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The position of Piedmontese on the Romance grammaticalization cline

DOI 10.1515/flin-2017-0004

Submitted October 27, 2014; Revision invited April 17, 2015; Revision received April 29, 2016;
Accepted May 31, 2016

Abstract: The paper focuses on the pace of grammaticalization in (a number of varieties of) Piedmontese, a northwestern Italo-Romance language (which includes a regional koiné and several dialectal varieties), and compares it to the geographically closest languages conventionally discussed in the literature on the Romance grammaticalization cline (RGC): French and Italian. I examine the speed of grammaticalization in Piedmontese with respect to four grammatical domains previously analyzed for national languages in the literature on RGC, namely perfective auxiliaries, indefinite articles, demonstratives, and negation. The data show that Piedmontese varieties are on a par with, or even slightly ahead of, French along the Romance grammaticalization cline. While helping to explain why some languages appear to be more grammaticalized than others within the same genealogical family, these findings contribute to advancing our understanding of the role of language-external factors in the grammaticalization process: contact with other languages and the strength of social ties among speakers appear to be more important in favoring grammaticalization than early urbanization or the size of the speaker community.

Keywords: pace of grammaticalization, Piedmontese, French, Italian

1 Introduction

The proposal of a Romance grammaticalization cline (RGC, also referred to as the pace, rhythm or gradualness of grammaticalization in the Romance languages) has given rise to a vast body of research since the publication of pioneering work by Lamiroy (1999). The findings of these studies have recently been summarized in Lamiroy and De Mulder (2011), Carlier et al. (2012a), and De Mulder and Lamiroy (2012).

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The RGC hypothesis suggests that languages belonging to the same linguistic family, such as the Romance languages, grammaticalize at different speeds. For the majority of grammaticalization phenomena, such as word order, the encoding of motion events, adversative connectives, the use of the subjunctive, the evolution of the prepositional system, etc. (see Carlier et al. 2012b; Fagard and Mardale 2012; Giacalone Ramat and Mauri 2012; Iacobini 2012; Lahousse and Lamiroy 2012), Romance languages can be situated along a scale, where French is ahead of Italian and Italian is ahead of Spanish. These findings are visualized in (1) (adapted from Lamiroy and De Mulder 2011; Carlier et al. 2012a: *passim*; De Mulder and Lamiroy 2012: 200):

(1) more grammaticalized less grammaticalized



French Italian Spanish (Latin)

To date, however, less attention has been paid to non-national Romance languages, although they are numerous and, in some cases, extremely vital across the Romance territory. In the continental European tradition of socio-linguistics, independent languages that are “spoken in a given place or region in concomitance with a more prestigious superimposed [...] standard language” (Berruto 2010: 230), such as Piedmontese, Sicilian or Venetan (*vis-à-vis* Italian), are usually referred to as *dialects* (*dialectes*, *Dialekte*, *dialetti*). For English-speaking and non-European linguists, on the other hand, the term *dialects* does not refer to separate languages, but rather to (sub)varieties of a single language (see, e. g., Trudgill 2002: 165). For the sake of clarity, I will use the label (*regional or minority*) *languages* throughout this paper to refer to those linguistic systems that are different from the official language(s) of a given nation state, and that are traditionally used by a group of nationals smaller than the rest of that nation state’s population.¹ Varieties of the same language will be referred to as *dialects*. Dialects may be geographical or social (see Trudgill 1994: 2) or situational (also called *styles*, see Trudgill 1994: 10). By way of example, American English is a geographical dialect of English, Black English is a social dialect of English, and colloquial French is a situational dialect of French. Varieties of dialects will be indicated with the term *sub-dialects*.

¹ The label *regional or minority languages* was proposed in and is endorsed by the European Council’s *Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. With particular reference to Italy it has been utilized, among others, by Wright (2006), Coluzzi (2008), Coluzzi (2009), Cravens (2014).

This article will focus on the pace of grammaticalization in (a number of dialects of) the Piedmontese language. Piedmontese (or Piemontese, or, as its speakers call it, *Piemontèis*) is a regional language spoken in the Piedmont region of northwestern Italy (for an overview of Piedmontese, see Telmon 1988; Parry 1997; Clivio 2002).² The region's chief town is Turin, which was also the capital of the entire Kingdom of Italy from the Unification of Italy in 1861 until 1865. Until the second half of the 20th century, Piedmontese was the mother tongue of nearly all Piedmontese people (except for those living in the Provençal, Walser and Franco-Provençal valleys and in the environs of Novara), who often also had some command of French, Italian, and other local non-Piedmontese varieties (see, e.g., Telmon 2001: 37–38, Marazzini 2012). Nowadays, Piedmontese is probably spoken by 700,000 people in Piedmont and along the borders of that region (Regis 2012a: 93). However, in everyday life, virtually all Piedmontese speakers also, or predominantly, use Italian now, which was previously, at least until the 1950s, limited to cultural, literary, and scientific domains. Despite the fact that Piedmontese has a standard script, used, for example, in the regional edition of Wikipedia, a rich literature, and a grammatical tradition that dates back to the mid/late-18th century, it has never been an official language of any nation state, nor has it ever been taught in schools as part of compulsory education. Recent efforts to revitalize the language have had little success. It therefore still lacks a proper standard variety. Nonetheless, during the 18th century, Piedmontese developed a koiné, mainly corresponding to the Turinese variety (Clivio 2002: 151–152; Regis 2012b: 10–15). Moreover, its geographical dialects, such as High and Low Piedmontese, and their sub-dialects, such as Asti Piedmontese, Biella Piedmontese, Monferrato Piedmontese, etc. (see Telmon 1988, <http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/piem1238>, <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/pms>), are also identifiable and of interest: some of them will be taken into account in the course of this paper. The map in Figure 1 (courtesy of Francesco Rubat Borel) shows the geographical extension of Piedmont, the regional and/or minority languages spoken there and in the neighboring areas, along with the Piedmontese names of towns and some sub-dialect areas. The latter are in small caps. The names of the regions bordering on Piedmont are in capital letters.³

In the following sections, I compare Piedmontese to the geographically closest languages conventionally discussed in the literature on the RGC: French and

² During the 19th century, some Piedmontesophone communities migrated to Argentina (see Giolitto 2010), Australia, and Canada.

³ In Figure 1, languages are abbreviated as follows: pms = Piedmontese, frp = Francoprovençal, wae = Walser, oci = Occitan, lmo = Lombard, egl = Emilian, lij = Ligurian.

