

**This is the unedited version of a paper published in *Linguistic Inquiry***  
([https://doi.org/10.1162/ling\\_a\\_00460](https://doi.org/10.1162/ling_a_00460))

## **Labeling (reduced) structures: when VPs are sentences**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, we analyze five reduced structures in Italian that display morphological agreement between the past participle and the internal argument. Three out of the five structures have full illocutionary force despite lacking the middle field and the left periphery. We explain this fact (and the differences with the two remaining participial structures) by extending to object agreement cases Chomsky's (2019) hypothesis that clauses are exocentric but can be labeled by a mechanism of feature sharing. This goes against the hypothesis that all reduced structures interpreted as clauses must be elliptical.

### **Keywords**

Labeling, absolute clauses, participial clauses, reduced relatives, case assignment, unaccusatives

## Labeling (reduced) structures: when VPs are sentences

### 1. Introduction \*

There is a general debate concerning “reduced” clauses, opposing on one hand partisans of the hypothesis that all reduced clauses must have a full clause base and are thus elliptical (Morgan 1973; Merchant 2004), and on the other hand those who argue that at least some of them are originally built as reduced as they appear (cf. Barton 1990; Progovac 2013). This opposition is reproduced in the field of acquisition, where the same dilemma arises with respect to early reduced structures produced by children (Radford 1988; Rizzi 1993; Guasti 2016; Hyams 2005).

The first aim of this paper is to step in this debate by focusing on a particular kind of “reduced” participial structures in Italian, exemplified in (1). These structures, which we will argue should be divided into the five following types, all have one characteristic in common: they involve the past participle of an unaccusative or passive verb that agrees in gender and number with the internal argument.

(1)

- |  |                |                |                 |                                      |
|--|----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Il  | paziente       | guarito        | (era contento)  | <b>REDUCED RELATIVE</b>              |
| the.M.SG                                       | patient. M.SG  | heal.PPRT.M.SG | (was happy)     |                                      |
| ‘The patient who recovered (was happy)’        |                |                |                 |                                      |
| b. Paziente                                    | guarito        |                |                 | <b>BARE NOUN REDUCED</b>             |
| patient.M.SG                                   | heal.PPRT.M.SG |                |                 |                                      |
| ‘The patient recovered ’                       |                |                |                 |                                      |
| c. Guarito,                                    | il             | paziente       |                 | <b>DISLOCATED REDUCED</b>            |
| heal.PPRT.M.SG                                 | the.M.SG       | patient. M.SG  |                 |                                      |
| ‘As for the patient, he recovered’             |                |                |                 |                                      |
| d. Guarito!                                    |                |                |                 | <b>FULLY REDUCED</b>                 |
| heal.PPRT.M.SG                                 |                |                |                 |                                      |
| ‘He recovered!’                                |                |                |                 |                                      |
| e. Guarito                                     | il paziente    | (festeggiammo) |                 | <b>UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED</b> |
| heal.PPRT.M.SG                                 | the.M.SG       | patient. M.SG  | (we celebrated) |                                      |
| ‘After the patient recovered (we had a party)’ |                |                |                 |                                      |

These five participial structures all present clear evidence of being “reduced” structures: they can host neither tense, nor negation, nor *wh*-movement, nor focus. As for the internal argument of the verb, its distribution and make-up vary across the different types along a pattern that will play a crucial role in our analysis.

In addition to giving a detailed empirical description of these five structures (some of which have been undescribed so far), two main theoretical goals unify this paper. The first one, as we already mentioned, concerns the debate on reduced structure, while the second one concerns the theory of labeling.

Starting from the first one, the five Italian participle constructions offer a diagnostic that allows us to decide between the ellipsis account and the account that take them to be originally built as reduced as they appear in favor of the latter, at least for the cases under consideration. It is useful to anticipate the logic of our argument. The five reduced structures are composed at most by a participle and by its internal argument (see below for a more precise description and some differences between them, though). In addition, they are possible only if the verb is unaccusative or passive. Finally, the structure is so reduced that there is no subject agreement node that can assign nominative to a promoted internal argument, as is normally the case in canonical (unreduced) passive or unaccusative clauses. Therefore, the question arises of how the internal argument is assigned case and, if it is not, how it is licensed. We will claim that accusative or any other case is never (directly) assigned to the internal argument in these reduced structures, and that each of the five structures has its own way to license the internal argument. This is where the five structures diverge, as we will see in details below. The general point we want to make is that, if we are on the right track, this account suffices to explain why the structures are reduced: assuming Burzio’s generalization (cf. Burzio 1986), a verb can assign a theta role to its subject position if and only if it can assign an accusative case to its object. Given that accusative is not assigned, the higher part of the structure that hosts the subject simply cannot be projected. Of course, this argument works only if the five structures are built as reduced as they appear. If they were elliptical structures resulting from some kind of truncation, there would be no obvious explanation for why they are reduced the way they are, as Burzio’s generalization applies to structure building operations and not to elliptical operations. Having established that these structures are literally reduced (as opposed to be complete but elliptical) and can be as small as a VP, the second main aim of this paper is to reflect on why

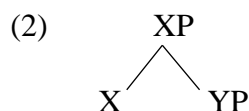
some reduced verbal structures receive an illocutionary force, and what is the mechanism that grants access to a sentential meaning to these fragments. Reflecting on the relation between movement and labeling, we shall argue that the agreement-related movement of the internal argument that we observe in most (but crucially not all) the five structures activates their sentential meaning through a mechanism of labeling. We will discuss this issue by concentrating on the configuration in which two phrases are merged.

The paper is organized as follows. After refining in section 2 some conceptual categories that are needed to analyze these structures, concerning in particular labels, movement and agreement, we start describing and deriving the first radically reduced structure under investigation in section 3, namely REDUCED RELATIVES. Section 4 addresses a structure that is minimally different from reduced relatives, corresponding to *problem solved* in English. This is BARE NOUN REDUCED. Section 5 focuses on yet another reduced structure, DISLOCATED REDUCED, which reveals that topicalization in radically reduced structures licenses a full DP argument that would be excluded for case reasons otherwise. Section 6 turns to FULLY REDUCED, an even more radically reduced structure, in which a participle alone can hold propositional content. Section 7 concludes the survey by addressing the issue of so-called absolute participial constructions, which, as we will argue, come in two varieties, only one of which is an instantiation of the radically reduced participial clauses that have in common the impossibility to assign accusative case. This is UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED.

Section 8 provides some conclusions, reflecting in particular on some consequences of our results for a general theory of what a sentence is, and where sentential force comes from.

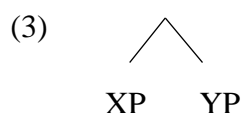
## **2. Labels, movement and agreement**

The issue of how syntactic objects get a label, determining their syntactic and interpretational properties, is at the center of much theorizing in recent years. In most recent versions of the Minimalist program (Chomsky 2013; 2015; 2019), the leading idea is that labels are simply determined by a principle of Minimal Search: if one feature is structurally prominent within a syntactic object, that feature is promoted as its label<sup>1</sup>. This relation between structural prominence and labels is directly observable in syntactic objects that are constituted of a simple element (a head) and a more complex one (a phrase), as in (2).



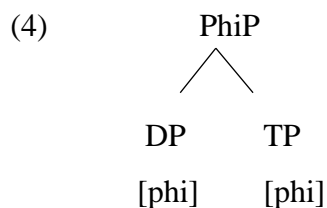
In (2) X is simpler than its complement in an obvious sense, and, as a result, its features are found by Minimal Search and assigned to the entire syntactic object, which is a category with label X. This derives the notion of headedness that is the core of phrase structure theory of the last forty years. Notice that this configuration can result from two kinds of operations: when a head is *externally* merged to a syntactic object, and when a head is *internally* merged to a syntactic object. In both cases, as is expected if both operations are two facets of the same operation Merge, the simplex object provides the label. The Minimal Search approach has the consequence that movement of a simplex element (a head) can modify the labeling of the hosting object (see Cecchetto and Donati 2015 for details). Donati and Cecchetto (2011) argue that the possibility for a moving head to relabel a structure is at the core of the notion of relativization. In a nutshell, in simple relative clauses, the raising of the nominal head (which, they claim, is always a simple noun) relabels the CP structure as an NP, which in turn is selected by an external determiner. We shall see in the next section another illustration of this ‘relabeling’ movement.

This however cannot be the whole story, because syntactic objects can also have the form of (3), i.e. they can contain two complex syntactic objects that are merged together.

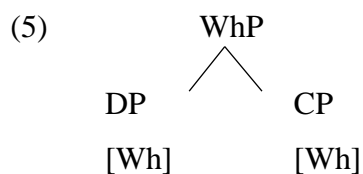


Here neither XP nor YP is prominent. So, labeling by structural prominence cannot get any label to (2). There is some disagreement on whether unlabeled objects are tolerated in syntax (see Chomsky 2013; 2015 and Cecchetto and Donati 2015). Leaving aside this question here and assuming for the sake of the argument that labels are necessary, a way to assign a label in the configuration in (2) is proposed by Chomsky (2015), who claims that, if a feature is shared by a Probe and a Goal, this feature is promoted to be the label.

This is illustrated in (4) with a phi-features configuration. For ease of exposition, we call this mechanism ‘labeling by feature sharing’ while we call ‘labeling by structural prominence’ the mechanism illustrated in (2) by which a lexical item provides the label when it is merged with a phrase.

