which she identifies as the low peripheral Focus projection.

To my knowledge, the main monograph that discusses Northern Italian contrastive focus more extensively is Fiorini (2024), which analyzes Camuno (Eastern Lombard) data akin to the one discussed in the present chapter. Fiorini (2024) also observes that Camuno contrastive focus is realized clause-internally, rather than fronted. The type of data analyzed by the author is exemplified in (3):

(3) a. CONTEXT: Paolo arrived with Nica. *Camuno*

b. L' è riat COL LUCA al Paolo.
SCL.3SG be.PRS arrived with Luca the Paolo
'It is with Luca that Paolo arrived.' (Adapted, Fiorini 2024: ex. 33, p. 148)

Fiorini (2024) employs the label "m(arked)-focus" to distinguish constituents such as *COL LUCA* in (3) from rhematic focus, and places it in a dedicated FocP projection at the edge of *v*P. Evidence for this position comes from constructions showing that contrastive focus must obligatorily surface right after the lexical verb, which undergoes V-raising. See the example below, illustrating a subject (4a), an object (4b), and an adjunct (4c) contrastive focus:

(4) a. SUBJECT FOCUS

L’ a portat LA ME PINA i fiur. *Camuno*
SCL.3SG have.PRS brought the my girl the flowers
‘It was my daughter that brought the flowers.’

b. OBJECT FOCUS

La me pina l’ a portat I FIUR htamatina.
the my girl SCL.3SG have.PRS brought the flowers this morning
‘It was flowers that my daughter brought this morning.’

c. ADJUNCT FOCUS

La me pina l’ a portat HTAMATINA i fiur.
the my girl SCL.3SG have.PRS brought this morning the flowers
‘It was this morning that my daughter brought the flowers.’ (Adapted, Fiorini 2024: ex. 3, p. 130)

The patterns in (4) show that contrastive focus is realized in a clause-internal position, regardless of its grammatical function, suggesting that its distribution is structurally determined rather than tied to a specific theta-role assigning position, i.e., *in-situ*.

For the Camuno *v*P structure, the author adapts the representation of this area proposed in D’Alessandro et al. (2010) and D’Alessandro (2017) for asymmetric subject-participle agreement for Italian and French. Building on this, Fiorini (2024) proposes that marked focus is derived through the presence of a silent particle merged with the focused constituent, forming a dedicated syntactic constituent *mop*P. It is this particle that introduces the feature responsible for marked focus triggering movement of the associated phrase to the edge of *v*P, where a low Focus projection is located. This movement is driven by the need to value an operator-related feature, [*u*Operator], against a corresponding interpretable feature in the low periphery, yielding a contrastive or corrective interpretation. Under this view, the distinction between unmarked (rhematic) and marked (contrastive) focus is reduced to the presence vs. absence of this particle-driven movement. The derivation is summarized in (5).

(5)

i. *mop*P is built through the merging of the silent particle *mop* endowed with the [*u*Operator] feature with the focused XP: [*mop*P [*mop*] [XP *marked focus*]].

ii. The entire *mop*P moves to the edge of *v*P triggered by [*u*Operator].

iii. At the lower phase edge, *mop*P enters a local relationship with an Operator carrying [*i*Operator].

iv. *mop*P lands in Spec,FocP, to the left of the predicate domain: FocP > *v*P > VP.

In conclusion, under Fiorini's (2024) analysis, m-focus is introduced by a silent particle triggering movement of the focused constituent to a Focus position at the edge of *v*P, yielding a contrastive interpretation.

This section has shown that contrastive focus in NIDs is consistently realized in a clause-internal position, which has been analyzed as the result of movement to a low Focus projection in the *v*P-periphery (Bonan 2021a; 2021b; Fiorini 2024). In the next section, I propose an alternative analysis of contrastive focus in Eastern Lombard, which retains the centrality of the *v*P periphery.

5.2 Analysis

The analysis of Eastern Lombard contrastive focus illustrated in this section goes hand in hand with the one provided for the wh-interrogatives, while also removing some of the complexity observed in the latter. In this regard, only one strategy seems to be accepted: the clause-internal one, as illustrated in (5) and (6):[72] [73]

(5) a. L' a preparat AL SO OMEN, mia al Marco. *Soltino*
OCL.3SG have.PRS made the her man NEG the Marco

b. ??AL SO OMEN l' a preparat, mia al Marco.
the her man OCL.3SG have.PRS made NEG the Marco

'It was her husband who made it, not Marco.'

(6) a. O comandat OL VIN ROS, mia kwel bianc. *Bergamasque*
have.PRS ordered the wine red NEG that white

[72] During the data collection process, different speakers provided different grammaticality judgements concerning the fronted strategy: some considered it ungrammatical altogether, while for some it was marginally acceptable. In order to avoid any confusion and to maintain consistency, I label this strategy with two question marks, to show that even when accepted, it is still grammatically degraded compared to its clause-internal counterpart.

[73] Note that, as introduced in chapter 3, contrastive focus is characterized by heavy prosody regardless of its surface position. The heavy prosody is normally represented through capitalization.

b. ??OL VIN ROS o comandat, mia kwel bianc.
the wine red have.PRS ordered NEG that white
'It is the red wine I ordered, not the white one.'

The two examples in (5) and (6) show that contrastive focus in Eastern Lombard may only be expressed clause-internally, rather than exhibiting optionality between movement to the CP domain and focus *in-situ* like in standard Italian.[74] For illustrative purposes, the standard Italian equivalent for (6) is exemplified in (7), which shows the alternation between the fronted and the *in-situ* strategy:

(7) a. IL VINO ROSSO ho ordinato, non quello bianco. *Standard Italian*
the wine red have.PRS ordered NEG that white
b. Ho ordinato IL VINO ROSSO, non quello bianco.
have.PRS ordered the wine red NEG that white
'It is the red wine I ordered, not the white one.'

The degraded grammaticality of focus fronting is a characteristic encompassing all Eastern Lombard dialects under consideration, and is in line with other Gallo-Romance (and adjacent) varieties (Cruschina 2022), both external to the Italian peninsula (8), and internal to it (9).

(8) a. J' ai caressé UN CHAT, pas un chien. *French*
SCL.1SG have.PRS caressed a cat, NEG a dog
b. ?UN CHAT j' ai caressé, pas un chien.[75]
a cat SCL.1SG have.PRS caressed NEG a dog
'It is a cat I caressed, not a dog.'

(9) a. Go visto GIANI, no Toni! *Trevisan*
have.PRS seen Giani NEG Toni
b. ?GIANI go visto, no Toni!
Giani have.PRS seen NEG Toni
'It is Gianni I saw, not Toni.' (Adapted, Bonan 2021b: ex. 58, p. 120)

[74] The clause-internal contrastive focus has been traditionally referred to as occupying an *in-situ* position.
[75] Focus fronting, such as (8b), tends to be more broadly accepted in informal contexts (cf. Cruschina 2022).

It appears, then, that Eastern Lombard belongs to the group of Romance languages with absent (or very limited) optionality between focus fronting and focus *in-situ*. This contrasts with the picture delineated for the wh-interrogatives, which possess a high degree of optionality in alternating between fronting and surfacing clause-internally. Nonetheless, the syntactic distribution of contrastive foci supports the conclusion according to which the lower phase edge is prominent in Eastern Lombard. Indeed, these elements also occupy a position to the left of the predicate domain, thus moving away from their point of merging. This is observable in ditransitive constructions such as (10), which contrasts with its unmarked counterpart in (11), but presents the same constraints as their interrogative counterpart, (12).

(10) a. O portat A LA LIVIA i hukì, mia a la Gina. *Darfense*
have.PRS brought to the Livia the zucchini NEG to the Gina

b. *O portat i hukì A LA LIVIA, mia a la Gina.
have.PRS brought the zucchini to the Livia NEG to the Gina

'It is to Livia that I brought the zucchini, not to Gina.'

(11) a. O portat a la Livia i hukì.
have.PRS brought to the Livia the zucchini

b. O portat i hukì a la Livia.
have.PRS brought the zucchini to the Livia

'I brought the zucchini to Livia.'

(12) a. Ghe-t scriit **a ki** la letera? *Castenedolese*
have.PRS=SCL.2SG written to whom the letter

b. *Ghe-t scriit la letera **a ki**?
have.PRS=SCL.2SG written the letter to whom

'To whom did you write the letter?'

The examples in (10) and (11) illustrate the same phenomenon observed for the ditransitive interrogatives repeated in (12): the constituent *A LA LIVIA* 'to Livia' must obligatorily surface right-adjacent to the lexical verb in (10) but not in (11), as in (10) the IO is the contrastive focus, while the DO is unmarked. In this configuration, the IO moves to the edge of the *v*P, while the DO remains *in-situ*. In unmarked contexts, the two objects, *a la Livia* 'to Livia' and *i hukì* 'the zucchini', may be freely reordered, as seen in (11).

Moving on to the attributes of focus Operators, two of the main syntactic properties of focused elements are weak crossover effects and parasitic gap licensing (Lasnik & Stowell 1991). In the case of weak crossover effects, Eastern Lombard's behavior is observable in (13):

(13) a. La ho$_i$ mama ama la Maria$_i$, (mia il Rocco). *Darfense*
the POSS mother love.PRS the Mary NEG the Rocco
'Her mom loves Mary.'

b. *La ho$_i$ mama ama LA MARIA$_i$, (mia il Rocco).
the POSS mother love.PRS the Mary NEG the Rocco
'It is Mary that her mom loves.'