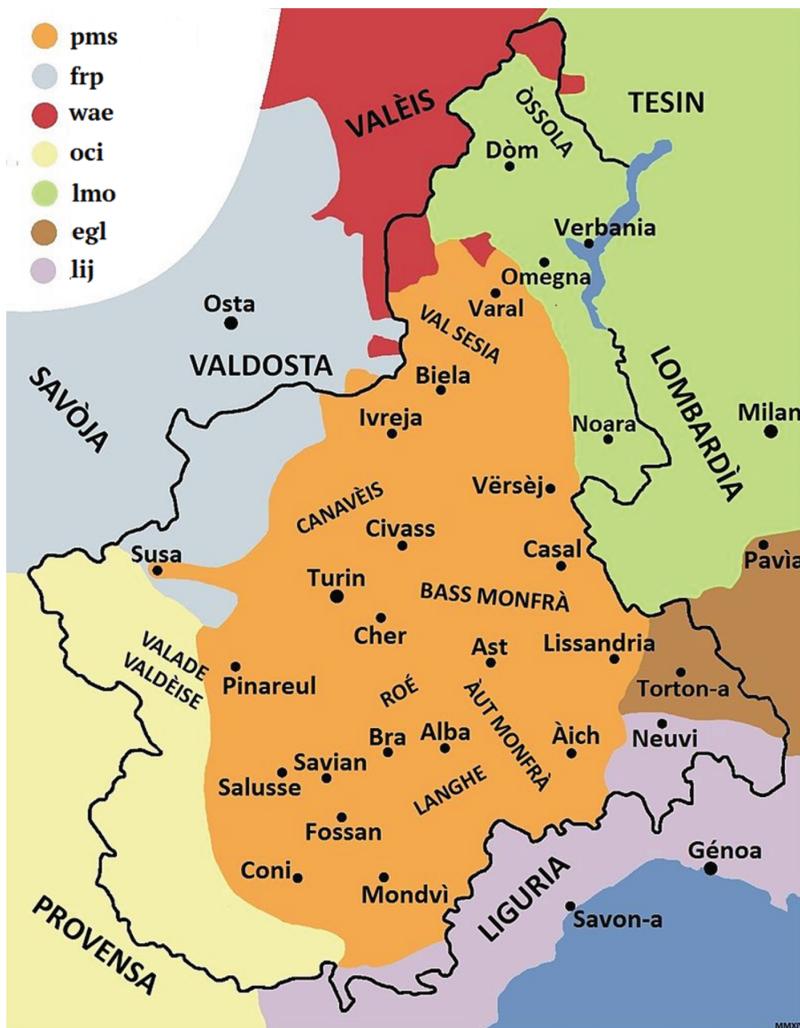


Figure 1: Map of the regional or minority languages spoken in Piedmont and neighboring areas.

Italian. Specifically, I examine the speed of grammaticalization in Piedmontese in four morphosyntactic domains which have already been investigated for national languages in the literature on the RGC, namely demonstrative adjectives (see Section 2), negation (Section 3), perfective auxiliaries (Section 4), and plural indefinite articles (Section 5). The analysis relies on data from my own fieldwork and from previous studies on Piedmontese, as well as from a selected corpus of Piedmontese texts ranging from 1321 to the present day.

The data shows that the Piedmontese koiné or other Piedmontese varieties are frequently to be situated at the same stage as, or are even slightly ahead of, French on the RGC. These findings complement De Mulder and Lamiroy's (2012: 219–221) view about the role of language-external factors in grammaticalization processes: the view proposed here (Section 6) is that contact with other languages and social ties among speakers are more important in favoring grammaticalization than early urbanization and the size of the speaker community. Finally, I also discuss the relationship between literacy in (official) languages and grammaticalization.

2 Demonstrative adjectives

Demonstratives are deictic or anaphoric elements used “to orient the hearer outside of discourse in the surrounding situation [and] to organize the information flow in the ongoing discourse” (Diessel 1999: 2). Classical Latin had a four-term system for demonstrative pronouns and adjectives, made up of proximal *hic*, medial *iste* and distal *ille*, as well as anaphoric *is*. In this section, I focus on the evolution of the Piedmontese adjectival system and then examine how it compares to developments in the French and Italian systems. My own fieldwork, which partially confirms Lombardi Vallauri's work (1986), suggests that present-day Piedmontese features a system with three demonstrative adjectives, which emerged via a number of steps that I now summarize. The first attestations of demonstrative adjectives in full-fledged Piedmontese are found in the 14th-century *Statuti della Compagnia di San Giorgio a Chieri* (Salvioni 1886: 347–350). In the *Statuti*, the Latin system had already been reduced to two terms: proximal *cost* and distal *col*. These derive from the Latin *iste* and *ille*, respectively, prefixed by the exclamative *ecum < ecce*: (*ec*)*cuist(e)*; (*ec*)*cuill(e)*.⁴

- (2) Old Piedmontese (14th century)
- a. *per col consegl*
‘for **that** council’ (*Statuti...* 5, quoted from Salvioni 1886: 347)
 - b. *de colla compagnia*
‘of **that** company’ (*Statuti...* 12, quoted from Salvioni 1886: 348)

⁴ The demonstrative system in *Sermons Subalpins* is not examined in this section, because it might have been influenced by other old Romance varieties (see Gasca Queirazza 1996; Tressel 2004; for an account of the *Sermons'* demonstratives, see Danesi 1976: 61–63 and Villata 1996: 58–62).

c. *de costa vita pressent*

'of **this** present life' (*Statuti...* 82, quoted from Salvioni 1886: 350)⁵

A third form appeared in 17th-century Canzoni (Clivio 1974; see (3a)), namely *st*, a phonetic reduction of *cost* and/or of its allophonic variant *cas(t)*. *St* carried the same meaning as *cost*, being a proximal demonstrative, while *col*, with its variant *cal*, remained the distal adjective:⁶

(3) Piedmontese koiné (17th century)

- a. *I vöi fé savei sta vòta | a tutta la gioventù | ch-a s' è fait na bella nòta.*
SBJ.CL.1SG want.PRS.1SG make.INF know.INF **this** time to all the youth that=SBJ.CL.3SG REFL be.PRS.3SG make.PP a nice memo
'This time I want to let all the young people know that a nice piece of writing has been produced.'
- (Clivio 1974: 34)
- b. *Chi-n vuol fé com le polaie | [...] | lassa sté chste canaie.*
who-NEG want.PRS.3SG make.INF like the chickens let.PRS.3SG stay.INF **these** scoundrels
'Whoever does not want to be a sitting duck, should let these scoundrels go.'
- (Clivio 1974: 35)
- c. *Stan un pòc e pöi gl' agreva | d' isté lì a fé cal msté*
stay.PRS.3PL a little and then to.them weigh.PRS.3SG of stay.INF there to make.INF **that** job

5 In the earliest attestations of Old Piedmontese (see (2)), the initial [kwi/kwe/koe] had already been monophthongized to *co-*. This does not hold for 14th/15th-century sub-dialects of Piedmontese such as Carmagnolese, Saluzzese, and Dronerese (Clivio 1970: 57–58). Nonetheless, nearly all Piedmontese dialects exhibited a monophthongized form from the 16th century onwards. Although the examples in (2) are the only attestations of Piedmontese demonstrative adjectives in the 14th-century texts, I deem it highly unlikely that other demonstrative adjectives were used in Piedmontese at that time.

6 Piedmontese has a standard orthography, which was defined by Pacotto (1930). Prior to that, slightly different orthographies were used. In this paper, I maintain the graphic choices of the authors, or editors, of texts published before 1900. In contrast, I have modified the 20th- and 21st-century texts to bring them into line with the standard orthography. All modifications are flagged.

'they remain for a while and, then, it weighs on them to keep on doing that job'
 (Clivio 1974: 41)

Throughout the 18th century, *st* became more widespread in the Piedmontese koiné, at the expense of *cost*. As an adjective, *cost* was rare in 18th- and 19th-century texts, mainly featuring in plays that mimicked the *sermo popularis* (4a–b). During the 20th century, another demonstrative form entered Piedmontese grammar: (*ë*)*s* (feminine *sa*, 4c). (*È*)*s*, derived from the Latin *ipse*, is quite clearly a first-person demonstrative, although it is used inclusively to indicate all the possible referents in a given context (Lombardi Vallauri 1986: 57). The co-existence of three forms with almost the same proximal meaning probably explains why *cost* specialized, reinforced by the adverb *sì* 'here', as a demonstrative pronoun. Today, Piedmontese speakers rarely use *cost* as an adjective (Bonato 2003–2004: 190–217). *Col* is still the only distal adjective.