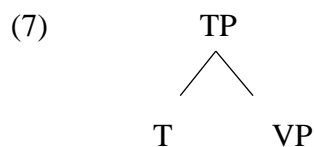
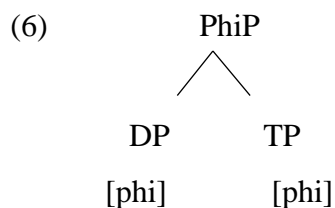


In (4) the DP subject and the TP agree in phi-features. As a result, the shared phi-features are found by minimal search as the label of the structure. In the same vein, under labeling by feature sharing the category obtained when the *wh*-phrase agrees and merges with interrogative COMP would have the label *whP*. This is illustrated in (5). The reasoning can be repeated for other criterial positions in the sense of Rizzi (cf. Rizzi 2006).



Note that ‘labeling by feature sharing’ and ‘labeling by structural prominence’ can be seen as two different instances of Minimal Search, the intuition being that in neither case the internal structure of the two objects that are merged need to be searched for. In fact, the category that is promoted to be the label is immediately found either by virtue of being structurally prominent or by virtue of being a feature represented at the upper node of the categories that are merged. An interesting question arises on what happens when both routes for labeling determination are available within the same configuration, e.g. when agreement holds in a configuration involving structural prominence of the type of (2): we shall discuss such a case in the next sections (see also below for a comment concerning DPs).

Besides this open question, the labeling by feature sharing proposal is not without problems, notably with syntactic objects that might or might not host agreement configurations and would be labeled differently accordingly (see Donati, in press, for a critical discussion). As an example, a structure where the subject has raised to the EPP-position and agrees with T (say English) would be labeled Phi-P (6), while the same structure without a specifier (say a sentence with an *in situ* subject in pro-drop languages) would receive the label TP (7). This is not a welcome consequence, as these two objects seem to have the same syntactic distribution and the same interpretation at the interface.



We tentatively put this problem aside by assuming that there is always a category hosted in what is traditionally referred to as Spec, TP: a DP in English, *pro* in pro-drop languages like Italian.

Another (potentially more serious problem) is raised in the nominal domain. D can agree with the NP when the two are merged, therefore if labeling by feature sharing were allowed in this case, one would expect the DP to be relabeled PhiP, the same label of the node created by Merge of DP and TP in (4). But obviously the distribution of a DP cannot be equated with the distribution of a clause. Chomsky does not discuss this unwanted consequence of the mechanism that he proposes, possibly because he is implicitly assuming that D can label the structure even in the presence of phi-feature sharing, since D is structurally more prominent. In this specific case, labeling by structural prominence provides the label D, while labeling by feature sharing would provide a deviant label and this would stop the derivation. In any case, this is what we tentatively assume for DPs.

There is a more fundamental issue raised by the labeling by feature sharing mechanism: what does it mean for a label to result from an agreement configuration? Traditionally a label has been conceived as a categorial feature that is already present in the lexical properties of a given category and can be transmitted when this category is merged with another one (this label transmission can be repeated at each occurrence of Merge).<sup>2</sup> This amounts to describe labeling as a mechanism by which one of the two objects that are merged prevails over the other. However, the labeling by feature sharing mechanism implies that none of the two objects that are merged “wins”. A comparison with the VP is useful. It is easy to show that the distributional properties of a VP are determined by the verb alone. For example, with verbs that allow a transitive – intransitive alternation, the VP has the same distribution irrespective of the presence of the internal argument. In case of clauses, it is not easy to decide which category determines their distribution (whence the fact that clauses have been called in different ways in the generative tradition, S, IP, TP, AgrP etc.). With an innovative, yet controversial, move, Chomsky (2019) claims that this terminological indeterminacy is



just an indication that clauses are exocentric, so it is hopeless to label them after their alleged head. Still, this cannot mean that they do not have a label, since they have a certain distribution that ultimately results from the label they carry. Therefore, we take the claim that clauses are exocentric to mean that their label does not come from one of the two objects prevailing over the other, but comes from some features they share.

Despite the aforementioned problems, we think that the labeling by feature sharing mechanism has an interesting corollary that is worth exploring, namely it can be seen as a syntactic marker of the subject-predicate relation. The idea is that a clause is exocentric (therefore labeled by feature sharing) because it corresponds to a relation between two categories rather than being a configuration in which one of the two categories prevails over the other. On the other hand, endocentric categories, like VPs, do not correspond to a relation. For example, there can be a VP with a single verb, which by virtue of being the only element inside the category cannot be in relationship with anything.

In this paper, we propose to go one step forward in this direction and assume that the existence of the subject-predicate relation is the pre-condition for the presence of illocutionary force. We thus explore a consequence of this idea for the domain of reduced structures. More specifically, agreement with the external argument is not the only agreement relation that exists, agreement with the internal argument (possibly realized as “object agreement”) being the other prominent configuration. Therefore, if feature sharing is responsible for the establishment of a subject-predicate relation and of illocutionary force, this should happen with agreement with the internal argument as well. As agreement with the internal argument is realized in a smaller portion of the clause, this means that there should be reduced structures with illocutionary force. This is what happens in most of the reduced structures that will be explored in this paper, which can be fruitfully analyzed at the light of the labeling by feature sharing hypothesis.

### **3. Reduced relatives**

Reduced relative clauses are participle clauses modifying a head noun, as illustrated in (8).

- (8) Il ragazzo [arrivato tardi]  
the.M.SG boy.M.SG arrive.PPRT.M.SG late  
‘the boy that arrived late’

As originally observed by Burzio (1986), reduced relatives are restricted to unaccusative and passive verbs, and are impossible with transitive or unergative verbs.

Historically, the term “reduced relatives” comes from the first analyses that were proposed in generative grammar, by which these structures were literally seen as elided versions of full relative clauses (cf. Jacobs and Rosenbaum 1968). At the other extreme, we find another line of thought, inaugurated by Burzio (1986:150), where reduced relatives are identified with various kinds of small clauses. In Burzio’s analysis, for example, a reduced relative like (8) involves a null PRO, as in (9).

(9) il ragazzo [PRO arrivato tardi]

The idea that reduced relatives should be assigned a full-fledged clausal structure assimilated to finite relative clauses is also well represented. Participial relatives are analyzed as involving a relative operator which is licensed in the specifier position of a functional projection headed by a complementizer-like functional head, as illustrated in (10).

(10) il [ragazzo] [<sub>FP</sub> Op<sub>i</sub> F° t<sub>i</sub> arrivato tardi]  
the boy arrived late

In Kayne (1994), the functional projection hosting the relative operator is identified with CP; in Siloni (1995) it is identified with DP. The only peculiarity of participial clauses under this view is that they do not contain a tense node.

This revival of the ellipsis approach is partly related to the cartographic framework, whereby structures are defined by dedicated functional projections: the defining feature of relativization is identified with a specialized functional projection hosting an operator (or the raising head in Kayne’s terms): since participial relatives are relatives, they must contain this position.

An obvious problem of Kayne’s proposal is that it does not explain why overt complementizers are systematically banned from participial relatives. This incompatibility does not hold only in Romance, but is robustly attested across languages and is indeed a well-established typological generalization (see Doron and Reintges 2013, and the references quoted therein). Another problem with assuming a full-fledged structure for participial

relatives is that it does not explain Burzio (1986)'s observation, namely why these relatives are only possible with unaccusatives and passives. This is why we assume that reduced relatives do not project the entire structure associated with a full relative (which is later phonologically deleted) but assume instead that they are literally reduced.

We shall extend to these structures the approach to relativization developed by Cecchetto and Donati (2015), who reduce relativization to an application of labeling by structural prominence in a configuration in which the lexical item is *internally* merged to a phrase. Under this analysis, which they call 'relabeling analysis' because the target is relabeled by the lexical item that is internally merged to it, relativization derives from the type of movement (that of a bare lexical item), no matter whether it happens in a full-fledged structure, as in full inflected relative clauses or in free relatives, or in a constituent as small as the VP. All is needed under the relabeling approach in order to build a relative structure is a relabeling movement, i.e. the movement of a nominal head, which being structurally prominent in the newly formed syntactic object labels it.<sup>3</sup>

Consider as an illustration the structure in (11), containing a participial relative with a passive verb. This is to be compared with (12), containing a full-fledged relative clause under the relabeling analysis.

(11) Conosco [DP il [NP ragazzo [VP rimproverato ~~ragazzo~~]]]  
 (I) know the.M.SG boy.M.SG scold.PPRT.M.SG  
 'I know the boy that has been scolded'

(12) Conosco [DP il [NP ragazzo [CP che hai rimproverato ~~ragazzo~~]]]  
 (I) know the.M.SG boy.M.SG that have.2s scolded  
 'I know the boy you scolded'

In (11) the head of the reduced relative ('ragazzo') is external since it precedes the verb, much like the head noun in the full relatives in (12). In both (11) and (12), it is the movement of N which "relabels" the structure, and provides the external determiner with the NP it selects. This amounts to saying that the derivation in (11) is parallel to the derivation of a full relative but for two aspects:

- the landing site of N movement is a position in the VP periphery in reduced relatives, while it is in the CP area in full relatives<sup>4</sup>;

- in (11) there is no manifestation of a D inside the relative. Participial relatives never contain *wh*-determiners such as ‘which’ or the complementizer ‘che’, which can be analyzed as a *wh*-determiner (Manzini and Savoia 2003 a.o.).

We take the absence of a D inside the reduced relative at face value, and we assume that in (11) the participle ‘rimproverato’ (“scolded”) is merged directly with the bare noun ‘ragazzo’. This assumption plays a crucial role in explaining the restriction to unaccusatives, as we are going to explain. As a premise, we assume that theta role assignment takes place configurationally (cf. Baker 1988’s UTAH; Hale and Keiser 2002), namely a category (or its copy/trace) must be in the right environment to receive a theta role. However, what we say is compatible both with the idea that theta role assignment is a “filter” at the C-I interface and with the idea that it applies when a category is externally merged, possibly because theta role is a feature of the verb/predicate (Hornstein 1999).

