

# On ‘*nd* clitic in the Friulian variety of Romans d’Isonzo\*

Francesco Pinzin

(Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main)

**Abstract:** Many varieties of Northern Italy present a locative clitic “supporting” the verb ‘to have’, either in its lexical or auxiliary form (e.g., Dello (BS) *g ò la makina*. ‘I have a car.’; *g ò maiat la fröta*. ‘I ate fruit’). This clitic has been variously analyzed as expressing the location where the possession relation ensues – for the lexical verb – or as expressing the temporal location of the event – for the auxiliary – (Benincà 2007, Paoli 2020). In this contribution I present new data from the Friulian variety of Romans d’Isonzo (GO), which, in the same environments, presents not the locative but the partitive clitic: *A ‘nd ai fat la spesa*. ‘I went grocery shopping’. This phenomenon is plausibly due to language contact with the neighboring Veneto varieties spoken in Friuli around Monfalcone and is interestingly shaped by the grammar of both languages: the Friulian variety of Romans d’Isonzo (as Friulian varieties in general) does not possess a dedicated locative clitic and, consequently, does not simply borrow the Veneto form of the locative clitic (*ghe*) but employs its own “endogenous” partitive clitic. Besides the pattern of crosslinguistic influence, it will be shown how this new datum (i) reveals that the Veneto pattern with *ghe* of the neighboring varieties is better analyzed as a sequence of [locative clitic + verb] and not as a single unique form of the verb ‘to have’, (ii) supports the proposal already in Penello (2004) that the locative and the partitive clitic share a common set of features. More in general, this shows how the analysis of microvariation data and the close interaction between different varieties is an invaluable source for theoretical linguistics, continuously shaping and refining the plausible set of analyses.

## 0. Introduction

In this contribution, I analyze the use of the partitive clitic ‘*nd*, corresponding to Italian *ne*, in the Eastern-Friulian variety spoken in Romans d’Isonzo (GO).<sup>1</sup> More specifically, I focus on

---

\* This contribution is a small homage to Cecilia in her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her ideas, stimulus and work ethics have been a fundamental stepstone in my research along the years. Her approach to dialectal microvariation coupled with a strong focus on the theoretical level of the analysis has helped shaping the field of linguistics in general, even beyond the limits of the dialectological research. For this and for her continuous support I will always be grateful.

<sup>1</sup> For an overview on the Friulian varieties see Frau (1984).



integrated in the form of the verb ‘to have’ in the Veneto varieties (ii) speaks in favor of the observation already made in Penello (2004) and Tortora (1997) regarding the close interaction between locative and partitive clitics<sup>3</sup>, (iii) in conjunction with additional data from Bresciano (Paoli 2020, supported by new data presented in Section 1), leads to review the syntactic-semantic contribution of the “support” clitic in conjunction with the auxiliary form of the verb.

The contribution is organized as follows. In Section 1 I introduce the general typology already attested and partially described in the literature regarding the use of the locative clitic as a “support” clitic of the verb ‘to have’, adding a series of data for the Bresciano varieties, which represent an interesting comparison point with the Veneto patterns and the similar pattern observed for Romans d’Isonzo with the partitive clitic *nd*. Section 2 describes the main pattern around which the contribution is centered, i.e., the use of the partitive clitic *nd* as a “support clitic of the verb ‘to have’ in Romans d’Isonzo. In Section 3 I propose an analysis of the specific pattern in terms of language contact and draw some specific conclusions on the two varieties involved, concluding the section highlighting some future lines of inquiry on the general phenomenon.

## 1. Locative clitics and the verb ‘to have’, a typology

The use of the locative clitic in “support” of some forms of the verb ‘to have’ is present in Standard Italian. In surveilled speech and formal register, it is only attested in combination with the lexical verb *avere* ‘to have’ when it is preceded by an object clitic, as in (5). Its use is obligatory in this case.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The Authors show how these two clitics are strictly interconnected, to the point that some Veneto varieties express the partitive clitic only in connection with the locative one, in a single cluster and some other varieties – mainly attested in Veneto (but see Tortora 1997 on Borgomanero) – express both the partitive and the existential locative clitic with a single cluster where both forms are visible (Penello 2004: 48-52).

<sup>4</sup> Note that, as a reviewer pointed out, this use seems more frequent with interrogative sentences as the following.

- i. **Ce** l’hai una sigaretta?  
CL.LOC CL.OBJ.F.SG have a cigarette  
‘Do you have a cigarette?’

It is also interesting to note that the plural form of the object clitic allows to the locative clitic, and that, for some speakers, the sentence with the singular object clitic improves if the final vowel of the object clitic is not elided

- ii. Le chiavi (**ce**) le ho.  
the keys CL.LOC CL.OBJ.F.PL have  
‘I have the keys.’
- iii. La macchina <sup>??</sup>(**ce**) la ho.  
the car CL.LOC CL.OBJ.F.SG have  
‘I have the car.’

- (5) Una casa io \*(**ce**) l' ho.  
 a house I CL.LOC CL.OBJ have.1SG  
 'A house, I have it.'