(4) Piedmontese koiné

- a. *e c' a preuvo mai pì a buté 'l nas*
 and that SBJ.CL.3PL try.SBJV.3PL never more to put.INF the nose
ant sta cà
 in **this.F** house
 'and may they never dare to nose in this house again'
 (Bersezio 1863, act I, scene 14)
- b. *C' a scusa, ma còl om a*
 that SBJ.CL.3SG excuse.SBJV.3SG but **that** man SBJ.CL.3SG
l'ha fame monté la sénèvra.
 have.PRS.3SG let.PP.to.me come.up.INF the mustard
 'Sorry, but that guy really got a rise out of me.'
 (Bersezio 1863, act I, scene XIII)
- c. *Lë studios che pr'asar a- j rivèissa*
 the scholar REL casually SBJ.CL.3SG to.him happen.IPFV.SBJ.3SG
travers sa cernia 'd fé conossensa con d'
 through **this.F** selection of make.INF acquaintance with INDF
autor ch' a lo antrigèisso a
 authors that SBJ.CL.3SG him intrigue.IPFV.SBJV.3SG SBJ.CL.3SG
dovrà - as capiss - s' a veul
 shall.3SG SBJ.CL.IMPER understand.3SG if SBJ.CL.3SG wants
andé pì ancreus, arfesse a j' originaj. Faita
 go.INF more deeply refer.INF.REFL to the originals make.PP.F

sa *precisassion* [...]

this.F clarification

(Clivio 1972: I)

‘The scholar who, in this selection, happens to come across authors that interest him must, if he wants to go into greater depth, consult the original works. With this clarification in mind [...]’

Table 1 sums up the system of demonstrative adjectives in use in contemporary Piedmontese. It is a three-term and two-distance system:

Table 1: Demonstrative adjectives in contemporary Piedmontese.

	proximal	distal
adjective	<i>st</i>	<i>(ë)s</i>

Note: Proximal adjectives may also be reinforced by *sì* ‘here’ and *lì* ‘there’; distals may be reinforced by *lì* and *là* ‘over there’

According to Lombardi Vallauri (1986), *(ë)s* may have entered the koiné grammar from peripheral, dialectal varieties. Indeed, *(ë)s* is attested, in the form *is*, in non-koiné (i. e., non-Turinese/non-peri-Turinese) texts from the 16th century (e. g., in Alione 1521). In peripheral varieties, the demonstrative adjectival system has since been heavily reduced: several dialects of Piedmontese today feature only one demonstrative adjective, e. g., *(ë)s/s(ë)* in Cairo (Parry 1991; 2005: 150–156), Biella (Vv.Aa 2000), and Asti (Musso 2003: 68–69), *ca* in Pinerolo and Avigliana (Calosso 1973: 142–149), with the postposition of deictic adverbs to represent different degrees of (psychological or spatial) distance from the speaker.

Furthermore, from a diachronic point of view, the grammatical changes in this domain seem to have first taken place in the peripheral varieties, and only subsequently in the koiné. While 17th-century Turinese songs contain very few instances of *st*, the *Historia della guerra del Monferrato* (1613), written in a Monferrato dialect, already featured the two competing proximal forms *cost* and *st/s*, as in (5). In addition, while De’ Conti’s (1798) *Gerusalemme Liberata in Monferrino* featured a strictly two-distance, two-term system (*st* vs *col*), similar to that of the contemporary Turinese variety, the third term *cost* is still attested in the 19th-century koiné.

- (5) Monferrato Piedmontese (17th century)

*E po miser Plinio studiand sto cas, | Al
and then mister Plinius studying this case SBJ.CL-3SG
scris costa sentenza in si carton | De
write.PFV.3SG this sentence in on.the pages of
col libraz ch' al fè in so vecchiezza.
that book.PEJ that SBJ.CL.3SG make.PFV.3SG in his old.age
'And then Plinius, studying this case, wrote this sentence on the pages of
that book that he produced in his old age.'*
(*Historia*: vv. 161–163)

Table 2 summarizes the evolution of the demonstrative adjective system in the Piedmontese koiné with respect to the peripheral varieties:⁷

Table 2: Demonstrative adjective systems in Piedmontese.

century	koiné	peripheral
14th	<i>cost / col</i>	
16th		<i>(cost) ist / is / col</i>
17th	<i>cas (st) / cal</i>	<i>cost st / col</i>
18th	<i>(cost) st / col</i>	<i>st / col</i>
19th	<i>(cost) st / col</i>	
20th	<i>st ès / col</i>	<i>ès</i>

My data are mainly drawn from written texts, which are less accurate in the representation of phonetics and more conservative by nature. It is thus possible that (*è*)s became undistinguishable from *st* via phonetic reduction, and that these two forms have ultimately merged into one demonstrative, in the koiné as well as in the peripheral varieties. If this is indeed what happened, then the contemporary koiné system would also be a two-term system, with one proximal adjective *st* (and its phonotactic variants) and one distal adjective, *col*. French has developed a demonstrative adjective system that is very similar to those of the peripheral Piedmontese varieties: it “has reduced the paradigm of the demonstrative determiners maximally, so that it no longer marks differences

7 In Table 2, / separates proximals from medials (if present) and distals; | separates different forms attested for the same distance. Terms in brackets are attested infrequently.

related to distance" (De Mulder and Lamiroy 2012: 217; Guillot and Carlier 2015). Contemporary French has distinct adjectives and pronouns (*ce* vs *celui/ceux/celle(s)*). Note that the only adjectival term in the current French system is *ce* [sə], now a deictically neutral demonstrative, phonetically identical to the forms attested in Cairo, Biella, and Asti. Just as in Cairo Piedmontese, Biella Piedmontese, and Asti Piedmontese, French *ce* is reinforced by adverbial suffixes (-*ci* and -*là* placed after the noun following the demonstrative), but these "are no longer used systematically" (De Mulder and Lamiroy 2012: 217), so that, for example, -*là* does not imply that the referent is far away (6a).

Contemporary standard Italian, on the other hand, has a two-term demonstrative system (with both terms used as adjectives and as pronouns), expressing person-related features in the following way: *questo*, occasionally shortened to ('*sto* in informal speech and in allegro forms, i. e., phonetically reduced forms used in rapid speech (see Matthews 2007: s.v.), means 'close to the speaker'; *quello* means 'away from the speaker' (6b–c). *Codesto*, a second-person oriented demonstrative that means 'away from the speaker but close to the hearer' may still be alive in Tuscan Regional Italian, but has disappeared from everyday communication in standard Italian (Sabatini 1985: 158; Berruto 1987: 78).

(6) a. Contemporary spoken French

J’ aime ce vin- là.
 I love.PRS.1SG DEM wine there
 'I like this wine.'