Going back to reduced relatives. if the verb does not need to check/assign accusative as in passive and unaccusative constructions, nothing goes wrong: the noun ‘ragazzo’ gets a thematic role from the past participle and gets a case from the main verb ‘conosco’ together with the external D after the noun has moved and has relabeled the structure. Under this analysis, theta role assignment is *not* restricted to DPs, as the past participle assigns a theta-role to the bare noun ‘ragazzo’ (notice that there is independent evidence that nouns can receive theta roles: this happens with adjectives and participial are kind of adjectives).

In languages like Italian, bare singular nouns do not get case (DPs do). Therefore, an object reduced relative as (13) is predicted to be impossible: (13) is a case violation because Gianni does not get case.

- (13) \*Il [<sub>NP</sub> panino [<sub>VP</sub> Gianni mangiato ~~panino~~]]  
 The sandwich Gianni eaten

Next, consider (14), an ungrammatical participial relative with a transitive active verb.

- (14) \*Incontrerò [<sub>DP</sub> il [<sub>NP</sub> professore [<sub>v</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> visto il ragazzo]]]  
 (I) will-meet the professor seen the boy

In principle, in (14) the bare noun ‘professore’ should be able to become the label when it is merged with the structure headed by *v* (cf. 15).

(15) [NP professore [<sub>v</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> visto il ragazzo]]]

However, if *v* does not provide the label, the configuration for the Agent theta role assignment is not created (informally, the noun is not in Spec,<sub>v</sub>P). Therefore, a theta violation occurs and the structure is out.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the relabeling configuration is incompatible with that for theta assignment. Due to this incompatibility, subject reduced relatives with a transitive verb as (14) are ungrammatical.

The same reason that blocks (15) blocks (16), with a unergative verb. (16) involves a theta violation because *v* does not provide the label if the noun ‘ragazzo’ relabels the structure: in this configuration theta assignment is not available.

(16) \*Incontrerò [DP il [NP ragazzo [<sub>v</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> telefonato]]]  
(I) will-meet the boy phoned

There is one aspect of the derivation of reduced relatives that still needs an explanation, and this is the movement of the noun into the edge of the VP: we have seen that this movement is ultimately beneficial as it leads to the desired (re)labeling configuration but what is its trigger?

To approach this question, observe that, putting aside radically reduced structures like the ones considered in this paper, the past participle is introduced by an auxiliary (cf. 17a, in which the past participle does not agree with the internal argument and appears in its default, masculine, singular form). We therefore assume that the past participle is normally (namely in *unreduced* structure) licensed by being selected by the auxiliary.<sup>6</sup>

(17) a. Gli idraulici hanno aggiustato la perdita  
The plumbers have-3PL fix-PPRT.M.SG the.F.SG leak.F.SG  
‘The plumbers fixed the leaky pipe’  
b. La perdita aggiustata (non era grave)  
the.F.SG leak.F.SG fix-PPRT.F.SG (was not serious)  
‘The leak that was fixed was not serious’

When it is not licensed via selection by the auxiliary, we propose that the past participle can be licensed through morphological agreement with the internal argument and this is what happens in the reduced structures we are considering (cf. 17b).<sup>7</sup> Adopting the minimalist technology, we assume that in order for the past participle to agree with the internal argument, it must act as a Probe looking for a Goal (the internal argument) that values its agreement features. In turn, this Probing configuration can trigger the movement of the internal argument, which can be internally merged with the Probe. This is structurally analogous to the EPP movement of the subject in the finite clause (on participial agreement, and its relation to movement, see Kayne 1989; Belletti 2017; D’Alessandro and Roberts 2008).

After this background discussion, we can conclude that in reduced relatives the noun moves into the edge of the VP by virtue of entering a Probe-Goal configuration with the past participle. If this is true, an interesting question arises. The configuration resulting from the movement of the internal argument N is a case of Internal Merge of a lexical item, therefore it is a case of labeling by structural prominence. This is what happens in reduced relatives, where a VP is relabeled and becomes an NP, later selected by an external determiner, as illustrated in (11) above. However, the movement of the internal argument N, being associated with agreement, creates a feature sharing configuration, therefore, given what we said in the preceding section, we expect that this configuration could also be a case of labeling by feature sharing. If so, the resulting structure should be interpretable also as a subject predicate relation, i.e. a root sentence. In other terms, we predict the configuration where the N moves to the VP edge to be a potential case of labeling ambiguity. Labeling by structural prominence leads to a nominal output (reduced relatives). Labeling by feature sharing should lead to a clausal output. This prediction is borne out, as we shall observe directly in the next section.

#### **4. Bare noun reduced structure**

In the previous section, we crucially assumed that the internal argument of the participial is a bare noun. This hypothesis played an instrumental role in providing an input to the relabeling movement that makes reduced relatives possible. But do we have any overt evidence that unaccusative participials can select bare NPs? We believe we do, and that the relevant case is instantiated by another radically reduced structure that is minimally different

from reduced relatives and crucially involves a bare NP. We shall dedicate this section to this second structure, which we shall call BARE NOUN REDUCED for ease of reference. This reduced structure, which is productive in spoken interactions, is constrained in its distribution in a way that is reminiscent of the constraints affecting reduced relatives. Some examples are given in (18)-(20), in question answer contexts (for simplicity, in the glosses we indicate only the morphological agreement between past participle and the internal argument).

(18) Come va? Problema risolto  
 How goes. Problem.M.SG fix-PPRT.M.SG  
 ‘How is the situation? The problem has been fixed’

(19) Hai notizie dall’Italia? Nonna guarita (ma la mamma è ancora malata)  
 (You) have news from Italy? Grandma.F.SG recover-PPRT.F.SG (but the mother is still sick)  
 ‘Did you get any news from Italy? Grandma recovered (but mom is still sick)’

(20) Cos’hanno detto i medici? Sintomi scomparsi (ma la debolezza resta)  
 What have said the doctors? Symptom.M.PL disappear- PPRT.M.PL but weakness remains  
 ‘What do the doctors say? Symptoms disappeared (but he/she is still weak)’

The answers in (18-20) are interpreted as declarative clauses, as such they are legitimate answers to the questions preceding them. However, they are very reduced, the only overt elements being the past participle and its internal argument, which, crucially, is a bare NP. Neither the auxiliary nor the external argument are overtly expressed.

BARE NOUN REDUCED is not restricted to question-answer pairs, as long as the context is rich enough. For example, imagine I meet a friend, who welcomes me with a large smile. She might react to my puzzled look by uttering (21).

(21) Problema risolto  
 Problem.M.SG fix-PPRT.M.SG  
 ‘The problem has been fixed’

On the other hand, BARE NOUN REDUCED cannot be embedded, neither as a complement, as shown in (22), nor as an adjunct clause, as illustrated in (23).

(22) Viene Mariam stasera? \*No, ha detto che commedia già vista  
Comes Mariam tonight? No, (she) has said that comedy.F.SG already seen-PPRT.F.SG

(23) Vieni con noi stasera? \*No, perché film già visto  
you come with us tonight? No, because film.M.SG already see-PPRT.M.SG

We can conclude that BARE NOUN REDUCED is rigidly a root phenomenon. Now, granted that no tense or inflection is possible, the next question is how rich its structural endowment can be. A first observation is that neither a focalized element (24) nor negation (25) nor a *wh*-element (26-27) are possible in BARE NOUN REDUCED, pointing towards a radically restricted structural span<sup>8</sup>.

(24) La nonna sta bene? \*No, ZIA guarita  
The grandma is well? No, aunt heal-PPRT.F.SG

(25) Tutto bene? \*No, problema non risolto  
Everything OK? No, Problem.M.SG not fix-PPRT.M.SG

(26) \*Guarito chi?<sup>9</sup>  
heal-PPRT.M.SG who

(27) \*Chi guarito?  
who heal-PPRT.M.SG

A striking observation is that despite being very reduced, BARE NOUN REDUCED can have a full force specification. They can be declaratives, as in the examples discussed up to now, but they can also be interrogatives (cf. 28) or have an exclamative flavor, as in (29).



- (28) Problema risolto?  
Problem.M.SG solve-PPRT.M.SG?  
'Is the problem solved?'

*Context: Leo meets his friend, whom he knows has been struggling with a problem lately. He utters (28) to have news from his friend*

- (29) Nonna guarita!  
Granma.F.SG heal-PPRT.F.SG  
'Grandma recovered!'

*Context: Leo meets an old friend, who knows how worried he's been lately about his Granma in Lombardy. He utters (29) to let him know his joy and excitement.*

Summarizing our observations so far, all this strongly suggests that BARE NOUN REDUCED is a smaller than  $\nu$ P structure (assuming that Spec, $\nu$ P is where the external theta role assigned: see below). We propose that it is a VP. This conclusion can be reinforced by testing one of its corollaries: if BARE NOUN REDUCED is a VP, it should be able to host more than one nominal expression provided that Case is not a problem. (30) and (31) prove this prediction to be correct.

- (30) Libro restituito (alla biblioteca)?  
Book.M.SG return-PPRT.M.SG to.the library  
'Did you return the book to the library?'

- (31) Sì, messo \*(sul tavolo)  
Yes, put return-PPRT.M.SG on.the table  
'Yes, I put it on the table'

The examples above confirm that recipient arguments introduced by a preposition are perfectly acceptable in a BARE NOUN REDUCED. Their optionality (30) or obligatoriness (31) depends of course on the selection properties of the verb: 'mettere' is obligatorily ditransitive (cf. 32), while 'restituire' is not (33), independently from their occurrence in BARE NOUN REDUCED (32 and 33 are two full sentences)

(32) Hai restituito il libro (alla biblioteca)?  
(you) have returned the book to-the library  
'Did you return the book to the library?'

(33) Sì, l'ho messo \*(sul tavolo)  
Yes, (I) it have put on-the table  
'Yes, I put it on the table'

Notice that the recipient arguments in (30) is not a bare NP, but a regular a DP, and that this goes with the presence of a preposition assigning Case.

