

The use of subject pronouns in Raeto-Romance

A contrastive study¹

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1. Introduction

In Raeto-Romance, the expression of subject pronouns is considered obligatory like in French and unlike in Italian (i.a. Meyer-Lübke 1899). However, subject pronouns may remain unexpressed in certain contexts in Raeto-Romance varieties. In this paper, we investigate the use of subject pronouns in Raeto-Romance. For this purpose we carried out a field study covering Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin. This field study will be extended to Friulian. The Friulian data analysed in this paper are based on a preliminary corpus study, which serves as a starting point for this field study.

We claim that the omission of subject pronouns in the Raeto-Romance varieties under consideration may be due to four main factors: discourse situation, syncretism, language contact and grammaticalisation.

The paper is organised as follows: section 2 gives a brief general introduction presenting the language areas of Raeto-Romance and certain syntactic properties relevant to subject pronoun usage in these varieties. After that, section 3 presents methodological aspects and the results of our field study on subject pronoun usage in Swiss Romansh, Dolomitic Ladin and Friulian. Section 4 summarizes the main results of our investigation. A further discussion follows in section 5.

2. Raeto-Romance

2.1 Language areas

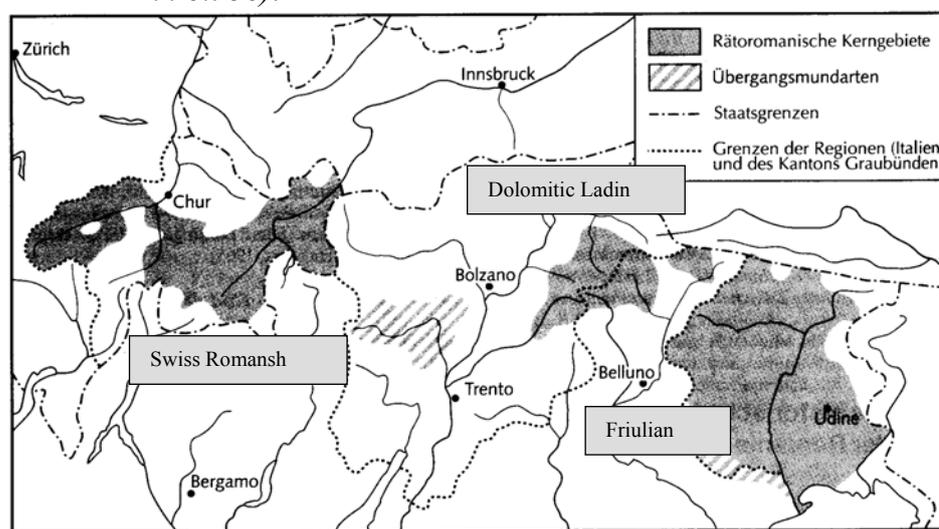
Since Theodor Gartner (1883), the notion “Rätoromanisch” (engl. “Raeto-Romance”) is used as an umbrella term for the varieties spoken in the three language areas of Swiss Romansh, Dolomitic Ladin and Friulian.² Swiss Romansh, which is further divided into the five subvarieties or linguistic idioms Sursilvan, Sutsilvan, Surmiran, Putér and Vallader, is spoken in the Swiss Canton

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² However, the question whether these three language territories can in fact be conceived as one linguistic unit is discussed controversially in Romance linguistics (Liver 1999:15-28). The motivation to subsume the three language areas in question under that term, were mainly phonological in nature. They share 1) the realisation of word final *-s* whereas the segment is deleted in Central Romance languages and varieties, 2) the conservative realisation of consonantal clusters of the type C+l (/kl-/ , /gl-/ , /pl-/ , /bl-/ , /fl-/), 3) the palatalisation of /k/ and /g/ in the environment of a following /a/ (Ascoli 1873; Gartner 1883; Liver 1999; Kaiser et al. 2001).

Graubünden.³ Dolomitic Ladin, which comprises five main varieties around the Sella mountain, Gherdëina (Val Gardena), Badiot/Ladin⁴ (Val Badia) with Maréo, Fascian (Val di Fassa), Fodóm and Anpezzo, is spoken in Northern Italy. Friulian is spoken in the administrative region Friuli-Venezia-Giulia in the North-East of Italy (cf. figure 1). The region shares its borders with Austria in the North, Slovenia in the East and the Veneto region in the West. The Friulian varieties are usually divided into three areas: a) *Central-Southern Friulian*, the most widespread variety, exhibiting koiné status; b) *Western Friulian*, the most innovative variety due to the close contact with the Veneto; c) *Carnic Friulian* which is spoken in the Alpine area (Francescato 1966:91-125; Frau 1984:14-16; Vanelli 1997:279). In the remainder of this article we refer only to Central-Southern Friulian (see section 3.5).

Figure 1. *The language areas of Raeto-Romance (adapted from Kristol 1998:938).*



2.2 Language contact

The Swiss Romansh varieties are in close contact with Alemannic and Southern German dialects. All speakers are bilingual in either Swiss Romansh and Swiss German or in Swiss Romansh and Italian. Dolomitic Ladin is influenced by language contact with Bavarian dialects as well as Northern Italian dialects. Depending on the variety considered, speakers are bilingual in Ladin and a variety of German or in Ladin and Italian or speakers are even trilingual.

³ Jauer, a variety of Vallader spoken in Val Müstair, is almost uniquely spoken and hardly ever written.

⁴ In fact, there are several varieties in Val Badia. *Badiot* refers to the variety spoken in the upper part of the valley (Alta Badia). *Ladin* designates the variety in the middle part of the valley. The term *Ladin* is not to be confounded with the term *Dolomitic Ladin* itself. We use the notation *Badiot/Ladin* when we consider both Val Badia varieties together. Maréo is spoken in Enneberg, which is a tributary valley to the Val Badia.

Friulian, too, is in close language contact with Northern Italian dialects, especially with Venetian varieties. Moreover, Slovenian varieties are spoken in some Eastern Friulian valleys (Val Canale, Val di Resia, Alto Torre, Valli del Natisone, Collio and Carso) as well as in the neighbouring Balkan area (Frau 1984:209-218; Vanelli 1997:33; Vicario 2005:26-28). German is spoken in Val Canale, as well as in Valbruna, Tarvisio and in Carnia, namely in the upper Bût valley and in Sáuris (cf. Frau 1984:218-219).

2.3 Syntactic properties

2.3.1 Subject pronouns

Most Romance languages like (standard) Italian (1a) or (standard) Spanish (1b) have retained from Latin the property to omit subject pronouns and to use them only to mark contrastive focus. These languages are so-called *null-subject languages* or *pro-drop languages*.