(De Mulder and Lamiroy 2012: 217)

b. Standard Italian

Mi piace questo vino.
 to.me like.PRS.3SG this wine
 'I like this wine.' (near the speaker)
 (native competence of the author)

c. Standard Italian

Mi piace quel vino.
 to.me like.PRS.3SG that wine
 'I like that wine.' (far from the speaker)
 (native competence of the author)

In sum, with regard to demonstrative adjectives: Italian has a two-term person-related system (*questo/quello*). The Piedmontese koiné has a two/three-term person-related system with two distances: (ë)s/st vs. col. As suggested earlier, the first two of these forms might possibly be regarded as allomorphs of a single term. Piedmontese dialects have one neutral demonstrative adjective

((*è*)*s* (+ N-*si/lì/là*)).⁸ French has one neutral adjective (*ce* (+ N-*ci/là*)). French and Piedmontese dialects thus appear to be more grammaticalized than the Piedmontese koiné and Italian, because they have reduced the paradigm to the maximum extent, which is typical of grammaticalization processes (Lehmann 2002: 118). The Piedmontese koiné appears to be on a par with Italian, although it should be borne in mind that the former is a grammaticalization cycle ahead of the latter. This assessment does not take into account the Italian ('*sto* (reduced form of *questo*, corresponding to the Piedmontese *st*, reduction of *cost*), although it is frequently used in everyday communication. In practice, the development of a single dedicated proximal adjective form, i.e., ('*sto*, which is different from the pronoun form, i.e., *questo*, is still in progress in Italian, while it is virtually complete for the Piedmontese koiné (*s(t)* vs. *cost(-si)*). Thus, Italian seems closer to Latin than the Piedmontese koiné, because although both daughter languages have reduced the system to two terms, Italian still does not distinguish between adjectives and pronouns. The RGC with respect to the morphological microsystem of demonstrative adjectives is represented in (7):

(7) more grammaticalized less grammaticalized



French	Piedmontese koiné	Italian (Latin)
Piedmontese dialects		

3 Negation

In this section, I examine how negative forms have evolved in Piedmontese, and their pace of development in relation to negation in French and Italian (Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti 2012). My analysis is confined to standard negation.⁹ In a number of languages and especially in the Romance area, standard negation follows a cyclical pattern known as Jespersen's cycle:

The original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in its turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of time be subject to the same development as the original word. (Jespersen 1917: 4)

8 Note, moreover, that peripheral varieties of Piedmontese have two demonstrative pronominal forms (*cost(-si)* and *col*), while French has only one pronoun (*celui-ci/là*).

9 Berruto (1990) was the first to draw attention to selected Piedmontese features from a typological and diachronic perspective; among these features was negation.

The development of the cycle has been studied in detail by Van Der Auwera (2010), and, with a special focus on Piedmontese, by Parry (1996, 2013), who proposed a five-stage model (Parry 2013) that was complemented by a sixth stage argued for in Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti (2012: 455) (see Table 3):

Table 3: The development of negation.

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
neg1 V	neg1 V	neg1 V			neg3 V
	neg1 V neg2	neg1 V neg2	neg1 V neg2		
		V neg3	V neg3	V neg3	V neg3

In early Piedmontese texts, the descendant of the Latin preverbal NON (= [neg1 V]) is the most frequent negator, exhibiting conditioned allophony (*non* vs *no*). Nonetheless, some instances of discontinuous negation (= [neg1 V neg2]) already appeared in the *Sermons Subalpins*, while, alongside [neg1 V] and [neg1 V neg 2] sentences, a single occurrence of post-verbal negation (= [V neg3]) is attested in a song from Carmagnola as early as the 14th century (8b).

- (8) a. Old Piedmontese (12th/13th century)

*Lo premer, qui est ric, no li vol
The first who be.PRS.3SG rich NEG him want.PRS.3SG
nient aier.*

NEG help.INF

‘The first, who is rich, does not want to help him (in any way).’

(*Sermons subalpins*, VII, 51–52; Parry’s 2013 translation)

- b. Old Piedmontese (14th century)

*quelci chi son nen vegnù | no poeno
those REL = SBJ.CL.3PL be.PRS.3PL NEG come.PP NEG can.PRS.3PL
pa dir ansi*

COUNTEREXP.NEG say.INF so

‘those who did not come cannot say the same thing’

(Clivio 1970: 55, *Laudi di Carmagnola* III, 2)

Stages 2 and 3 in the development of negation (Table 3) were reached in the 16th century, as attested in the work of Alione (9a), while 17th-century Turinese songs and plays already exhibited Stage 4, with *n ... nent/pa* (9b) as the most usual form of negation and the postverbal *nen* (9c) rising to more than 25 % of all negations in Tana’s ‘*L Cont Piolet*’ (a play written during the 17th century but not

published until 1784).¹⁰ Analysis of Bersezio's (1863) *Le miserie 'd Monssù Travet* (see 9d) shows that Stage 5, [V neg3], had been reached in the Piedmontese koiné before the 19th century.

(9) a. Asti Piedmontese (16th century)

Basta, che te n' an sarai nent!
enough that you NEG of.us be.FUT.2SG NEG
'Enough, you will not be one of us!'

(Alione 1521: 430)

b. Piedmontese koiné (17th century)

a-n sà pa scasi ont viresse
SBJ.CL.3SG-NEG know.PRS.3SG NEG almost where turn.INF.REFL
'one almost does not know where to turn'

(Clivio 1974: 50)

c. Piedmontese koiné (17th century)

E già ch' voi 'm volì nen sposè
and since that you.PL.HON me.ACC want.PRS.2PL NEG marry.INF
'and since you do not want to marry me'

(Tana 1690: 78)

d. Piedmontese koiné

Se soa fomna a 'ndeissa nen tant
if your.HON wife SBJ.CL.3SG go.IPFV.SBJV.3SG NEG so.much
a la moda, a l'aveissa nen tanta ambission,
à la mode SBJ.CL.3SG have.IPFV.SBJV.3SG NEG so.much ambition
a spendeissa nen tant
SBJ.CL.3SG spend.IPFV.SBJV.3SG NEG so.much
'if only your wife did not dress in such a fashionable way, did not have
so much ambition, did not spend so much money'

(Bersezio 1863, act I scene II)

Bordering varieties, such as Cairese (i. e., Cairo Piedmontese, 10a–b) and Roccavignale Piedmontese (10c), still display some degree of variation today in that they can exhibit, along with [V neg3], preverbal *n'* and discontinuous *n' ... nen* (see Parry 2014: 221–222; Duberti and Regis 2014: 104–105). Other

10 Piedmontese *nen* (*nient* in Old Piedmontese, *nent* in Alione's poems) descends from Latin NEC ENTEM 'no thing'. *Pa* is a counterexpectative negator in the Piedmontese koiné, but is used as the standard negator in some Piedmontese dialects. It is arguably a borrowing from French, whose negator *pas* ([pa] or [pal]) was derived in turn from the Latin PASSUM 'step'. The Piedmontese word for 'step' – *pas* [pas] – shares the same root.

conservative varieties spoken along the political regional borders, however, consistently use the [V neg3] form (see 10d for an example of so-called Kje spoken in Roccaforte Mondovì). The data suggest that the dialects linguistically oriented towards Ligurian have tended to maintain a [neg1 V] or [neg 1 V neg2] strategy, because of the contact with Ligurian, a [neg1 V] language, much more so than the dialects linguistically oriented towards the koiné.

(10) a. Cairo Piedmontese

- a ‘n le seu*
 SBJ.CL.1SG NEG it.ACC know.PRS.1S
 ‘I do not know (this)’
 (Parry 2005: 257)

b. Cairo Piedmontese

- a n’ heu nèn visc-tle*
 SBJ.CL.1SG NEG have.PRS.1SG NEG seen.him
 ‘I did not see him’
 (Parry 2005: 256)

c. Roccavignale Piedmontese

- sa valvula li ‘n zima, nurnal, gn’ ha gnènt*
 this valve on.top normal NEG has NEG
 ‘the valve on top, the normal one, it’s not there’
 (Miola 2013: 216, adapted to conform to standard orthography)

d. Kje/Conservative Roccaforte Piedmontese

- si t’ has gnent o biet, it*
 if SBJ.CL.2SG have.PRS.2SG NEG the ticket SBJ.CL.2SG
pass gnent
 pass.PRS.2SG NEG
 ‘if you do not have the ticket, you cannot pass’
 (Miola 2013: 216, adapted to conform to standard orthography)

The diachronic development of French negation has been investigated, among others, by Ashby (1981), Mosegaard Hansen (2009), and Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti (2012): “Colloquial spoken French is currently very firmly Stage 4” (Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti 2012: 455). The [neg1 V neg2] construction *ne ... pas* had grammaticalized as the standard negation by the end of the 17th century (Mosegaard Hansen 2009: 229), but French is now moving towards Stage 5, given that *pas* is in the course of grammaticalizing as the only negator.¹¹

¹¹ Some dialects of French are already [V neg3] varieties (see Sankoff and Vincent 1977).