Outside of this specific context, its use is more restricted. More colloquial registers of Italian admit the use of the locative clitic with all finite forms of the lexical verb *avere*, analytic or not, but do not accept it with non-finite forms, unless an object clitic or a partitive clitic is present too. In all these cases, the sentence works both with and without the locative clitic, with no obvious difference between the two versions besides the lower stylistic level of the sentence with the “support” locative clitic.

- (6) (**C'**) ho una macchina.  
 CL.LOC have.1SG a car  
 'I have a car'
- (7) (**C'**) ho sempre avuto una macchina.  
 CL.LOC have.1SG always had a car  
 'I've always had a car.'
- (8) Aver-(\***ci**) una macchina è utile.  
 have.INF-CL.LOC a car is useful  
 'Having a car is useful.'
- (9) Aver-(**ce**)-la è utile.  
 have.INF-CL.LOC-CL.OBJ is useful  
 'Having it is useful.'
- (10) Aver-(**ce**)-ne due è utile.  
 have.INF-CL.LOC-CL.PART two is useful  
 'Having two is useful.'

Finally, the use of the “support” locative clitic in conjunction with auxiliary ‘to have’ is not attested in colloquial Italian, irrespective of the finite/non-finite divide or possible cooccurrences with other clitics.

- (11) \***C'** ho mangiato una mela.<sup>5</sup>  
 CL.LOC have.1SG eaten an apple
- (12) \*Aver-**ci** mangiato una mela è stata una buona idea.  
 have.INF-CL.LOC eaten an apple is been a good idea
- (13) \***Ce** l' ho mangiata.  
 CL.LOC CL.OBJ have.1SG eaten
- (14) \*Aver-**ce-la** mangiata è stata una buona idea.  
 have.INF-CL.LOC-CL.OBJ eaten is been a good idea

A further type is testified by the Romanesco variety, spoken in Rome, which extends the use of the locative clitic to all non-finite forms of the lexical verb, irrespective of the presence of other clitics (see Benincà 2007, note 6; the data have been confirmed by consultation with native speakers). When no other clitic pronouns are present, the speakers report that the presence of the “support” locative clitic is obligatory, while when other clitic pronouns are present its use is optional, just like in Colloquial Italian. Note that in this variety, just like in colloquial Italian, the auxiliary uses of ‘to have’ do not allow for the presence of the “support” locative clitic.

- (15) Ave-\*(**cce**) na machina è mejo. (Romanesco)  
 have.INF-CL.LOC a car is better  
 ‘Having a car is better.’
- (16) Ave-(**cce**)-la è mejo.  
 have.INF-CL.LOC -CL.OBJ is better  
 ‘Having it is better.’

For now, we only dealt with varieties which allow for the use of the locative clitic only in conjunction with the lexical verb ‘to have’. In the case of the lexical verb, the role of the locative clitic is connected to the semantics of possession and, more specifically, to the fact that it involves a location where this possession ensues (or not). In other words, a possession must be realized in some location, whether this location is explicitly noted, contextually obvious or even currently unknown (*I have it somewhere, but I don't know where!*). Such an

---

<sup>5</sup> The sentence is grammatical if the intended meaning is ‘I ate an apple *there*’ with the locative clitic contributing a locative semantics.





- (25) **Ea gh** ò, ea machina.  
 CL.OBJ CL.LOC have.1SG the car  
 ‘I have it, the car.’

On the other hand, focusing for the moment only on the lexical verb, both colloquial Italian and Bresciano varieties order the “support” locative clitic on the left of the low argumental clitics, which are then closer to the verb than the locative. Observe that this is the same position where we normally find the locative clitic in its referential use (28)-(29).

- (26) **Sì, ce l’** ho, la macchina. (Colloquial Italian)  
 yes CL.LOC CL.OBJ have.1SG the car  
 ‘Yes, I have it, the car.’
- (27) **Se, ga l** ò la machina (Dello)  
 yes CL.LOC CL.OBJ have.1SG the car  
 ‘Yes, I have it, the car.’
- (28) **Ce lo** metto, il cavolo nella minestra.  
 CL.LOC CL.OBJ put.1SG, the cabbage in.the soup  
 ‘I put the cabbage in the soup.’
- (29) **Se, ga i** mete i verz nel minestrù, preocupet mia!  
 yes CL.LOC CL.OBJ put.1SG the cabbage in.the soup worry not  
 ‘Yes, I put the cabbage in the soup, don’t worry!’

Let us now consider the cases in which the auxiliary is involved, focusing only on the Bresciano varieties, since colloquial Italian does not allow for the use of the “support” locative clitic with the auxiliary in general. Here, point (b) – the (im)possibility to cooccur with other clitics – comes into play: these varieties do not allow for the cooccurrence of low argumental clitics and the “support” locative clitic when the auxiliary ‘to have’ is involved. In such cases, whenever a low clitic is present, the “support” clitic is absent. The data come from Dello, the variety presented before, and have been replicated for the other inquiry points. Comparing (30) with (31)-(33), we observe how without the other clitics the “support” locative clitic is present, while it disappears when an object, dative or partitive clitic is present. The same is valid when we look at the non-finite forms, where we see the “support” *ga* only when no other clitic is present (see (34) vs. (35)).



