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Sulla natura della microvariazione sintattica: gerarchie parametriche e distribuzione areale

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Structure of the talk

1. introduction (RQs, aims, methodology)
2. the co-occurrence between subject clitics and phrasal subjects;
3. expletive clitics in impersonal contexts;
4. the make-up of paradigms;
5. summary and discussion.
6. appendix: on first person SCIs/agreement

1) The relationship between SCIs and NSP

- Northern Italo-Romance dialects display the canonical properties of null subject languages and subject clitics co-occur with phrasal subjects, see (1).

(1) a. Nisciun u me capisce. (Alassio)

b. Personne (*il) me comprend. (Fr.)

- Subject clitics in northern Italian dialects instantiate a form of agreement (Rizzi 1986 a.o.).
- Manzini & Savoia (2005: i.55): D lexicalized by

- Italian V
- NIDs D
- English D'

2) The differences between SCIs and OCIs

- The morphology and syntax of object clitics across northern Italo-Romance is uniform, whereas subject clitics exhibit a high degree of cross-linguistic variation.
- Among other properties, paradigms of subject clitics are either defective – see (2) – or exhibit extensive patterns of syncretism (i.e. identity of exponence).
- Morphological irregularities strengthen the hypothesis that Italo-Romance subject clitics do not have a pronominal nature.

- (2) a *_parto, te parti* (Ver.)
 b *je pars, tu pars* (Fr.)

3) The nature of microvariation

- General tendencies have been found since Renzi & Vanelli's 1983 seminal work.
- Several hypotheses have been entertained on how to model microvariation:
 - zero hypothesis, “historical accident”;
 - many independent parameters (Manzini & Savoia 2005);
 - fewer dependent parameters, but “microparameters generally have to do with modes of PF-realization” (Roberts 2014).

Aims

- This paper addresses some of the above research questions in the light of **geolinguistic data**.
- I support Renzi & Vanelli's view that microvariation can be captured by **higher-grade generalisations** (see also Roberts 2014, *pace* Manzini & Savoia 2005).
- I will show that we cannot draw a clear boundary between syntactic and morphological phenomena; in particular, the data do not confirm the hypothesis that “microparameters generally have to do with **modes of PF-realization**” (Roberts 2014: 177; emphasis mine).
- Lastly, the data analysed so far show **no meaningful correlation between** the occurrence/distribution of **subject clitics** and verbal agreement **inflection**.

Sample

- ASIt (Syntactic Atlas of Italy) + Manzini & Savoia 2005.
- By combining the two sources, the total amount of dialects/datapoints amounts to 350 circa.
- The maps that will be presented in the following sections have been made with ggplot2 (Wickham H. 2016. *ggplot2: Elegant Graphics for Data Analysis*. Springer-Verlag New York).

Methodology

Examples have been tagged manually in order to disentangle as far as possible each property from orthogonal phenomena.

The coding of linguistic variables has required a fine-grained linguistic analysis of various phenomena:

- phonological phenomena (for instance, certain subject clitics can be easily mistaken for prosthetic vowels and *vice versa*);
- morphological phenomena (for instance, in several dialects sequences of a subject clitic and an auxiliary verb have been reanalysed as part of the verbal root, e.g. *al è* → *a lè* ‘he is’);
- syntactic phenomena (for instance, dialects usually show various possible interrogative structures, each of which affects the syntax of subject clitics). Furthermore, the presence/absence of subject clitics may vary between declarative and (main) interrogative/exclamative clauses as in several varieties the latter trigger subject inversion and the inventory of proclitic and enclitic formatives are often dissimilar. What follows is primarily based on the analysis of proclitics.
- Pragmatic phenomena, for instance several dialects exhibit discourse particles (which have been variously associated with an ‘emphatic’ reading) which can be easily mistaken for subject clitic forms.

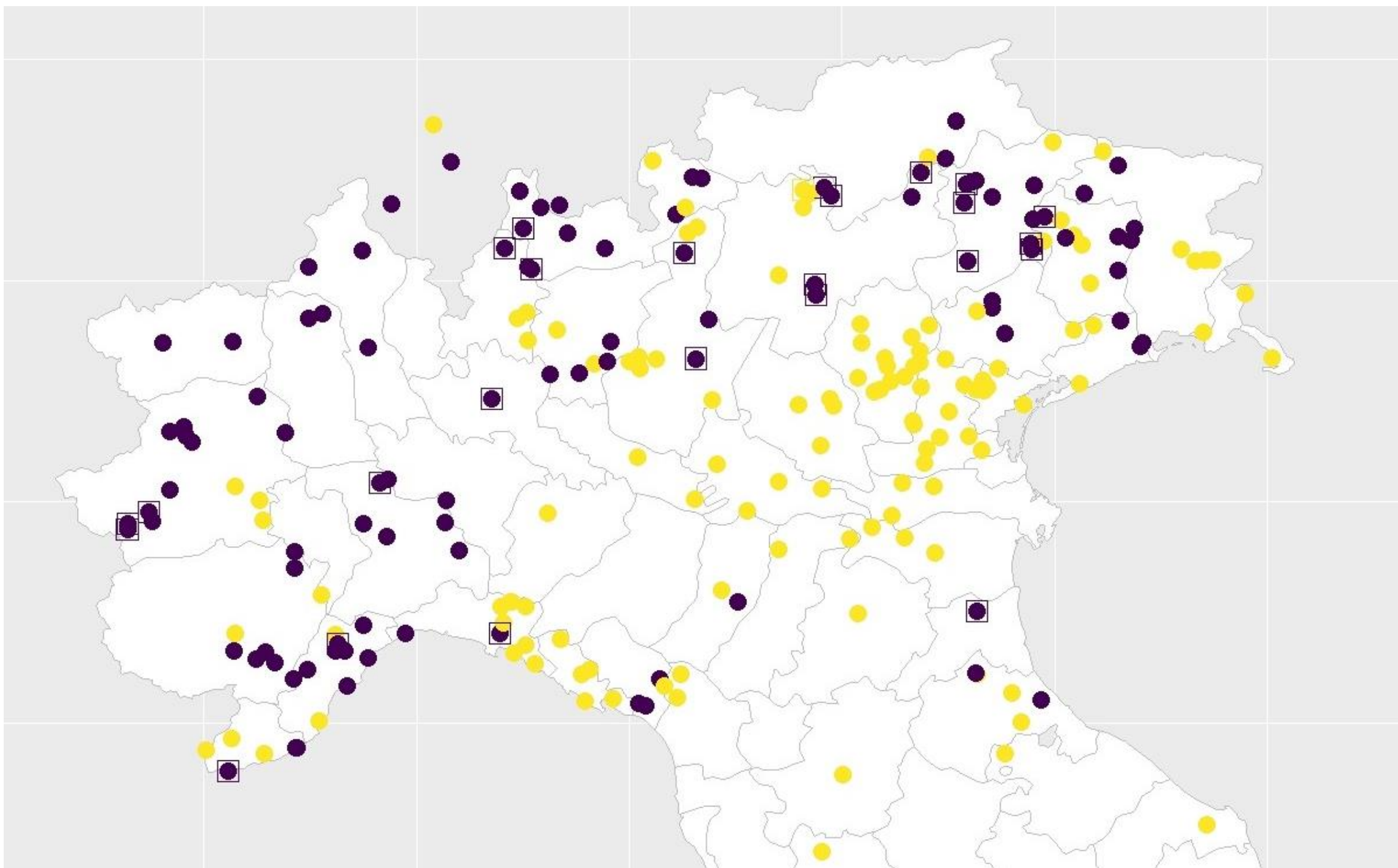
Doubling

- Not all subjects can be doubled by clitic formatives. Poletto 2000; Poletto & Tortora 2016 show that whereas pronominal and, to a lesser extent, DP subjects are readily doubled by subject clitics, operator-like subjects such as *wh* elements and bare quantifiers seldom require doubling.

a Chi magna le patate? (Agugliaro, VI)

b Chi *u* mangia ei patate? (Calizzano, SV)

- The following map shows the presence (purple) vs absence (yellow) of subject clitics in co-occurrence with the interrogative pronoun *who* (squares indicate that, at least in the dataset, doubling is restricted to certain clausal environments such as clefts).