- (1) a. (Lei) dorme.
b. (Ella) duerme.

By contrast, in *non-null-subject languages* like Modern French (2a) and Raeto-Romance (2b) (here exemplified by Sursilvan, a variety of Swiss Romansh), subject pronouns have to be used obligatorily.

- (2) a. *(Elle) dort.
b. *(Ella) dorma.

But there is still a third group of languages, typologically in between the two other one and characterised by a partial null-subject property. This means that the subject pronoun paradigm of such a language only features subject clitics for certain persons, while for other persons there are no subject clitics in the paradigm. Above all, this is the case in Northern Italian dialects (henceforth NID), which show omission or overall lack of certain subject clitics in the paradigm (3).

- (3) *Cazzano di Tramigna, Verona*
 Ø 'dɔrmo
 te 'dɔrmi
 el / la 'dɔrme
 Ø dor'memo
 Ø dor'mi
 i / le 'dɔrme (Manzini & Savoia 2005:84)

As far as Raeto-Romance is concerned, the different varieties vary significantly with respect to the inventory and status of subject pronouns, a fact we will dwell on in section 2.3.3.

2.3.2 Word order

All Raeto-Romance varieties are characterised by a strict SVO word order. However, a characteristic distinguishing Swiss Romansh and two dialects of Dolomitic Ladin, Badiot/Ladin and Gherdëina, from all the other modern Romance languages is their strict verb-second (V2) property.

V2-languages are characterised by the fact that the finite verb must always occur in the second position in a declarative main clause. If a constituent other than the subject appears in the first position of the clause, these languages feature the so-called ‘V2-effect’, an inversion, which creates a XVS word order, with the verb appearing in second position avoiding ungrammatical V3.

In Swiss Romansh and the Dolomitic Ladin varieties with V2-property, this inversion takes place in questions or if an object or an adverb occurs in the first position of the clause (4). If the subject of the clause in these cases is an unstressed subject pronoun, it is directly attached to the verb in enclitic position entering in a close relation with the verb (5b).⁵

- (4) *Swiss Romansh (Sursilvan)*
- a. L’ onda va en vacanzas.
The aunt go.3.SG on holiday
‘The aunt goes on holiday.’
 - b. Gleiti va l’ onda en vacanzas.
Soon go.3.SG the aunt on holiday
‘Soon the aunt goes on holiday.’ (Spescha 1989:594)

- (5) *Dolomitic Ladin (S. Leonardo)*
- a. T vas gonoot a ciasa sua.
You go.2.SG often at home his
‘You often visit him.’
 - b. Gonoot vas-t a ciasa sua.
Often go.2.SG=SCL at home his
‘You often visit him.’
 - c. *Gonoot t vas a ciasa sua.
Often you go.2.SG at home his (Poletto 2000:89f.)

In languages with strict V2-property, V3 is ungrammatical.

- (6) *Swiss Romansh (Sursilvan)*
- *Il cudisch cun plascher ha la dunna legiu.
the book with pleasure has the woman read.PAST.PART
‘The woman has read the book with pleasure.’ (Kaiser 2002-2003:314)

In contrast to Swiss Romansh, Gherdëina and Badiot/Ladin, the remaining Dolomitic Ladin varieties Fascian, Fodóm, Ampezzo and Friulian (7), do not feature the V2-property.⁶

⁵ Throughout this paper, the glosses for the examples cited are our own.

⁶ However, these varieties also form questions by means of inversion of subject and verb like the other Raeto-Romance varieties do. Because of this, the term “interrogative conjugation” has been proposed in the literature (i.a. Renzi & Vanelli 1983; Plangg 1989; Fava 1993).

(7) *Friulian (bible data)*

Ogni an, chest om al leve sù de sô sitât
 each year this man SCL = went up from his town
 ‘Each year this went up from his town.’ (La Bibie, 1 Samuel 1, 3)

V2 in Raeto-Romance plays a crucial role with respect to the use of subject pronouns. The idea that there is a “causal relationship between V2 word order and the presence of unstressed pronoun subjects” (Haiman & Benincà 1992:174) goes back to i.a. Thurneysen (1892), Foulet (1930) or Spiess (1956) who argued with respect to Old respectively Medieval French that V2 requires the presence of subject pronouns, i.e. subject pronouns are obligatory in sentence-initial position to keep the verb in the second position of the clause. Thus, the possibility to omit postverbal subject pronouns is often explained by the fact that in inverted word order the V2-restriction is fulfilled by another constituent in first position. But there is also a functional explanation for the possible omission of postverbal subject pronouns. This explanation assumes that the verb (respectively its inflectional morphology) already specifies the grammatical person and since it could not add any further information the pronoun in postverbal position becomes dispensable and thus can be omitted:⁷

C’est là un point fondamental de la syntaxe du vieux français: l’inversion du sujet entraîne facilement dans le cas du pronom personnel l’omission du sujet. [...] Il semble que le verbe une fois donné le pronom ne puisse guère apporter de précision nouvelle, et que devenu inutile il n’apparaisse pas.
 (Foulet 1930:313)

Because of the V2-constraint, it is particularly frequent that subject pronouns appear in postverbal position in Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin. Given these circumstances we will not discuss the use of preverbal subject pronouns here but focus on postverbal subject pronouns.

2.3.3 Inventories of subject pronouns in Raeto-Romance

2.3.3.1 *Swiss Romansh.* Table 1 shows the inventory of free and clitic subject pronouns in Swiss Romansh. Whereas Sursilvan features only one single series of preverbal subject pronouns, which are free pronouns, Vallader, in addition to the free series disposes of proclitic subject pronouns in the 1SG and the 3PL. The free pronouns also occur in postverbal position. However, in this position, above all in spoken language, they are replaced by clitics (in 3SG as well as in 1 and 3PL), which are reduced forms of the free pronouns. Remarkably, there are no enclitic pronouns in 2SG and 2PL and in these grammatical persons the free ones generally are not used in postverbal position (cf. section 3).

⁷ However, on the other hand, also preverbal subject pronouns may be omitted in V2 languages. As regards Raeto-Romance, this omission is often explained by imitation of (written) Italian or Latin (Linder 1987:21f.). Another factor to take into consideration here is *topic drop* (Guasti 2002), i.e. the constituent about which something is said in the discourse and which is situated in sentence-initial position may be dropped because it is already known and given in the discourse.

Table 1. *Subject pronouns in Sursilvan and Vallader* (Widmer 1959; Linder 1987:2-162; Haiman & Benincà 1992:131; Ebnetter 1994:754-757; Hack 2007:23f.).