As can be seen in (13), while it is possible to co-index the possessive with *Maria* in a construction not involving a syntactic Operator, (a), the same does not apply when an Operator chain is involved, (b). That is because, whenever an Operator chain and a pronoun are co-indexed, the Operator cannot bind a pronoun that surfaces on the left of its base-generated position.

Another property of contrastive focus is the fact that it licenses parasitic gaps, as shown in the Eastern Lombard example in (14):

(14) A-l majat LA POLENTA$_i$ t_i hensa scaldà e$_i$, *Darfense*
have.PRS=SCL.3SG eaten the cornmeal without heating
mia la minestra.
NEG the soup
'It is the cornmeal that they ate without heating, not the soup.'

Example (14) shows that the DP LA POLENTA 'the cornmeal' moves from its base-generated position, leaving behind a copy/variable t_i. In turn, the latter is coindexed with the parasitic gap e_i, which may only be licensed by overt A-bar movement, thus confirming that the contrastively focused constituent is not *in-situ*.

Finally, contrastive foci in the varieties under consideration are also sensitive to island effects, a phenomenon illustrated in (15):

(15) a. ??L' è mia 'ndat CON NOTER an vacanha. *Darfense*
SCL.3SG be.PRS NEG gone with us in holiday

‘It isn’t with us that he went on holiday.’

b. L’è CON NOTER ke l’ è mia ‘ndat
it be.PRS with us that SCL.3SG be.PRS NEG gone
an vacanha (con la me horela he).
in holiday with the my sister yes
‘It isn’t with us that he went on holiday (but he did go with his sister).’

Example (15a) shows that negation produces intervention effects in the presence of contrastively focused constituents, in a similar fashion to the interrogative repeated as (16), thus disrupting the interaction between the CP domain and the focused constituent. Once again, cleft constructions such as (15b) help circumvent this issue.

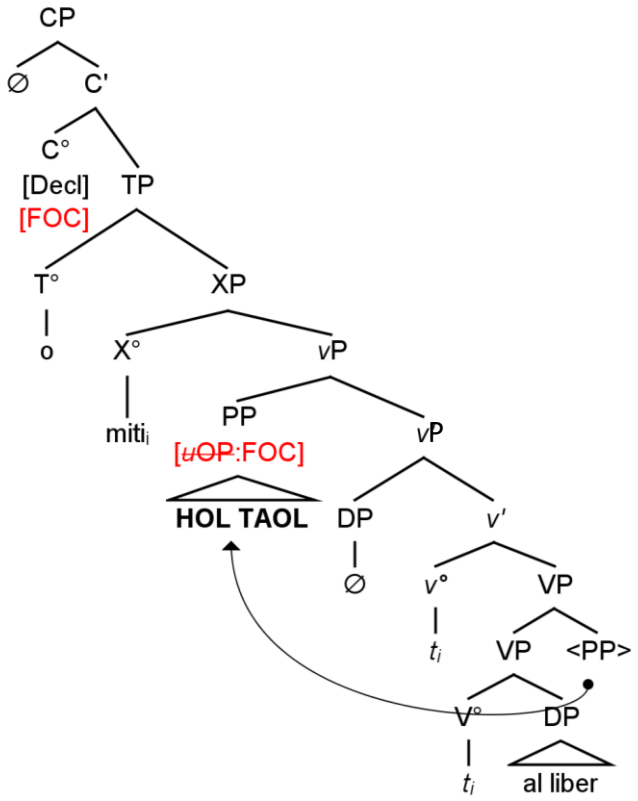
(16) *Maje-la *mia* **ke** la ho hpuda? *Darfense*
eat.PRS=SCL.3SG NEG what the his wife
‘What doesn’t his wife eat?’

These properties of Eastern Lombard contrastive foci intersect with the ones discussed for the wh-interrogatives. This points to an analysis in which the contrastively focused XP is an Operator that must check its formal features against the CP. Put differently, for the focus data discussed in this section, I assume that the element bearing the [*u*Op] satisfies the probe-goal relationship with [FOC] via Agree. The derivation of the focus Operator differs from that of the wh-Operator in one crucial way: the latter checks its [*u*Op] feature in C° against [Q], which also determines interrogative clause-typing, whereas the former establishes a probe-goal relationship with [FOC] (also in C°), whose declarative clause-type is independent of the relationship between [*u*OP] and [FOC]. Nonetheless, the Focus Operator still undergoes movement to the edge of the *v*P phase to escape the lower phasal domain and remain visible to CP for further computation. The tree in (17b) illustrates the derivation for the construction in (17a).[76]

[76] Note that the tree includes an XP hosting the lexical verb between *v*P and TP. As discussed in relation to aspectual adverbs, Eastern Lombard past participles raise to the left of the predicate domain and precede focused or wh-constituents. Since the precise landing site is not specified, I represent it as a generic XP.

(17) a. O miti HOL TAOL al liber (mia hol let). *Darfense*
have.PRS put on-the table the book NEG on-the bed
'It is on the table that I put the book, not on the bed.'

b.



As seen in (17b), the focused PP adjunct *HOL TAOL* 'on the table' moves from its VP-adjoined position into the left-edge of *v*P, in a similar configuration to the one observed for clause-internal wh-phrases. Unlike the wh-interrogatives, however, contrastive focus follows a more conservative Gallo-Romance syntactic pattern, where the clause-internal strategy is the only one universally accepted by the interviewed Eastern Lombard participants.

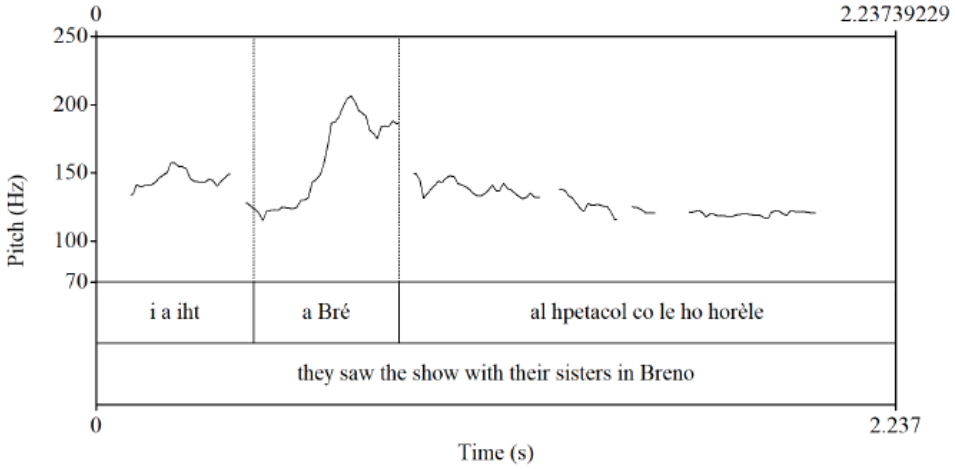
The presence of a weak [*u*OP] feature on contrastively focused XPs, however, is not enough to explain its lack of optionality. Moreover, an analysis of focus Operators must take into account the triggers behind focus fronting vs its clause-internal/*in-situ* counterpart. As shown in the previous section, Fiorini (2024) resorts to the postulation of a silent focus particle to justify movement (although limited to short movement to the *v*P periphery). Another analysis which

assumes that a probe-goal relationship with the [FOC] feature is insufficient to trigger the Move operation, especially when considering Romance varieties exhibiting optionality between focus fronting and focus *in-situ*, comes from Alboiu (2004). According to the author, dislocation of focused constituents is triggered by an optional OCC(urrence) feature on [FOC]. Thus, in languages such as standard Italian, optionality arises from the presence vs absence of the [OCC] feature, which corresponds to the presence vs absence of movement, respectively. In recent Minimalist terms, the [OCC] feature is synonymous with "edge feature". It follows, then, that in marked focus structures, Eastern Lombard lacks this edge feature altogether, since it never dislocates contrastively focused XPs. At the same time, these constituents still establish a probe-goal relationship with C°, in line with the other Romance languages.

Moving on to the interaction with the PF interface, recall the heavy prosodic properties of Eastern Lombard contrastive foci. (18b) illustrates this for the sentence in (18a).

(18) a. (No,) i' a iht A BRÉ al hpetacol co le ho horele. *Darfense*
no SCL.3PL have.PRS seen at Breno the show with the her sisters
'(No,) it is in Breno that they saw a show with their sisters.'

b. *Figure 6*



(Neagu & Fiorini 2026: Figure 2, p. 25)

The data in (18) illustrate an example of corrective focus (a subtype of contrastive focus) in Darfense. As can be observed in the figure in (18b), *a Bré* 'in Breno' is the element receiving

prosodic salience. This is not only expected from this type of focused constituent, but it is also a characteristic that goes hand in hand with the PF properties of the clause-internal wh-element discussed earlier in the chapter.

Overall, this section has shown that the analysis of the clause-internal contrastive focus in Eastern Lombard complements the one provided for the wh-interrogatives. In particular, the edge of the *v*P phase plays a central role in the derivation of contrastively focused XPs, confirming again that this area of the clause is a fertile field for A-bar operations. Unlike the wh-interrogatives, however, the focus Operator checks its relevant formal feature against C° via Agree, without the necessity of any type of movement to the left periphery.

Having discussed the relevant properties of contrastive foci, the following section compares the derivation of these constituents with that of wh-items.

5.2.1 Comparison with interrogative Operators

The analysis developed so far raises a natural question as to how focus Operators relate to interrogative Operators in the dialects under consideration. Let us begin by exploring their similarities before moving to the illustration of the properties in which they differ.