Overall, these data confirm that BARE NOUN REDUCED have all the properties associated to full bare VPs. On the other hand, they have a full force specification.

Turning now to what can enter BARE NOUN REDUCED, we have seen that all the examples discussed so far obey very strict constraints: (i) the participial needs to be passive or unaccusative, and (ii) the internal argument cannot be anything different from a bare NP. As for (i), this is confirmed by the ungrammaticality of the answer in (34) and (35), which contain an unergative and a transitive verb respectively.

(34) Come è andata oggi? \*Bambino pianto  
How is gone today? Child cry-PPRT.M.SG

(35) E la festeggiata? \*Mangiato la torta  
And the celebrated? Eat-PPRT.M.SG the cake

As for (ii), the internal argument crucially cannot be a full DP, as shown in (36) and (37).

(36) a. # Il problema risolto  
the problem solved  
b. #L'ordine eseguito  
the order executed  
c. #La nonna guarita  
the grandma healed

- (37) a. #Risolto il problema  
Solved the problem  
b. #Eseguito l'ordine  
executed the order  
c. #Guarita la nonna  
healed the grandma

Notice that the expressions in (36) are not ungrammatical, but they can only be interpreted as DPs. In our account, they derive from the relabeling movement of the NP and external merge of a D, as described in details in the previous section and briefly summarized in the derivation in (36'). In other words, they are reduced relatives.

(36)' [DP il [NP problema risolto ~~problema~~ ]]

The expressions in (37) are not ungrammatical either, but they cannot receive a propositional interpretation as BARE NOUN REDUCED do<sup>10</sup>. Their only possible interpretation is that of absolutive participial constructions, that typically require a continuation in the form of a main clause (e.g. *Risolto il problema, andammo a festeggiare*, 'Once we solved the problem, we went to celebrate'). We shall go back to this construction in Section 7 below. What is important now is to underline that (37) cannot have the interpretation of BARE NOUN REDUCED, which is that of an autonomous clausal constituent.

How can we derive the correlation between full force specification and the presence of a bare NP? We believe this derives straightforwardly from the hypothesis that the relevant structure corresponds to a simple VP hosting at its edge the internal argument that underwent a movement that results in agreement with the past participle. As a result, the resulting VP is labeled by feature sharing, and is interpreted as a clause. As for the restriction to a bare NP, it follows directly if a bare NP can be the recipient of a theta role but does not need Case: under Burzio's generalization, it can be happy within a root VP whereas a DP cannot. Turning now to its position, we have seen that in BARE NOUN REDUCED the bare NP precedes the past participle, although the former is the object of the latter. Why is the *in situ* version of BARE NOUN REDUCED, which reflect the VO order, impossible?

- (38) a. \*Risolto problema  
fix-PPRT.M.SG problem.M.SG

- b. \*Eseguito ordine  
execute-PPRT.M.SG order.M.SG
- c. \*Guarita nonna  
heal-PPRT.F.SG Granma.F.SG

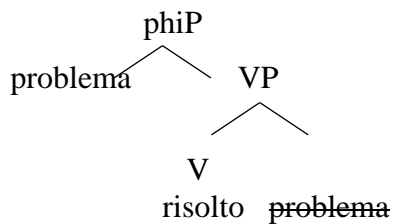
We believe that this is the case because the reduced structure receives a subject-predicate interpretation, and ultimately a sentential meaning, only if it hosts a local Agree relation activating phi-feature sharing. Again, this agree relation, which is associated to the movement of the internal argument to the left of the participial, is reflected in morphological agreement.

To be completely clear: we think that BARE NOUN REDUCED is a case of labeling by feature sharing involving agreement with the internal argument in gender and number, which adds to the case of labeling by feature sharing involving agreement in person and number, proposed by Chomsky.

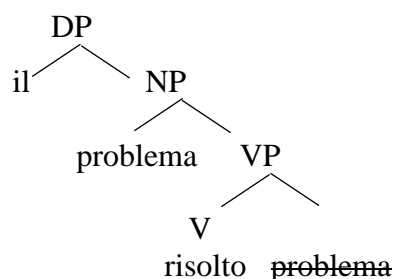
The null hypothesis is that an illocutionary force can be associated to any PhiP structure, no matter whether the latter is complete (tensed clauses) or reduced (participial clauses). This explains why a structure as reduced as BARE NOUN REDUCED can be interpreted as a sentence and has illocutionary force.

As mentioned at the end of Section 3, given the analysis we are pushing here, the only difference between a BARE NOUN REDUCED and a reduced relative amounts to labeling. This minimal difference is schematized in (39) and (40) below.

(39) Labeling by Feature Sharing (BARE NOUN REDUCED)



(40) Labeling by Structural Prominence (REDUCED RELATIVE)



In both cases only a VP is projected, where the unaccusative verb assigns a theta role to its sole argument, which being a bare NP does not need case. This NP moves to the edge of the VP as the result of the probing of the participial for agreeing phi-features. It is only then that the two derivations diverge: if the shared phi-features provide the label, as in (40), the resulting object is clausal; if the N provides the label, as in (41), the output is a nominal expression that can merge with a D and get case from it.

We conclude this section with an observation concerning the syntax-semantics interface. As we stressed several times and as is explicitly indicated by its name, the construction we called BARE NOUN REDUCED must contain a bare NP, as opposed to a full DP. Still, the bare noun gets a definite interpretation. For example by uttering ‘missione compiuta’ (mission accomplished) you say that a specific mission has been accomplished and by uttering ‘nonna guarita’ (grandma recovered) you are talking about a specific person (say, your grandma). This means that bare nouns in so-called BARE NOUN REDUCED, although syntactically impoverished, are interpreted as if they were DPs. Interestingly, this mismatch between syntax and semantics extends to proper names in Italian. The premise is that, although in standard (normative) Italian, proper names cannot be introduced by an article, in many regional varieties they can (with further differences, such that an article introducing a feminine proper name is possible or even obligatory in Northern and Central Italian regions, but not in the South, while the possibility of having an article with masculine proper names is restricted to some Northern regions). Be that as it may, proper names cannot be introduced by an article in BARE NOUN REDUCED even in those varieties that allows or force this option in other syntactic contexts (cf. 41 – 43, which are representative of the varieties where the article is fully acceptable before a feminine proper name, say Milanese or Florentine).

(41) La Maria è arrivata

The.F.SG Maria is arrive-PPRT.F.SG

‘Maria arrived’

(42) Maria arrivata!

Maria arrive-PPRT.F.SG

‘Maris arrived!’

(43) \*La Maria arrivata!

The.F.SG Maria arrive-PPRT.F.SG

In this paper, we cannot explore the reason why the internal argument can be interpreted as definite in BARE NOUN REDUCED despite being syntactically bare, although we suspect that this might be related to whatever mechanism allows Italian proper names to be interpreted referentially even when they lack a determiner (cf. Longobardi 1994 and Chierchia 1996).

## 5. Dislocated reduced structures

The two radically reduced constructions that we have considered in the previous sections (REDUCED RELATIVES and BARE NOUN REDUCED) contain an NP (as opposed to a DP). In our analysis, this is linked to the main properties of the constructions, namely their reduced nature and the restriction to unaccusatives and passives. In nutshell, no DP is present because these structures are smaller than  $vP$ , therefore Accusative cannot be assigned to a full DP.

Let us now turn onto another type of radically reduced structure, which has very similar properties but contains a DP. This is illustrated in (44). We call it DISLOCATED REDUCED.

- (44) a. Risolto,            il            problema  
          solve-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG problem.M.SG  
          ‘As for the problem, it was fixed’
- b. Eseguito,            l’ordine  
          execute-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG order.M.SG  
          ‘As for the order, it was executed’
- c. Guarita, la nonna  
          heal-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG grandma.F.SG  
          ‘Grandma healed’

A defining property of this construction, illustrated in (44), is that the DP is right dislocated, as these sentences would be ungrammatical without the intonational break signaled by the comma.

The analogies between dislocated reduced structures and REDUCED RELATIVES and BARE NOUN REDUCED are obvious. First, these structures are reduced, as no auxiliary introduces the past participle. Second, they are incompatible with active and unergative verbs:

- (45) a. \*Suscitato interesse, il problema  
           raised interest, the problem  
       b. \*Causato sconcerto, l'ordine  
           caused bewilderment, the order  
       c. \*Pianto, la nonna  
           cried, the grandma

Third, DISLOCATED REDUCED are too small to contain sentential negation:<sup>11</sup>

- (46) a. \*Non risolto,            il            problema  
           Not solve-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG problem.M.SG  
       b. \*Non eseguito, l'ordine  
           not execute-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG order.M.SG  
       c. \*Non guarita,         la nonna  
           not heal-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG grandma.F.SG

Despite being reduced, DISLOCATED REDUCED, as BARE NOUN REDUCED, are sentences, as shown by the fact that they can have interrogative (cf. 47) and exclamative force (cf. 48) in addition to being declarative:

- (47) a. Risolto, il problema?  
           solve-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG problem.M.SG  
           'Was the problem fixed?'  
       b. Eseguito, l'ordine?  
           execute-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG order.M.SG  
           'Was the order executed?'

c. Guarita, la nonna?  
 heal-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG grandma.F.SG  
 ‘Did grandma heal?’

- (48) a. Risolto, il problema!  
 solve-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG problem.M.SG  
 ‘As for the problem, it was fixed’  
 b. Eseguito, l’ordine!  
 execute-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG order.M.SG  
 ‘The order was executed!’  
 c. Guarita, la nonna!  
 heal-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG grandma.F.SG  
 ‘Grandma healed!’

Interestingly, the left dislocated version is allowed as well, although it becomes fully natural only with a continuation that allows a contrastive topic interpretation (namely the sentence is grammatical only with the intonation break signaled by the comma).