		Sursilvan		Vallader		
person	free	clitic		free	clitic	
		proclitic	enclitic		proclitic	enclitic
1SG	jeu		-u	eu	e	-a
2SG	ti			tü		
3SG	M		-ʼl	el		-ʼl
	F		-ʼla	ella		-ʼla
1PL	nus		-s, -sa	nus / no		-a
2PL	vus			vus / vo		
3PL	M		-i	els	i	-a
	F		-ʼlas	ellas	i	-a

2.3.3.2 *Dolomitic Ladin*. The Dolomitic Ladin varieties of Val Gardena and Val Badia feature two series of subject pronouns: a free one and a clitic series.

Table 2. *Subject pronoun paradigms in Gherdëina and Badiot/Ladin* (cf. Thiele 2001:51f.; Bernardi 1999:42,73; Anderlan-Obletter 1991:38).

		Gherdëina		Badiot/Ladin		
person	free	clitic		free	clitic	
		proclitic	enclitic		proclitic	enclitic
1SG	ie		-i	iö	i	-i
2SG	tu	te		tö	te	-te
3SG	M	ël	l	ël	al	-el
	F	ëila	la / lʼ	ëra	ara	-era
1PL	nëus		-s	nos	i *	-se
2PL	vo			os	i *	-e
3PL	M	ëi	i	ëi	ai	-i
	F	ëiles	les	ëres	ares	-eres

*dropped in Alta Badia

It is important to note that in contrast to Swiss Romansh, where the usage of free pronouns prevails, Dolomitic Ladin varieties normally use the clitics in preverbal as well as in postverbal position. In postverbal position, the use of the free pronouns is even banned.

As far as Gherdëina is concerned, there are no preverbal clitics in 1SG and 1 and 2PL. Equally, there are no enclitic forms in the second persons in postverbal position.

The variety of Val Badia, in contrast, features a complete paradigm of subject pronouns. But the different parts of the valley behave differently with respect to subject pronoun usage: in general, the upper part of the valley (Alta Badia) behaves quite similar to Gherdëina. For instance Badiot (the variety of Alta Badia) lacks 1 and 2PL preverbal subject clitics like Gherdëina.

2.3.3.3. *Friulian*. As mentioned before, Friulian varieties also exhibit a double series of subject pronouns, consisting of free subject pronouns and subject clitics. Subject clitics occur in pre- or postverbal position.

Table 3. *Free subject pronouns and clitics in Friulian*
(see Gregor 1975; Marchetti 1977; Vicario 2005).

		Friulian	
person		clitic	
1SG		jo	o
2SG		tu	tu
3SG	M	lui	al
	F	jê	e
1PL		nô	o
2PL		vualtris	o
3PL		lôr	a

However, some Friulian varieties show defective paradigms, which means that some grammatical persons do not exhibit subject clitics (Frau 1984). But as mentioned before, we refer only to Central Friulian, which exhibits a complete series of subject clitics.

3. *The use of subject pronouns in Raeto-Romance*

According to grammars of Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin, amongst others Spescha (1989) for Sursilvan, Ganzoni (1983) for Vallader & Belardi (1984) and Anderlan-Obletter (1991) for Gherdëina, second person subject pronouns are generally omitted in postverbal position. Linder (1987:53) even considers this omission as the normal case.

- (8) *Swiss Romansh (Sursilvan)*
- a. Oz fas (ti) quella lavur.
today do.2.SG (you) this work
'Today you do this work.'
 - b. Vegnis (vus) lu in tec ad uras?
come.2.PL (you) then a bit in time
'Will you then arrive in time?' (Spescha 1989:563)

However, as regards Gherdëina, the term 'omission' is not adequate since free subject pronouns are banned in postverbal position (in all grammatical persons) and second person enclitic pronouns are not present at all in the paradigm.

- (9) *Dolomitic Ladin (Gherdëina)*
- a. Pona vënies Ø.
then come.2.SG
'Then you come.'

- b. Pona uniëis Ø.
 then come.2.PL
 ‘Then you come.’ (Anderlan-Obletter 1991:40)

Following Friulian grammars (see Gregor 1975; Marchetti 1977; among others), subject clitics other than 2SG may be omitted when object clitics (10a), reflexive pronouns (10b) and the negation particle (10c) precede the verb. The following examples are taken from a Friulian bible.

- (10) *Friulian (bible data)*
- a. il signôr Ø j veve sierât il grim
 the Lord her.DAT had closed the womb
 ‘The Lord had closed her womb.’ (1 Samuel 1, 5)
- b. I siei lavris Ø si movevin
 det her lips REF moved
 ‘Her lips moved.’ (1 Samuel 1, 13)
- c. Ane però no Ø lè sù
 Hannah but NEG went up
 ‘But Hannah didn’t go up.’ (1 Samuel 1, 22)

In consideration of the statements in grammars and studies of Raeto-Romance given above (and the results of our preparatory studies) several research questions arise:

- (a) In which grammatical persons and in which contexts can subject pronoun omission be attested in Raeto-Romance?
- (b) Is there any dialectal / diatopic variation?
- (c) How can the omission of subject pronouns in a non-null-subject language like Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin be accounted for, respectively which factors can trigger subject pronoun omission in a non-null-subject language?

3.1 Methodological aspects

In order to investigate if subject pronouns are used or not in Raeto-Romance we have carried out a field study covering three varieties of Swiss Romansh (Sursilvan, Vallader and Jauer) and three varieties of Dolomitic Ladin (Gherdëina, Badiot and Maréo). We used an especially conceived questionnaire with more than thirty sentences in two versions. Whereas the first version of the sentence contained the subject pronoun, the second version lacked it. 100 native speakers of Swiss Romansh and another 57 native speakers of Dolomitic Ladin were asked to compare these two versions and to judge which one they would use in a day-to-day situation.

The second part of this field study consists in investigating the three main varieties of Friulian (Western Friulian, Central Friulian, Carnic Friulian; see Frau 1984; Haiman & Benincà 1992; Vanelli 1997). Since this field study has not been carried out yet, we give rather a perspective on what we might expect on the basis of previous analyses (Haiman 1991), grammars (Gregor 1975; Marchetti 1977) and with respect to corpus data we collected from a bible written in the variety of

the Central Friulian koiné.⁸ As regards this methodological aspect, and because of the fact that Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin (V2-property) on the one hand and Friulian (no V2-property) on the other hand present different contexts of interest with respect to the omission of subject pronouns, we divide the discussion into two parts.