- (11) a. Standard French

Jean ne mange pas de poisson.

J. NEG eat.PRS.3SG NEG PART fish

'Jean does not eat fish.'

(Bernini and Ramat 1996: 17)

- b. Colloquial French

C'est dommage qu'on soit pas plusieurs.

DEM is pity that SBJ.CL.IMPER be.SBJV.3SG NEG several.PL

'Too bad there aren't many of us.'

(Van Compernolle 2009: 47)

Standard Italian, on the other hand, is still at Stage 1 in Table 3, as the Latin preverbal *non* is still the standard negation in non-emphatic sentences (12a). Northwestern Italian dialects (i. e., socio-geographical and situational varieties of Italian) are developing [neg1 V neg2] and [V neg3] strategies (12b–c), possibly under the influence of regional languages spoken in that part of Italy, such as Lombard or Emilian:

- (12) a. Standard Italian

Non riesco a trovare un buon esempio.

NEG succeed.PRS.1SG to find.INF a good example

'I can't find a good example.'

(native competence of the author)

- b. Colloquial (Northern) Italian

Non dico mica...

NEG say.PRS.1SG NEG

'I do not say [mica]...'

(Mosegaard Hansen and Visconti 2012: 456)

- c. Colloquial (youth) Italian

Ho capito un cazzo.

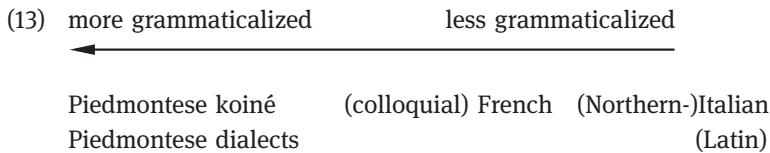
have.PRS.1SG understand.PP a prick (=NEG)

'I didn't understand.'

(native competence of the author)

In light of the data discussed in this section, the position of the three languages with respect to standard negation may be summarized as follows¹²:

12 Although some Piedmontese dialects are positioned at the same stage as the koiné variety in (13), other Piedmontese dialects still feature the [neg1 V neg2] construction today. This would place them at the same point along the cline as (colloquial) French.



Piedmontese is ahead of all other languages in that it has been consistently at Stage 5 since the 19th century, while French is currently still at Stage 4. Standard French, in turn, is ahead of Italian, whose standard variety has not left the Latin stage yet. Nevertheless, northwestern spoken Italian appears to be moving towards Stage 2 or 3.¹³

While it is impossible to predict whether Piedmontese will display Stage 6 constructions with finite verbs in the future, contemporary varieties of Piedmontese already negate infinitives by means of a preverbal *nен* (14a). The same holds for French infinitives (15a). In relation to gerundives, the Piedmontese edition of Wikipedia shows that both pre-verbal and post-verbal negation may be used, although the latter strategy is strongly preferred (14b–c). French is still a [neg1 V neg2] language as far as the negation of the gerundives is concerned (15b).

- (14) Piedmontese koiné

a. *Pér la meison costa-sì a l'é stàita la*
For the car.company this.here SBJ.CL.3SG be.PRS.3SG been the
prima vitura èd Segment B con carosseria zincà per
first car of Segment B with bodywork zinc-coated for
nen fela dësvèrnisè.
NEG make.INF.it lose.the.paint
'For the car company this was the first B-Segment car with a zinc-coated
body to prevent loss of paint.'

13 In this regard, a brief discussion of negation in *Fremdarbeiteritalienisch* might be of interest. *Fremdarbeiteritalienisch* (= FAI, see Berruto 1991) is an Italian pidgin used at work by immigrant workers in Switzerland, whose linguistic repertoire includes their L1s, alongside Swiss German and FAI as L2s. FAI is mainly a [neg1 V] language, with *non*, *no*, *niente*, and *mica* as negotiators. Preverbal use of *niente* and *mica* might be viewed as the outcome of a highly accelerated Jespersen's cycle, which has taken place despite the fact that the German varieties in contact with FAI are consistently [V neg3]. This is evidence that in a small community, characterized by a high degree of multilingualism, the pace of grammaticalization is incredibly fast.

- b. *Pensand nen a la possibilità 'd na cariera an costa*
 thinking NEG to the possibility of a career in this
dissiplin-a, ant èl 1910 as anscriv a la
 discipline in the 1910 SBJ.CL.3SG.REFL enrol.PRS.3SG to the
facoltà d' angegneria.
 faculty of engineering
 'Without thinking about the possibility of an academic career, in 1910
 he enrolled at the Faculty of Engineering.'
 (http://pms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stefan_Banach)
- c. *Nen avend d' arzultà, a scriv na litra an*
 NEG having INDF outcomes SBJ.CL.3SG write.PRS.3SG a letter in
sij prinsipi dla mecanica.
 on.the principles of mechanics
 'Having failed to obtain any results, he wrote a letter on the principles
 of mechanics.'
 (http://pms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Simon_de_Laplace)

(15) Standard French

- a. *Goyard a feint de ne pas le voir.*
 Goyard have.PRES.3SG pretend.PP of NEG NEG him see.INF
 'Goyard pretended not to see him.'
 (Simenon 1931: 94, quoted from Martineau 1994: 56)
- b. *en n' ayant pas la possibilité*
 in NEG have.GER NEG the possibility
 'not having the possibility'
 (<http://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/provence-alpes/emissions/provence-alpes-cote-d-azur-matin/manger-cru-pour-preserved-sa-vitalite.html-0>)

These data show that Piedmontese is also ahead of French as far as the negation of non-finite verb forms is concerned.

4 Perfective auxiliaries

Perfective auxiliaries, i. e., the light verbs with which present perfect and other compound tenses are formed, go back in Romance to the Latin verbs *esse* 'to be' and *habere* 'to have', which gradually lost their referential meaning. As is well known, Romance languages usually display split intransitivity: while active-voice transitive verbs consistently use HAVE as a perfective auxiliary,

intransitives are divided into two subclasses: unergatives, which preferably use HAVE, and unaccusatives, which preferably use BE.¹⁴ Nonetheless, recent developments in the study of this topic suggest that the selection of HAVE or BE is in fact a gradual phenomenon, with core unaccusatives and core unergatives displaying less variation than other verbs of the same class (Sorace 2000). Furthermore, the choice of HAVE or BE for an individual verb may change over time. “This is particularly evident in the Romance languages, which have been undergoing a diachronic change leading to the progressive replacement of BE by HAVE” (Sorace 2000: 860). Sorace (2000), Cennamo (2001), Cennamo and Sorace (2007), and Cennamo (2008) showed that cross-linguistically the spread of one perfective auxiliary at the expense of the other follows a lexical-semantic path. Accordingly, verbs can be divided into subclasses (e.g., verbs indicating a change of state/location, verbs indicating a state, verbs indicating motivational/non-motional processes, etc.), and HAVE has been shown to spread over time from the “core-unergative” verb class (i.e., controlled non-motional processes) to “less core-unergative”, or “peripheral”, verb classes (i.e., motivational processes, change of state/location, etc.). “Change proceeds from the center towards the periphery in the case of changes involving the constitution of a category with a radial structure [like split intransitivity, EM], but follows a reverse path (from the periphery towards the center) in the case of the (partial) cancellation of a category with a radial structure” (Cennamo 2008: 137; see also; Lazzeroni 2005: 18).