This is in contrast with the Padovano variety of the younger generation, where the two can cooccur (Benincà 2009: 24). For both varieties of Padovano, as underlined before (see (24)-(25)), there is no cooccurrence issue with the other low argumental clitics, which can cooccur with the “support” locative clitic, both with the lexical verb and the auxiliary ‘to have’.

Summarizing, the patterns of cooccurrence of the locative clitic with the verb ‘to have’ vary depending on four features: (i) lexical vs. auxiliary use of ‘to have’, (ii) finite vs. non-finite, (iii) (non-)cooccurrence with low argumental clitic pronouns. In addition, we note that there is variation with respect to the relative order with low argumental clitic pronouns. For the first three phenomena, we can establish implicational scales: (i) if a variety uses the locative clitic supporting the auxiliary verb, then it will use it in support of the lexical verb too; (ii) if a variety uses the locative clitic supporting the non-finite forms, then it will use it in support of the finite forms too; (iii) on a scale [no clitic > object clitic > partitive clitic], if a variety allows for the cooccurrence of the auxiliary “support” clitic with one specific clitic, then it will allow for its cooccurrence with all the other clitics on the left. Note that all these phenomena are independent, meaning that the implications just described are valid only when looking at the corresponding form with the opposite feature specification. For example, while it is true that if a variety shows the locative clitic with the *finite forms of the auxiliary ‘to have’* it will show the locative clitic with the *finite forms of the lexical ‘to have’*, it will not necessarily show the locative clitic with the *non-finite forms of the lexical ‘to have’*, as most of the Veneto varieties show. As a further point, the implicational scale on the cooccurrence with low argumental clitics is only valid looking at the auxiliary: with the lexical verb, colloquial Italian allows for the cooccurrence of partitive and object clitics with the “support” locative clitic, but it does not allow for its presence with no clitic. These considerations are summarized in the following table, where red = no “support” locative clitic, pale green = optional “support” locative clitic, green = obligatory “support” locative clitic.

feature spec.	coll. It.	Roman.	Bresc.	Padov. (old)	Padov. (young)
lex. fin. no-cl.					
lex. fin. obj cl.					
lex. fin. part cl.					
lex. non-fin. no-cl.					
lex. non-fin. obj cl.					

lex. non-fin. part cl.					
aux. fin. no-cl.					
aux. fin. obj cl.					
aux. fin. part cl.					
aux. non-fin. no-cl.					
aux. non-fin. obj cl.					
aux. non-fin. part cl.					

Table 1. Distribution of ‘have clitics’ in the varieties investigated.

As for the last phenomenon – the order between the “support” locative clitic and the low argumental clitics – it is interesting to note that there is no variety for which the order [“support” locative clitic > low argumental clitic > verb] is attested for the auxiliary verbs; if a variety allows for the use of the “support” locative clitic with the auxiliary, it either (i) orders the locative clitic closer to the verb than the other low clitics (= Padovano and most Veneto varieties), or (ii) the low argumental clitics are in complementary distribution with the “support” locative clitic (= Bresciano).

From these data some questions emerge for which the pattern from Romans d’Isonzo can provide an answer. A first point regards the morphological subdivision of the forms of the verb ‘to have’ showing the “support” locative clitic. Colloquial Italian and Romanesco are not problematic in this respect: whenever we have a “support” locative clitic with the verb ‘to have’ it needs to be analyzed as an autonomous clitic separated from the form of the verb. This follows from the fact that the same verb can appear either with or without the clitic, showing that the two forms are independent (see (6) for Colloquial Italian and (16) for Romanesco). As for Bresciano and the Padovano variety of the old generation, we can draw the same conclusion: depending on the presence of other clitics, the same form of the verb ‘to have’ can either cooccur with the “support” locative clitic or not (see (30) vs. (31)-(33) for Bresciano and (24) vs. (36) for Padovano). This shows that the forms of the verb ‘to have’ and the “support” locative clitic are independent. As for the Padovano of the young generation and all the other Veneto varieties which do not show any alternation with the partitive clitic, instead, the issue is not easy to settle. These varieties never show the finite forms of the verb ‘to have’ without the “support” locative clitic preceding them. In other words, we never see an opposition as the ones described for the previous varieties between a clitic-less form and a form with the clitic. In the case of these varieties, then, one could hypothesize that a form like *gh ò* in (24) is not to



In this variety, the partitive clitic *'nd* can be used as a “support” clitic for the verb ‘to have’, as already underlined in the introduction. The phenomenon is constrained to this specific verb and is not present with other verbs, as the following examples shows.

(37) Il nono al ara il cjamp. (Romans d’Isonzo, GO)  
 the grandpa CL.SUBJ plows the field  
 ‘The grandpa plows the field.’