Discussion

- If subject clitics were fully-fledged agreement markers, one would expect them to occur in all contexts and in all dialects, regardless of the nature/position of phrasal subjects.
- This conclusion is in line with fine-grained analyses of single dialects in which the presence/absence of third person clitics depend on the nature and position of DP subjects (see Benincà 1994 ; Benincà and Poletto 2004 on Paduan).

Expletives

(9) a. El plof. (Monno)

it=rain.3

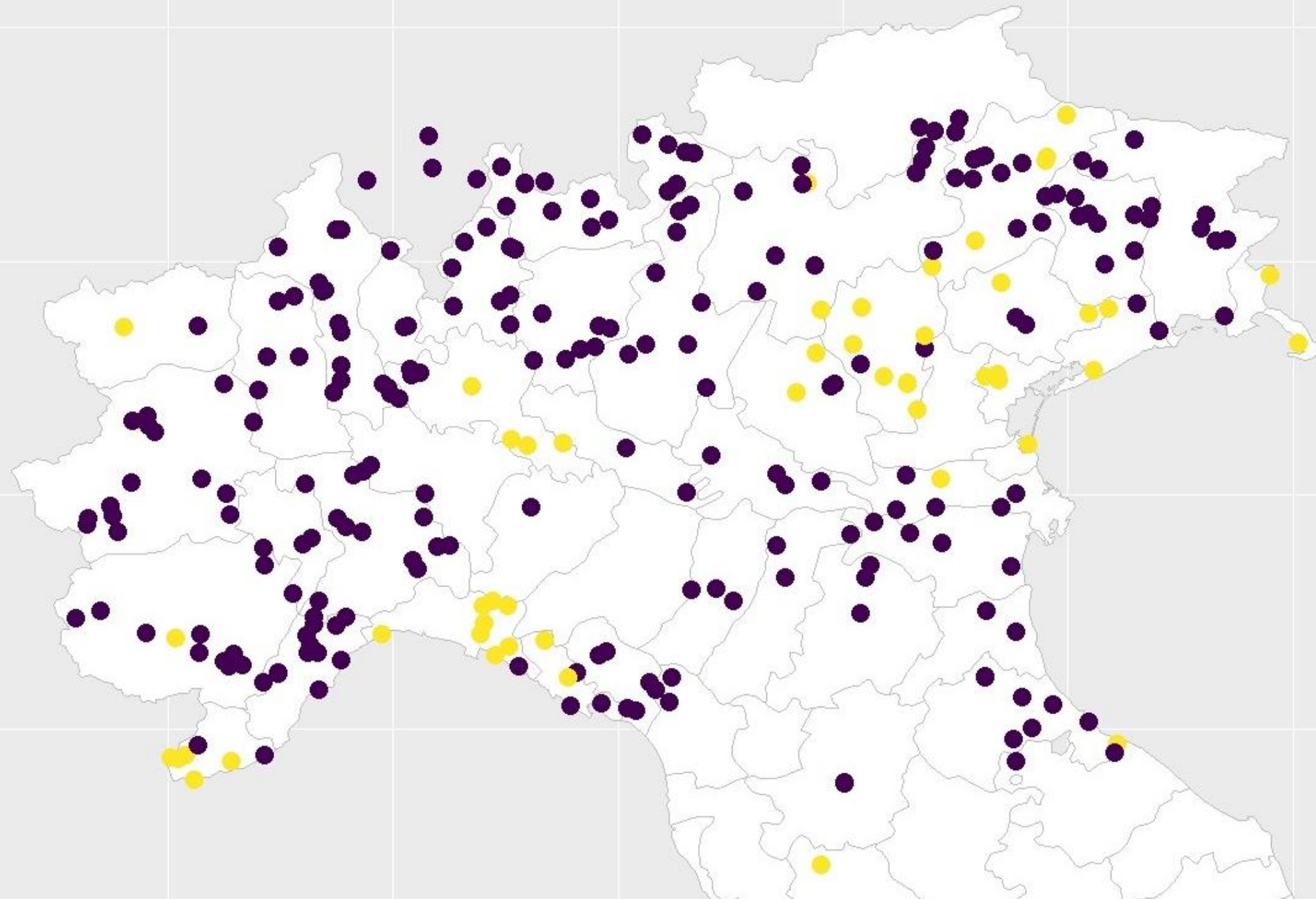
‘It is raining.’

b. __ Piovi. (Trieste)

rain.3

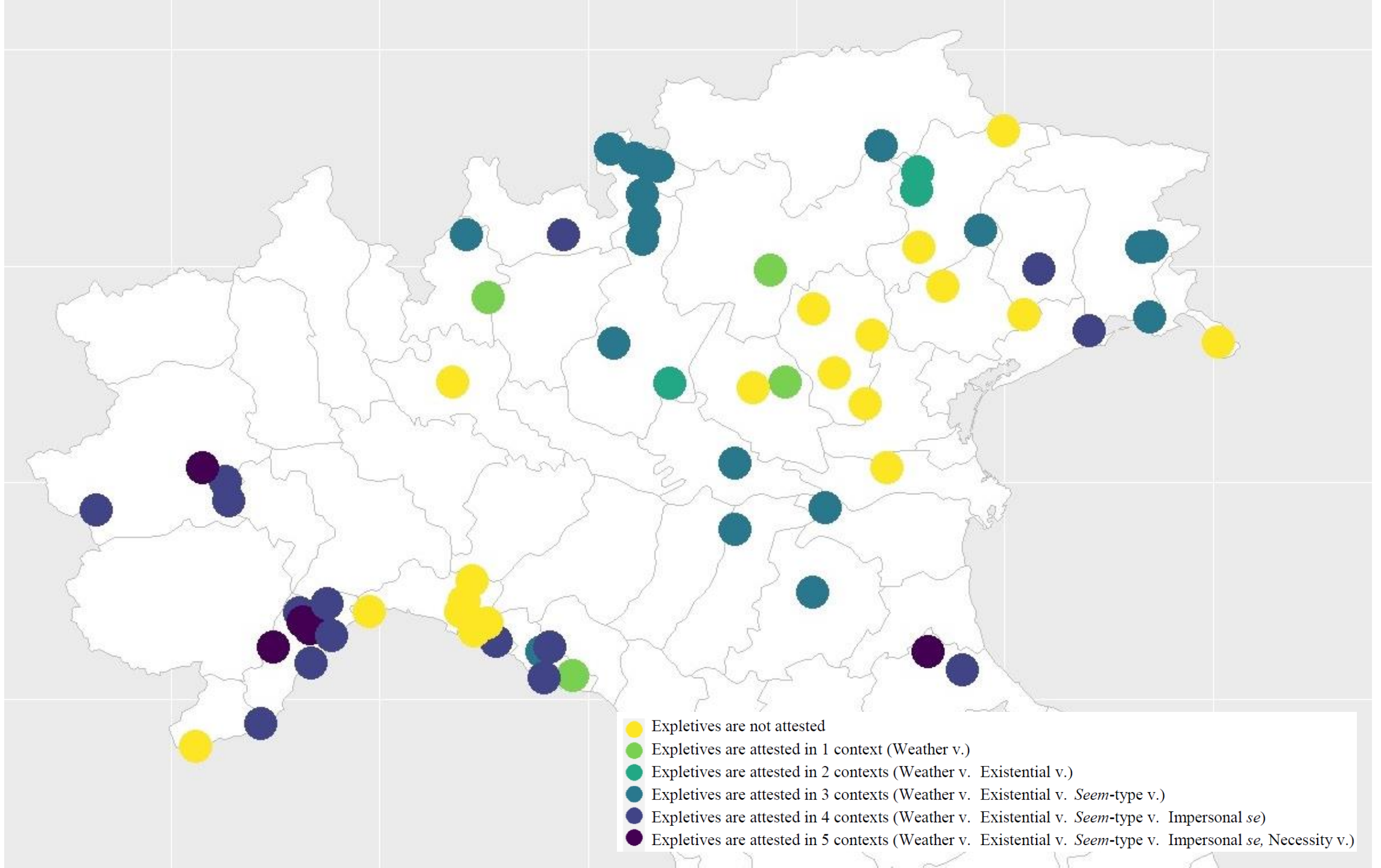
‘It is raining.’