The contemporary Piedmontese koiné is a split-intransitivity language, its perfective auxiliaries being *avej* ‘to have’ and *esse* ‘to be’ (see Burzio 1986; Villata 1997: 168–170):

(16) Piedmontese koiné

- a. *Ti it ses andà a Turin.*
you SBJ.CL.2SG be.PRS.2SG go.PP to Turin
'You went/have gone to Turin.'
(author's fieldwork)
- b. *Ti it l'has travajà tant.*
you SBJ.CL.2SG have.PRS.2SG work.PP a.lot
'You (have) worked a lot.'
(author's fieldwork)

¹⁴ The perfect auxiliaries for passive and reflexive verbs will not be taken into account here.

- c. *Ti it l'has mangià la pasta*
 you SBJ.CL.2SG have.PRS.2SG eaten the pasta
 ‘You ate/have eaten pasta.’
 (author’s fieldwork)
- d. *Ier a l'é/l'ha piuvù.*
 yesterday SBJ.CL.3SG be/have.PRS.3SG rain.PP
 ‘Yesterday it rained.’
 (author’s fieldwork)

Nonetheless, in varieties such as Biella Piedmontese (the dialect spoken in the city of Biella, in north-eastern Piedmont), as well as in Southern Piedmontese dialects, the aforementioned replacement of *esse* by *avej* is ongoing, and indeed, in the areas around Biella and Cuneo, change has already proceeded to the extent that split intransitivity has disappeared. In Vallanzenghese and Cigliese, for instance, *avej* is the only remaining auxiliary for all verbs (Cerrone and Miola 2011: 196–198).

In contemporary French, only about a dozen verbs use *être* ‘to be’ as a perfective auxiliary (Rowlett 2007: 40). These verbs belong to two verbal subclasses indicating a definite/indefinite change of location (e.g., *arriver* ‘to arrive’) or a definite/indefinite change of state (*devenir* ‘to become’; Sorace 2000: 863–867). All other French verbs use *avoir* ‘to have’.

Standard Italian, on the other hand, uses *avere* ‘to have’ with transitive and intransitive verbs indicating uncontrolled (*squillare* ‘to ring’) and controlled processes (*lavorare* ‘to work’), although in the case of uncontrolled processes *essere* ‘to be’ may be used instead of *avere* without any variation in meaning (17a–b).

(17) Standard Italian

- a. *Il telefono ha/è squillato.*
 the telephone have/be.PRS.3SG ring.PP
 ‘The telephone rang.’
 (Sorace 2000: 877)
- b. *Abbiamo/**siamo lavorato/**i finora.*
 have/**be.PRS.1PL work.PP until.now
 ‘We have worked until now.’
 (native competence of the author)

Interestingly enough, in the small Piedmontese towns of Coggiola (see 18) and Niella Tanaro (Nicola Duberti, p.c.), only BE is used to form the perfective compound tenses (even with transitive verbs, see 18):

- (18) Coggiola Piedmontese

 - a. *L'* *é* *biughe* *dui binei.*
 SBJ.CL.3SG be.PRS.3SG have.PP two twins
 '(She) gave birth to twins.'
 - (*ALI's questionnaire*)
 - b. *I* *son* *cantà* *na cansoni.*
 SBJ.CL.1SG be.PRS.1SG sing.PP a song
 'I have sung a song.'

(Cerrone and Miola 2011: 199)

The choice of perfective auxiliaries in the languages and varieties discussed so far is schematized in Table 4.¹⁵

The development of auxiliary selection is in fact a counterexample to the RGC hypothesis (Lindschouw 2010: 186), because “Spanish reduced its auxiliary alternation, thus showing more paradigmaticity (Lehmann 2002), and hence a higher degree of grammaticalization [...] than French and Italian” (De Mulder and Lamiroy 2012: 201), whereas in other domains, French and Italian are consistently more grammaticalized than Spanish. It is still not clear why Spanish and other Ibero-Romance languages have grammaticalized faster in this domain (but see Rosemeyer 2014), but they are beyond the scope of the current paper. However, the same degree of grammaticalization as in Spanish is displayed by the peripheral Piedmontese dialects Vallenzenghese and Cigliese, which are thus ahead of French, the Piedmontese koiné, and Italian. With regards to the Coggiola and Niella Piedmontese dialects, the pace of grammaticalization of the perfective auxiliaries may even have been faster than that of the other Piedmontese dialects. Following Cennamo (2008), we might speculate that all verb classes first adopted HAVE (as in the Biella Piedmontese dialects), with BE subsequently once more superseding HAVE. In other words, the Coggiola and Niella varieties may have completed a double auxiliary cycle in the same time-span that it has taken the other varieties to complete only one.

The diagram in (19) represents the degree of grammaticalization of perfective auxiliaries in French, Italian, and Piedmontese:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------------|
| (19) more grammaticalized | | less grammaticalized |
| ← | | |
| Piedmontese dialects | French | Italian |
| | | Piedmontese koiné |

¹⁵ Some peripheral Piedmontese dialects exhibit what is known as a triple-auxiliation system (Loporcaro 2007). These dialects will not be further discussed here.

Table 4: The choice of perfective auxiliaries in some Romance varieties.

LANGUAGE /VERB CLASS	Definite change of location/state	Indefinite change of location	Continuation of a pre-existing state	Existence of a state	Uncontrolled process	Controlled process
Piedmontese koiné	E	E	E	E	E/H	H
Italian	E	E	E	E	E/H	H
French	E	E/H	H	H	H	H
Piedmontese dialects (NE / S Piedmont)	H	H	H	H	H	H
Coggioia /Niella	E	E	E	E	E	E
Piedmontese dialects (NE / S Piedmont)						

5 Plural indefinite articles

Indefinite and partitive articles are a key topic that has been widely discussed in recent linguistic research on the Romance languages. My discussion is informed by previous work by Herslund (2012), Carlier and Lamiroy (2013), Luraghi (forthcoming), and, with a special focus on Piedmontese, Bonato (2004). The indefinite “article”, which in Latin did not exist as such, developed from the Latin preposition *de* ‘of, from’ plus the definite “article” *ille*, *-a*, *-um*. In all three languages at issue here, this development began during the 12th/13th centuries. Originally, *de*(+*ille*) had a strictly partitive meaning, as in (20).

- (20) a. Old Piedmontese (12th/13th century)

So compaignun no bevrà d' aiva clara.
 his comrade NEG drink.FUT.3SG of (=PART) water clear
 ‘His comrade will not drink clear water.’

(*Sermons subalpins*: VIII, 156; see Bonato 2004: 180)

- b. Old French (12th century)

Del vin volentiers bevaient.
 of (=PART).the wine gladly drink.IPFV.3PL
 ‘They gladly drank (some) of the wine.’

(Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec*, 3178; quoted from Carlier and Lamiroy 2013)

- c. Old Italian (13th century)

Che del ben non vi sia.
 that of (=PART).the good NEG there be.SBJV.3SG
 ‘That there is not some good.’

(*Ubertino del Bianco d'Arezzo*; quoted from Luraghi forthcoming)

Whereas there is no evidence for the use of *de* as an indefinite article in the *Sermons Subalpins* (12th/13th century), it appears in the poems of Alione (1521) with both partitive and indeterminate meanings, although the latter function could also be fulfilled by Ø. At that time, however, articulated forms were more frequent than unarticulated ones, that is, forms derived from the Latin *de + ille* were used more than the bare *de*.