(38) \*Il nono a **'nd** ara il cjamp.  
 the grandpa CL.SUBJ CL.PART plows the field

The *'nd* clitic is present both with the lexical and the auxiliary verb, showing how this variety is to be placed in the Bresciano/Veneto type for this phenomenon, contrasted with the patterns attested for Colloquial Italian and Romanesco.

(39) No **'nd** à la machine.  
 not CL.PART has the car  
 ‘He doesn’t have a car.’

(40) A **'nd** ai fat la spesa.  
 CL.SUBJ CL.PART have.1SG done the shopping  
 ‘I went grocery shopping.’

As for the further variation points already observed for the other varieties, we can see that the distribution of *'nd* follows the Veneto pattern and is opposed to the Bresciano pattern, even if the comparison is not entirely straightforward. Let us begin with assessing the presence of the “support” clitic with the non-finite forms of the verb ‘to have’. At first sight, the fact that the “support” clitic does not appear with the non-finite forms (see (41)-(44)) might be seen as in favor of a parallel with the Veneto varieties.

(41) Vê la machina al è util.  
 to.have the car it is useful.  
 ‘Avere la macchina è utile.’

(42) Vê mangjât la pasta nol è stât una buna idea.  
 to.have eaten the pasta not is been a good idea

‘Avere mangiato la pasta non è stata una buona idea.’

(43) Vint la machina, podi lâ dapardut.

having the car can go anywhere

‘Avendo la macchina puoi andare dappertutto.’

(44) Vint mangjât la pasta, no soi rivât a mangjâ altri.

having eaten the pasta not am arrived to eat other

‘Avendo mangiato la pasta, non sono riuscito a mangiare altro.’

This is in line with what we observed for the Veneto varieties and opposed to what happens in Bresciano (see (22)-(23)). Things are not so simple, however. As Laura Vanelli (p.c.) pointed out to me, in many Friulian varieties the partitive clitic *nd* is only present when the following auxiliary begins with a vowel. When the auxiliary begins with a consonant *nd* is not present. The same is valid for the variety of Romans d’Isonzo, both for the “real” partitive use and the “support” use of *nd*.

(45) A (\***nd**) vevi mangjât tre.

CL.SUBJ CL.PART have.PST.1SG eaten three

‘I had eaten three.’

(46) A (\***nd**) vevi mangjât lis pomis.

CL.SUBJ CL.PART have.PST.1SG eaten the apples

‘I had eaten the apples.’

Since this restriction on the overt realization of the partitive clitic is active across the board (also on with the auxiliary ‘to be’, see CL.PART+3SG.PRS *nd è* vs. 3sg.pl (\**nd*) *sono*), it is independent from our “support” pattern. This nonetheless means that we do not actually know if for the non-finite forms the “Veneto pattern” is in place or not: all non-finite forms begin with a consonant in these varieties. Therefore, we cannot know if the variety of Romans does not show the “support” clitic with the non-finite forms because all non-finite forms begin with a consonant or because it follows the Veneto pattern. Note however that in the Bresciano variety low argumental clitics must follow the non-finite forms of the verb (see (23)), as it is the case in most Italo-Romance varieties and in Friulian too. This means that the initial segment of the non-finite forms should not be relevant for ruling out/in the presence of a given clitic, since the clitic would in any case follow the verb and not precede it. This brings back in the hypothesis that the absence of the “support” clitic is due to the fact the Romans follows the

Veneto pattern and not to the phonological characteristics of the non-finite forms of the verb ‘to have’. If this were the case, we would expect the partitive to regularly cooccur with the non-finite forms of the verb except when it is used as a “support”. This is not true, however: the partitive clitic does not appear in enclitic position to non-finite verbs in general, as the following translation of It. *Aver-ne mangiati solo due non è stata una buona idea* ‘eating only two of those wasn’t a good idea’ shows.

- (47) Mangjâ dome doi no je stada una buna idea.  
 eat.INF only two not is been a good idea  
 ‘Eating only two of those wasn’t a good idea.’

This means that the absence of the partitive clitic with the non-finite forms is more general than the specific “support” pattern, hindering a direct comparison with the Veneto varieties.

Even disregarding finiteness, it is nonetheless possible to see how the Romans variety behaves more in line with the Veneto varieties than with the other varieties showing the “support” clitic pattern. Let us look at the relative position with respect to the other clitics. In line with what we already observed for the Veneto varieties, the “support” *nd* clitic follows the other clitics on the right and is therefore closer to the verb.<sup>11</sup>

- (48) La ‘**nd** ai mangjada duta.  
 CL.OBJ CL.PART have.1SG eaten all  
 ‘L’ho mangiata tutta.’
- (49) Ju ‘**nd** ai mangjâts ducj.  
 CL.OBJ CL.PART have.1SG eaten all  
 ‘Li ho mangiati tutti.’
- (50) Gji ‘**nd** ai dât(i) un regâl.  
 CL.DAT CL.PART have.1SG given a gift

---

<sup>11</sup> The speaker reports an issue with the feminine plural clitic *lis*, where he feels that the use of *nd* is less natural. The problem is probably due to the final /s/ of the clitic. In fact, the alternative surface realization of feminine plural without final /s/ [li] is reported to be more natural.