- The following map shows that the dialects that display expletives are a superset of those that are characterised by the doubling of operator-like subjects



A typology of expletive systems

Variety	Weather v.	Existential v.	<i>Seem</i> -type v.	Impersonal <i>se</i>	Necessity v.
Carcare	U ciov	U j-è	U smija...	U s diz	U bsogna
Cesena	E piov	U j-è	E per...	U s dis	Ø bsogna
Monno	El plof	El g'e	El par	Ø s dis	Ø gna
Rocca P.	El piof	L'è	Ø omea	Ø se dis	Ø moza
Aldeno	El piove	Ø gh'e	Ø par	Ø se dis	Ø bisogna
	'it rains'	'there is...'	'it seems that...'	'one says'	'it is needed...'



Discussion

- Since all northern Italian dialects are null subject languages, then one wonders about the nature of expletive clitics.
- Expletives are normally regarded as placeholders, i.e., **dummy elements having the same status of phrasal subjects**.
- However, if Italo-Romance subject clitics were agreement markers, how could they satisfy a syntactic requirement related to the subject position?
- Moreover, if subject clitics were agreement markers, they would occur in all impersonal constructions as well as in prototypical subject-less contexts such as imperatives, *contra* evidence.

Gaps and Syncretism

	Olivone	Corte	Grumello	Fornero	Piverone	Calasetta	Tayac
1p	<i>a</i>		<i>(a)</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>		
2p	<i>tu</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>(a) ta</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>at</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>tæ</i>
3p (m/f)	<i>u/ra</i>	<i>l/la</i>	<i>al/(a)</i>	<i>al/la</i>	<i>al/la</i>	<i>u/a</i>	<i>ew</i>
4p	<i>a</i>		<i>a n</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>		
5p	<i>a</i>		<i>(a)</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>		<i>vusaw</i>
6p (m/f)	<i>i</i>	<i>i/le</i>	<i>(a) i</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>a</i>		<i>zi</i>

Previous generalisations

Previous studies revealed some robust trends in the form of implicational statements, see Renzi e Vanelli 1983:

- (10) a. If a variety has at least one subject clitic, it is 2sg.
- b. If a variety has two subject clitics, they are 2sg and 3sg.
- c. If a variety has three subject clitics, they are 2sg, 3sg, 3pl

No single chain can account for all the patterns found so far:

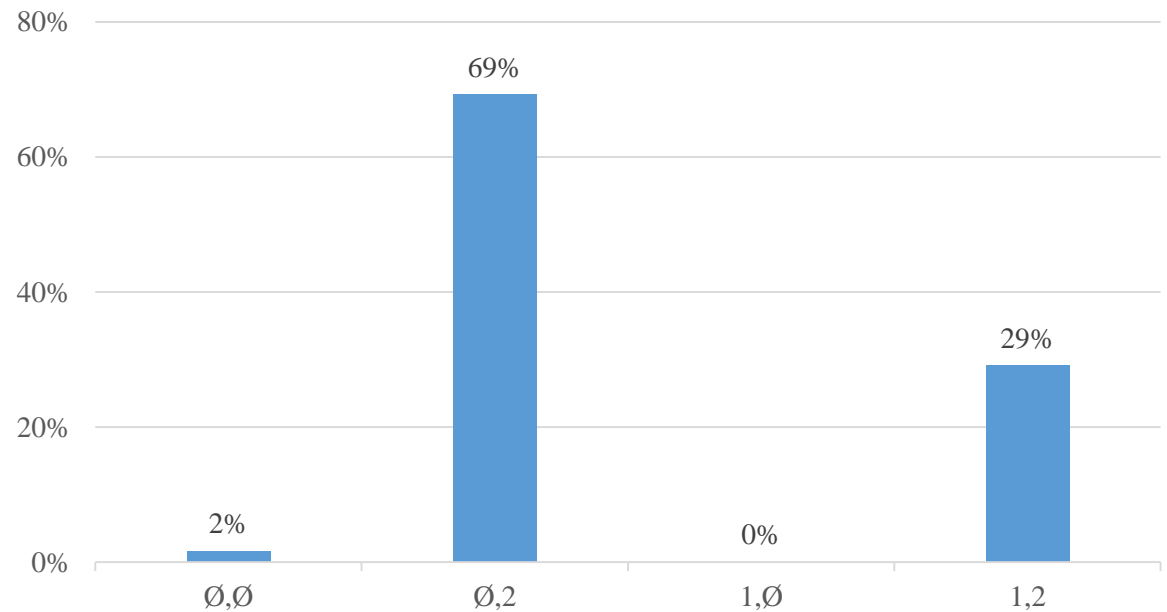
- (11) a $2 > 3 > 6 > 5 > 4 > 1$ (Renzi and Vanelli 1983)
- b $2 > 3 > 6 > 1 > 4/5$ (Cabredo Hofherr 2004; Calabrese 2011)
- c $2 > 6 > 3 > 4 > 1 > 5$ (Heap 2000)

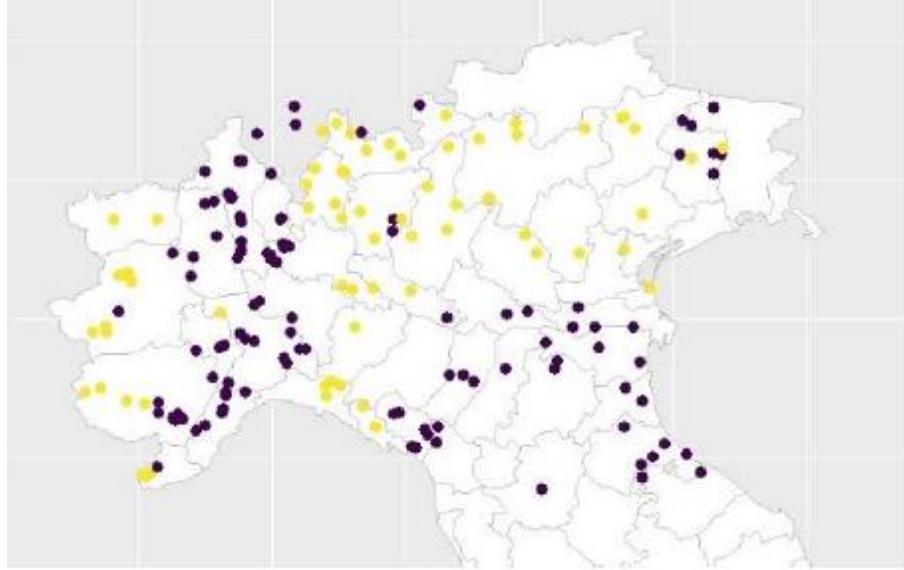
Heap 2002; Benincà & Poletto 2005; Oliviéri 2011; Calabrese 2011 tried to derive Person-driven gaps from feature geometries.