The two types of A-bar Operators being analyzed have been shown to possess a number of overlapping characteristics. For example, both these elements are associated with material that is not fully determined in the common ground at the point of utterance. Moreover, both are canonically associated with the rhematic component of the clause, where they tend to be base-generated, and with the CP domain, with which they interact in their derivation. Other common properties were mentioned in the previous chapter, such as their mutual exclusivity. Overall, the similarities between interrogative and focus Operators suggest that they instantiate a common underlying mechanism within A-bar dependencies.

Despite their overlapping properties, however, the two are independently realized according to different strategies, as observable in the data and the analysis put forward so far. The first, most crucial difference between [Q] and [FOC] is the presence of clause-typing in the former and its absence in the latter. Put differently, both wh-constituents and contrastive foci interact with C° to check their relevant features and to establish an Operator-variable chain. Yet, whereas the checking of [Q] inherently induces interrogative clause-typing, the checking of [FOC] proceeds

independently of clause-typing. This is a cross-linguistic property that aids our understanding of the differences between the derivation of the wh-interrogatives, when compared to contrastive focus in Eastern Lombard. In other words, displacement in Eastern Lombard interrogatives is driven not merely by "Operatorhood", but by the need to satisfy clause-typing requirements.

Finally, the strict absence of movement (with few exceptions) in contrastive focus constructions is explainable through Alboiu's (2004), and partially Fiorini's (2024), analysis of focus movement as triggered by an additional element to the [FOC] feature. Thus, not only do I assume that the [*u*OP] feature on focused constituents is weak, but, following Alboiu (2004), that its lack of movement to Spec,CP reflects the absence of an edge feature associated with [FOC]. While such an edge feature is optionally present in those Romance languages like standard Italian, Romanian, or Spanish, whose contrastive foci are optionally expressed dislocated or *in-situ*, the same feature is entirely absent in Eastern Lombard, thus yielding the constructions under analysis.

The contrast between the two types of dependencies in Eastern Lombard is illustrated in *Table 5*:

Table 5

Property	**Wh-interrogatives**	**Contrastive focus**
vP movement	✓	✓
CP movement	✓	X
Clause typing	✓	X
Edge feature in CP	✓	X

In sum, the contrast between interrogative and focus Operators relates to the presence vs absence of clause-typing, with direct consequences for movement to the CP periphery. The following section compares the current account with previous analyses of contrastive focus in Northern Italian dialects.

5.3 Comparison with previous literature and conclusions

The account developed here differs in important respects from previous analyses of contrastive focus in NIDs, to which I now turn. These accounts share one significant similarity with the present analysis: the clause-internal (*v*P) realization of contrastive focus; however, they also differ in important ways when it comes to the derivational mechanisms involved.

As discussed above, both Bonan (2021a; 2021b) and Fiorini (2024) argue that contrastive focus in NIDs is realized in a clause-internal position corresponding to the *v*P periphery. In these approaches, the landing site of focused constituents corresponds to a dedicated low Focus projection, located at the edge of the lower phasal domain. For Bonan (2021a; 2021b), this corresponds to the low periphery of the clause in Belletti's (2004) terms. For Fiorini (2024), the representation is more minimalist in nature and follows the basic *v*P structure proposed by D'Alessandro et al. (2010) and D'Alessandro (2027) for standard Italian and French. By contrast, the present account does not posit a specialized Focus projection in the low periphery. Instead, the *v*P edge is analyzed as a phase edge position, whose role is purely syntactic.

Moreover, Fiorini (2024) argues for the presence of a focused particle attaching to the contrastively focused constituent and checking its relevant features against FocP in the periphery of *v*P. The analysis discussed here, on the other hand, avoids the postulation of additional silent particles and sides with previous analyses of Romance contrastive focus, whose features are checked against CP. More specifically, given its clause-internal configuration, I propose that Eastern Lombard contrastive focus is established through an Agree relationship with a [FOC] feature in C°, which is possible after movement to the low periphery.

The main advantage of the present analysis lies in its relative economy. While previous accounts rely on additional mechanisms, e.g., a silent focus particle or a dedicated functional projection, the current account derives the relevant properties of contrastive focus from assumptions concerning phasal domains and formal features. As such, it eliminates the need for construction-specific devices, resulting in a more generalizable analysis.

In sum, although previous analyses correctly identify the *v*P-periphery as a crucial domain for the realization of contrastive focus in NIDs, the present proposal offers a different perspective on its derivation. By treating movement to the *v*P edge as a general property of A-bar dependencies

and attributing the absence of further displacement to the lack of an edge feature in C°, this account provides a more unified analysis of the interaction between focus and clause structure. More broadly, it supports the view that the variation observed between wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus in Eastern Lombard does not reduce to differences in Operatorhood, but rather to the distinct ways in which Operator features interact with the clausal spine.

6. Experimental findings

This chapter aims to integrate the theoretical analysis provided in chapter 4 with experimental data collection. Its main goal is to shed further light on the dichotomy between the CP and *v*P phase edges as areas involved in the computation of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives, by testing the strategy preferred by participants in a controlled experimental setting that complements the informal data collection process. In fact, while the data collected through more traditional methods provided a broad picture of these constructions, it was insufficient to support a clear conclusion that the clause-internal strategy is the most prominent.[77]

More specifically, this chapter contributes to current discussions on the extent to which optionality between different syntactic strategies can help our understanding of grammar. Eastern Lombard seems particularly well-suited to this, given its multiple strategies for forming wh-dependencies. It is therefore possible to investigate whether the optionality described in the previous chapters is "true" or the result of constraints that were not possible to grasp during the informal data collection process. For example, no conclusions were reached regarding potential pragmatic constraints during the informal data collection, or whether any sociolinguistic factors play a role in the preferred strategy choice. In order to address this issue, the study uses a forced-choice experimental design, as it allows for a direct comparison of the competing interrogative strategies. This methodology provides a more controlled environment for testing speakers' preferences, rather than informal elicitation, as it makes it possible to determine whether one strategy is systematically favored once the effect of standard Italian is controlled for by limiting its use to the instructions section of the experiment.[78] The main hypothesis regarding the preferred strategy, as explained in chapter 4, is that speakers will opt for the clause-internal one, therefore supporting an analysis in which the *v*P phase edge plays a central role in the derivation of these structures.

The experiment focuses on speakers of Darfense, one of the dialects of Eastern Lombard under analysis. This choice was motivated by methodological considerations: restricting the sample

[77] Unlike contrastive focus, which speakers almost unequivocally placed clause-internally.
[78] As opposed to the informal data collection, where interaction with participants took place in standard Italian due to my limited fluency in Eastern Lombard.

to a single dialect minimizes potential confounds caused by lexical variation and surface phonetic differences across dialects. This approach ensures greater uniformity across stimuli and participants, without impacting the broader theoretical relevance of the findings. As a reminder, Darfense employs two of the three available interrogative strategies: wh-fronting (1a) and the clause-internal strategy (1b).

(1) a. **Kwando** l' e-t tʃapada te la patente?
when OCL be.PRS=SCL.2SG gotten you the driver's license

b. L' e-t tʃapada **kwando** te la patente?
OCL be.PRS=SCL.2SG gotten when you the driver's license

'When did you get your driver's license?'

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 6.1 briefly discusses the literature by exploring the advantages of experimental methods. Section 6.2 introduces the experiment and illustrates its design, methodology, and results. Section 6.3 provides a discussion of the results and their implications. Finally, section 6.4 summarizes and concludes the chapter.

6.1 Advantages of experimental data collection

Critiques of traditional syntactic methods have often focused on their empirical limitations, including small participant samples, restricted stimulus sets, and the potential effect of researcher bias (Gibson & Fedorenko 2013). Although informal acceptability judgments have been shown to be a reliable data collection method, especially in the presence of smaller samples (Sprouse & Almeida 2013; Sprouse et al. 2013), these critiques highlight the advantages of formal experimental approaches. By having better control over both stimuli and responses, experimental methods make it possible to obtain more replicable results. Moreover, they also provide an alternative way of investigating the conclusions drawn from informal data, thus strengthening the empirical foundation of syntactic analyses (Sprouse 2015). For this reason, they have become an increasingly important tool in the investigation of syntactic phenomena.

Beyond their general methodological advantages, experimental approaches have also been shown to complement traditional fieldwork methods in the study of non-standard varieties such as Eastern Lombard. Dialectal forms, in particular, present specific challenges concerning data collection, especially when it comes to the presence of two coexisting linguistic systems and the potential influence of prescriptive norms (Henry 2005). Because of this, the elicitation of non-standard syntactic patterns requires carefully controlled methodologies in order to obtain more reliable data (Cornips & Poletto 2005). Within this perspective, formal methods allow us to capture these patterns at the community level, which is crucial for identifying microvariation across speakers, rather than speaker-specific preferences (Polinsky 2023). At the same time, since formal acceptability judgments tend to be affected by multiple interacting factors, including grammaticality, processing demands, or the very properties of the acceptability task, all of which can conceal the source of observed contrasts (Sprouse 2023), capturing broader patterns is particularly important. This issue is especially relevant in dialect studies such as the present one, where variation is often subtle and may be more or less meaningful (Häussler & Juzek 2021). In more general terms, acceptability has been shown to be gradient rather than categorical (Keller 2000; Sorace & Keller 2005). Experimental methods address this problem by systematically controlling variables when comparing minimally different structures, therefore limiting noise from non-syntactic factors.