In the course of the following centuries, the use of indefinite articles and partitives became more frequent, although they continued to alternate with Ø. With regard to article function, both articulated and unarticulated forms were used. The latter, however, came to be increasingly preferred, so that by the mid-18th/early-19th century the unarticulated form had been almost fully grammaticalized and had become obligatory for both the indefinite

article and the partitive functions (see Bonato 2004, whose examples are quoted in 21).

(21) a. Asti Piedmontese (16th century)

E c' avran el man? | Ø Begli guant de està,
 and what have.FUT.3PL the hands nice gloves in summer
e d'invern del mittaine, o Ø moffole.
 and in winter INDF muffs or mittens
 ‘And what will the hands wear? Nice gloves during summer and in
 winter muffs or mittens.’

(Alione 1521: 40)

b. Piedmontese koiné (18th century)

Purtröp a s' treuvo di caluniator, e
 Unfortunately SBJ.CL.3SG IMPER find.PRS.3PL INDF slanderers and
dj' invidios, i quai per fè perde l' afession d'
 INDF envious REL for make.INF lose.INF the love of
un Pare vers un fieul a s' invento
 a father towards a son SBJ.CL.3SG IMPER make.up.PRS.3PL
d' còse tute false.
 INDF things all false

‘Unfortunately one can find slanderers and envious people who, in
 order to make a father lose his love for his son, make up all sorts of
 false stories.’

(Pipino 1783: 100)

c. Piedmontese koiné (19th century)

Sté tant ch' podré lontan da 'd lite
 Stay.IMP.2PL much that can.FUT.2PL far from INDF fights
e 'd gare.
 and INDF challenges

‘Stay away from fights and challenges as much as you can.’

(Casalis, *Fàule Esopian-e*, in Brero 1981: II, 52)

Whereas in spoken Turinese and peri-Turinese varieties (i. e., the varieties upon which the koiné is modeled) the unarticulated form *dë/ëd* is nowadays obligatory (see 22a, and *all* the spontaneous interactions registered by Bonato 2004: 185), in contemporary (peripheral) Piedmontese dialects, both articulated and unarticulated forms are still in use (and also alternated with Ø), as shown in examples (22b–c):

- (22) a. Piedmontese koiné

*Gioan a les ēd/**Ø poesie ant soa stansia.*

G. SBJ.CL.3SG read.PRS.3SG INDF poems in his room

‘Gioan reads poems in his room.’

(author’s fieldwork)

- b. Cairo Piedmontese

im portavo Ø grissini faj in

SBJ.CL.3PL = to.me bring.IPFV.3PL breadsticks make.PP in

campagna.

countryside

‘They used to bring me breadsticks made in the countryside.’

(Parry 2005: 142)

- c. Cairo Piedmontese

J' ero za dij bej sòdi.

SBJ.CL.3PL be.IPFV.3PL already INDF.the beautiful.PL money-PL

‘There was already a nice bit of money.’

(Parry 2005: 143)

This shows that some Piedmontese syntactic structures “contemporaneamente riflettono stadi più arcaici del dialetto stesso, all’italiano più affini di quelle odierne. È quindi possibile cogliere non solo l’impulso all’italianizzazione, ma anche la tensione tra *koiné* e varietà periferiche” [simultaneously reflect more archaic stages of the regional language that were more similar to Italian than the contemporary stage. It is thus possible to capture not only the drift towards Italianization, but also the variation between the *koiné* and peripheral varieties] (Bonato 2004: 190; my translation).

French has followed a pattern very similar to Piedmontese’s. After 13th-century “exploratory expressions” (Harris and Campbell 1995), *de + ille* gradually developed into a full-fledged article, mainly with direct objects at first (15th and 16th century), but becoming increasingly obligatory from 1700 onward in all syntactic positions, including subjects (Carlier and Lamiroy 2013; see 23a).

As for Italian, the *de + ille + NP* construction (initially used with mass nouns and direct objects) has always appeared in alternation with Ø (see 23b). Today, its use is still not obligatory, but is sensitive to diatopy, with Northern Italian varieties displaying it more frequently than Central and Southern ones (Tekavčić 1980: 118; Luraghi forthcoming). In other words, the regional languages of Italy and (Regional) Italians (in this case Northern Italians) appear to mutually influence one another with respect to the use of partitive/indefinite articles. The fact that Northern speakers of Italian seem more prone to use the partitive than Southern speakers (Carlier and Lamiroy 2013) might result from their different

regional linguistic adstrata (i. e., regional and minority languages spoken throughout Italy, as well as French, German, and/or other neighboring languages).

(23) a. French

- Jean lit des/**Ø poèmes dans sa chambre.*
 J. read-PRS-3SG INDF poems in his room
 ‘Jean reads poems in his room.’
 (based on Herslund 2012: 345)

b. Standard Italian

- Gianni legge delle/Ø poesie nella sua stanza.*
 G. read-PRS-3SG INDF/ØINDF poems in.the his room
 ‘Gianni reads poems in his room.’
 (native competence of the author)

With respect to the development of the plural indefinite article, the different degrees of grammaticalization displayed by the languages under investigation are schematically represented in (24):

(24) more grammaticalized less grammaticalized



A remark is in order here to explain why I have positioned the Piedmontese koiné ahead of French. While French and Italian developed their indefinite article from the articulated Latin preposition *de*, the competition between the articulated and unarticulated forms in Piedmontese came to an end in favor of the latter during the 19th century. Given that phonetic reduction is a key feature of grammaticalization (Lehmann 2002), Piedmontese is arguably more grammaticalized than the other languages examined here.

6 Conclusion: How do language changes spread throughout a linguistic community?

For the majority of the morphosyntactic domains discussed above, Piedmontese, in its dialect varieties or in its koiné or in both, is on a par with, or even slightly ahead of, French on the RGC, while French is consistently ahead of Italian. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the question as to why some grammatical domains seem to constitute counterexamples to the usual

grammaticalization cline for Romance languages. Take, for example, perfective auxiliation, where Spanish and Portuguese are ahead of French on the RGC, but are constantly behind it in other domains. Similarly, the Piedmontese koiné is at the same stage as Italian with respect to perfective auxiliaries, but is consistently ahead in all other domains. A possible explanation might be that perfective auxiliation is not regarded by (naïve) speakers as a morpho-syntactic feature, but rather as a lexical feature. For bilingual speakers, lexical features are more salient, which is why the difference between the two languages is easily identified, and leveled out or completely eliminated, possibly on account of the prestige of the more standardized language, or of the so-called “roof language”, in the terms of Kloss (1967). This may have happened with Piedmontese, given that it was, and is, spoken alongside Italian, which is generally perceived as more prestigious by Piedmontese speakers.¹⁶ In any case, the higher degree of grammaticalization of Piedmontese in the Romance area seems to represent, at least with respect to French and Italian, a strong pattern.¹⁷ These findings may help explain why some languages appear to be more grammaticalized than others within the same genealogical family. First, they complement De Mulder and Lamiroy's (2012: 219–221) view about the role of language-external factors in the grammaticalization processes. As argued by De Mulder and Lamiroy, early urbanization and the size of the speaker community may play a role in favoring grammaticalization. However, neither of these factors can account for the fact that regional languages, such as Piedmontese (and even its local dialects), which by definition are spoken by a smaller population than national languages, are grammaticalizing at least as fast as the most grammaticalized language investigated by De Mulder and Lamiroy, namely French, and consistently faster than Italian. What exactly is it, then, that speeds up grammaticalization in Romance languages?