Counterexamples

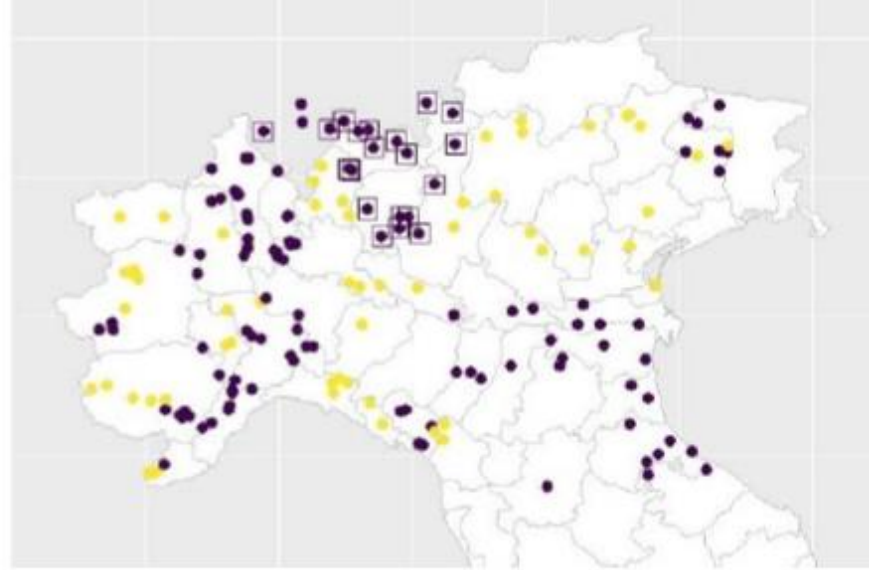
Manzini & Savoia (2005, §2.3): a group of Trentino dialects have the 3rd person clitic, but no 1st and 2nd person clitic, *contra* the generalisations in (11).

However, the 2nd person clitics is missing iff the 1st person clitic is missing. As shown in the following histogram, 2% of the 370 datapoints of Manzini & Savoia's and ASIt datasets lack both the 1st and the 2nd person clitics, but no dialect lacks the 2nd person clitic if the 1st person clitic is present.