- (49) a. Il problema, risolto (ma la preoccupazione rimane)  
 the.M.SG problem.M.SG solve-PPRT.M.SG but the worry remains  
 ‘The problem is fixed but we are still worried’  
 b. L’ordine, eseguito (ma nessuno sa le conseguenze)  
 the.M.SG order.M.SG execute-PPRT.M.SG but nobody knows the consequences  
 ‘The order was executed but nobody knows its consequences’  
 c. La nonna, guarita (ma il nonno sta ancora male)  
 the.F.SG grandma.F.SG heal-PPRT.F.SG but the grandpa is still bad  
 ‘Grandma healed, but grandpa is still sick’

Given these analogies, the analysis of DISLOCATED REDUCED should be minimally different from the one we proposed for BARE NOUN REDUCED. In particular, we maintain that these structures are as small as VP and we extend to them the analysis that incorporates the labeling by feature sharing mechanism. In particular, we propose that the internal argument (here a DP) moves to the periphery of the VP as the Goal probed by the past participle. In



this position, the labeling by feature sharing mechanism takes place, and the structure is labeled PhiP, identifying it as a sentence, much like BARE NOUN REDUCED. It is at this point that the derivation of DISLOCATED REDUCED and BARE NOUN REDUCED differs because the derivation of DISLOCATED REDUCED involves a further step, namely the topicalization of the internal argument.

A question arises, though. Given the absence of *v*, accusative case cannot be assigned. If so, how can the topicalized DP be licensed without a case?

We answer this question by capitalizing on the fact that the dislocated DP in (44) (and in the other examples seen so far) must be interpreted as a topic. The relationship between topichood and structural case must be briefly discussed. The best languages where to investigate this interaction are those in which both topic and case features are morphologically expressed. Japanese and Korean are such languages. We illustrate the basic pattern with Japanese, which is that of a curious incompatibility: when a subject or an object that would be normally marked by the nominative morpheme *-ga* or by the accusative morpheme *-o* is dislocated and is marked by the topic particle *-wa*, the case marker disappears (case neutralization). (50) shows case neutralization with a direct object.

- (50) a. hon-wa, John-ga yonda  
 book-TOP John-NOM read  
 ‘John read a book’  
 b. \*hon-o-wa, John-ga yonda  
 book- ACC-TOP John- NOM read

Importantly, case neutralization is not due to a superficial morphological filter that prevents the topic marker from associating to case particles in general, because *-wa* can co-occur with the genitive case marker *-no* (51) and with the dative case marker *-ni* (52):

- (51) The great Gatsby-no honyaku-no-nakade, Murakami-no-wa totemo ninki da.  
 The great Gatsby-of translation-of-among Murakami-of-TOP very popular is  
 ‘Among the translations of ‘The Great Gatsby’, the one from Murakami is very popular.’

- (52) Roma-ni-wa sekaiisan-ga takusan aru.  
Rome-in-TOP world heritage sites-NOM many are  
'There are many world heritage sites in Rome.'

What these pieces of data suggest is that a topic phrase can exploit a licensing mechanism that is in competition with structural case assignment. If the ultimate reason that motivates the need for Case is visibility (Chomsky 1986), one is led to conclude that a dislocated nominal can remain case-less because it gets visible by receiving the informational structure status of a topic.

An independent piece of evidence suggesting that topics do not receive structural case is the pattern observed in languages with a nominative/absolutive alignment system, like Berber and Cushitic varieties (Comrie 2013). In these languages, the subject is morphologically marked as nominative, while absolutive case is the elsewhere condition (it is associated to all non-subject nominals). Interestingly, when a subject is topicalised, it gets the non-marked absolutive case (cf. the oral communications by Orin Gensler quoted in Satzinger 2108). This suggests that, in languages in which an elsewhere case is available in the grammatical system (or a topic marker is present), a topic does not get structural case.

Finally, the hypothesis that a topic does not need structural case can shed light on a very solid cross-linguistic generalization for which, as far as we know, no systematic explanation has ever been proposed.<sup>12</sup> We refer to the distribution of Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD) as opposed to the distribution clitic doubling. CLLD, in which a category (including an object DP) is topicalized and a clitic surfaces clause internally, is very widespread (no Romance variety that lacks it has ever been reported, to the best of our knowledge). It is very tempting to analyze CLLD as the result of topicalization of the left dislocated category out of a clitic doubling configuration. However, while CLLD is cross-linguistically widespread, as we said, its alleged source, clitic doubling is much rarer. Jaeggli (1986), building on Kayne (1975), proposed a Case theory explanation for the distribution of clitic doubling, which he called Kayne's generalization. According to this generalization, a clitic and a full DP cannot co-exist if the clitic absorbs a structural case, because, if it does, the double DP could not get case and the Case Filter would be violated. Clitic doubling is thus only allowed if the Case Filter violation is obviated due to a preposition-like element that can assign a second case to the doubled, as in Rioplatense Spanish (53, the preposition-like element being 'a') or Romanian (54, the preposition-like element being 'pe', cf. Dobrovie-Sorin 1990). Borer (1984) proposed

a similar case explanation for another instance of clitic doubling made available by a preposition, this time in Modern Hebrew):<sup>13</sup>

- (53) Lo vimos a Juan  
Him (we) saw *a* Juan  
'We saw Juan'
- (54) L-am vazut pe Ion.  
him-(we) have seen *pe* John  
'We saw John.'

If clitic doubling is very restricted because it leads to a Case Filter violation, and if, as suggested by the Korean and Japanese data, a topic phrase does not need structural case, we do have an explanation for why CLLD is allowed across the board: the doubled in CLLD does not need case, therefore the case is left available for the clitic, which can absorb it. After this discussion concerning the relationship between case and topichood, our strategy to analyze DISLOCATED REDUCED should be clear: an internal argument DP is allowed in an environment in which it cannot receive accusative, namely in a root VP which is not selected by *v*, insofar it is dislocated to a topic position because a DP in a topic position does not need case. The topichood of the DP in DISLOCATED REDUCED is confirmed by the incompatibility of this construction with quantifiers like 'all' that resists topicalization in general, as shown in (55).

- (55) \*Risolto, tutto  
Fix-PPRT.M.SG all.M.SG

Interestingly, the same quantifier is perfectly possible in BARE NP REDUCED, and this is expected since no such topicalization occurs<sup>14</sup>.

- (56) Tutto risolto!  
all.M.SG fix-PPRT.M.SG  
'Everything has been fixed!'

## 6. Fully reduced structures

In this section we consider yet another radically reduced structure. In a sense it is the most radically reduced of them all because it surfaces as a simple past participle. This can be illustrated by the question-answer pair in (57):

- (57) E il ragazzo? Partito  
And the boy? Leave-PPRT.M.SG  
'What about the boy?' 'He left'

- (58) Licenziati per aver esercitato il diritto di sciopero.  
Fire-PPRT.M.PL for having used the right of strike  
'They have been fired because they exercised their right to go on strike'

<https://twitter.com/sandragesu/status/1443248684083339267?t=bk9mMxTT-YQD0EFxRhvdvw&s=03>

We call the structure exemplified by the answer in (57) and (58) FULLY REDUCED. (43) is interpreted as a declarative clause although the only overt element is the past participle *partito*. Similarly, in (REM!) the main clause introducing the adverbial clause is composed only by the past participle *partito*.

The difference with the other reduced structures that we have seen so far is that in FULLY REDUCED the internal argument is dropped, although it is interpretively and syntactically present (for example, the dropped argument acts as a controller for the subject of the infinitival clause in 58). Just like the other reduced structures considered so far, FULLY REDUCED is allowed only with passive and unaccusative verbs.

- (59) E il dessert? Mangiato (da Leo)  
And the.M.SG dessert.M.SG? Eat-PPRT.M.SG (by Leo)  
'What about the dessert?' 'Leo ate it'

- (60) E il ragazzo? \*Pianto  
And the boy? Cry-PPRT.M.SG

- (61) E il ragazzo? \*Mangiato la torta  
And the boy? Eat-PPRT.M.SG the cake

In FULLY REDUCED, the past participle agrees with a contextually given internal argument. While in (57), the make-up of the past participle is compatible with its default value (singular, masculine), (62) and (63) show that the past participle is inflected in gender and number.

- (62) E le torte? Mangiate (da Leo)  
And the.F.PL cake.F.PL? Eaten-PPRT.F.PL (by Leo)  
'What about the cakes'. 'Leo ate them'
- (63) E le ragazze? Partite  
And the.F.PL girls.F.PL? Leave-PPRT.F.PL  
'What about the girls'. 'They left'

FULLY REDUCED is not restricted to question-answer pairs, as long as the dropped argument is contextually salient. For example, imagine a context in which I enter my office and I notice that the desk next to mine has been fully emptied. A colleague might react to my puzzled look by uttering (64).

- (64) Licenziata  
Fire-PPRT.F.SG  
'She has been fired'

Sentential negation is not allowed in FULLY REDUCED.

- (65) E le ragazze? \*Non partite<sup>15</sup>  
And the.F.PL girls.F.PL? Not leave-PPRT.F.PL

Although *ne*-extraction is possible from the internal argument of a transitive verb (cf. 66), *ne*-extraction is not possible in FULLY REDUCED (cf. 67).

(66) (Di quei film) ne ho visti tre  
(Of those movies) *ne* (I) have see-PPRT.M.PL three

‘I saw three of those movies’

(67) \*E quei film? \*Vistine tre  
And those movies? (I) have see-PPRT.M.PL *-ne* three

FULLY REDUCED, despite being very reduced (in fact, it typically contains only a past participle) has a full force specification. It can be a declarative as in the example discussed up to now, but it can also be an interrogative (cf. 68a) or an exclamative (cf. 68b).