Experimental work on syntactic structures in Gallo-Italic and Italo-Romance non-standard varieties remains relatively limited. Nevertheless, a very small number of experimental approaches have been applied to the study of Italian dialects. As far as interrogative structures are concerned, Lusini (2013) investigates yes/no question-marking in Sienese (Italo-Romance), combining theoretical and experimental methods, including controlled elicitation and quantitative analysis of speakers' responses. This work demonstrates the feasibility of applying experimental methodologies to dialect syntax, although with a smaller pool of participants, and shows how such approaches can provide systematic evidence on interrogative syntax. However, the extension of these methods to other interrogative structures, such as *wh*-questions, remains largely unexplored for non-standard Italian varieties. Within the Gallo-Romance group, more extensive experimental research has been conducted on interrogative structures in standard French. Production and acceptability judgment tasks have investigated the distribution of *wh*-in-situ and movement

strategies, showing that these variants are associated with both inter- and intra-speaker variability and are sensitive to prosodic and discourse-related factors (cf. Déprez et al. 2013; Baunaz et al. 2024). Furthermore, these studies have shown that acceptability judgments are affected not only by grammatical factors but also, as expected, by prescriptive norms, with speakers distinguishing between variants associated with formal and informal registers (Thiberge & Hemforth 2025). Taken together, these studies show that experimental methods are well-suited to capture the type of microvariation observed in the constructions under investigation, provided they are carefully designed to control the potential sociolinguistic factors affecting speakers' responses. As better explained in the next paragraph, this is particularly important in contexts with multiple competing structures, as in the Eastern Lombard data, where different strategies are often attested without a clear-cut distinction in grammaticality.

As discussed throughout this section, experimental studies in syntax often involve acceptability judgment tasks, such as Likert scale, magnitude estimation, and forced-choice. The latter is at the center of the present chapter, as it was used to test the preferences of native Eastern Lombard (Darfense) speakers concerning the fronted vs the clause-internal wh-strategy. The adoption of the two-alternative forced-choice task follows from its general properties: this method requires participants to select the more acceptable sentence between two options. Crucially, since forced-choice tasks probe relative preferences rather than absolute acceptability, they are particularly suitable when both variants are accepted but differ in degree of preference. Therefore, because it requires a choice between alternatives, this task is devised to make even subtle contrasts between conditions more detectable, often resulting in a substantial gain in statistical power (Sprouse et al. 2013). As for the disadvantages of this method, its biggest issues are the lack of indication of intermediate levels of acceptability (Kaiser & Runner 2023), as well as the fact that it does not reveal the absolute quality of the sentences being compared, since both could be either highly unacceptable or relatively well formed.

Given, however, the acceptability of both fronted and clause-internal wh-phrases in Eastern Lombard, the forced-choice task seems the most suited to verify the current hypothesis that the clause-internal strategy is preferred in Eastern Lombard. The next section is dedicated to the presentation of this experiment in the Darfense variety.

6.2 Evidence from forced choice in Darfense

The main purpose of the present experiment is to test the preferred strategy for wh-interrogatives in Darfense, an Eastern Lombard dialect spoken in Valle Camonica, particularly in the municipality of Darfo Boario Terme, which has about 16,000 inhabitants. As explained earlier in the chapter, this dialect was chosen for methodological reasons, but also because it is spoken in one of the most populous towns to which I had easy access during data collection. In the experiment, native speakers of Darfense were instructed to select the preferred strategy between the two attested in this variety, i.e., wh-fronting and the clause-internal strategy. The experimental design and its results are discussed in the following sections.

6.2.1 Materials and procedures

The experiment was carried out using PCIbex Farm, a platform designed to implement and host web-based experiments. The task consisted of acceptability judgements in the form of a two-alternative forced-choice, where native Darfense participants selected their preferred wh-strategy by clicking on one of two interrogative sentences. Responses were recorded as binary choices between the two variants. To minimize any marked/non-canonical interpretation of the target questions, the items were accompanied by an audio recording in which a native Darfense speaker read the two alternatives in the order in which they were presented. Participants could replay the audio as needed and were not subject to time constraints. Moreover, each pair of interrogatives was preceded by a short contextual prompt. Example (2) illustrates the experimental design for an argument (2a) and an adjunct (2b) wh-interrogative:[79]

(2) a. CONTEXT: *Te sentet du persune che i e dré a parlà. Quala te homea la frase pio giosta?*
You hear two people talking. Which seems the best sentence for you?
- **Chi l' a ciamada la to mama?**
who OCL have.PRS called the your mom
- **L' a ciamada chi la to mama?**
OCL have.PRS called who the your mom

[79] Note that (1) illustrates the data exactly as it was presented to the participants, i.e., following Italian orthographic practices, as opposed to the theoretical analysis from the previous chapters, where I mixed Italian orthography with phonetic symbols.

'Who called your mom?'

b. CONTEXT: *Do anziani i e dré a parlà de la gioventù. Quale de cheste domande l'è pio probabile che i dopererà?*
Two elderly men are talking about their youth. Which of these questions are they more likely to use?

- **H' et nahit 'ndoe te?**
REFL have.PRS=SCL.2SG born where you

- **'Ndoe h' et nahit te?**
where REFL have.PRS=SCL.2SG born you
'Where were you born?'

The design in (2) was applied to all the stimuli under analysis. Since participants had to select between two interrogative variants differing in their syntactic position, the dependent variable was the binary choice between the two variants. In addition, items were distributed across four wh-constituent types (*ki* 'who', *ke* 'what', *'ndoe* 'where', and *kwando* when), which functioned as a within-subjects, between-items variable. Each context was followed by the two interrogative variants presented simultaneously in vertical order. To control for potential order effects, the presentation order of the two variants (fronted vs. clause-internal) was counterbalanced across items. There were 4 total between-item conditions, each corresponding to a different wh-constituent, namely *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.[80] The *who*-constituents were all subjects, while the *what*-constituents were all direct objects. Each condition included four lexicalizations, each realized in two variants, yielding a total of 32 target items. The fillers, also with two variants each, were twice as many, for a total of 64 items. These were a mix of interrogative and declarative structures which involved word-order manipulations, and were divided into two types: (i) items exhibiting a clear grammaticality contrast between variants, and (ii) items in which both variants were grammatical. In addition to the stimuli and the fillers, the experiment included 2 control conditions with one fully grammatical and one fully ungrammatical wh-question, thus functioning as a baseline. As with the target items, all fillers and controls were preceded by a context and

[80] *Why* was automatically excluded due to its peculiarities, as explained in section 4.2.2, whereas *how* was excluded to ensure greater uniformity across conditions.

accompanied by an audio recording. All items (targets, fillers, and controls) were randomized so that each participant was presented with a different item order.

Participants first received written instructions explaining the task and were asked to select the most natural sentence in each context. A background questionnaire also preceded the task. Here, participants were required to provide demographic information concerning their current residence and place of birth, age, level of education, as well as self-reported measures of dialect use. The latter included the contexts in which Darfense is used, the relative frequency of dialect use compared to standard Italian, and self-assessed proficiency in both spoken and written modalities (beginner, intermediate, or advanced).

A total of 10 participants took part in the experiment; however, one had to be excluded for providing an implausible age (7 y.o.), which could not be verified as this was one of the few participants recruited through social media. All participants were native speakers of Darfense, with most of them still living in the region, and were recruited through personal contacts, local networks, and social media. The limited number of participants comes from difficulties encountered during the recruitment process. The latter was particularly challenging, likely because of the type of variety under investigation (a non-standard dialect with decreased usage) and because of the online format of the study, which limited direct contact with potential participants. Recruitment via social media and local networks was particularly ineffective; consequently, most participants were recruited through personal contacts. The nine participants included four male and five female speakers. Their ages ranged from 29 to 78 years old and were uniformly distributed across generations. Most participants identified standard Italian as their main language, with only two selecting Darfense. As expected, dialect use was mainly reported in informal contexts. Self-reported bilingualism and proficiency in Darfense generally increased with age. Finally, participants' educational backgrounds ranged from primary education to a PhD, with older speakers tending to indicate lower levels of formal education.

The study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines, and all participants provided informed consent prior to participation.

6.2.2 Results

The experimental data were analyzed using Jamovi (The jamovi project 2026). Given the binary nature of the response variable, proportion and contingency tests were used to evaluate overall preferences and the effect of wh-phrase type. Sociolinguistic variables (e.g., age, education, and self-reported proficiency) were not included in the final analysis due to the absence of significant effects in the speakers' data, likely because of the limited number of participants. The summary of the results for each participant is illustrated below in Table 6:

Table 6

Participant	WhP	Clause-internal	Fronted
P1	what	100%	0%
	who	100%	0%
	when	75%	25%
	where	100%	0%
P2	what	100%	0%
	who	100%	0%
	when	75%	25%
	where	75%	25%
P3	what	100%	0%
	who	100%	0%
	when	75%	25%
	where	100%	0%
P4	what	100%	0%
	who	25%	75%
	when	75%	25%
	where	75%	25%
P5	what	100%	0%
	who	50%	50%
	when	50%	50%

	where	75%	25%
P6	what	100%	0%
	who	0%	100%
	when	50%	50%
	where	100%	0%
P7	what	100%	0%
	who	25%	75%
	when	50%	50%
	where	0%	100%
P8	what	100%	0%
	who	25%	75%
	when	50%	50%
	where	50%	50%
P9	what	100%	0%
	who	25%	75%
	when	100%	0%
	where	100%	0%

Table 6 summarizes the main results by presenting the percentage of choices for each *wh*-word type across participants. As shown in the third column, the clause-internal strategy was selected more frequently overall than the fronted variant, whose percentages are shown in the last column. In order to further investigate these results, two tests were conducted. The first test is a one-sided binomial test to determine whether the clause-internal strategy is preferred overall. The main results are shown in Table 7, with the count number for each strategy representing the total counts across trials:

Table 7

Binomial Test

	Level	Count	Total	Proportion	*p*
Strategy	**clause-internal**	105	144	0.729	<.001
	Fronted	39	144	0.271	1.000

Note. H_a is proportion > 0.5

As illustrated in the table above, the results show that the clause-internal strategy was preferred significantly over the fronted one, with 72.9% of cases, over the fronted one, with 27.1% of cases. Moreover, the responses for the clause-internal strategy were significantly more frequent than expected under a 50% distribution, with $p < .001$, confirming a clear preference for this syntactic pattern.