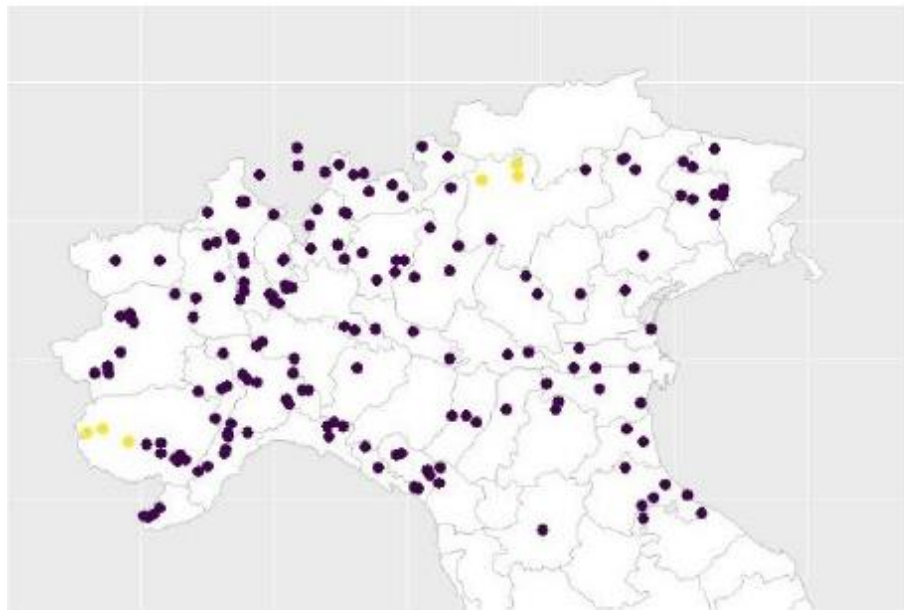




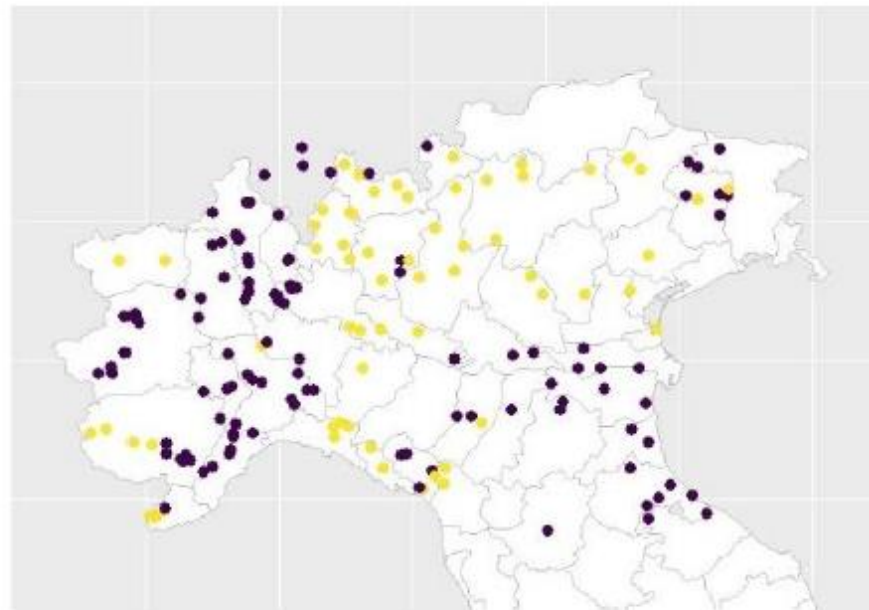
a) First person



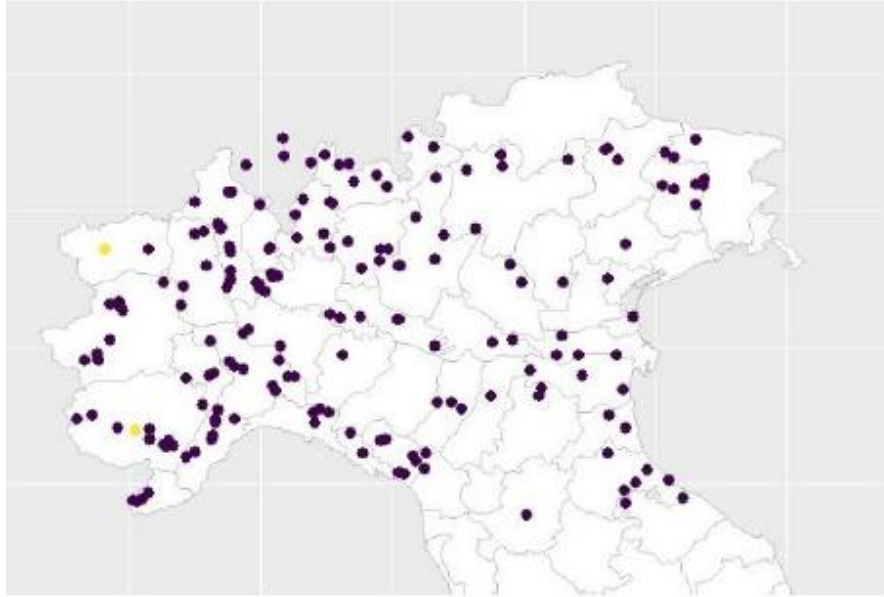
d) Fourth person



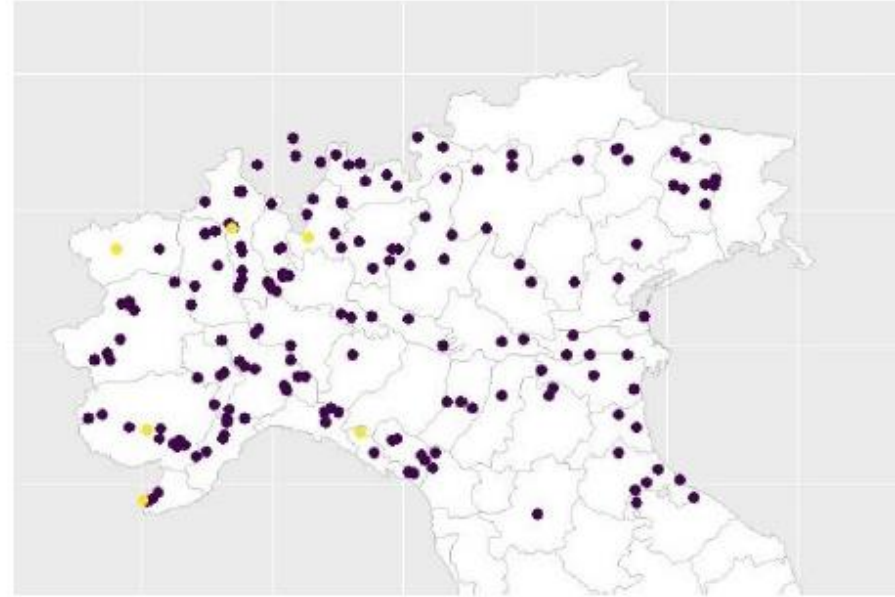
b) Second person



e) Fifth person



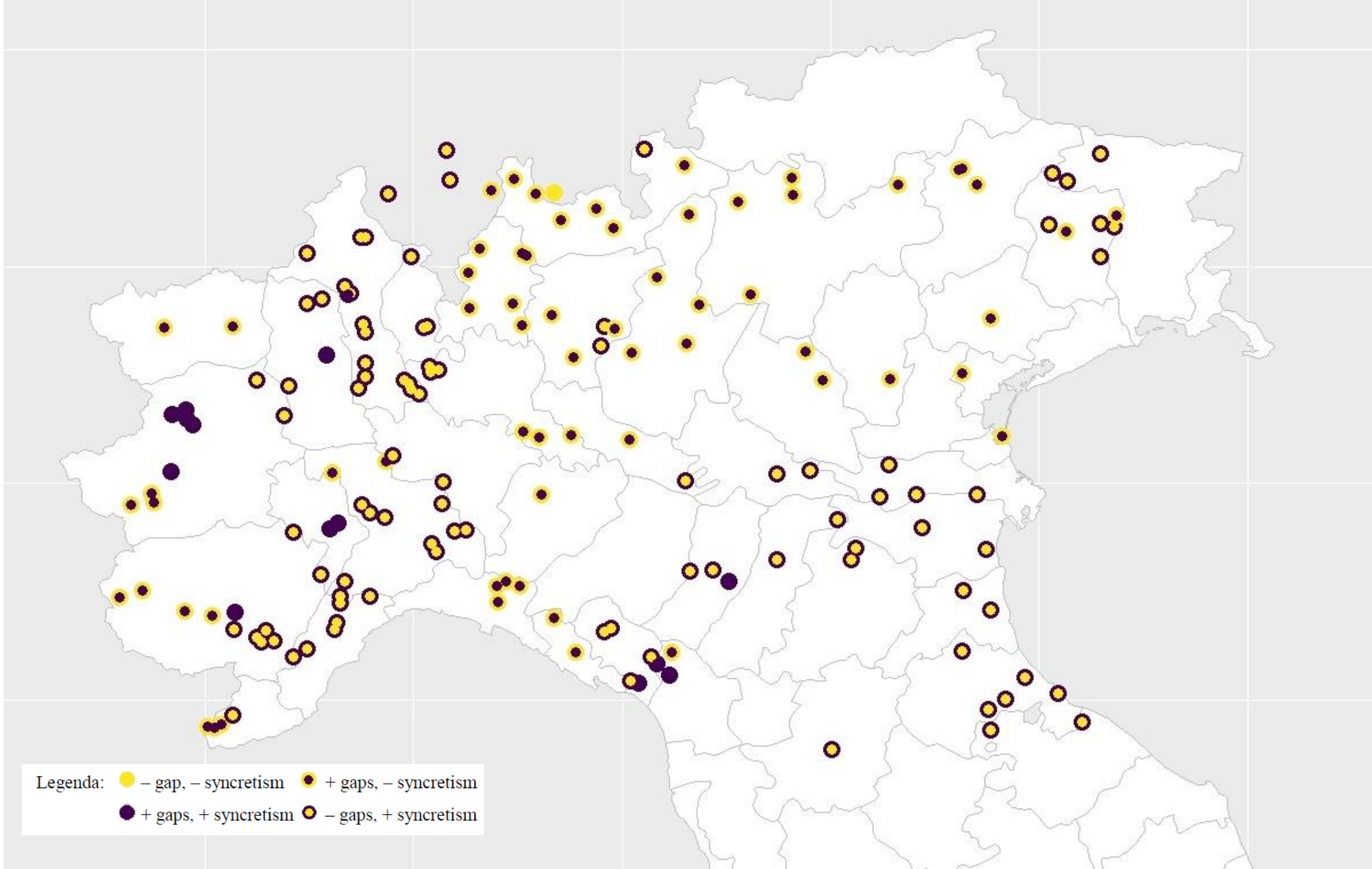
c) Third person



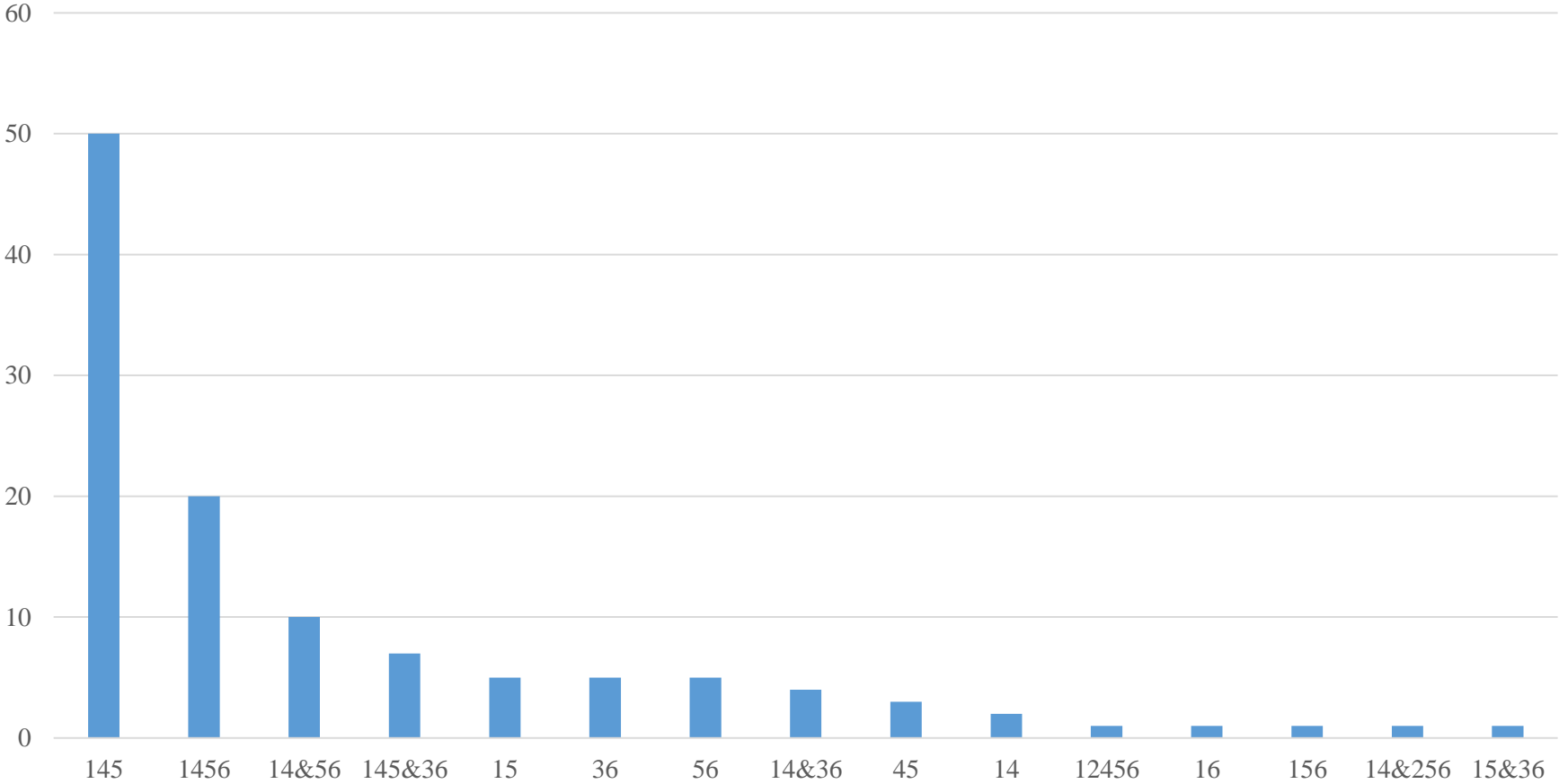
f) Sixth person

Syncretism

- The dialects that are characterised by a complete set of clitics tend to exhibit patterns of syncretism, i.e. **clitic forms with the same exponent**.
- In the following maps, four types of systems are plotted, depending on whether the paradigm of subject clitics is characterised by gaps and/or syncretism: the inner dot signals the presence (purple) or absence (yellow) of gaps, while the outer circle indicates whether the system has syncretic clitics (purple) or not (yellow).



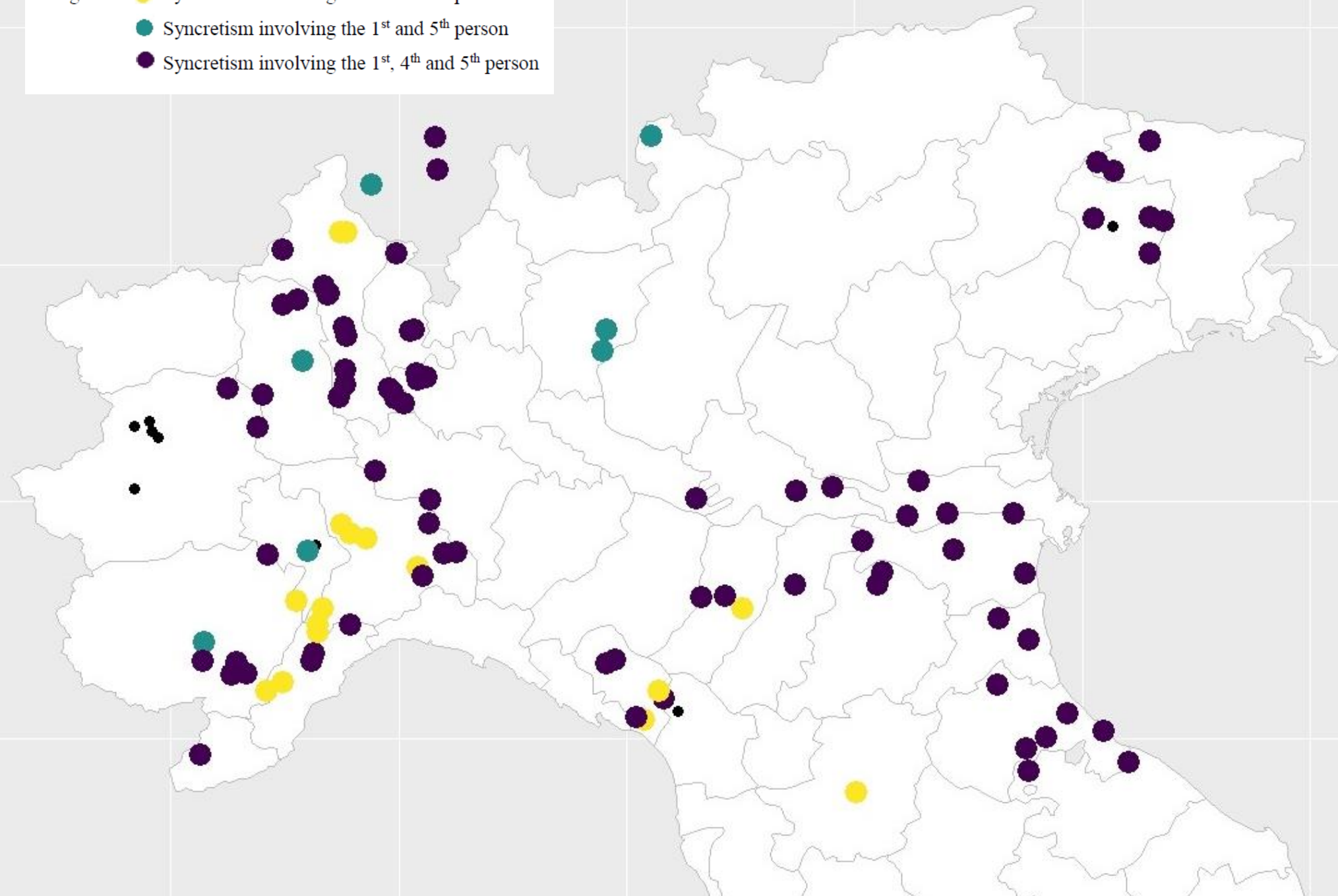
Types of syncretism (incidence)



Types of syncretism (distribution)

- The following map illustrates the distribution of three patterns of syncretism that involve the 1st, 4th and 5th person. The purple dots are the datapoints in which the 1st, 4th and 5th person are identical (in the same dialects, other subject clitic forms may be syncretic as well); the turquoise and yellow datapoints are those in which the pattern of syncretism involve, respectively, the 1st/5th and the 1st/4th person (the remaining black dots marks varieties exhibiting other patterns of syncretism).