- i. ??\*[Lis] **and** ai mangjadis dutis.  
 CL.OBJ.3PL.M CL.PART have eaten all  
 ‘I ate them all.’
- ii. ?[Li] ‘**nd** ai mangjadis dutis.  
 CL.OBJ.3PL.M CL.PART have eaten all  
 ‘I ate them all.’

‘Gli ho dato un regalo.’

Finally, the “support” *nd* clitic cooccurs with all other clitics (see the examples above) but itself, meaning that when an actual partitive clitic is required, we don’t have a sequence of two *nd* but only one.

- (51) Il murador no ‘**nd** a fas su pos, di murs.  
the mason not CL.PART has done up few of walls  
‘The mason didn’t make few of them, of walls.’

This is again in line with what we observed for the Veneto varieties, which allow for the cooccurrence of the “support” clitic with the other low argumental clitics (but the partitive for the Padovano of the “old generation”, see (36)), and contrasts with Bresciano, which does not allow for such cooccurrence.

Following this brief sketch, we can conclude that the use of *nd* in this variety of Friulian is in line with what has been observed regarding the use of the “support” locative clitic in the Veneto varieties, with an open question regarding the cooccurrence patterns with the non-finite forms.

As a working hypothesis I propose to link to observed pattern to the influence of the surrounding Veneto varieties: it would be an instance of language change due to language contact.<sup>12</sup> Romans d’Isonzo is close to Monfalcone on the south side and Gorizia on the east side, where Veneto varieties are currently spoken (Frau 1984: 8; the southern area in the triangle Sagrado-Monfalcone-San Canzian is known to host the Bisiacco variety, Frau 1984: 197 and references therein). However, the phenomenon is not attested in San Lorenzo Isontino and Mossa, two location that are closer to Gorizia than Romans d’Isonzo (see the data in the DiFuPaRo database). One could conclude from this that the relevant influence might come from the southern area of Monfalcone, which is closer to Romans d’Isonzo than to the other locations. Additional data are needed, however, to formulate a more precise hypothesis. It would be interesting, for example, to test for the presence of this phenomenon in the

---

<sup>12</sup> Two relevant caveats are in order. First, we cannot properly talk about language change, since we do not have direct evidence of a previous stage of the Romans variety in which this feature is absent. I will however adopt the working hypothesis that such a stage existed, given the fact that all other varieties of Friulian do not show this phenomenon. Second, a proper investigation of the surrounding Veneto varieties is necessary, to ascertain if the phenomenon is present or not. These points will have to be addressed in future research.

surrounding areas and see if it extends to other varieties, in which direction and if it is attested up to the border with the Veneto areas, in accordance with the hypothesis above.

If the hypothesis of language change due to language contact is on the right track, it is interesting to note that we are not dealing with a simple borrowing of a form from a neighboring variety. The Friulian variety absorbs the “support” clitic pattern of the Veneto type and translates it in its own terms, adopting a different form of the clitic, the partitive *nd*. This is because the locative clitic is not present in the Romans d’Isonzo variety, as in Friulian in general. The following two examples shows the absence of the locative clitic both for the referential and existential environments.

(52) A        soi lâ t    a î r.  
CL.SUBJ am gone yesterday  
‘I went there yesterday.’

(53) A        son trê    fantats.  
CL.SUBJ are three boys  
‘There are three boys.’

In other words, the Friulian variety does not simply adopt for the “support” clitic function the Venetan form of the locative clitic *ge* or a derived form, but resorts to its own resources, extending the use of the partitive *nd* clitic to this new context.

### **3. Some consequences for the analysis of the “support” clitics**

In this section I would like to highlight some consequences of the analysis of the “support” *nd* as a “support” clitic whose origin is to be traced to the influence of the surrounding Veneto varieties. I focus on the two main issues already highlighted in Section 1, (i) the morphosyntactic segmentation of the Veneto forms and (ii) the syntactic-semantic contribution of the “support” clitic. In the final part of the section, I put forward some broader considerations on the general pattern.

As for the morphosyntactic segmentation, the issue is related to the possibility that the Veneto forms with /ge/ are to be analyzed as single units, with no segmentation between the supposed clitic and the verb ‘to have’. This analysis follows from the fact that, in these varieties, the various forms in which the “support” clitic is present never alternate between a form with the clitic and a form without it, contrary to what happens in all other varieties

considered here (Colloquial Italian, Romanesco, Bresciano). In this respect, the observed pattern of crosslinguistic influence might give us a clue in favor or against this analysis.