In order to examine whether this preference changes depending on the type of wh-constituent, a chi-square test was also performed. The test indicates a significant association between wh-phrase type and response choice, with $\chi^2(3) = 23.7$ and $p < .001$. This suggests that the preferred strategy differs depending on the type of wh-constituent under consideration. This is shown in Table 8:

Table 8

χ^2 Test

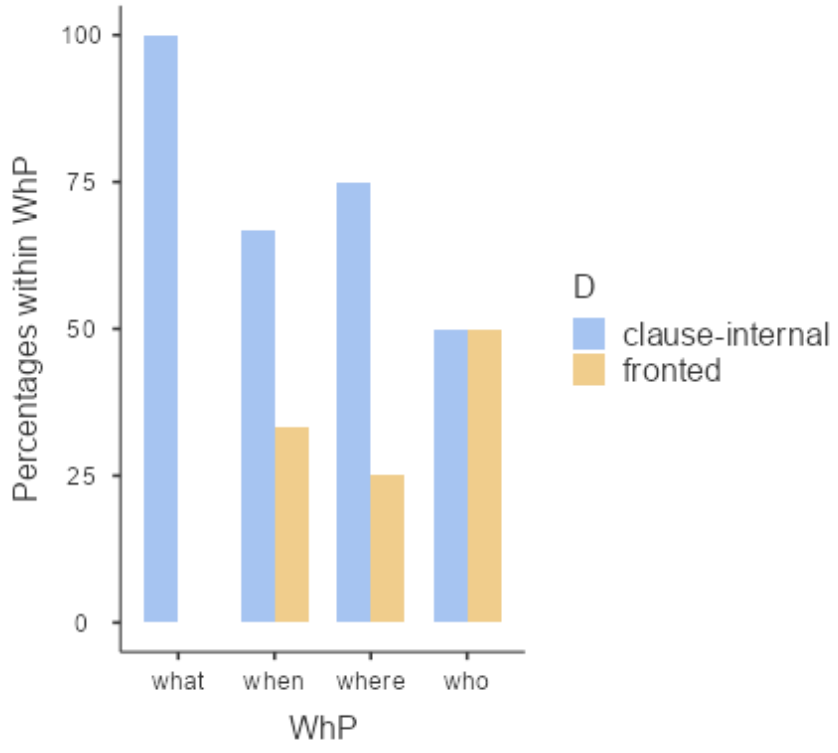
	Value	df	P
χ^2	23.7	3	<.001

χ^2 Test

	Value	df	P
N	144		

This relationship between wh-type and strategy preference is illustrated in Figure 7, which shows the proportion of clause-internal and fronted responses for each wh-phrase. As observable in the figure, *ke* 'what' displays a categorical preference for clause-internal position, while *'ndoe* 'where' and *kwando* 'when' show strong but non-categorical preferences. In contrast, *ki* 'who' exhibits the greatest variability, with responses distributed more evenly across the two strategies.

Figure 7



Overall, the results confirm a clear preference for clause-internal strategies, while also demonstrating that this preference is systematically conditioned by the type of wh-constituent.

6.3 Discussion

The experimental results reported in the previous section, despite their limitations due to the restricted number of participants, provide clear empirical support for the theoretical analysis discussed in chapter 4. In particular, the distribution of the fronted vs clause-internal strategies observed in the experimental results is not uniform across wh-phrase types but instead reflects systematic differences in their base-generated positions and their relation to the different phasal domains.

As shown in the results, the clause-internal strategy is overall preferred (72.9% of responses); however, this preference is not homogeneous: while *ke* 'what' and, to a slightly lesser extent, *'ndoe* 'where' display a clear preference for this strategy, *ki* 'who' and *kwando* 'when' show a significantly higher degree of variability.[81] Given the different areas of the clause where the wh-phrases are base-generated, this asymmetry suggests that the choice of interrogative strategy is sensitive to the merging site of the wh-phrase, rather than being freely optional. Specifically, within the theoretical framework adopted in this dissertation, the derivation of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives is analyzed as reflecting the interaction between two phasal domains, *v*P and CP, with wh-constituents marking their respective edges once they reach their landing site. As a reminder, clause-internal wh-phrases are argued to occupy a position at the edge of the *v*P phase, while fronted wh-elements occupy the CP domain, where clause-typing features are checked. From this perspective, the experimental results can be interpreted as evidence that the availability of these strategies is also constrained by the base-generated position of the wh-phrase relative to these domains. As such, wh-constituents such as *what* and *where* are base-generated inside the predicate domain, i.e., inside VP or in closely related argumental or adjunct positions. In other words, they originate within the *v*P phase and are licensed at its edge in Eastern Lombard. The strong preference

[81] While *when* and *where* yielded similar results in terms of strategy preference, the former nonetheless shows more propensity for the fronted strategy than the latter.

for the clause-internal strategy observed in the experimental data suggests that, for these elements, interpretation can be achieved via short movement to the *v*P phase edge, making movement to the CP domain unnecessary in most cases. In contrast, *who* and *when* behave differently. The subject wh-phrase is base-generated in Spec,*v*P, i.e., right outside this phasal domain. At the same time, *when* is merged in a temporal projection outside the predicate domain. Consequently, both *who* and *when* are generated outside the *v*P phase altogether, often directly at its edge. This structural difference makes them visible to the CP domain, making fronting a more accessible option.

An additional factor potentially contributing to this asymmetry concerns the semantic and discourse-related properties of the wh-items themselves. More specifically, all the wh-phrases tested in the experiment are indefinites. In particular, *ke* 'what' corresponds to a direct object, which occupies the lowest position among the tested constituents and is also non-topicalized. From this perspective, its categorical preference for the clause-internal strategy is unsurprising, since remaining within the lower *v*P domain reflects its non-prominent discourse status. In contrast, subject *ki* 'who' is structurally higher, being externally merged in Spec,*v*P, which makes movement to the CP domain more accessible and therefore increases the availability of fronting. Moreover, Romance subjects, including standard Italian ones, tend to move to Spec,TP, which could have contributed to the overall dichotomy observable in the results.[82] Adjuncts occupy an intermediate position between these structural extremes. While locative *'ndoe* 'where' behaves closely like a predicate-internal argument, both adjuncts represent a middle-ground in structural prominence, correlating with the non-categorical preferences observed for the clause-internal strategy. Together, these patterns further support the view that strategy choice in Eastern Lombard is sensitive not only to phasal organization, but also to the relative structural prominence of the wh-constituents within the clause.

From the point of view of phase theory, which was introduced in chapter 3, this yields a natural explanation for the observed variation. Wh-phrases originating within the *v*P phase (*what* and *where*) show a strong tendency to surface at its edge, resulting in a preference for clause-internal strategies. In contrast, wh-phrases that are generated at the periphery of the *v*P phase (*who* and *when*) are more accessible to the CP phase-edge and therefore display greater flexibility

[82] Note that Darfense, like other Eastern Lombard dialects, tends to either place its subjects in a SCLI configuration, or, in the case of tonic subjects, in Spec,*v*P.

between clause-internal and fronted realizations. Crucially, these patterns and possible derivations also reflect economy principles of least possible computation, as each group of wh-phrases undergoes the shortest movement available to check their formal features: *ke* 'what' and *'ndoe* 'where' tend to move only "one step" towards the *v*P edge so they can be "seen" by CP for feature-checking purposes; conversely, *ki* 'who' and *kwando* 'when' are already visible to this functional domain, and, as explained in chapter 4, optionality between strategies reflects interactions in the internal grammar of the speakers between standard Italian and Eastern Lombard (*dilalia*).

These findings therefore support a view of Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives in which optionality is not fully unconstrained, but emerges from the interaction between base-generation sites, phasal domains, the cyclic structure of the clause, and *dilalia*. At the same time, the experimental component remains limited in scope due to the small number of participants, and the results should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than exhaustive. Nevertheless, the consistency of the observed patterns across speakers suggests that the asymmetry between different wh-types is robust and reflects underlying grammatical constraints rather than idiosyncratic variation.

6.4 Summing-up

This chapter has presented the results of the experimental component and discussed them in light of the theoretical analysis developed in chapter 4. The findings confirm a clear overall preference for the clause-internal strategy in Eastern Lombard, while also showing that this preference is not uniform across wh-phrase types. In particular, the results show a systematic asymmetry between two different groups of wh-constituents. Wh-phrases such as *ke* 'what' and *'ndoe* 'where', which are base-generated within the predicate domain, display a strong preference for clause-internal realizations. In contrast, *ki* 'who' and *kwando* 'when', which are generated at the edge of the predicate domain, show greater variability and a higher number of fronted wh-constituents.

These patterns support the phase-based analysis proposed throughout the dissertation, according to which Eastern Lombard wh-interrogatives reflect the interaction between the *v*P and

CP domains. Clause-internal wh-phrases correspond to a surface position at the edge of the *v*P phase, while fronted wh-elements occupy the CP domain. The experimental results show that the distribution of interrogative strategies is therefore not random, but is systematically constrained by the base-generated position of the wh-phrase and its relation to phasal domains. At the same time, the experimental component remains limited in scope due to the small number of participants and should therefore be interpreted as providing supporting evidence to the theoretical account, rather than a comprehensive empirical account. Nevertheless, the consistency of the observed patterns suggests that the asymmetries identified here reflect underlying grammatical properties of Eastern Lombard, rather than incidental variation. Table 9 summarizes the experimental results and their interaction with the theoretical account:

Table 9

Wh-phrase	**Base position**	**Phasal domain**	**Preferred strategy**
what	object domain	*v*P internal	Clause-internal
where	locative domain	*v*P internal	Clause-internal
who	subject domain	CP internal	Mixed
when	temporal domain	CP internal	Mixed

In sum, these findings suggest that the apparent optionality of wh-strategies in Eastern Lombard is in fact constrained by the interaction between syntactic structure and phase-based computation.