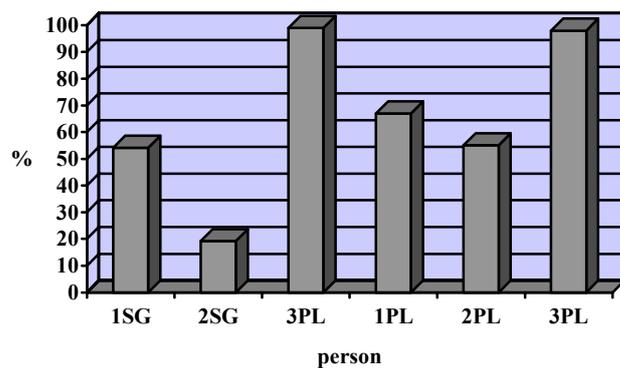
3.2 Results

3.2.1 Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin

3.2.1.1 Swiss Romansh. Figure 2 shows the overall results regarding the frequency of postverbal subject pronouns in Swiss Romansh. Third person subject pronouns have to be used obligatorily, whereas the usage of the 1SG as well as the 1 and 2PL subject pronouns is significantly less frequent. These pronouns can be omitted to a greater or lesser extent according to the grammatical person.

The 2SG subject pronoun takes an exceptional position in that only around 20% of speakers affirmed to use it always. This was in fact what we expected given the statements concerning subject pronoun usage in Raeto-Romance grammars.

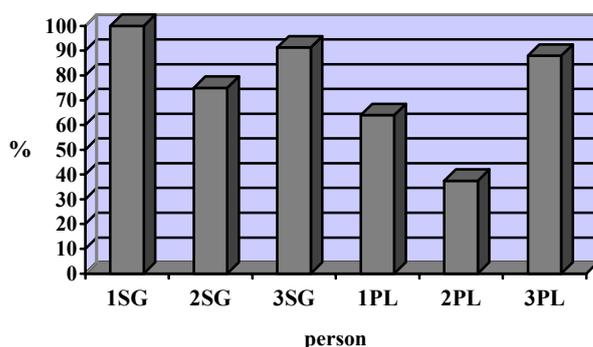
Figure 2. *Frequency of postverbal subject pronouns in Swiss Romansh.*



3.2.1.2 Dolomitic Ladin. As far as Dolomitic Ladin is concerned, the varieties under consideration behave quite differently. In fact, in Maréo, the usage of postverbal subject clitics is 100% obligatory in all grammatical persons.

In Badiot/Ladin postverbal subject clitics may be omitted to a greater or lesser extent according to the grammatical person. 1SG, 3SG and 3PL postverbal subject clitics are almost obligatory, whereas 2SG, 1PL and 2PL subject clitics may be omitted.

⁸ The corpus data, taken from 1 Samuel 1-3, consists of 85 verses, 155 sentences and 2.649 words. Despite their status of being part of the verb, clitics were counted as words.

Figure 3. *Frequency of postverbal subject clitics in Badiot/Ladin.*

3.2.1.3 Comparing Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin. Comparing the results for Swiss Romansh (figure 2) and Badiot/Ladin (figure 3) with respect to the usage of postverbal subject pronouns, we observe similar trends in the 3rd persons as well as in 1PL and 2PL. The striking difference between Swiss Romansh and Badiot/Ladin concerns 1SG and 2SG: in Badiot/Ladin, the usage of these (enclitic) pronouns is much more frequent than it is in Swiss Romansh. Especially interesting is the usage of the 2SG subject pronoun: Whereas it is generally omitted in Swiss Romansh and in Gherdëina, 75% of the informants in Val Badia considered it obligatory.

In conclusion, Badiot/Ladin seems to behave like the NIDS whereas Gherdëina behaves like Swiss Romansh.

3.3 Comparison with other studies

Renzi & Vanelli (1983) investigate the usage of subject pronouns in 30 Romance varieties, mostly NID – which exhibit clitic subject pronouns for some, but not for all grammatical persons – but also two varieties of each Francoprovençal, Swiss Romansh, Dolomitic Ladin and Friulian. Heap (2000) investigates subject pronoun usage in “Central” Romance varieties using geolinguistic maps from the *ALF* and the *AIS*.

Renzi & Vanelli (1983) reach the generalisation, confirmed by Heap’s (2000) study, that if a variety makes constant use of at least one subject clitic, then it is the one for second person singular:

Se una varietà fa un uso costante di almeno un pronome soggetto,
questo è quello di 2. persona [singolare, FMH & SG].

(Renzi & Vanelli 1983:143)

Renzi & Vanelli (1983) and Heap (2000) also propose a hierarchy of subject pronouns with respect to the frequency of their usage. Table 4 shows the results of Renzi & Vanelli, Heap and Hack (2007) in comparison.

Table 4. *Synopsis of the hierarchy of subject pronouns according to Renzi & Vanelli (1983); Heap (2000) and Hack (2007).*

	Renzi & Vanelli (1983): 30 Romance varieties	Heap (2000): “Central Romance”	Badiot/Ladin	Hack (2007): Swiss Romansh
1	2SG	2SG	1SG	-
2	3SG	3PL	3SG	3SG
3	3PL	3SG	3PL	3PL
4	1PL	2PL	2SG	1PL
5	2PL	1SG	1PL	2PL
6	1SG	1PL	2PL	1SG
				2SG

All Romance varieties under consideration share one general characteristic, namely the position of the third persons in the hierarchy: third person subject pronouns are almost obligatory in all varieties. However, the varieties differ with respect to which subject pronoun is most obligatory (or most frequently present in partial null-subject paradigms). Both in Renzi & Vanelli’s and in Heap’s hierarchies, the 2SG subject pronoun takes the first position, i.e. the pronoun has always to be used obligatorily and is never omitted. In the case of varieties with partial subject pronoun paradigms, the 2SG pronoun is the first one to be present. By contrast, as Hack’s (2007) investigation regarding Swiss Romansh shows, this pronoun is situated just at the opposite end of the hierarchy. Hence, there is a significant difference between the usage of the 2SG subject pronoun in Swiss Romansh on the one hand, and in the remaining Romance varieties on the other. Interestingly, in Badiot/Ladin it is the 1SG which has to be present with highest obligation – an observation for which we will provide an account in section 3.4.3.

In conclusion, comparing Swiss Romansh, Dolomitic Ladin and Northern Italian dialects reveals significant differences between the individual varieties which become evident in:

- the inventories of subject pronouns (and clitics).
- the 2SG: In Swiss Romansh, there is no enclitic subject pronoun present in the paradigm for this person and the postverbal subject pronoun is generally omitted. The same holds for Gherdëina⁹ whereas Badiot/Ladin (still) features an enclitic form in 2SG. In the NIDs in contrast, the 2SG subject clitic is indispensable, i.e. the one to be expressed with highest obligation.