Legenda: ● Syncretism involving the 1st and 4th person
● Syncretism involving the 1st and 5th person
● Syncretism involving the 1st, 4th and 5th person



Discussion

This state of affairs follows from the interplay of two orthogonal properties:

- a restriction on the externalisation of 1st/4th/5th person features (a *filter*, in Calabrese's 2011 terms);
- a parameter establishing whether subject clitics are mandatory or not.

The effects of the 'filter' and the 'parameter', if taken separately, cannot lead to any higher grade generalisation, but, when the effects of the two are compared, it seems reasonable to conclude that microvariation is neither nuanced nor chaotic, but follows from discrete choices that are hierarchically organised.

Results and open questions

- Garzonio & Poletto 2018: the interaction between grammatical properties can give rise to three main geolinguistic patterns:
 - *Coincidence* would [...] be interpreted in a way to make the two phenomena depend on the same abstract property.
 - *Inclusion* would be interpreted in a way such that the phenomenon that is more largely represented is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the occurrence of the second.
 - *Complementary distribution* would be a case of alternative checking [...] of the same property.

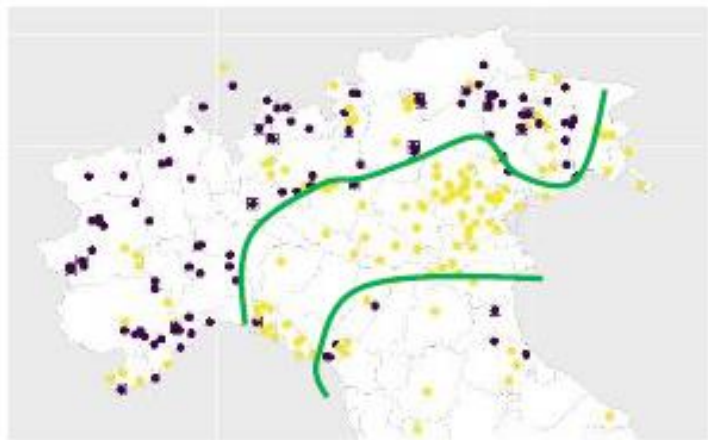


Fig 1 – Presence or absence of doubling of the subject *who*.

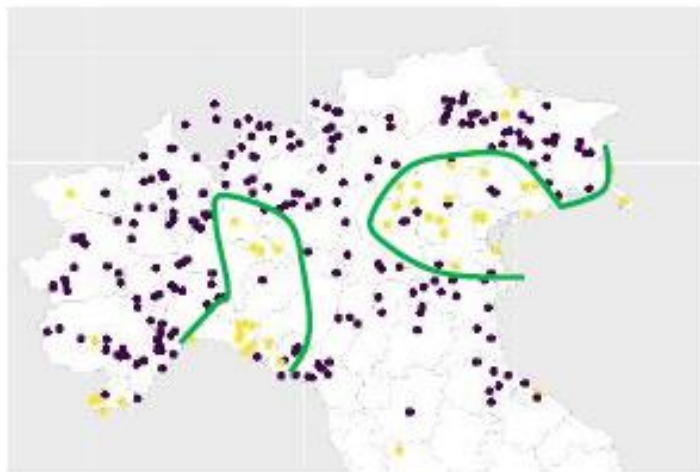


Fig. 2 – Presence or absence of expletives with weather verbs.