If the hypothesis regarding the use of *'nd* in Romans d'Isonzo is on the right track and we are dealing with a phenomenon of language change induced by language contact with the Veneto varieties, it is plausible to analyze it as developing in a bilingual community which uses both codes, Veneto and Friulian. In such a bilingual environment, borrowing and mixing of the two codes are to be expected. Such phenomena would respect the grammar of both languages, given the assumption that we are dealing with a group of bilingual speakers. In such an environment, the fact that the Friulian variety shows an obvious clitic, *'nd*, segmented from the verb 'to have', can be taken as a clue for the analysis of the Veneto pattern giving rise to the influence as a clitic too, segmented from the verb 'to have'. In other words, if the influence is to be understood as arising in a bilingual community, we expect speakers to transfer phenomena respecting the grammar of both languages, so that including a "support" clitic segmented from the verb in Friulian equals to having a "support" clitic segmented from the verb in Veneto. From a more general perspective, this reasoning allows us to indirectly check some unclear features in L-a (Veneto, in this case) by means of the result of language contact between L-a and L-b (Friulian, in this case). Note that, however, this reasoning applies to the Veneto varieties involved in the transfer phenomenon, it does not extend to all other Veneto varieties, for which the analysis of the morphosyntactic segmentation might be different.

Let us now take a step toward the second point under discussion, the contribution of the "support" clitic. In this respect, two points are already clear, (i) we are not dealing with a phonologically-driven phenomenon, since the clitic only appears with the verb 'to have' and with no other verb, irrespective of its phonological composition (see (37)-(38))<sup>13</sup>, (ii) we are not dealing with a specific form of the verb 'to have', the clitic has to be segmented from it. Once we discard the phonological and the lexical analysis, we are left with the possibility that we are dealing with a syntactic-semantic phenomenon, in line with what has been proposed by Benincà (2007) for the "support" locative clitic in Veneto. Interestingly in this respect, the pattern of Romans d'Isonzo allows us to take a deeper look into the syntactic-semantic field we are dealing with. The fact that this variety (as Friulian in general) does not possess its own form of the locative clitic forces the speakers to translate the pattern with a different form. A plausible hypothesis is that, in such a context in which no direct corresponding form is

---

<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that there is no phonological conditioning on the presence of *'nd*, which is not allowed if the next word begins with a consonant. The observation is that the pattern cannot be captured as a purely phonological operation triggered by specific purely phonological conditions.

available, the speakers will end up producing a form which is close enough in semantic terms to the semantics of the original pattern. The partitive clitic *'nd* fulfills this requirement. This is not unexpected, since a close connection between the locative clitic and the partitive one has already been observed by Penello (2004) for the Veneto varieties and Tortora (1997) for Borgomanerese (NO). Penello shows that in some Veneto varieties the partitive clitic is expressed by a complex form consisting of the locative clitic *ghe* plus an additional part etymologically related to Latin *inde* 'from there' (the origin of the Italian partitive clitic *ne*), while the locative clitic is expressed as a simple *ghe* (see examples (54)-(56)). In other varieties, moreover, the complex form locative+partitive extends to the existential locative contexts, so that only referential locatives show the simple locative clitic (see examples (57)-(59)).

(54) Dei libri che te gh-é ordinà **ghin** rivarà solo  
of.the.M.PL books that you CL.LOC-have.2SG ordered CL.LOC+CL.PART arrive only  
che tre. (Carmignano di Brenta)

that three

'Only three books of the ones you ordered will arrive.'

(55) **Ghe** zé un puteo.  
CL.LOC is a boy

'There is a boy.'

(56) In sima ala montagna **ghe** zé rivà par primo Giorgio.  
on top to.the mountain CL.LOC is arrived for first Giorgio  
'Giorgio arrived first on the top of the hill.

(57) Dei libri che te avea ordinà **ghe ne** rivarà sol  
of.the.M.PL books that you had ordered CL.LOC+CL.PART arrive only  
tre. (Crocetta del Montello)

three

'Only three books of the ones you ordered will arrive.'

(58) **Ghe n-è** un ceo.  
CL.LOC CL.PART-is a boy

'There is a boy.'

(59) **Ghe** portetu ti el ceo, (a) scuola?  
CL.LOC bring.you you the boy to school

'Will you bring the boy to school?'

(Penello 2004: 49-51)

The pattern highlighted by Penello shows an extension of the locative clitic to the partitive contexts. The pattern we observe in Romans d'Isonzo shows the opposite pattern, the partitive clitic extends to a context, the “support” clitic, where a locative clitic is generally used. Both observations lead to the same conclusion: there is a close connection between expressing a location, existential (*C'è un ragazzo* ‘There is a boy.’) or referential (either stative, It. *Ci rimango* ‘I stay there.’, or motion to It. *Ci vado* ‘I go there.’), and a partitive relation, often connected to motion out of/from something (It. *Ne sono uscito di corsa* ‘I ran out of there.’) or to a more general genitive relation, (*Ne prendo tre* ‘I take three of it’, *Ne parlo* ‘I talk about it’). Going back to our initial question, the syntactic-semantic contribution of the “support” clitic, the observed pattern shows that it could fall within the highlighted semantic field related to the locative and partitive clitics.