3.4 Explanatory Approaches

We claim that the observed omission of subject pronouns in Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin is due to four main aspects:

- discourse situation which brings about a split among the grammatical persons
- language contact
- syncretism in the verbal paradigm and

⁹ With the difference, though, that the 2SG postverbal subject pronoun is not “omitted” as in Swiss Romansh but free pronouns in postverbal position are banned in all grammatical persons.

- the genesis of verbal desinences in the course of a grammaticalisation process, respectively the reinterpretation of postverbal subject pronouns as part of inflection.

3.4.1 *Discourse situation*

A common result found in Renzi & Vanelli (1983), Heap (2000), Hack (2007) and in our own data from Dolomitic Ladin is the observation that 3rd person pronouns in general cannot be remain unexpressed. This might be due to their role in the discourse situation distinguishing between *vraies personnes* (“true persons”) and *non-personnes* (“non-persons”) (Benveniste 1966). Whereas the 1st and 2nd persons directly participate in the discourse situation, the 3rd persons are discourse-external entities whose identification requires a particular anaphoric reference. Hence, the omission of 1st and 2nd person subject pronouns in contrast to the obligatory usage of 3rd person pronouns could be explained by the fact that the former persons can be deduced from the discourse situation, while the latter cannot. However, this explanation is not completely satisfactory, given the prominent status of the 2SG subject clitic in NID and Friulian and the 1SG subject clitic in Badiot/Ladin. As will be shown in the following sections, syncretism in the verbal paradigm and grammaticalisation may be crucial to account for this. Furthermore, a feature geometrical approach along the lines of Harley & Ritter (1998, 2002) and Heap (2002), which we will not discuss in detail here (see also section 4), may provide an explanation in this respect. A main characteristic of that model is the assumption of universal morphosyntactic features. Thus, the prominence of the respective subject pronouns may be due to different marking of these features.

3.4.2 *Language contact*

Language contact is another crucial factor as regards the omission of subject pronouns in Raeto-Romance. As already mentioned, Swiss Romansh is in close language contact with Alemannic (i. e. Swiss German dialects), and the Dolomitic Ladin varieties under consideration here are in contact with Southern German (Bavarian) dialects. What matters here, is that both Alemannic and Bavarian usually omit the 2SG subject pronouns in postverbal position, as has been observed for Swiss Romansh and Gherdëina. According to Löttscher (1983:94) one peculiarity of 1SG and 2SG subject pronouns in Swiss German is that they can be omitted in postverbal position giving rise to sentences like the following.

(11) *Swiss German*

- a. Woane gaasch Ø ?
 where go.2.SG
 ‘Where do you go?’
- b. Was hësch Ø ?
 what have.2.SG
 ‘What do you have?’
- c. Gòdsch Ø scho?
 go.2.SG already
 ‘You are already leaving?’

The above also holds for Southern German dialects, respectively Bavarian, which is in close language contact with certain varieties of Dolomitic Ladin.

Further evidence derives from the fact that NID, which are not exposed to language contact with neither Alemannic nor Southern German dialects, do not feature the possibility to omit the 2SG subject pronoun.

3.4.3 Subject pronoun usage and syncretism in the verbal paradigm

Traditionally, the fact that languages like standard Italian or standard Spanish do not use subject pronouns in unmarked contexts and only resort to them in order to mark contrastive stress or focus is considered to be related to a ‘strong’ or highly differentiated verbal inflection which exhibits distinct desinences for each grammatical person (Rizzi 1986, Benincà 1994:38f.). In most cases, the grammatical person can unambiguously be identified via its individual verbal ending.¹⁰ Following this line of reasoning, we should expect that in the case of syncretism additional indications are used in order to unambiguously identify the grammatical person.

As table 5 shows, all varieties of Dolomitic Ladin exhibit a general syncretism in 3rd person singular and plural in their verbal paradigms which holds for all verbs and tenses.

Table 5. (Regular) verbal inflection in Dolomitic Ladin (Plangg 1989:655).

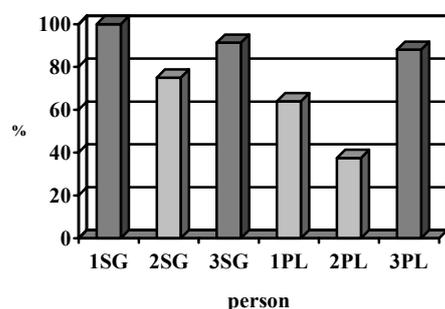
CANTARE > **cianté** (“to sing”)

person	Gherdëina	Badiot/Ladin	Fascian	Fodóm
1SG	ciante	ćiante	ćiante	ćiante
2SG	ciantes	ćiantes	ćiantes	ćiantes
3SG	cianta	ćianta	ćianta	ćianta
1PL	cianton	ćiantun	ćianton	ćianton
2PL	ciantëis	ćiantëis	ćiantéde	ćiantéi
3PL	cianta	ćianta	ćianta	ćianta

The peculiarity of Badiot/Ladin is that this general syncretism is extended to 1SG in many frequent irregular verbs such as *avëi* (“to have”), *orëi* (“to want”), *jí* (“to go”). In fact, in those grammatical persons exhibiting syncretic verbal desinences in Badiot/Ladin, the usage of subject clitics is most frequent and near obligatory (cf. the dark bars in figure 4).

¹⁰ See Cordin & Calabrese (2001) for exceptions concerning syncretisms across the subjunctive forms of Italian.

Figure 4. *Correlation between subject pronoun usage and syncretism in the verbal paradigm in Badiot/Ladin.*



Hence, there seems to be a correlation between subject pronoun usage and syncretism in the verbal paradigm with 1SG, 3SG and 3PL subject clitics being obligatorily used to disambiguate syncretic verb forms.

Swiss Romansh, in contrast, shows highly differentiated verbal paradigms with distinct desinences for all persons and hence no syncretism at all.

Table 6. *(Regular) verbal inflection in Swiss Romansh.*

person	Sursilvan	Vallader
1SG	contel	chant
2SG	contas	chantast
3SG	conta	chanta
1PL	cantein	chantain
2PL	canteis	chantaivat
3PL	contan	chantan

Thus, the observed correlation between subject pronoun usage and syncretism in the verbal paradigm in Badiot/Ladin does not hold for Swiss Romansh and we can conclude with Benincà (1994:38f.):

La ricchezza della flessione potrà quindi essere considerata una condizione preliminare per l'assenza di soggetto nelle lingue che hanno questa caratteristica, ma non potrà essere considerata semplicemente come la causa di questa caratteristica.