I suggest a tentative answer to this question on the basis of three parameters. Further studies, taking into account other regional languages of Europe, are needed to confirm, refine or change my speculative conclusions. Given the sometimes extremely different sociolinguistic and socio-historical status of each minor or regional language present in Italy, it is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate

¹⁶ Moreover, in a diglossic sociolinguistic environment, auxiliaries seem more prone to be copied from the (most) standardized language into the other languages at play (see Giacalone Ramat and Sansò 2014: Section 3 and references therein about (BE)COME + past participle as a passive auxiliary in several minor/regional languages).

¹⁷ Other domains, such as presentative constructions, the grammaticalization of an objective conjugation, the grammaticalization of subordinating connectives, and the personal pronoun system, which could not be taken into account here, confirm this claim.

the position of other regional languages on the RGC. However, at least as far as the regional languages of Northern Italy are concerned, the data available appears to display a very similar pattern to the Piedmontese data presented here, for example, in relation to demonstrative adjectives, negation (Vai 1996), and other grammar domains (Cerruti 2008; Fedriani and Miola 2014; Loporcaro et al. 2014).

The three factors that I propose may be responsible for speeding up grammaticalization are (i) the strength of social ties among speakers, (ii) the amount of contact with other languages, and (iii) the absence of a fixed linguistic norm (enforced by schools).

6.1 The pace of grammaticalization and small communities

Although in larger communities, made up of individuals who are related to each other by weak ties rather than strong ones, languages may change at a fast pace, in small communities “the speed of language change may be increased when speakers of these communities enter into contact with individuals with whom they have weak ties” (De Mulder and Lamiroy 2012: 220; see also Sinnemäki 2009). In addition, very small language communities may display more rapid language change if the gap between innovators and early adopters, i. e., groups of speakers that further disseminate innovations into the speech community by virtue of their central social role in it (Milroy and Milroy 1985), is narrowed by the fact that innovators are *also* early adopters. It is also arguable that small, peripheral communities are more prone to having contact – for economic or geographical reasons – with the surrounding speech communities. This leads us to consider the role of contact.

6.2 Language contact

By most accounts, language contact speeds up the pace of language change (Milroy and Milroy 1985). This is also what I argue here. All the Piedmontese-speaking communities that I have described as peripheral are located on the borders of the region and are therefore in contact with at least one other language besides Italian. Thus, prior to the 20th century, natives of Cairo and Biella, who were diglossic and spoke their local variety of Piedmontese alongside the Piedmontese koiné, and possibly also alongside Italian when it came to “high” domains, were in contact with Ligurian and Lombard, respectively. Even the inhabitants of Turin, whose linguistic repertoire did not include a local Piedmontese variety different from the koiné, were exposed to French, which was one of the languages, together with Italian, spoken by the upper classes and the court up to at least the mid-19th century.

This is a typical example of “situation[s] where contact between people leads to the establishment of many weak ties” which might be responsible for the acceleration of language change (Milroy and Milroy 1985: 380). Thus, the presence of diglossia or multilingualism due to contact with other languages speeds up grammaticalization and language change in general. Sicilian and English, for example, have undergone more changes than Sardinian and Icelandic respectively (Milroy and Milroy 1985) because they have been much more subject to language contact. As I have shown in this paper, this is also the case for peripheral Piedmontese varieties, as compared with the *koiné*.

6.3 The role of literacy and standardization

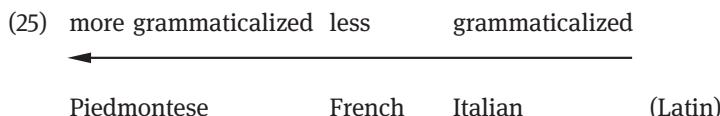
One might wonder, then, why Italian did not evolve as fast as the regional languages spoken on Italian territory, and why French has been faster to grammaticalize, even though it was spoken diglossically alongside regional languages until the last century (Lodge 1993: 193–194), a situation somewhat similar to Italian.

A key point here is that Italian was spoken as a native language by almost no one until the mid-20th century (De Mauro 1991: 43). It had been the written language of the entire Italian peninsula since 1500 (Testa 2014), but, although used by intellectuals and writers, Italian was never consistently taught to (and above all, never learnt by) large portions of the population until the end of the 19th century. In some Italian regions, the rate of illiteracy was still over 25 % in the mid-20th century (De Mauro 1991: 95). Until the last century, Italian was only used in “high” domains by cultured people, while the majority of Italians learned it as an L2 and scarcely, if ever, spoke it. Thus, Italian has remained extremely conservative with respect to Latin because of this peculiar sociolinguistic situation: “standard” norms were enforced and were rarely transgressed, simply because nobody actually spoke Italian, apart from highly cultured adult individuals, who mainly used it in written/formal contexts, and whose language is – as is well known – highly conservative in any case. Only when other strata of the population, such as youngsters, started to learn Italian and it was, so to speak, vernacularized, could the pace of grammaticalization begin to speed up. Furthermore, the standardization and scripturalization of a language usually has the effect of slowing down its rhythm of grammaticalization (“language reformation often aim[s] at halting, regulating or redirecting [...] grammaticalization”, Laitinen 2004: 247). Italian was codified in the mid-16th century by Pietro Bembo, based on

the prose of three 14th-century writers (Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca, and Giovanni Boccaccio). For this reason “in Italia [...] il processo di formazione della lingua nazionale coincide con la formazione di una lingua letteraria, basata sul prestigio del modello fiorentino, per secoli utilizzata prevalentemente come lingua scritta e come strumento di comunicazione tendenzialmente alta” [in Italy the process of forming a national language coincided with the formation of a literary language, based on the prestige of the Florentine model, which, for centuries, had mainly been used as a written language and as a means of cultured communication] (Banfi 2014: 26; my translation). Indeed, few changes were made in prescriptive grammars until the mid-20th century.

France, on the other hand, evolved towards a new sociolinguistic situation during the 16th century, when, “for a sizeable proportion of the population, Parisian French functioned as a colloquial L[ow] language in addition to its H[igh] role” (Lodge 1993: 150). When it comes to standardization, then, French is positioned at least some two hundred years after Italian: while the first Italian codification may be said to be based on written texts from 1300–1375 (when Boccaccio, the last of the Tre Corone, died), for French, the elaboration of function began during the 16th century and was not fully codified until the 18th century (Lodge 1993: 149). Moreover, French was standardized based on a spoken dialect, that of Paris, rather than on the language used in literary works, as Italian was. For French, these conditions resulted in less restrained grammaticalization processes.

As regards Piedmontese, it remained a spoken-only Romance variety until recent years: the absence of conservative factors, such as a codified and enforced set of norms (see Parry 1996: 233) may have played a major role in increasing its grammaticalization pace, yielding the following summarizing outline of the RGC for the three languages studied here.



Acknowledgment: The author would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their helpful and insightful comments on an earlier version of the paper. The usual disclaimer applies. All websites cited in the work were last accessed 24 January 2017.

Abbreviations

1/2/3 = first/second/third; ACC = accusative; COUNTEREXP = counterexpectative; DEM = demonstrative; F = feminine; FUT = future; GER = gerundive; HON = honorific; IMP = imperative; IMPER = impersonal; INDF = indefinite article; INF = infinitive; IPFV = imperfective; nEg = negative morpheme; PART = partitive; PEJ = pejorative; PFV = perfective; PL = plural; PP = past participle; PRS = present; REFL = reflexive pronoun; REL = relative pronoun; SBJ.CL = subject clitic; SBJV = subjunctive

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