In this respect, some general considerations are in order. Let us go back one step and consider the whole pattern, starting from the fact that the “support” locative clitic is a ‘to have’-specific feature, appearing only with this verb. This fact is already partially captured by the sketched analysis proposed for the lexical verb in Section 1. By that analysis, the “support” clitic would be needed by the lexical verb to express the location of the possession expressed by ‘to have’. In other words, the locative is needed because of the argument structure of the verb itself, which is arguably different from the argument structure of other verbs. By this reasoning, we can explain why the “support” clitic is confined to the verb ‘to have’ and why the form of the locative/partitive is adopted (being those forms closely related, as highlighted above), since it lexicalizes the location of the possession. This analysis presents some problematic aspects, however. A first issue is related to the fact that the “support” clitic is not present in Colloquial Italian and Veneto varieties with the non-finite forms of the lexical verb, which arguably carry the same possession semantics as their finite counterparts. If it is the possession semantics of the verb ‘to have’ that leads to the presence of the “support” clitic, we would expect it to appear with all forms of the verb, irrespective of the finite/non-finite distinction. One possibility would be to assume that finite and non-finite forms of the verb are different in their lexicalization potential: non-finite forms would not be able to lexicalize the location of the possession, while non-finite forms would “contain” the location of the possession in their lexical specification, so that the additional clitic is not needed.<sup>14</sup> Other

---

<sup>14</sup> This kind of difference in the lexicalization potential of the different forms, even within the same paradigm, can be technically captured by different frameworks, among which Nanosyntax (Starke 2009) and Spanning

varieties, as Bresciano and Romanesco, would not present this difference between the lexical specification of finite vs. non-finite verbs, so that both sets of forms require the additional locative clitic.<sup>15</sup> A similar point regards the variety of Romans d’Isonzo investigated in this paper. This variety uses the *nd* clitic for the locative function in relation to the lexical verb ‘to have’ but does not extend its use to the other contexts in which a locative clitic is required, where we instead find no clitic at all (see (52)-(53)). This is potentially problematic for such an approach: if we are dealing with a somehow regular locative, we would expect a parallel behavior between the two, that is either the same pattern we see with all other locatives in the language (i.e., no overt clitic) or an extension of the *nd* clitic to the other locative contexts. This can again be captured by assuming that all other verbs which semantically select for a locative argument “contain” the locative in themselves, so that no additional form is needed, while this is not the case for the verb ‘to have’. With these two caveat and their potential solutions, we can still support the idea that the “support” locative is needed with the lexical verb ‘to have’ in relation to its lexical semantics.

It is clear, however, that the analysis just sketched for the lexical verb cannot be straightforwardly extended to the pattern with the auxiliary, which does not have any apparent possession semantics. In this case, arguing for a locative argumental slot filled by the locative pronoun is not obvious. In the spirit of maintaining the connection with the locative semantics, it has been supported by Benincà (2007) and Paoli (2020) that in this case the “support” clitic would cover a function related to the *temporal* location of the event, [+temporale] in Paoli (2020) and “localizzazione [...] di tipo temporale [...] dell’evento” in Benincà (2007: 25). This solution implies that the function of the “support” clitic with the auxiliary verb is related but different from the function it absolves with the lexical verb. This is supported by the fact that we have varieties as (i) Colloquial Italian and Romanesco where the “support” clitic is only attested with the lexical verb and not with the auxiliary, and (ii) Bresciano, which shows the “support” clitic with both the auxiliary and the lexical verb but present a clear difference between the two: when another non-subject clitic is present, the “support” clitic disappears with the auxiliary but not with the lexical verb, see (27) vs. (31) repeated here.

(60) Se, **ga**      I      ò      la machina      (Dello)

---

(Svenonius 2016). Since the point of this contribution is not to give a fully detailed analysis but to provide some notes for future developments, I will leave open the choice of the specific theoretical framework to be adopted.

<sup>15</sup> Non-colloquial Italian would not present this difference either. The only difference being that both non-finite and finite forms of the verb ‘to have’ would be able to lexicalize the location of the possession. Note that the specific pattern with the object clitic (see (5)) would need additional specifications to be captured.

yes CL.LOC CL.OBJ have.1SG the car

‘Yes, I have it, the car.’

(61) Se, I ò maiada, la fröta.

yes CL.OBJ have.1SG eaten the fruit

‘Yes, I ate it, the fruit.’