3.4.4 Grammaticalisation

Another crucial factor favouring the observed omission of subject pronouns in Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin is grammaticalisation. Thereby we mean the process in which lexical elements become functional elements. In fact, in both Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin certain verbal desinences are considered the result of a grammaticalisation process in the course of which subject pronouns in postverbal position underwent an evolution from free pronouns to clitics and in the end got absorbed by the verb (cf. Gartner 1883, Widmer 1959, Linder 1987, Plangg 1989, Haiman & Benincà 1992, Hack 2007).

The V2-property plays a decisive role here, since it causes the subject to appear after the finite verb if a constituent X is in the first position of the clause. In postverbal position, the free subject pronoun becomes weak and cliticises onto

the verb. In this situation, the clitic can further fuse with its verbal host in a way that it might be reinterpreted as part of inflection.

Evidence for this restructuring comes from two different observations: On the one hand, quite often an additional free pronoun is used, giving rise to the so-called phenomenon of „doubling“. On the other hand, the verb form (which has been created in inverted word order) is taken over into direct word order as well.

This grammaticalisation process is exemplified in (12) for the 1PL desinence of the verb *ir* ‘to go’ in Sursilvan and in (13) for the 2PL of the verb *avair* ‘to have’ in Vallader.

(12) *Swiss Romansh (Sursilvan)*

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. | nus mein ussa | direct word order |
| | we go.1.PL now | |
| | ‘We are going now.’ | |
| b. | ussa mein nus | inverted word order due to V2 |
| | now go.1.PL we | |
| | ‘Now we are going.’ | |
| c. | ussa meinsa | step 1: cliticisation |
| | now go.1.PL=SCL | |
| d. | ussa meinsa | step 2: reinterpretation |
| | now go.1.PL | |
| e. | ussa meinsa nus | step 3a: ‘doubling’ |
| | now go.1.PL we | |
| e.’ | nus meinsa ussa | step 3b: take-over |
| | we go.1.PL now | |

(13) *Swiss Romansh (Vallader)*

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. | HABETIS: -ETIS > -ait > -ai | |
| | have.2.PL 2.PL | |
| | ‘you have’ | |
| b. | HAB- + -ai vo + -t > vaivat | |
| | have. 2.PL you 2.PL | |
| c. | vaivat | step 1: subject clitic perceived |
| | have.2.PL=SCL | |
| d. | vaivat | step 2: reinterpretation |
| | have.2.PL | |
| e. | vaivat vo | step 3a: ‘doubling’ |
| | have.2.PL you | |
| e.’ | vo vaivat | step 3b: take-over |
| | you have.2.PL | |

The 2PL verbal desinence derived regularly from Latin -ETIS (13a). The verb form *vaivat* is supposed to have originated in inverted word order, where the free subject pronoun in postverbal position cliticised onto the verb and got the suffix -t, which is the usual 2PL desinence in Vallader in other tenses and moods (13b). In step 1 (13c), the former pronoun – now incorporated into the verb form – maintains its pronominal function, which is still perceived by the speakers. Hence, this stage is crucial for subject pronoun omission since another postverbal

pronoun would be redundant. In step 2 (13d), in contrast, the clitic is reanalysed as an affix, i.e. part of inflection, the pronominal function is lost and the ending serves merely as verbal desinence. The development can go even further (providing evidence for the loss of the pronominal function): in inverted word order (step 3a in 13e), the free pronoun may appear (again) giving rise to “doubling” (a phenomenon often observed in NIDs). This can be interpreted as incapability of the verbal desinence to license a null-subject. Furthermore, as displayed in step 3b (13e’), the verb form may also be taken over into direct word order, hence appearing as a regular verb form with a preverbal subject pronoun. Similar grammaticalisation processes can be observed for 1SG and 2SG. What is crucial here is that grammaticalisation processes converting postverbal subject pronouns into verbal agreement markers occur in all the grammatical persons whose postverbal subject pronouns may be omitted in Swiss Romansh. We claim that it is in the stage in which the pronoun has cliticised onto the verb but still maintains its pronominal function that postverbal subject pronouns can be omitted.

Summing up, the free subject pronoun has undergone an evolution from the status of a postverbal pronoun through that of a clitic to become finally an affix and part of the verbal inflection where it has totally lost its pronominal function.

Dolomitic Ladin roughly shows a similar behaviour but differs in some crucial aspects from Swiss Romansh: first, in Dolomitic Ladin, unlike in Swiss Romansh, the free subject pronouns cannot be used in postverbal position and are completely superseded by the clitics. Second, the clitics seem to (still) maintain their pronominal function, i.e. the grammaticalisation process described above for Swiss Romansh, which turns postverbal subject pronouns into agreement markers and part of inflection has not taken place in Dolomitic Ladin. However, the fact that in the 2SG the free subject pronoun is added, thus giving rise to ‘doubling’, could be interpreted as the beginning of this grammaticalisation process.

3.5 *Friulian*

3.5.1 *Free subject pronouns*

In Friulian, free subject pronouns may be preposed or postponed to the verb in declarative sentences (14a, b) as well as in interrogative sentences (14c, d). In interrogative sentences they are obligatorily postverbal (14c, d). Free subject pronouns and subject clitics may co-occur in preverbal as well as in postverbal position.

(14) *Friulian*

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------|
| a. | jo o feveli
I SCL=speak
‘I speak’ | (assertive) |
| b. | o feveli jo
SCL=speak I
‘I speak.’ | (assertive) |
| c. | jo fevèli o?
I speak=SCL
‘Do I speak?’ | (interrogative) |

- d. fevèlio jo?
 speak=SCL I
 ‘Do I (probably) speak?’ (interrogative) (Marchetti 1977:222)

Free subject pronouns in Friulian behave like their Italian counterparts (Renzi & Vanelli, 1983). Their realisation is obligatory only under certain circumstances, which is also shown by our Friulian bible data (see also Gregor 1975; Marchetti 1977; Renzi & Vanelli 1983). In 1 Samuel 1-3, free subject pronouns are realised 34 times. 22 realisations (64.7%) are due to contrast or emphasis (15a), whereas anaphoric reference can be attested in 12 cases (35.3%; see 15b).¹¹

(15) *Friulian (bible data)*

- a. jo no ti ài clamât
 I not you have called
 ‘I haven’t called you.’ (1 Samuel 3, 6)
- b. Ane e jevà su (...)./
 Ane SCL=went up
 jê e preave il Signôr
 she SCL=prayed to.the Lord
 ‘Hannah went up (...). / She prayed to the Lord.’
 (1 Samuel 1, 9-10)

In Friulian, free subject pronouns are not obligatory in sentence-initial position. This is due to the fact that it is not a V2-language and thus it does not require sentence-initial free subject pronouns in order to keep the verb in second position.

3.5.2 *Subject clitics*

The realisation of subject clitics is almost obligatory. Hence they co-occur with nominal subjects (16a), which is not the case for the neighbouring Venetian varieties for example (16b). Subject clitics are always adjacent to the verb.