(68) a. Licenziato?

Fire-PPRT.M.SG

‘Has he been fired?’

*Context: Leo enters his office, notices that the desk next to his has been fully emptied and utters (67) to elicit information from a colleague.*

b. Bruciata!

Burn--PPRT.F.SG

*Context: Leo arrives next to the Opera House, notices that it has been destroyed by a fire and utters (68) to express his surprise/disappointment.*

The analogies between DISLOCATED REDUCED and FULLY REDUCED are striking and call for a unified analysis. As for FULLY REDUCED specifically, it is pretty clear that this is a case of topic drop<sup>16</sup>. We propose that the dropped topic is the DP that surfaces in DISLOCATED REDUCED. In other terms, the input configuration of the FULLY REDUCED in (69) is the DISLOCATED REDUCED sentence in (69’).

(69) Risolto

fix-PPRT.M.SG

(69’) Risolto, ~~il problema~~

There is independent evidence supporting the topic drop analysis. It is fairly uncontroversial that an expletive cannot be a topic. This can explain why FULLY REDUCED is ungrammatical with meteorological verbs:

(70) L'anno scorso abbiamo avuto il sole tutto il tempo. E quest'anno? \*Piovuto (sempre)  
The last year (we) have had the sun all the time. And this-year? rain-PPRT.M.SG always

The reason why the FULLY REDUCED in (70) is not acceptable is that by assumption it involves topic drop but the only potential topic is the null expletive subject and expletives cannot be topics.

## 7. Absolute reduced structures

Absolutive past participle clauses are yet another reduced structure that is clearly reminiscent of the reduced structures that we have analyzed so far. Just like the other structures, a) they contain an agreeing participle and no further inflectional head and b) they overtly show only an internal argument. What is different from the other structures, on the other hand, is that this construction cannot be a sentence, i.e. it cannot have an illocutionary force on its own: it cannot be declarative, interrogative or exclamative. It has only an adverbial distribution, somehow juxtaposed to the main clause, hence the term “absolutive” it traditionally receives. In line with the labels we have given so far, we shall call it ABSOLUTE REDUCED.

Some examples are given below.

(71) Morto Gianni, tutti cominciammo ad avere paura

Die-PPRT.M.SG Gianni, all (we) started at having fear

‘After John died, we started being scared’

(72) Entrati i senatori, il governo dovette spiegarsi

Enter-PPRT.M.PL the.M.PL senators.M.PL, the government had.to explain-itself

‘Once the senators entered, the government had to give explanations’

(73) Licenziati gli operai, il dirigente distribuì i dividendi.

Fire-PPRT.M.PL the.M.PL worker.M.PL the manager paid the dividends

‘After firing the workers, the manager paid dividends’

Looking more closely at the examples above we observe an interesting fact. The first two cases display a further resemblance to the reduced structures we examined so far: they contain respectively a passive (71) and an unaccusative (72) verb. As a confirmation, we can see that minimally different sentences with a unergative verb are indeed ungrammatical: (74).

- (74) a. \*Starnutito Gianni, tutti cominciammo a avere paura  
 Snore-PPRT.M.SG Gianni, all (we) started at having fear  
 b. \*Protestati i senatori, il governo dovette spiegarsi  
 Complain-PPRT.M.PL the.M.PL senator.M.PL, the government had.to explain-itself

The example in (73) is however different: the verb here is neither passive nor unaccusative, but rather transitive (as originally noticed by Belletti 1990). This is confirmed by the fact that there is an implicit agent, which is obligatorily controlled by the main clause subject. The following sentence confirms that there is obligatory control of the implicit agent, as we are forced to assign to it the weird interpretation in which the cat opens up the book (as opposed to the more plausible interpretation according to which it is Maria who opened up the book).

- (75) Aperto il libro, il gatto si mise sulle gambe di Maria  
 Open-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG book.M.SG, the cat himself put on-the legs of Maria  
 ‘The cat sit on Maria’s legs after opening the book’

However, the external argument cannot be realized lexically, cf. (76).

- (76) \*Il dirigente licenziati gli operai, distribuì i dividendi  
 The manager fire-PPRT.M.PL the.M.PL worker.M.PL (he) paid the dividends

There are two ways to go here: one possibility is to claim that ABSOLUTE REDUCED is a single construction and it is different from the reduced structures considered so far in that it is not restricted to specific types of predicate. We do not think this is the right way to go, as unergatives are never allowed, so there *are* restrictions on predicate types. Another option is to assume that there are two different types of ABSOLUTE REDUCED: one, corresponding to



(71) and (72), where only the internal argument is licensed. We shall call it UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED. One, corresponding to (73) where both arguments are licensed. We shall call it TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED.

We deal with these two structures separately in the next two paragraphs. However, before going there, we need to answer a fundamental question, which is relevant for both subtypes of ABSOLUTE REDUCED, namely why are they absolutive? After all, the other structures that we have considered in this paper have an illocutionary force, namely they are *sentences* (as opposed to clauses) despite being very reduced, so the issue cannot be neglected. We believe we do have an answer to this question: in ABSOLUTE REDUCED, unlike what happens in BARE NOUN REDUCED and DISLOCATED REDUCED, the internal argument stays in the argumental position rather than moving past the past participle. We illustrate this in (77).

(77)

a. Il problema, risolto (ma la preoccupazione rimane) DISLOCATED REDUCED  
 the.M.SG problem.M.SG solve-PPRT.M.SG but the worry remains  
 ‘The problem is fixed but we are still worried’

b. Problema risolto (ma la preoccupazione rimane) BARE NOUN REDUCED  
 problem.M.SG solve-PPRT.M.SG but the worry remains  
 ‘The problem is fixed but we are still worried’

c. Risolto il problema, la preoccupazione rimane ABSOLUTE REDUCED  
 solve-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG problem.M.SG solve-PPRT.M.SG the worry remains  
 ‘After the problem has been fixed our worries remain’

We have argued that the movement of the internal argument is the crucial device that allows labeling by feature sharing in DISLOCATED REDUCED and in BARE NOUN REDUCED and that is instrumental to the attribution of illocutionary force to these structures: when the internal argument moves, the structure is labeled PhiP, which in turn can be interpreted (like any other PhiP) as a sentence. On the other hand, in ABSOLUTE REDUCED there is no movement of the internal argument. Therefore, the structure is not labeled PhiP, it has no illocutionary force and can only be interpreted as an adverbial clause.<sup>17</sup>

### 7.1 Unaccusative absolute reduced structures

Let start from those absolute clauses that contain unaccusatives, like the examples we started from (71-72). Here there is no reason to postulate that the structure goes beyond VP: no accusative case is licensed, since the verbs are unaccusatives; no external argument is projected, and the participle does not seem to move, as confirmed by the impossibility of enclisis: (78).

- (78) a. Tornata                      a casa    Maria, facemmo festa  
Come-back-PPRT.F.SG to home Maria (we) made party  
'Once Maria was back home, we had a party'  
b. \*Tornataci, facemmo festa  
Come-back-PPRT.F.SG-there (we) made party

So, the hypothesis is that UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED is another instance of the bare VP structure that stands alone as a radically reduced structure. A question arises however in relation to this structure, concerning the make-up of the internal argument: given that the verb is unaccusative and that by hypothesis no case assigner is projected, how can the full DP be licensed here as opposed to what happens in other radically reduced structures? In the other radically reduced structure the case problem was fixed either because the internal argument is an NP which does not need case (REDUCED RELATIVES and BARE NOUN REDUCED, cf. 79 and 80) or because the internal argument DP does not need structural case being a topic (DISLOCATED REDUCED, cf. 81). But in UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED (cf. 82) there is a DP and it is not dislocated. How can it get case?

- (79) L'epidemia finita l'anno scorso (non era delle peggiori)  
the.F.SG pandemic.F.SG finish-PPRT.F.SG the last year not was of-the worst  
'The pandemic that finished last year was not one of the worst'

- (80) Epidemia finita!  
pandemic.F.SG finish-PPRT.F.SG  
'The pandemic is over!'

- (81) Finita, l'epidemia  
 finish-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG pandemic.F.SG  
 'The pandemic is over'
- (82) Finita l'epidemia, (andarono a festeggiare)  
 finish-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG pandemic.F.SG. (they) went to celebrate  
 'Once the pandemic was over, they run a party'

We build on our previous claim that topicalization represents an alternative way for ensuring visibility to a caseless DP. Now, suppose the entire UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED is in topic here: this makes sense if we consider that it is dislocated, separated by an intonational break from the main clause, in a position that reminds that of a hanging topic. Furthermore, the informational status of the UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED is that of introducing background information against which the informational content of the main clause is understood. Given the topic-like status of UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED, the hypothesis that we would like to entertain is that the internal argument in (82) receives a topic marking thanks to long distance agreement with the past participle, namely the category that labels the participial clause (in traditional terms “the head”). The proposal is that the topic-hood status can be shared via agreement.<sup>18</sup> The form assumed by a pronoun sitting in the UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED appears to confirm this hypothesis.

- (83) Arrivata io/\*me, Gianni decise di uscire  
 Arrive-PPRT.F.SG I.NOM \*me.ACC Gianni decided to leave  
 'After I arrived, Gianni decided to leave'

In (83), the pronoun cannot exhibit the typical accusative form it gets in case-marked positions. Rather, the form *io* that is only possible, beside corresponding to a nominative, is crucially the form that shows up in (hanging) topics, as in (84).

- (84) a. Io, se mi interrogano mi bocciano  
 I.NOM if (they) me interrogate (they) fail-me  
 'As for me, if the teacher examines me, I will be failed'
- b. \*Me, se mi interrogano mi bocciano  
 me.ACC if (they) me interrogate (they) fail-me

Summarizing so far, UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED is yet another instance of the bare VP structure containing an unaccusative participial agreeing with its internal argument that we have seen at play in the reduced structured explored in this article. The only specificity is that here agreement is not coupled with the movement of the internal argument to the edge of the structure. As a result, the structure does not get labeled by feature sharing and it does not get any sentential meaning. Let us now turn to a minimally different case, that of TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED.