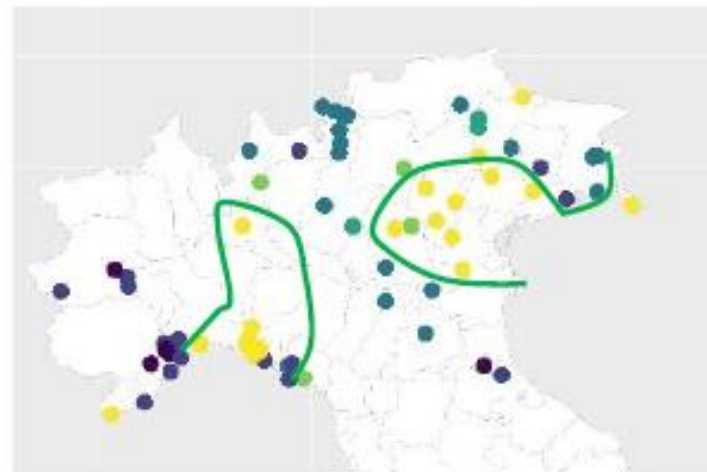


Fig. 3 – Typology of expletive systems

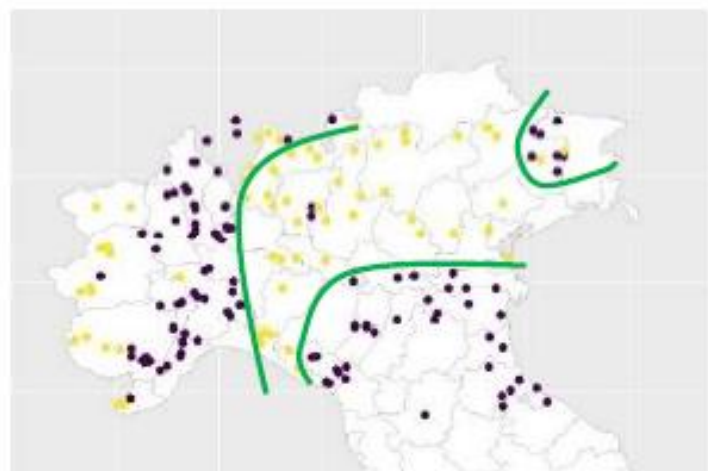


Fig. 5a – 1st Person

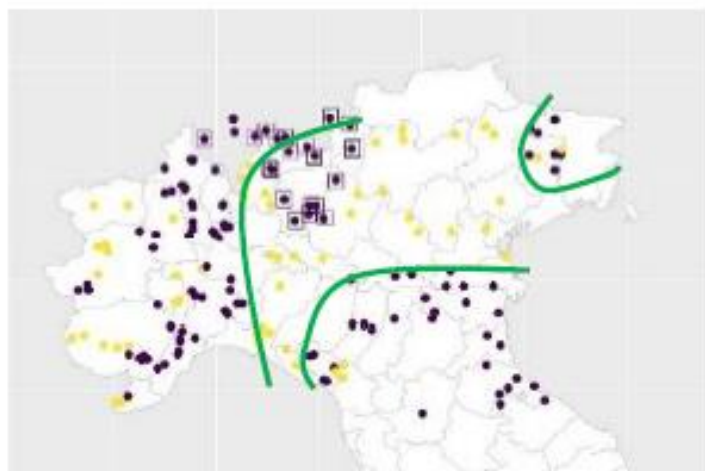


Fig. 5d – 4st Person

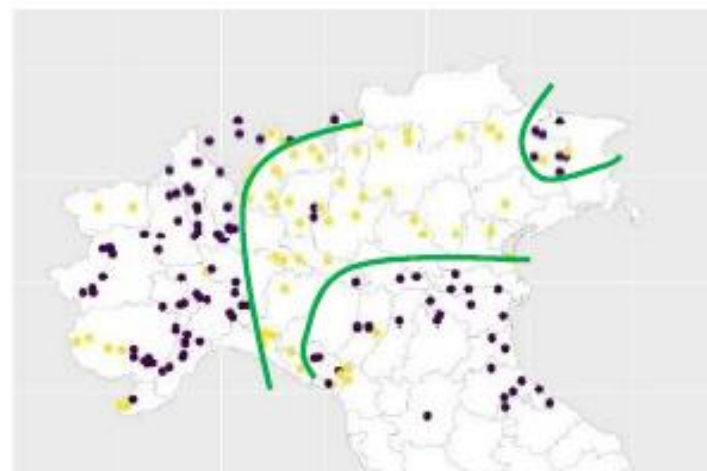


Fig. 5e – 5th Person

Conclusion #1: Inclusion

The above geographical distribution can be therefore expressed in terms of subset relations between three abstract properties:

- Generalised Exponence, i.e. clitics are mandatory for all persons;
- Generalised Doubling, i.e. clitics double all kinds of subjects;
- Generalised Expletives, i.e. clitics occur in all impersonal clauses.

Generalised Exponence \subset Generalised Doubling \subset Generalised Expletives

Conclusion #2: hierarchical organisation of microparameters

- Gaps and syncretism are in complementary distribution, but target the same set of persons.
- This seems to suggest that the same set of person features remains unexpressed in dialects where the parameter Generalised Exponence is negatively set, whereas, in dialects where the parameter Generalised Exponence has a positive value, the same set of person features is expressed by a dummy-like exponent.

Conclusion #3: a robust set of syntactic parameters

- The findings of this study suggest that the kind of microvariation exhibited by northern Italian dialects is less kaleidoscopic than part of the recent literature suggests.
- In the spirit of Renzi & Vanelli 1983, I argued that microvariation follows some robust trends, which confirm the validity of higher-grade generalisations.
- Lastly, the data discussed in the previous section suggest that microvariation hinges on syntactic features and cannot be reduced only to “modes of externalisation” (*pace* Roberts 2014).

Grazie!

Subject clitics vs verbal morphology

- “Let us take, as a purely descriptive device, the feature [\pm agr] to denote whether a clitic or agreement marker shows a ‘full’ set of morphological person-number distinctions, where ‘full’ means at least five distinct forms, and zero counts as distinct.” (Roberts 2014: 196)

- (12)
- | | | | |
|----|-----------|---------|--|
| a. | SCL[+agr] | V[+agr] | a ‘fully redundant,’ null-subject system |
| b. | SCL[+agr] | V[-agr] | a non-null-subject system |
| c. | SCL[-agr] | V[+agr] | a non-redundant null-subject system |
| d. | SCL[-agr] | V[-agr] | (usually) a complementary system |

Roberts's typology

- Fiorentino (fully redundant)

(108) (E) parlo. Si parla. ('I speak', etc.)
 Tu parli. Vu parlate.
 E parla. E parlano.
 La parla. Le parlano.

- French (non-null-subject)

- Como (non redundant)

(110) dərmi dərɱum ('I sleep', etc.)
 ta dərmat dərɱuf
 al/la dərma dərɱaŋ

- Carrara (complementary)

(111) a dərɱə a dərɱiŋ ('I sleep', etc.)
 tə dərɱə dərɱitə
 i/al dərɱə i/al dərɱənə

Objection

- The 4th and 5th person are not an ideal testbed ideal to verify whether a correlation holds between the presence of subject clitics and verbal inflection.
- Stress shift and suppletion might in fact provide a possible functional explanation for the lack of subject clitics in the 1st/2nd person plural or for the fact that they are syncretic.
- For this reason, I think that – in order to compare verbal agreement and subject clitics – one has to focus on singular persons, in particular on the 1st person singular.

Hypotheses

- Two hypotheses can be made concerning the relationship between clitics and endings:
 - Endings and clitics are characterised by isomorphic patterns of irregularities; subject clitics and verbs share the same *morphomic* structure, in Maiden's 2005 terms. According to this hypothesis one expect a positive correlation (r is positive and tends to 1) between the presence of syncretism in the verbal domain and the presence of syncretism and/or gaps in the system of subject clitics.
 - the irregularities in the two series (clitics and endings) combine in order to maximize the overall distinctiveness of the system. In this case we expect a negative correlation (r is negative and tend to -1) between the presence of syncretism in the verbal domain and the presence of syncretism and/or gaps in the system of subject clitics.

Legenda

- The comparison between subject clitics and endings in the first person singular is plotted in the following map.
 - Green squares: the verbal ending of the first person is syncretic.
 - Yellow dot: the SCl is missing
 - Purple dot: the SCl is syncretic
 - Black dot: the SCl is present and non syncretic
- The geolinguistic diffusion, at this level of granularity, does not support the hypothesis of a significant relationship between the distribution of subject clitics and verbal agreement.

Correlation

The correlation between syncretism in the verbal system and presence of clitics and the correlation between syncretism in the verbal and clitic system is not as significant as expected.

Correlation between the presence/syncretism of subject clitics and

- Presence of scl/syncretism of the verb $r = 0,323739$
- Syncretism of scl/syncretism of the verb $r = 0,262853$

SCIs and NSP

- The division between null and non null subject languages cuts across the area in which subject clitics are attested. Northern Italian dialects exhibit subject clitics, cf. (3c), but, unlike French, they are characterised by the properties of *consistent* null subject languages (Roberts 2014) a.o.: they are not subject to the so-called *that*-trace effect, cf. (4c), and allow free inversion as in (5c). For these reasons, clitics in northern Italian dialects have been often analysed as agreement markers, rather than fully-fledged pronouns (Rizzi 1986; Brandi & Cordin 1989).

Other differences

(7) a Un tu compri mai mele. (Flo.)

NEG you= buy.2SGnever apples

b Tu n' achètes jamais de pommes. (Fr.)

2SG.NOM= NEG buy.2SGnever of apples

'You never buy apples.'

(8) a La canta e la balla (Flo.)

she= sing.3SG and 3SG=dance.3SG

b Elle chante et danse. (Fr.)

she= sing.3SG and dance.3SG

'She sings and dances.'

- (3) a. ___ parla italiano. (It.)
 speak.3SG Italian
- b. *(Il) parle italien. (Fr)
 he= speak.3SG Italian
- c. *(El) parla italian (Ver.)
 he= speak.3SG Italian
 ‘He speaks Italian.’

- (4) a. Chi hai detto che ha scritto questo libro? (It.)
who have.you said that has written this book
- b. *Qui as-tu dit qu' a écrit ce livre? (Fr.)
who have=you said that has written this book
- c. Ci ghe-to dito che l' a scrito sto libro? (Ver.)
who have=you said that he= has written this book
'Who did you say wrote this book?'

- (5) a ___ è arrivato Gianni. (It.)
 is arrived John
- b *Il est arrivé Jean. (Fr.)
 he= is arrived John
- c L' è rivà Giani. (Ver.)
 he= is arrived John.
 'John has arrived.'