7. Concluding Arguments

This dissertation has investigated A-bar phenomena in Eastern Lombard, with particular focus on the syntax of wh-interrogatives and contrastive focus. The starting point of this research was the observation that Eastern Lombard exhibits a remarkably high degree of optionality in the distribution of interrogative wh-constituents, especially when compared to standard Italian. Depending on the dialect and the type of wh-element involved, interrogatives may be formed with fronted wh-phrases, clause-internal wh-elements, or wh-doubling structures. Similarly, contrastive focus strongly favors a clause-internal realization despite the availability of focus-fronting strategies in related Romance languages such as standard Italian. These patterns raise a fundamental theoretical question: whether the observed variation reflects genuinely free optionality within the grammar or whether it is constrained by deeper structural principles governing syntactic computation.

The dissertation has argued that this optionality is not unconstrained. Rather, the distribution of interrogative and focus strategies in Eastern Lombard systematically reflects the interaction between syntactic structure, phasal domains, economy principles, and sociolinguistic competition between grammatical systems. More specifically, the dissertation has proposed that the syntax of Eastern Lombard A-bar dependencies is shaped by the interaction between the *v*P and CP phase edges. Clause-internal constituents are argued to occupy a position at the edge of the *v*P phase, whereas fronted constituents occupy the CP domain associated with clause typing and higher discourse-related features. Under this approach, the different interrogative strategies observed across dialects do not represent arbitrary alternatives, but rather correspond to different ways in which the grammar exploits the cyclic structure of the clause.

One of the central contributions of this dissertation has therefore been to demonstrate the importance of the clause-internal domain in the derivation of Eastern Lombard A-bar phenomena. Traditional analyses of Romance interrogatives often prefer the left periphery of the clause as the primary locus of interrogative computation. Eastern Lombard, however, provides strong evidence that lower phasal domains may also function as active syntactic areas involved in A-bar computation. In fact, the clause-internal position occupied by wh-elements is not interpreted here

as a purely *in-situ* configuration in which no movement occurs. Instead, the dissertation has argued that these constituents undergo movement to the edge of the predicate domain, where they become accessible to higher syntactic operations while remaining structurally lower than fronted elements. Several empirical properties discussed throughout the dissertation support this conclusion. Clause-internal wh-elements systematically appear immediately adjacent to the raised lexical verb and precede aspectual adverbs and lower complements, indicating that they occupy a position outside the VP proper but within the broader predicate domain. Ditransitive constructions similarly show that clause-internal wh-phrases occupy a structurally privileged position higher than other internal arguments. Furthermore, the existence of wh-doubling structures in certain dialects suggests that both the low and high phasal domains may be overtly represented simultaneously during the derivation. These patterns collectively point toward an analysis in which intermediate phasal positions are not merely invisible computational steps, but syntactically active positions capable of overt realization.

A further contribution of the dissertation concerns the relationship between optionality and structural asymmetry. The experimental and descriptive evidence discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 demonstrates that different wh-types do not behave uniformly. Direct-object wh-phrases display a near-categorical preference for clause-internal realization, whereas subjects show much greater variability and more frequent fronting. Locative and temporal adjuncts occupy an intermediate position between these two extremes. This asymmetry has been argued to follow from the structural position in which the different wh-constituents are base-generated. Constituents merged low within the predicate domain tend to remain associated with the *v*P phase edge, while constituents generated higher in the clause are more directly accessible to the CP domain. Consequently, the preferred strategy for each wh-category reflects the interaction between locality conditions and economy principles, minimizing unnecessary movement. Within this perspective, the asymmetry between arguments and adjuncts also becomes more transparent. Direct objects constitute the structurally lowest constituents tested in the experimental component and are also interpreted as non-topicalized indefinites. Their strong preference for clause-internal realization therefore follows naturally from the interaction between their low structural position and their discourse status. Subjects, by contrast, occupy a structurally higher position and are consequently more accessible to the CP domain, increasing the availability of fronting. Adjuncts occupy an intermediate

structural space and display correspondingly intermediate behavior. The experimental results therefore reinforce the broader claim that interrogative strategy choice is sensitive to the structural prominence of the wh-constituent within the clause rather than reflecting free alternation between equivalent syntactic options.

The dissertation has additionally argued that purely structural explanations are insufficient to account for the full range of variation observed in the data. Eastern Lombard exists within a sociolinguistic context characterized by prolonged contact with standard Italian and by the progressive decline of local vernacular usage. Historically, Eastern Lombard entered first into a diglossic and later into a dilalic relationship with standard Italian, whose influence now extends deeply into informal communication. This coexistence of grammatical systems has important consequences for interrogative syntax. In particular, the greater availability of fronted interrogatives has been interpreted as reflecting the influence of standard Italian, where movement to the left periphery constitutes the canonical strategy for information-seeking questions. Consequently, the optionality observed in Eastern Lombard emerges not only from syntactic structure, but also from the interaction between competing grammars within bilingual speakers. This interaction between syntax and language contact is especially important because it situates Eastern Lombard within broader debates concerning microvariation and bilingual grammars. The data discussed throughout the dissertation suggest that optionality cannot always be reduced to purely formal syntactic mechanisms internal to a single homogeneous grammar. Rather, competing grammatical systems may coexist within speakers and interact with structural principles in determining the distribution of linguistic forms. In this sense, the dissertation contributes to approaches that seek to integrate sociolinguistic and formal considerations into the analysis of syntactic variation.

Another important contribution of the dissertation concerns methodology. Research on non-standard and endangered varieties often relies heavily on informal elicitation and small-scale descriptive data. While these approaches remain indispensable, the present dissertation has shown the value of integrating formal experimental methods into dialect syntax research. The forced-choice experiment presented in Chapter 6 provided quantitative evidence supporting the theoretical claims developed throughout the dissertation. The results revealed a clear overall preference for clause-internal interrogatives while also confirming systematic differences across wh-types.

Although the experimental component remains limited because of the restricted number of participants, the consistency of the observed patterns strongly suggests that the asymmetries identified throughout the dissertation reflect underlying grammatical tendencies rather than idiosyncratic speaker preferences.

More broadly, the dissertation contributes to several areas of theoretical and empirical research within linguistics. First, it provides one of the few extensive generative studies dedicated specifically to Eastern Lombard syntax across multiple dialects. In doing so, it contributes to the documentation and analysis of an endangered Romance language. Second, it contributes to the literature on Romance interrogatives by demonstrating that clause-internal strategies may occupy a far more central position in Romance grammar than traditionally assumed. Third, it supports approaches to syntactic computation in which phase edges constitute active domains for the derivation of A-bar dependencies. Fourth, it contributes to broader discussions of optionality by arguing that apparent free variation often reflects the interaction between structural constraints, economy conditions, and language contact. The findings developed throughout this dissertation also carry implications for the study of phases and locality more generally. One of the consequences of the analysis proposed here is that the distinction between "movement" and "in-situ" interrogatives becomes less rigid than is often assumed. Eastern Lombard clause-internal wh-elements are neither fully fronted nor truly in situ. Instead, they occupy an intermediate position that reflects the cyclic nature of syntactic computation. In this sense, the language provides evidence that the derivation of interrogative dependencies may involve overt realization at multiple points along the movement path. This perspective strengthens approaches to syntax that treat phase edges as fundamental organizational principles within the grammar rather than merely technical constraints on derivation.

Naturally, several questions remain open for future research. The present dissertation has focused primarily on a restricted set of Eastern Lombard dialects and on a limited number of A-bar phenomena. Future work could expand the dialectal sample in order to determine more precisely the geographic distribution of the strategies discussed here and to investigate whether additional microvariation emerges across the Eastern Lombard area. Further research could also examine additional interrogative categories, embedded questions, island configurations, and the interaction between interrogatives and information structure. The experimental component could likewise be

expanded through larger participant samples and additional methodologies. Reaction-time experiments, prosodic analyses, and corpus-based approaches could all contribute to a more refined understanding of how syntactic structure interacts with processing, discourse, and bilingual language use. More generally, future research on Eastern Lombard and related Northern Italian varieties could further illuminate the relationship between endangered vernaculars, grammatical competition with standard Italian, and syntactic change.

Finally, beyond its specific theoretical claims, this dissertation has sought to demonstrate the broader importance of studying endangered and underrepresented languages within formal syntax. Vernaculars such as Eastern Lombard provide a unique window into the range of variation permitted by Universal Grammar and often preserve structural configurations that challenge assumptions based primarily on standard languages. The study of dialect syntax is therefore not peripheral to theoretical linguistics, but central to understanding the architecture of grammar itself. In conclusion, this dissertation has argued that the syntax of Eastern Lombard A-bar phenomena reflects the interaction between *v*P and CP phase edges, locality constraints, economy principles, and language contact. The apparent optionality characterizing interrogative and focus structures is therefore not random, but systematically constrained by the cyclic organization of syntactic structure. Through the investigation of a previously understudied Romance language, the dissertation has attempted to show how microvariation, dialect syntax, and experimental evidence can jointly contribute to broader theoretical debates concerning phases, locality, optionality, and the nature of syntactic computation.