This shows that even in varieties where the “support” clitic is present with both the auxiliary and the lexical verb, we can clearly detect differences in their distribution, hinting to the fact that the two must be treated differently. The Bresciano pattern, however, poses an issue for the analysis proposed in Benincà (2007) and Paoli (2020) for the “support” clitic with the auxiliary. In this variety, the support clitic is present both with the finite and non-finite forms of the auxiliary verb, which is incompatible with assigning it a temporal locative function. This evidence forces Paoli (2020) to propose that in these cases the “support” clitic has an empty feature combination {[-temporal] [-spatial]}.<sup>16</sup>

In the context of this short paper, I limit myself to a couple of additional considerations which could bring about a future analysis. First, one needs to set aside the question related to the presence of the locative clitic with the lexical version of the verb ‘to have’ from the question related to its presence with the auxiliary. Since the data set them apart for the reasons listed above, it is helpful to tackle the phenomena on their own terms, which means to adopt different perspectives for the two.<sup>17</sup> In the first case – the lexical verb – we showed that we can claim that the presence of the “support” clitic is related to the lexical semantics of the verb, with the additional specifications that we need to say something about (a) the difference between finite and non-finite forms for Colloquial Italian and Veneto varieties and (b) about the fact that the Romans d’Isonzo variety does not extend the use of *nd* to any other locative context. For both issues there are potential solutions, as hinted above. The second set of phenomena, related to the presence of the “support” clitic with the auxiliary, present different challenges. As just highlighted, the analysis of the “support” clitic as temporal location is not entirely straightforward as one would conclude only looking at the Veneto data. The Bresciano pattern shows that the “support” clitic with the auxiliary is not always limited to the finite forms and

---

<sup>16</sup> As a side note, it is unclear how this proposed feature combination, which should be valid for the support clitic in general in the variety, can account for the fact that the same clitic is present with the lexical verb, where it should still support a [+spatial] function.

<sup>17</sup> This does not automatically mean that one needs to propose two different lexical items for the “support” clitic, it only means that the two morphosyntactic environments – with the lexical verb and with the auxiliary – are different. It could well be the case that a single lexical entry is used in these two different morphosyntactic environments.

and therefore contrast with the explanation which sees the role of the “support” clitic as expressing a “temporal location”. In addition, these varieties show that the “support” clitic is not only in competition with the partitive clitic (as in some Veneto varieties and in Romans d’Isonzo) but with all other non-subject clitics: when such clitics are present, the “support” clitic *ga* is absent. In our data on Bresciano, this interaction is only attested for the “support” clitic when it occurs with the auxiliary, never when it occurs with the lexical verb, where it cooccurs with the other clitics (and is farther from the verb than the other clitics, in the “regular” locative position). In this respect, one could characterize the Bresciano pattern with the following descriptive statement: “whenever you have an auxiliary form of the verb “to have” a non-subject clitic must be present, the clitic *ga* is the elsewhere form”. This begs at least two questions: how can the locative/partitive clitic, which bears a case which on the case hierarchy supported among the others by Caha (2009) is more complex than accusative/dative case in terms of feature composition, be an elsewhere form? Which function is involved (present with both finite and non-finite derivations) which requires an elsewhere form to be inserted? As for the first question, a potentially relevant observation is that both the locative and the partitive clitic do not express any gender or number feature. In other words, they do not vary depending on the feature specification of the referent. All other clitics do so. Along these lines one could argue that referential features are more relevant to calculating the elsewhere/less specific form than the case features, thus making locative/partitive clitics less specific than the other clitics.<sup>18</sup> With this in place, one can look at the second question from a different perspective. If, being less specific, locative/partitive clitics can be used as an elsewhere form, it is then possible to propose that, in their “have-support” function, they lexicalize some general features common to the set of all clitics, so that no “locative-related” semantics needs to be involved. As for the identification of such function, I leave it open for future research.

## References

- Benincà, Paola (2007). ‘Clitici e ausiliari: gh ò, z é\*’ in: D. Bentley and A. Ledgeway *Sui dialetti italo-romanzi. Saggi in onore di Nigel Vincent* [The Italianist 27, Special Supplement 1], pp. 27-47.
- Caha, Pavel (2009). *The Nanosyntax of Case*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Tromsø, Tromsø.

---

<sup>18</sup> Adopting a nanosyntactic approach, one could argue that in one case (locative/partitive clitics) we have one/two additional case features, while in the case of the other clitics we have a larger set of class/gender/number features. If this computational perspective is on the right track, then the fact that locative/partitive clitics are used as elsewhere forms is expected. A complete elaboration of this idea would however require a much more space and would go beyond the scope of the present contribution.

- Frau, Giovanni (1984). *I dialetti del Friuli*. Udine: Società Filologica Friulana.
- Paoli, Sandra (2020). ‘Avér o gavér? Questo è il dilemma! Microvariazione negli esiti del latino habere nel nord d’Italia’, *Revue Romane* 55(2): 283-310.
- Penello, Nicoletta (2004). ‘I clitici locativo e partitivo nelle varietà italiane settentrionali’ in: B. Patruno, C. Polo *Quaderni di Lavoro dell’Atlante Sintattico dell’Italia Settentrionale* 4, pp. 37-103. Online at: <http://asit.maldura.unipd.it/documenti/ql4/penello.pdf>
- Starke, Michal (2009). ‘Nanosyntax: A short primer to a new approach to language’, *Nordlyd* 36: 1-6.
- Svenonius, Peter (2016). ‘Spans and Words’ in: D. Siddiqi, H. Harley *Morphological Metatheory*. Amsterdam/New York: John Benjamins.
- Tortora, Cristina (1997). *The syntax and semantics of the weak locative*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Delaware, Newark.