- (16) a. *Friulian*
 Meni al ven (*Meni ven)
 PN SCL=comes
 ‘Meni comes.’
- b. *Venetian*
 Nane vjen (*Nane al vjen)
 PN comes
 ‘Nane comes.’ (Benincà & Poletto 1991:8)

Our bible data confirms this finding with respect to Friulian, where 68 co-occurrences (100%) of nominal subjects and subject clitics were found but none where the subject clitic is not realised.

¹¹ For the same verse, the Italian bible translation (*La Nuova Diodati*) used also shows the realisation of the subject pronoun *io* which is clearly due to emphasis (*Io non ti ho chiamato*).

(17) *Friulian (bible data)*

- Penine e veve fruz
 Peninnah SCL=had children
 ‘Penninah had children.’ (1 Samuel 1, 2)

Nevertheless, in Friulian as well as in NID subject clitics other than 2SG may be omitted when they would co-occur with object clitics (18a) and reflexive pronouns (18b) (see Gregor 1975; Marchetti 1977; Haiman 1991 among others). Our Friulian bible data, instead, do not show optionality but indicate that subject clitics are *never* realised when they would co-occur with object clitics (64 examples) and reflexive pronouns (16 examples).

(18) *Friulian (bible data)*

- a. il signôr Ø j veve sierât il grim
 the Lord her had closed the womb
 ‘The Lord had closed her womb.’ (1 Samuel 1, 5)
- b. I siei lavris Ø si movevin
 DET her lips REF moved
 ‘Her lips moved.’ (1 Samuel 1, 13)

However, it is unclear if the co-occurrence of subject clitics other than 2SG with the syntactic elements in question in (18a, b) is ungrammatical or rather optional from an empirical perspective, regarding spoken Friulian. Marchetti (1977:225) justifies co-occurrences of this type as euphonicly motivated for example. In order to answer this question, we will undertake another field study methodologically similar to the ones we did for Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin. The gathered data should also help us to find out the factors constraining the relationship between subject clitics, object clitics, reflexive pronouns and negation.

While only subject clitics of 2SG co-occur obligatorily with object clitics and reflexive pronouns, the behavior of subject clitics differs with respect to negation (19a, b), where the 2SG subject clitic as well as the 3M.SG subject clitic must also be realised. In contrast to reflexive pronouns and object clitics, subject clitics do not precede negation but follow it. The example in (19c) shows that the realisation of subject clitics other than 2SG and 3M.SG is not obligatory.

(19) *Friulian*

- a. Tu no tu sâs
 you NEG SCL=know
 ‘You do not know.’ (Gregor 1975:122)
- b. Il rosôr nol passare parsore dal so cjâf
 the razor NEG=SCL=pass above from his head
 ‘No razor will (ever) be used on his head’ (1 Samuel 1, 11)
- c. Ane però no Ø lè sù (1 Samuel 1, 22)
 Hannah but NEG went up
 ‘But Hannah didn’t go up.’ (1 Samuel 1, 22)

The omission of subject clitics is independent from the realisation of free subject pronouns. Hence, the subject clitic may be omitted even if no free pronoun or nominal subject is realised (20b).

(20) *Friulian*

- a. Jo Ø mi viôt.
 I REF see
 'I see myself.'
- b. Ø mi viôt.
 REF see
 'I see myself.'

(Marchetti 1977:225)

In the next paragraph we give an analysis for the use of subject pronouns in Friulian including an alternative view on clusters consisting of the negation particle *no* and the 3M.SG subject clitic.

3.5.3 *Analysis of Friulian subject clitics*

As mentioned before, subject clitics in NID can be analysed as being part of the verb and hence, as inflectional affixes (Haiman 1991; Poletto 2000). Being inflectional affixes, they should not be sensitive to the sentence type. But this is exactly the case in Friulian. Consequently, Haiman (1991:139-140) defines Friulian subject clitics as agreement marking morphemes without bound affix status, which is also a characteristic of Romance clitics.

However, some other Friulian varieties do not show any sensitivity with respect to the sentence type. In these cases it is possible to analyse the subject clitics as bound affixes as can be seen in the following example where the subject pronoun is proclitic even in an interrogative sentence.¹²

(21) *Friulian (Passariano)*

- I pensi (tu) k a vol vinji?
 SCL=think (you) that SCL=wants to.come
 'Do you think she wants to come?'

(Haiman 1991:140)

The agreement morpheme status of Friulian subject clitics is due to a diachronic development from free subject pronouns to subject clitics and hence due to the result of grammaticalisation which led to subject marking affixes in NIDS instead (Haiman 1991:153; Vanelli 1998:23-49).

Haiman (1991) attributes the historical reasons of using subject clitics in NID to the grammaticalisation of subject pronouns, originally occurring in inverted word order. Remember that Friulian forms questions by means of inversions. These pronouns became enclitic and then, through takeover, proclitic to the verb in declarative sentences. A similar diachronic development has been shown as regards Swiss Romansh (see section 2.4.4).

Haiman (*ibid.*) claims that „this is the word order in which 2SG pronouns usually occur, for the simple pragmatic reason that (...) one asks questions rather than makes statements concerning one's interlocutor“, which at the same time

¹² This is also true for non standard French, e.g. *Où tu vas?* (Haiman 1991:139-140 following Lambrecht 1981).

answers the question of the prominent status of the 2SG subject clitic. The author gives also an example for Gorizian Friulian where the 2SG subject clitic occurs only in enclisis, even in declarative sentences.

(22) *Friulian (Gorizia)*

pjardis tu
lose =SCL
'You lose.'

(Haiman 1991:149)

From our point of view it is also important to investigate if syncretism plays a role in the conjugational system of Friulian to see if an alternative analysis to Haiman (1991) is also available from a morphological perspective, as we also did for Swiss Romansh and Dolomitic Ladin. The following examples show that all tenses and moods with the exception of the imperative exhibit syncretism, which particularly concerns 2SG = 2PL (23) and 3SG = 1SG (24).

- (23) a. ciantavis
sing.IMPERFECT IND. 2.SG & 2.PL
'You sing.'
- b. ciantâris
sing.PERFECT IND. 2.SG & 2.PL
'You sang.'
- c. ciantaréssis
sing.CONDITIONAL 2.SG & 2.PL
'You would sing.'
- d. ciantâssis
sing.IMPERFECT SUBJ. 2.SG & 2.PL
'You sang.'
- (24) a. tas
be.quiet.PRESENT IND. 1.SG & 3.SG
'I am/he/she is quiet'
- b. ciantaréssin
sing.CONDITIONAL 1.SG & 3.SG
'I/he/she would be quiet'
- c. cianti
sing.PRESENT SUBJ. 1.SG & 3.SG
'I sing/he sings.'
- d. ciantàs
sing.IMPERFECT SUBJ. 1.SG & 3.SG
'You/he sang.'