### 7.2 Transitive absolute reduced structures

Building on observations by Belletti (1990/2017), it can be shown that TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED have a richer structure. In particular, the participle is in a higher position, as shown by the possibility of cliticization illustrated in (85). As shown below, cliticization is impossible in the other reduced structures considered so far in this paper (including UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED: see (78b) above).

- |      |   |                             |
|------|---|-----------------------------|
| (85) | a. Licenziatala, si tranquillizò<br>fire-PPRT.F.SG -her (he) himself reassured<br>'Having fired her, he got reassured'            | TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED |
|      | b. *(L'operaia) vistala<br>the.F.SG worker.F.SG see-PPRT.F.SG -her<br>Intended meaning 'the worker who saw her'                   | REDUCED RELATIVE            |
|      | c. *(Operaia) licenziatala<br>worker.F.SG fire-PPRT.F.SG -her<br>Intended meaning 'The worker fired her'                          | BARE NOUN REDUCED           |
|      | d. * Licenziatala, (l'operaia)<br>fire-PPRT.F.SG -her the.F.SG worker.F.SG<br>Intended meaning 'As for the worker, she was fired' | DISLOCATED REDUCED          |
|      | e. L'operaia? *Licenziatala<br>the.F.SG worker.F.SG? fire-PPRT.F.SG -her<br>Intended meaning 'And the worker? She was fired her'  | FULLY REDUCED               |

The possibility of cliticization (more precisely enclisis) also shows another important peculiarity of this participial construction: the verb is able to assign accusative case to the internal argument. This is of course not possible in the other reduced structures, which are all unaccusatives. That the verb assigns accusative case is confirmed by cases like (86), where the form of the strong pronoun is accusative (86 contains a coordination because a strong pronoun is more natural in such a context).

- (86) Salutate me e mia sorella, partì  
 greet-PPRT.F.PL me.ACC and my sister, (he) left  
 ‘He left after greeting me and my sister’

Finally, as already noticed, the verb here takes an external argument, which is controlled by the subject of the main clause, although it cannot be lexically expressed. Following Belletti (1990), it is reasonable to assume that it is PRO.

All this suggests that TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED shows a structure that is larger than the simple VPs corresponding to the other reduced structures analyzed in this paper. This structure has the following properties: (i) it triggers verb movement, which in turn explains enclisis; (ii) it assigns accusative case; (iii) it introduces an external argument but (iv) the latter cannot be lexically expressed. For the purposes of this paper, whose main focus is structures as reduced as VPs, we assume that TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED projects a *v*P and that the subject position is occupied by PRO.<sup>19</sup>

If the structure is a *v*P, the impossibility of an overt external argument is explained, since the nominative case cannot be assigned due to the absence of the T layer. Still, one can ask why the overt external argument cannot be licensed by the mechanism of indirect topic marking that we introduced for UNACCUSATIVE ABSOLUTE CLAUSES. If this mechanism were possible, we would expect (87) to be grammatical, which it is not. Why so?

- (87) \*Gianni visti i ragazzi, ci tranquillizzammo  
 Gianni see-PPRT.M.PL the.M.PL boy.M.PL (we) us got-reassured

We assume that what is missing in TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED is the crucial mechanism of agreement which, we argue, is the vector of topic transmission: in (87) the participle does not share any feature with the *external* argument (it agrees with the *internal* argument). As a

result, its topic-hood cannot be transmitted to the external argument DP, which is not licensed.

An alternative analysis that would make (87) grammatical needs to be excluded, namely promoting the external argument to a topic position (the type of licensing we assumed for DISLOCATED REDUCED). This (in fact illicit) derivation is illustrated in (88).

- (88) \*<sub>[TOPP Gianni]</sub>, <sub>[TOPP visti i ragazzi]</sub>, ci tranquillizzammo  
Gianni see-PPRT.M.PL the.M.PL boy.M.PL (we) us got-reassured

Here we tentatively assume that what goes wrong with (88) is that it involves a topic (*Gianni*) extracted out of a topic (the absolute clause) and that “the topic out of a topic configuration” is not acceptable at least for Italian, for reasons that we cannot further explore here. Independent evidence for this conclusion is illustrated in (89). While independent topicalization of the PP *a scuola* (‘to school’) or of the entire embedded clause is possible (cf. 89a and 89b) is fully acceptable, topicalization of the PP out of the topicalized embedded clause is very marginal (cf. 89c).

- (89) a. <sub>[TOPP A scuola]</sub> Gianni ha detto a tutti che c’è andato.  
To school Gianni has told to everybody that here is gone  
‘To school, Gianni told everybody that he went’
- b. <sub>[TOPP Che è andato a scuola]</sub>, Gianni l’ha detto a tutti.  
That is gone to school, Gianni it has said to everybody  
‘That he went to school, Gianni told everybody’
- c. ?? <sub>[TOPP A scuola]</sub>, <sub>[TOPP che c’è andato]</sub>, Gianni l’ha detto a tutti.  
To school, that there-is gone, Gianni it-has told to everybody  
‘To school, that he went, he told everybody’

## 8. Conclusion and loose ends

The definition of (root) clauses has been at the center of a great tension in syntactic theorizing. On one hand, there is a clear core associated to it, traditionally identified with a relation, that between a subject and a predicate (Williams 1980; Cardinaletti and Guasti 1995). On the other hand, there is a long investigation showing that sentences are typically associated with a number of functional projections that go beyond the expression of the

subject predicate relation. These are involved in case assignment, agreement, tense, force, topic, focus, and potentially many other semantic features which have been identified in the cartographic approach (cf. Rizzi 1997; Cinque 1999 among many others). Furthermore, the minimalist approach, which aims at reducing syntax to the recursive application of the simplest operation Merge, and to the associated labeling operation, makes prominent the question of how the richness of the clausal skeleton and its fixed hierarchy can be derived from simple operations.

In this paper, we offer a small contribution to this vast question by building on the idea that Internal Merge of two complex syntactic objects that share phi-features can create an exocentric phrase, labeled by those phi-features, which in turn is identified with predication and receives a sentential interpretation. Chomsky (2019) has proposed this for the node created when the subject is merged to the rest of a finite clause, the node previously identified as TP or AgrP. Here we assume that the same can happen at the level of VP, if the internal argument agrees with a past participle and is internally merged to its edge. Although the internal make up and the size of the exocentric structure which is created varies, it can be a *sentence*, either complete or reduced, but still a structure with its own illocutionary force. So, we think to have shown that having an illocutionary force, and a related simplified left periphery, can be dissociated from the vast cartography of complex tensed clauses, and can result from the labeling by feature sharing operation when it applies to a structure as small as the VP. If we are right, there could be two ways of building a sentence: either by labeling a structure through simple phi-features sharing, possibly yielding bare root reduced structures, or by piling up functional projections probing for criterial positions of various kinds, producing fully-fledged clauses.

We can now go back to the question we started this paper with. Are reduced clauses full structures where ellipsis applies or are they created as such? At least for the radically reduced sentences we considered, we have given evidence in favor of the latter approach: the structures are literally reduced. If so, how can they co-exist with full sentences? Notice that the reduced structures we have discussed in this paper are all productive and robustly attested in dialogues, and do not even seem to be subject to significant regional variation. They thus deserve and require an account in syntactic terms. Most of them are nevertheless mostly confined to spoken, though not necessarily informal, interactions, because they require a rich and specific context to be felicitously used, as what is not expressed grammatically must be inferred pragmatically<sup>20</sup>. A radically alternative analysis, by which

pragmatic inference is all is needed with these structures, and no structure is encoded in them beyond simple lexical items, does not seem to be viable at the light of the syntactic properties we have explored in this paper. A purely pragmatic account could not explain why the hearer is able to infer an illocutionary force from the context, but not tense, negation, or anything else. More importantly, the restriction to certain classes of verbs only (unaccusatives, passives) that we describe in the paper clearly show that syntax is at play here.

In fact, most likely, reduced structures in adult grammar are overwhelmingly outnumbered by complete sentences, because in the latter the simple predicative core is enriched by the semantic and pragmatic information conveyed by the cartographic structure.

However, the frequency and availability of these reduced structures in adults' language contrast with what is observed in toddlers, who typically produce in the first syntactic phases bare roots forms without the specification of Tense or Agreement and not including a left periphery. Interestingly, Italian children do not use root infinitives in this phase as English children do, but rather participials of the kind briefly illustrated in (90).

- (90) a. questo (.) lavato, teni (adapted from Antelmi, Childe, 2:04)  
this.M.SG wash-PPRT.M.SG, take  
b. la Lorenza andata a scuola (...) (adapted from Antelmi, 2 :06)  
the.F.SG Lorenza.F.SG go-PPRT.F.SG to school  
c. Disegno cascato  
Picture.M.SG fall-PPRT.M.SG

While a systematic survey of the morphosyntax of these bare participials is still lacking (cf Moscati and Tedeschi 2009; Hyams and Schaeffer 2008; Franchi 2006), notice that the examples above look quite similar to the reduced structures we have explored in this paper: they include unaccusative or passive verbs, and the internal argument sits in a preverbal position where it agrees with the participial. It is tempting to analyze this type of early productions as the child grammar equivalent of the radically reduced sentences that we described in this paper: a VP in which two phrases are merged and display agreement. Under this view, the reduced structures produced by adults could be considered a sort of fossils from this first syntactic phase.