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Appendix A: Participants' demographic information for the experimental component

Table 10

NAME	GENDER	AGE	MAIN LANGUAGE	CONTEXTS OF DIALECT USE	SELF-REPORTED BILINGUALISM	ORAL PROFICIENCY IN DARFENSE	WRITTEN PROFICIENCY IN DARFENSE	EDUCATION LEVEL
P1	F	29	Standard Italian	Family and friends	No (Italian better)	Beginner	Beginner	High School
P2	M	32	Standard Italian	Informal contexts	No (Italian better)	Intermediate	Beginner	Master's Degree
P3	M	34	Standard Italian	Family, friends, informal contexts	No (Italian better)	Intermediate	Advanced	PhD
P4	F	44	Standard Italian	Family	No (Italian better)	Intermediate	Beginner	High School
P5	M	55	Standard Italian	Work, family, friends	Yes	Advanced	Advanced	Middle School
P6	F	66	Darfense	Family and friends	Yes	Advanced	Beginner	Middle School
P7	M	70	Standard Italian	Friends	Yes	Advanced	Intermediate	Middle School
P8	F	71	Standard Italian	Family and informal contexts	Yes	Intermediate	Beginner	Middle School
P9	F	78	Darfense	With everyone	No (Darfense better)	Advanced	Advanced	Elementary School

Appendix B: Research instruments for the experimental component

Participant Instructions (Original Italian)

Non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate: conta solo la tua intuizione.

Nota bene:

Nei dialetti locali esiste molta variazione nelle parole e nelle pronunce: è possibile che alcune di queste forme non corrispondano a quelle che usi tu. Non farci caso e scegli semplicemente la frase che ti suona più naturale.

Prima dell'esperimento ti verranno poste alcune domande demografiche utili all'analisi.

Participant Instructions (English Translation)

There are no right or wrong answers: only your intuition matters.

Please note:

Local dialects exhibit considerable variation in vocabulary and pronunciation. Some of the forms included in this study may not correspond to those you personally use. Please do not focus on these differences and simply select the sentence that sounds most natural to you.

Before the experiment, you will be asked some demographic questions that will assist with the analysis.

Demographic Questionnaire (Original Italian)

(I campi contrassegnati con l'asterisco sono obbligatori. Se preferisci non indicare il tuo nome reale, puoi inserire qualsiasi testo nel campo per poter proseguire.)

Nome *

Età *

Luogo di nascita *

Dove vivi attualmente? *

Utilizzi più l'italiano standard o il dialetto? *

In che contesti utilizzi il dialetto? (con gli amici, con la famiglia, contesti formali, contesti informali, ecc.) *

Quante ore al giorno, in media, utilizzi il dialetto? *

Ti consideri un parlante bilingue? In altre parole, credi di parlare l'italiano standard e il dialetto a un livello simile? *

Quale livello pensi di avere in dialetto all'orale? (Principiante, Intermedio, Avanzato) *

Quale livello pensi di avere in dialetto allo scritto? (Principiante, Intermedio, Avanzato) *

Qual è il tuo livello attuale di istruzione? *

Vorresti aggiungere qualcosa? Puoi aggiungere qualsiasi cosa, compresi commenti relativi alla lingua o a questo progetto.

Demographic Questionnaire (English Translation)

(Fields marked with an asterisk are mandatory. If you prefer not to provide your real name, you may enter any text in the field in order to continue.)

Name *

Age *

Place of Birth *

Where do you currently live? *

Do you use Standard Italian or the dialect more frequently? *

In what contexts do you use the dialect? (e.g., with friends, with family, in formal contexts, in informal contexts, etc.) *

On average, how many hours per day do you use the dialect? *

Do you consider yourself bilingual? In other words, do you believe that you speak Standard Italian and the dialect at a similar level of proficiency? *

How would you rate your spoken proficiency in the dialect? (Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced) *

How would you rate your written proficiency in the dialect? (Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced) *

What is your current level of education? *

Would you like to add anything else? You may include any comments, including observations about the language or about this project.

Experimental Items

Note: The table below contains all 16 critical items, 32 fillers, and 2 control items used in the forced-choice task. Items are presented in their original Darfense form with English translations and bold added for the reader, but not part of the experiment itself.

Table 11

Label	Item	Context	Sentence 1	Sentence 2
Who	1	Te sentet du persune che i e dré a parlà. Quala te homea la frase pio giosta? You hear two people talking. Which sentence sounds better?	Al maiat **chi** la turta? Who ate the cake?	**Chi** al maiat la turta? Who ate the cake?
Who	2	Fet cunt che te dumanded argota a argù. Quala de cheste domande te dopèret? Imagine that you are asking someone something. Which of these questions do you use?	**Chi** l'a ciamada la to mama? Who called your mom?	L'a ciamada **chi** la to mama? Who called your mom?
Who	3	Quala de chèste frasi la te sembra la pio normal de doprà quand giù al parla? Which of these sentences seems the most natural to use when chatting?	**Chi** turnel a ca' a le doi? Who returns home at two?	Turnel **chi** a ca' a le doi? Who returns home at two?
Who	4	Te olet domandà chela laura che à la to famiglia a cena. Preferiset quala de chèste frasi? You want to ask your family something at dinner. Which of these sentences do you prefer?	Parleràl **chi** co la Maria? Who will speak with Maria?	**Chi** parleràl co la Maria? Who will speak with Maria?
What	1	Argù l'è dre a parlà de la so giurnada. Quale de chele laure che te ghe dumande? Someone is talking to you about their day. Which of these things do you ask them?	**Coha** maiet la hera? What do you eat in the evening?	Maiet **che** la hera? What do you eat in the evening?

What	2	Al to socio te domanda na laura. Decidi che frase te penset che al te dirà. Your friend is asking you something. Decide which sentence you think they will say.	Et dat **che** al Paolo? What did you give to Paolo?	**Coha** et dat al Paolo? What did you give to Paolo?
What	3	La nona l'è dre a parlà de i so niuch. Quale de cheste frasi te dopereret? Your grandmother is talking about her grandchildren. Which of these sentences would you use?	**Coha** farai i pì an vacanha? What will the children do on vacation?	Farai **che** i pì an vacanha? What will the children do on vacation?
What	4	Quala de cheste domande la te somea pio naturale quand che te se dre a parlà co i to soci? Which of these questions seems most natural when you are talking with your friends?	If truat **che** an del giardì? What did you find in the garden?	**Coha** if truat an del giardì? What did you find in the garden?
When	1	Do anziani i è dre a parla de la gioventù. Quale de cheste domande l'è pio probabile che i dopererà? Two elderly people are talking about their youth. Which of these questions is it more likely that they use?	**Quando** l'et ciapada te la patente? When did you get your driver's license?	L'et ciapada **quando** te la patente? When did you get your driver's license?
When	2	Qual èla de cheste la domanda che te dopereret an d'an na situasciù normal? Which of these is the question that you would use in an informal situation?	Laura **quando** al pì? When does the boy work?	**Quando** laura al pì? When does the boy work?
When	3	An pì, cinquant'agn fa, l'è dre a parlà co i so genidur. Quale domanda al fà? A child, fifty years ago, is talking with his parents. Which question does he ask?	**Quando** 'ndom da la nona? When are we going to grandmother's?	'Ndom **quando** da la nona? When are we going to grandmother's?
When	4	Te sentet du persune che i e dré a parlà. Quala te homea la frase pio giosta?	Al parleràl **quando** al Mario col ho capo?	**Quando** parleràl al Mario col ho capo?

		You hear two people talking. Which sentence sounds better?	When will Mario speak with his boss?	When will Mario speak with his boss?
Where	1	Do anziani i è dre a parla de la gioventù. Quale de cheste domande l'è pio probabile che i dopererà? Two elderly people are talking about their youth. Which of these questions is it more likely that they use?	**'Ndoe** h'et nahit te? Where were you born?	H'et nahit '**ndoe** te? Where were you born?
Where	2	Quala de chèste frasi la te sembra la pio normal de doprà quand giù al parla? Which of these sentences seems the most normal to use when chatting?	Ala m'a ciamada '**ndoe** la to fonna? Where did your wife call me?	**'Ndoe** m'a ciamada la to fonna? Where did your wife call me?
Where	3	Al to socio te domanda na laura. Decidi che frase te penset che al te dirà. Your friend asks you something. Decide which sentence you think they will say.	**'Ndoe** htaret voter l'inveren? Where will you stay this winter?	Htaret '**ndoe** voter l'inveren? Where will you stay this winter?
Where	4	Quale frase penhet che la doperere la to mama per dì chele laure che? Which sentence do you think your mother would use to say those things?	Èla burlada do '**ndoe** la Giacomina? Where did Giacomina fall down?	**'Ndoe** èla burlada do la Giacomina? Where did Giacomina fall down?
Filler	1	Fet cunt che te dumanded argota a argù. Quala de cheste domande te dopèret? Imagine that you are asking someone something. Which of these questions do you use?	Ndif **despeh** en montagna? Do you often go to the mountains?	Ndif en montagna **despeh**? Do you often go to the mountains?
Filler	2	Te olet domandà chela laura che à la to famiglia a cena. Preferiset quala de chèste frasi?	La Luisa comincela a hetember **la hcola**?	La Luisa comincela **la hcola** a hetember?