A possible solution would be to analyse the obligatory marking of 2SG in favour of a morphological contrast with respect to 2PL, spreading from the tenses listed in (23) to the present indicative. The status of the subject clitic of 3SG points into the same direction. Here, the subject clitic disambiguates 3SG and 1SG (24). But while the 2SG subject clitic is always obligatory this is not the case for other persons with the exception of 3M.SG which appears in combination with the preceding

negation particle *no* (19b). This becomes more evident, if we look at the phonological processes involved in clitic clusters.

The cluster *nol*, consisting of the negation particle *no* and the 3M.SG subject clitic *l* exhibits an interesting phonological shape, which differs from object clitic-clusters: an apparent phenomenon involved in Friulian object clitic clusters is the deletion of the nuclear vowel of the first clitic as the following examples show. The deletion of final vowels is also known as *apocope*.

- (25) a. mi + al → m'al
 DAT.1.SG ACC.M.SG
 b. mi + e → m'e
 DAT.1.SG ACC.F.SG
 c. mi + ai → m'ai
 DAT.1.SG ACC.M.PL
 d. mi + es → m'es
 DAT.1.SG ACC.F.PL
- (Gregor 1975:112)

However, clusters consisting of the negation particle and the 3M.SG subject clitic do not exhibit apocope but *apheresis*. With apheresis we mean the deletion of an initial vowel. In this case the nuclear vowel of the subject clitic is deleted (*no + al* → *nol*). With respect to clitic clusters this is the only case of apheresis. Obviously this means that the vowel deletion of the second clitic is not a phonological process. Speakers must have learned the phonological surface form of that particular cluster. We therefore claim that the cluster *no + l* has the underlying representation /*nol*/. The consequence is that two negation particles must be stored in the lexicon. While /*nol*/ concerns 3M.SG, /*no*/ is the representation for all other grammatical persons. The fact that /*nol*/ is represented as a cluster in the lexicon is therefore responsible for the special status of 3M.SG. Hence its realization is not due to the requirement to be obligatorily expressed like in the other Romance varieties under consideration, but it appears automatically with the negation particle because of its lexical representation.

A look at diachrony corroborates our suggestion since *nol* can be treated as a remnant of an earlier stage in language history of Friulian from our point of view. Evidence is supplied by other Romance languages. *Nol* has also been attested for Old Italian, but as the result of an apocope (Goldbach 2007:69). In this case the nuclear vowel, which is the final vowel of the object clitic *lo*, has been deleted. In Old Italian, the object pronoun cliticises to the left.

- (26) *Old Italian*
 no + lo > no = l > nol
- (Goldbach 2007:69)

Remember that cliticisation to the left was not restricted only to negation in Old Italian and Old French. While (27a) still represents a case of cliticisation through apocope, the examples in (27b) show cases of apheresis.

- (27) a. *Old Italian*
 te + lo > te = l > tel

- b. *Old Italian*
 e + il > e =l > e'l
Old French
 si + en > si =n > si'n (Goldbach 2007:69-70)

An alternative view on cliticisation with respect to the NEG=CL-Cluster would be to claim that the negation particle *no* itself is not a clitic but a stressed element and does therefore not exhibit apocope, whereas clusters consisting of two clitics do show vowel deletion within the first clitic (24a to d). We would then expect apheresis also within clusters, which consist of a free subject pronoun and an object clitic. This is exactly the case for the Western Friulian dialect of Erto. The following example shows that the vowel of the free subject pronoun (2SG) is not deleted. Instead apheresis occurs with respect to the object clitic *al*.

- (28) *Friulian (Erto)*
 Tol lias
 you=ACC.M.SG read
 'You read it.' (ASIS)

Remember that Benincà (2005:48) states that the Friulian negation particle *no* is not stressed but clitic. Following her interpretation of *no*, a stress-based analysis would not capture the phonological shape of *nol*. Due to the lack of data we cannot give an answer to that. Testing whether the negation particle *no* is stressed or not goes clearly beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, future research including more data is needed.

Following Haiman (1991), we conclude that subject clitics in Friulian show clear evidence for grammaticalisation. Additionally we propose a morphological account of the fact that the 2SG subject clitic has to be expressed obligatorily: namely the need to disambiguate syncretic patterns. Moreover, we treat the 3SG masculine subject clitic in *nol* as a remnant of an earlier stage of Friulian and as part of the negation particle although *nol* may also be due to stress. Hence, the 3SG masculine subject clitic is not part of the verb neither from a phonological nor from a morphological point of view.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have investigated subject pronoun usage in Raeto-Romance. As our field studies so far undertaken show, postverbal subject pronouns can be omitted in certain varieties according to the grammatical person. We claim that this omission is due to four main factors, namely (a) discourse situation respectively differences in the marking of features specifying the grammatical person, (b) language contact, (c) syncretism in the verbal paradigm, (d) grammaticalisation.

Moreover, we showed that in contrast to the other Romance varieties, the obligatory expression of the 3M.SG subject clitic is only apparent in Friulian since it is stored together with the negation particle in the lexicon.

5. Discussion

Until now we pointed out that in Raeto-Romance and NID the subject pronouns of 2SG play a prominent role. As mentioned before, while in Swiss Romansh and Gherdëina this prominence is expressed by omission, for NIDs and Friulian the contrary is the case. The subject clitic of 2SG may never be omitted. We claimed that the special status of the subject clitic of 2SG is due to language specific markedness. But a problem arises in the contradictory behavior of the 2SG pronouns. From our point of view it is not clear how the marking of the feature specification of 2SG (Heap 2002 following Harley & Ritter 1998) arises and how it causes the omission of the subject pronoun in question in Swiss Romansh and Gherdëina on the one hand and the obligatory realisation in NIDs and Friulian on the other hand. Hence more research is needed regarding the relationship of morphosyntactic feature specification and the different realisation patterns of subject pronouns and clitics.

In the course of our study we have encountered three phenomena, which arise the question whether they are due to language contact or the manifestation of a parallel development of genetically related languages. This concerns a) the omission of the postverbal 2SG subject pronouns in Swiss Romansh and certain varieties of Dolomitic Ladin, b) the prominence of the 2SG subject clitic in Friulian and NIDs, and c) the grammaticalisation of free postverbal subject pronouns to inflectional affixes in Swiss Romansh and German varieties.

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cf. <<http://asis-cnr.unipd.it/collab.it.html>>.
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