This view is consistent with the idea that the growth of grammar involves the growth of the clausal spine starting from a VP, which however can get a clausal interpretation by the same mechanism (namely exocentric labeling by feature sharing), which is operative in adult grammar “one step up”, namely at the T level. Still, the application of the mechanism at the VP level remains as a fossil to be employed when the utterance conditions favor it.

We leave this extension to child grammar as a speculation to be further explored. We also leave to future research the cross-linguistic identification of analogous reduced structures which are expected to exist if they result from such a fundamental mechanism like the one we have been assuming (but see Halm 2021 for very interesting converging evidence based on radically reduced sentences in Hungarian).

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\* We thank two anonymous LIS reviewers and Eric Reuland for very useful comments that led us to refine our analysis.

<sup>1</sup> The views about the role of labels vary a lot. As an illustration of the extremes of this variation, we can cite on one hand Chomsky (2015), who minimize the role of labels in Narrow Syntax, since they are reduced to an instruction for the proper identification of the syntactic object at the interface. On the other hand, Rizzi (2016) assumes that labels play an active role in derivations. Since this issue is not central in this paper, we shall put it aside. See also Fábregas (in press) for a discussion.

<sup>2</sup> However, this is by no means the only option. For example, in the research program stemming from distributed morphology labels like *v*, *n* etc. are attributed by a dedicated categorizing head.

<sup>3</sup> The relabeling approach is prima facie challenged by cases in which the head of the relative clause seems to be phrasal as in (i) or (ii). See Cecchetto and Donati (2015) and Cecchetto and Donati (2021) for an extensive discussion about these cases.

(i) I will meet the friend of Bill that you hate

(ii) I will read whatever book you hate

<sup>4</sup> Cf Alcázar and Saltarelli (2008) for a similar analysis of what they call adnominal participial clauses, which they claim are as small as VP, not vP.

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<sup>5</sup> In principle an alternative derivation might be one in which the external argument DP is merged in Spec,vP and does a very short movement to the periphery of the same vP by relabeling it into an NP. We assume that this is blocked by a condition against vacuous movement (see Chomsky 1986, and see Grohmann 2021 for a general discussion on antilocality constraints).

<sup>6</sup> The status of selection in minimalism is unclear, as this operation is not recognized as a primitive. However, dispensing with selection would have a clear cost, because many unwanted structures (say a determiner that selects a verb) should be tolerated until they are recognized as gibberish at the C-I interface. While a cyclic access to the interface, as the one postulated in phase theory, can somewhat minimize this overgeneration problem, it does not solve it. For this reason, following several authors (cf. Adger 2003, Cecchetto and Donati 2015, Pesetsky and Torrego 2006 a.o.), we assume that selection is a form of Probing. Having said that, the status of selection does not affect the core of our assumption here, which is that in unreduced structures the past participle is licensed by being selected by an auxiliary (in whatever way selection is modelled in the theory).

<sup>7</sup> This double possibility of licensing is probably to be related to the double nature of the participial, which as Huddleston (2002: 77–79 3) puts it, is “a word formed from a verbal base which functions as or like an adjective”. See Doron and Reintges (2007) for a typological discussion of this hybrid nature of the participle crosslinguistically.

<sup>8</sup> This pattern is very similar to the one exhibited by copular drop constructions in early Italian, as described in Franchi (2006).

<sup>9</sup> Notice that this is OK as an echo question following an assertion containing the participle, in a full clause, as in (i).

(i) Mi hanno detto che è guarito Signor Erfur. Guarito chi?

To-me (they) said that is heal Mr. Erfur? heal-PPRT.M.SG who

‘They told me that Mr. Erfur healed. Who did you say heal?’

<sup>10</sup> Unless the DP is topicalized with a marked prosody marginalizing internal argument. See section 5 for an explanation of this effect of topic.

<sup>11</sup> The expression *mica*, which is commonly used in negative sentences, is allowed in DISLOCATED REDUCED:

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(i) a. Mica risolto, il problema

mica solve-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG problem.M.SG

‘The problem has not been fixed’

b. Mica eseguito, l’ordine

mica execute-PPRT.M.SG the.M.SG order.M.SG

‘The order has not been executed’

c. Mica guarita, la nonna

mica heal-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG grandma.F.SG

‘Grandma did not recover’

Although ‘mica’ is a particle that can be found in the scope of negation, it does not need negation to be licensed. For example, it can occur in polar questions.

(ii) Mica hai mangiato?

Did you eat? (in a context in which you were not expected to have dinner)

Frana and Rawlins (2019) argue that ‘mica’ indicates a presupposed bias against a proposition being added to the common ground. In fact, the sentences in (i) are fully felicitous if the problem was expected to be solved, the order was expected to be obeyed and grandma was expected to heal.

<sup>12</sup> Tsakali and Anagnostopoulou (2008) notice that clitic doubling is allowed only in languages in which there is no past participle agreement with the direct object. Starting from this generalization, they propose an explanation for the distribution of clitic doubling based on a ban against “tripling” of phi features. In presence of past participle agreement, number and gender features are expressed twice (first on the past participle and then on the object). In these languages, clitic doubling would introduce the problematic tripling configuration. This explanation, although interesting, cannot explain why CLLD is more widespread than clitic doubling. In particular, it cannot account for the presence of CLLD in languages with past participle agreement, because these are cases of tripling:

(i) Quelle case, le hanno costruite l’anno scorso

Those.F.PL house.F.PL them.F.PL (they) have build-PPRT.F.PL last year



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‘Those houses have been built last year’

Incidentally, in languages like Italian, the “tripled” does not need to be in the left periphery. In (ii) number and gender features are realized three times, on the subject, on the *be*-auxiliary and on the past participle of the lexical verb.

(ii) *Quelle case sono state costruite l’anno scorso*

Those.F.PL house.F.PL have.3 PL been-PPRT.F.PL build-PPRT.F.PL last year

‘Those houses have been built last year’

<sup>13</sup> The case explanation has been criticized because several cases of clitic doubling are attested in which the double is not introduced by a preposition, including Modern Greek and several Balkan languages (cf. Anagnostopoulou 2017 for a survey). Notice however that in these cases the double gets morphological case. The case explanation can be preserved by assuming that overt case morphology can be assimilated to a preposition affixed on the double, as originally suggested by Jaeggli (1986). The rich literature on clitic doubling mentions other factors, like animateness or specificity, that favor/license this configuration and that we cannot go into in this paper. We assume that these factors play a role once the doubled and the clitic both check case.

<sup>14</sup> Both reduced structures are indeed incompatible with negative quantifiers, as shown in (i) and (ii).

(i) \**Nessuno guarito*

Nobody.M.SG heal-PPRT.M.SG

(ii) \**Guarito, nessuno*

heal-PPRT.M.SG nobody.M.SG

However, this incompatibility is independent from topichood and is rather due to the reduced nature of both structures, which cannot host sentential negation.

<sup>15</sup> There is a context that licenses a negated past participle in isolation and this is enumeration in a list. For example, in the old days of the Italian weather broadcasting a list of cities would be read and the minimum/maximum temperature registered in each city the

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previous day would be given. In those radio broadcastings, the frozen expression *non pervenuta* ('not arrived') was used, as shown in (i)

- (i) Bari 20-28  
Bolzano non pervenuta  
Milano 18-28  
Roma 20 -30  
Etc.

As in DISLOCATED REDUCED, 'mica' is allowed in fully reduced structures (cf. footnote 8).

<sup>16</sup> Topic drop is also widely attested as a mechanism of reduction in special written registers such as diaries and headlines (cf. Haegeman and Ihsane 2001; Haegeman 2013). It would be interesting to investigate whether the reduction phenomena in written registers and those in spoken interactions share a common core. See also footnote 19 below on this.

<sup>17</sup> The following structures are however acceptable as reduced interrogative sentences also in absence of intonational break between the past participle and the internal argument which signals a dislocation as in DISLOCATED REDUCED.

- (i) Fatti i compiti?

do-PPRT.M.PL the.M.PL homework.M.PL

'Did you do your homework?'

- (ii) Bevuta la birra?

drink-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG beer.F.SG

'Did you drink your beer?'

- (iii) Finita la raccolta?

finish-PPRT.F.SG the.F.SG harvest.F.SG

'Did the harvest finish?'

This possibility does not seem to follow from our account since the internal argument does not move and therefore the structure is not expected to have illocutionary force. We do not

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have a full explanation for this pattern but an important hint is that the declarative sentences corresponding to (i)-(iii) are not acceptable. We tentatively assume that in (i)-(iii) the past participle phrase is attracted to the position in the left periphery of a full-fledged phrase dedicated to interrogatives (Spec,FocusP in Rizzi's 1997 Left Periphery). This in turn activates the Force projection.

<sup>18</sup> As suggested by an anonymous reviewer (whom we thank here), the mechanism by which a long distance agreement (here between the topic head and the DP internal to the participial clause in Spec, Top) is contingent to a local agreement relation (here between the DP and the participial head of the structure) is strongly reminiscent of what Bhatt (2005) describes as Long Distance Agreement in Hindi-Urdu. A full exploration of the actual similarity of these phenomena goes beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>19</sup> In this respect, TRANSITIVE ABSOLUTE REDUCED would be different from absolutive *-ing* structures in English, illustrated in (i) with an example taken from Reuland (1983), who proposes that they are full clauses with a [-tense, +AGR] inflectional node.

(i) Roddy tried to avoid Elaine, he being a confirmed bachelor.

<sup>20</sup> Written texts cannot rely on the extra-linguistic context, and this would explain why the reduced structures described here are mostly confined to spoken conversations. It should be noticed however that special written registers, such as headlines, diary hits, tweets, SMS, clearly exhibit reduction phenomena that might bear some similarity to those described here. A full investigation of these reduced structures, aiming at determining whether simple auxiliary dropping is at play there or some more radical reduction is instantiated akin to the structures described here, is to be left for future research.