		You want to ask something to your family at dinner. Which of these sentences do you prefer?	Does Luisa start school in September?	Does Luisa start school in September?
Filler	3	Fa cunt che te he dre a parlà a argu de la to hetimana. Che frase te dopret? Imagine that you are talking to someone about your week. Which sentence do you use?	**Al lunede pahat** an hè piò nacc an de la cascina. Last Monday we didn't go to the farmhouse anymore.	An hè piò nacc an de la cascina **al lunede pahat**. Last Monday we didn't go to the farmhouse anymore.
Filler	4	Te he dre a hentì una lesciù an dialet. Al dih quale frase al mahestro? You are listening to a lesson in dialect. Which sentence does the teacher say?	I htudenti i a finit al compito **preht**. The students finished the homework early.	I htudenti i a finit **preht** al compito. The students finished the homework early.
Filler	5	Te he dre a parlà con giu dei to hoci mentre te behet al cafe. Quale frase te homea la pio normala? You are talking with one of your friends while you are drinking coffee. Which sentence seems the most natural to you?	Al Htefen l'a mia ricivit '**na rihpohta** da la Marta. Stefano didn't receive an answer from Marta.	Al Htefen l'a mia ricivit da la Marta '**na rihpohta**. Stefano didn't receive an answer from Marta.
Filler	6	Quale de chèste l'è la pio normala per te? Which of these is the most natural for you?	An ma mia troat nihuna solusciù **gier**. We didn't find any solution yesterday.	**Gier** an ma mia troat nihuna solusciù. We didn't find any solution yesterday.
Filler	7	Al to hocio l'è dre a lamentah. Quale frase la dih? Your friend is complaining. Which sentence do they say?	Nigù **a la me domanda** al rehponderà. Nobody will answer my question.	Nigù al rehponderà **a la me domanda**. Nobody will answer my question.
Filler	8	Te he dre a parlà coi to genidur. Te dighet come chela laura che? You are talking with your parents. How do you say this?	I me hochi i ol mia gni **an gita** con noter. My friends don't want to come on a trip with us.	I me hochi i ol mia gni con noter **an gita**. My friends don't want to come on a trip with us.

Filler	9	Quale frase penhet che te po hentì an de la coriera? Which sentence do you think you would hear on the bus?	I htudenti i a mia fat i compiti **an tep**. The students didn't do the homework on time.	I htudenti i a mia fat **an tep** i compiti. The students didn't do the homework on time.
Filler	10	Quale frase penhet che la doperere la to mama per dì chele laure che? Which sentence do you think your mother would use to say those things?	Al treno l'è mia riat **a la stasciù**. The train didn't arrive at the station.	**A la stasciù** al treno l'è mia riat. The train didn't arrive at the station.
Filler	11	Quale de chèste l'è la pio normala per te? Which of these is the most natural for you?	La me horela la capih **hemper** chel che hole dì. My sister always understands what I want to say.	La me horela la capih chel che hole dì **hemper**. My sister always understands what she wants to say.
Filler	12	Te lizet chel discorso che. Quale la te piah de pio? You are reading a speech. Which sentence do you prefer?	Al Luca al parlerà **del ho viagio** co i hoci. Luca will talk about his trip with friends.	Al Luca al parlerà co i hoci **del ho viagio**. Luca will talk about his trip with friends.
Filler	13	Te hentet an po de perhune che le parla an de la htrada. Te dihet che? You hear a few people talking in the street. What would you say?	L'è htat lizit **tate olte** chel liber che. This book has been read many times.	Chel liber che l'è htat lizit **tate olte**. This book has been read many times.
Filler	14	Fa cunt che te he dre a parlà a argu de la to hetimana. Che frase te dopret? Imagine that you are talking to someone about your week. Which sentence do you use?	Al gat l'a dormit tranquilo **tota la not**. The cat slept peacefully all night.	Al gat l'a dormit **tota la not** tranquilo. The cat slept peacefully all night.
Filler	15	Te he dre a parlà con giu dei to hoci mentre te behet al cafe. Quale frase te homea la pio normala?	Al ciel l'era bel fes **htamatia**.	Al ciel **htamatina** l'era bel fes.

		You are talking with one of your friends while you are drinking coffee. Which sentence seems the most nartural to you?	The sky was very beautiful this morning.	The sky was very beautiful this morning.
Filler	16	Te hentet argù che al dih chesto. Quale te homea la pio bela? You hear someone saying this. Which one seems better to you?	La mama la fa ho hemper **al dihna** per tota la familia. Mom always makes lunch for the whole family.	La mama la fa ho hemper per tota la familia **al dihna**. Mom always makes lunch for the whole family.
Filler	17	Te he dre a hentì una lesciù an dialet. Al dih quale frase al mahestro? You are listening to a lesson in dialect. Which sentence does the teacher say?	La maehtra l'a hcriit '**na letera** ai genitur. The teacher wrote a letter to the parents.	La maehtra l'a hcriit ai genitur '**na letera**. The teacher wrote a letter to the parents.
Filler	18	La nona l'è dre a parlà de i so niuch. Quale de cheste frasi te dopereret? Your grandmother is talking about her grandchildren. Which of these sentences would you use?	La Elena l'a pahat **al dé** an montagna. Elena spent the day in the mountains.	La Elena l'a pahat an montagna **al dé**. Elena spent the day in the mountains.
Filler	19	Al to hocio l'è dre a lamentah. Quale frase la dih? Your friend is complaining. Which sentence do they say?	Al ca l'a mia dehmitit de bajà **per tota la not**. The dog didn't stop barking all night.	Al ca l'a mia dehmitit **per tota la not** de bajà. The dog didn't stop barking all night.
Filler	20	Qual èla de cheste la domanda che te dopereret an d'an na situasciù normal? Which of these is the question that you would use in an informal situation?	Et **già** finit al liber? Have you already finished the book?	Et al liber finit **già**? Have you already finished the book?
Filler	21	Quala de cheste domande la te somea pio naturale quand che te se dre a parlà co i to soci?	**An atim fa** ei mia riacc?	Ei mia riacc **an atim fa**?

		Which of these questions seems most natural when you are talking with your friends?	Didn't they arrive a moment ago?	Didn't they arrive a moment ago?
Filler	22	Quan te he dre a parlà con argù ke te conohet, te preferihet quala de keste frasi? When you are talking with someone you know, which of these sentences do you prefer?	I hchecc i a mia **gnamò** majat. The kids haven't eaten yet.	I hchecc i a mia majat **gnamò**. The kids haven't eaten yet.
Filler	23	Te hentet argù che al dih chesto. Quale te homea la pio bela? You hear someone saying this. Which one seems better to you?	La sciura mia **al ho om** la è. The lady is not his wife.	La sciura la è mia **al ho om**. The lady is not his wife.
Filler	24	Te he dre a hpiega chèl laur che a chel che laura con te. Come tel dighe? You are explaining something to your coworker. How do you say it to them?	Crede mia che la hea **na buna idea**. I don't believe it's a good idea.	Crede mia che **na buna idea** la hea. I don't believe it's a good idea.
Filler	25	Te dopreret quale frase per hpiega chela laura che ai tò hoci? Which sentence would you use to explain this thing to your friends?	Chel liber che l'a **negota d'interesante**. This book has nothing interesting.	**Negota d'interesante** l'a chel liber che. This book has nothing interesting.
Filler	26	Te hentet an po de perhune che le parla an de la htrada. Te dihet che? You hear a few people talking in the street. What would you say?	An reuhirà mai **al rihtorante** a troa. We will never manage to find the restaurant.	An reuhirà mai a troa **al ristorante**. We will never manage to find the restaurant.
Filler	27	Te he dre a parlà coi to genidur. Te dighet come chela laura che? You are talking with your parents. How would you say this?	**Al Marco** al te ga de da una notizia importante. Marco has to give you an important piece of news.	Al te ga **al Marco** de da una notizia importante. Marco has to give you an important piece of news.

Filler	28	Quan te he dre a parlà con argù ke te conohet, te preferihet quala de keste frasi? When you are talking with someone you know, which of these sentences do you prefer?	**A ca'** am'a decidit de majà. We decided to eat at home.	Am'a decidit de majà **a ca'**. We decided to eat at home.
Filler	29	Te lizet chel discorso che. Quale la te piah de pio? You are reading a speech. Which one do you like more?	**Anco** g'o mia oja de ndà de fò. Today I don't feel like going out.	G'o mia oja de ndà de fò **anco**. Today I don't feel like going out.
Filler	30	Quale frase penhet che te po hentì an de la coriera? Which sentence do you think you would hear on the bus?	Chel hchet le al parla **dehpeh** a vanvera. That kid over there often talks nonsense.	Chel hchet le **dehpeh** al parla a vanvera. That kid over there often talks nonsense.
Filler	31	Te olet dir chela laura che à la to famiglia a cena. Preferiset quala de chèste frasi? You want to tell something to your family at dinner. Which of these sentences do you prefer?	I è dre a fa ho an banda a la hcola **an parco nof**. They are building a new park next to the school.	I è dre a fa ho **an parco nof** an banda a la hcola. They are building a new park next to the school.
Filler	32	Te he dre a hpiega chèl laur che a chel che laura con te. Come tel dighe? You are explaining something to your coworker. How do you say it to them?	Me piah hintì **chehta cansciù**. I like listening to this song.	Me piah **chehta cansciù** hintì. I like listening to this song.
Control	1	An pì, cinquant'agn fa, l'è dre a parlà co i so genidur. Quale domanda al fà? A child, fifty years ago, is talking with his parents. Which question does he ask?	Et hcrit al Bruno **che**? What did you write to Bruno?	**Che** et hcrit al Bruno? What did you write to Bruno?
Control	2	Argù l'è dre a parlàt de la so giurnada. Quale de chele laure che te ghe dumande?	Ala '**ndoe** la htcheta?	Ala la htcheta '**ndoe**?

		Someone is talking to you about their day. Which of these things do you ask them?	Where is the girl?	Where is the girl?