The microvariation of counterfactuality:
on the interaction between X°- and XP raising in the CP phase

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A number of Northern Italian dialects display in main interrogatives *subject clitic inversion*, which consists in the encliticization of a pronominal subject onto the inflected verb, as exemplified in (1):

(1) Cossa fe-to?   (Paduan)
       what do-scl   'what are you doing?'

The range of possible readings associated with clauses containing a verbal form with enclisis of the subject pronoun includes the following non-veridical contexts (cf. Benincà (1989) on the central variety of Friulian):

(2)a. main interrogatives (both *yes/no* and *wh*-questions);
   b. *wh*-exclamatives, expressing an emotionally salient attitude of the speaker, and *yes/no* exclamatives, expressing the speaker's negative presupposition with respect to the propositional content, which is presented as unexpected;
   c. optatives expressing the speaker's wish, in which the realization of a counterfactual propositional content is hoped for;
   d. *if*-clauses of conditional sentences, defining the condition under which the event expressed by the main clause can be realized;
   e. disjunctive structures in which two alternative possibilities are taken into account and evaluated as irrelevant to the realization of the event expressed by the main clause.

On the whole, these interpretations can be characterized as conveying a subjective (re)presentation of the propositional content; more precisely, whenever subject clitic inversion obtains, the event is related to the speaker's observational perspective.

From a comparative survey across some North-Eastern Italian varieties it turns out that clauses containing a verbal form with enclisis of the pronominal subject can be associated to different subsets of the readings listed in (2) along the following implicational scale:

(3)	Friulian	Paduan	Carmignano (Pd)	Illasi (Vr)
a. interrogatives	+	+	+	+
b. exclamatives	+	+	+	+
c. optatives	+	+	+	-
d. *if*-clauses	+	+	-	-
e. disjunctives	+	-	-	-

As one can easily see, the attested variation is not random: subject clitic inversion is invariably associated to the syntactic contexts in (a-b) and missing instances of inversion, if any, always belong to the same subset of contexts (c-e).

Adopting Kayne(1994)'s antisymmetric framework and capitalizing on Rizzi (1997)'s *split-CP* approach, it looks plausible to dismember the CP-field into a few functional projections, hierarchically organized in a fixed order, each codifying a particular mental attitude of the speaker with respect to the propositional content expressed by the clause. Within the relevant functional sequence, reported in (4), we can identify two main sublayers:

(4) *Disjunctive > Hypothetical > Optative >>>>> Exclamative > Interrogative*

This linear ordering can be interpreted as reflecting a (from right to left) decreasing degree of salience, for the speaker, of the truth value of the event expressed by the clause: starting from the lowest position encoding the interrogative reading, where the speaker asks the addressee to assign a truth value to the event in question, it gradually decreases to the speaker's minimal extent of involvement conveyed by the disjunctive structure, where both truth values for a given event are evaluated as irrelevant.

The distributional pattern of inversion reported in (3) can be straightforwardly traced back to precise structural conditions; in particular, I will propose that it results from the complex interaction between head raising and XP raising: the readings in (3a-c) can be accounted for assuming raising of the inflected verb to (at least two) different head positions, the crossdialectal variation being explainable in terms of incremental reduction of verb movement; as for the contexts in (3d-e), these seem to require fronting of the embedded clause (the *if*-clause or the disjunctive cluster, always preceding the main clause) having as landing site an appropriate specifier.

This interpretation of the data, if correct, has some significant theoretical implications:

a) firstly, it represents a counterargument to Chomsky (1999)'s view that verb raising and, more generally, head raising processes may fall within the phonological component; under the proposed account, verb-raising does have semantic import, hence it must be seen as an operation of narrow syntax;

b) secondly, it sheds light on the interaction between $X°$ and XP movement: if, as suggested by (3), fronting of the embedded clause into the appropriate specifier of the main clause only obtains in the dialects in which the verb reaches a given position, these data instantiate a counterpart, within the Romance domain, of the formal condition underlying the operation of *object shift* found in mainland Scandinavian (which, according to *Holmberg's generalization*, is permitted, to first approximation, only if V has raised to T);

c) thirdly, the present analysis is also relevant for a local reinterpretation of Chomsky (1999)'s *Equidistance Principle* (which is taken to hold for (both) terms of the edge of a head w.r.t. a higher probe); admitting the possibility of multiple specifiers, one might surmise, as suggested above, that the sequence in (4) defines two main subfields of the CP-layer, the higher (headed by c*) subsuming the disjunctive/hypothetical/optative readings and the lower (headed by C) the exclamative/ interrogative readings:

(5) [XP'' [Spec c* [XP' [Spec C]]]]

As object shift allegedly involves raising of the object to the outer edge of the phase v*P (outside the merged subject in Spec,v*), fronting of the disjunctive clause into the relevant specifier (XP''in (5), possibly through the internal specifier) instantiates movement of the goal to the outer edge position of c*P, still satisfying the checking requirements of the probe c*.

Summing up, it has been shown that North-Eastern Italian varieties exhibit a remarkable crossdialectal microvariation in the morphosyntactic encoding of specific aspects of the speaker's relation to the propositional content.

On the one hand, this highlights the existence of a close relation between a relatively rich agreement system (expressed by the relevant class of enclitic morphemes in the dialects considered) and feature strength/interpretability.

On the other hand, and more generally, the case study sketched here points to dialectology as to a promising field of research, where the possibility of comparing minimally differing grammatical systems enables us to detect the scope of slight morphosyntactic discrepancies in determining the attested crosslinguistic variation.