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2 The typology of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects

1. Introduction

As is well known, matrix yes/no questions are not marked by any morphosyntactic device in Standard Italian (cf. Lepschy & Lepschy, 1977; Tekavčić, 1980; Fava, 1995; Maiden & Robustelli, 2000; Cruschina, 2012). While subordinated yes/no questions are marked by an overt complementizer (see 1.b), only intonation distinguishes matrix yes/no questions from the corresponding declarative sentences (see 1.c):

1) a. Va al mare.
   go-PRES.3.Sg to-the sea
   ‘(S)he goes to the sea.’
   [declarative sentence]

   b. Non so se va al mare.
      neg know-PRES.1.Sg if go-PRES.3.Sg to-the sea
      ‘I don’t know if (s)he is going to the sea.’
      [embedded yes/no question]

   c. Va al mare?
      go-PRES.3.Sg to-the sea
      ‘Does (s)he go to the sea?’
      [matrix yes/no question]

As opposed to Standard Italian, Northern, Tuscan, Central and Southern Italian Dialects display a rich variety of morphosyntactic devices to mark yes/no questions. An example from the Sardinian variety spoken in Nuoro (Bentley, 2011) is provided in (2) below:

2) a. Ses imbreacu.
    be-PRES.2.Sg drunk
    ‘You are drunk.’
    [declarative sentence]

   b. Itte ses imbreacu?
      itte be-PRES.2.Sg drunk
      ‘Are you drunk?’ (Bentley, 2011:5)
      [matrix yes/no question]
As shown by the contrast between (2.a) on the one hand and (2.b), (2.c) and (2.d) on the other hand, there are three ways to form a yes/no question in the dialect of Nuoro. One possibility is to use a question particle, as in (2.b) and (2.c). Another option is provided by the use of a different word order with respect to the corresponding declarative, as in (2.d).

In fact, similar considerations can be made with respect to all main dialectal areas of Italy, which display a very high degree of variation in their yes/no question-marking systems. This has led to a growing interest in standard and non-standard question-marking strategies in Italian Dialects (cf. Poletto & Vanelli, 1995; Obenauer, 2004; Damonte & Garzonio, 2008, 2009; Garzonio, 2012; Cruschina, 2008, 2012) in recent years. Following up on this line of research, the present section aims at contributing to the existing literature with a previously undiscussed set of data from Central and Southern Italian varieties. Furthermore, it aims at defining the locus and limits of the observed microsyntactic variation. To sum up, the main goals of this chapter are:

- to provide an exhaustive overview of the yes/no question-marking strategies employed in the Italian dialects;
- to investigate whether the yes/no question-marking strategies found in the Italian dialects can fit into a broader typology of polar questions as proposed by Ultan (1978), Sadock & Zwicky (1985) and Dryer (2005).

Among others, the following research questions will be tackled in the next pages:

i. Is there a correlation between the frequency and distribution of the strategies available in the Italian dialects and other parameters?

ii. What can yes/no question-marking in the Italian dialects tell us about the structure of natural language?

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1 The data in (2.b) are taken from Bentley (2011:5), while those in (2.a), (2.c) and (2.d) were collected by the author.
2 The term standard vs. non-standard question is a general term taken from cf. Munaro (1999), Obenauer (2004), and Garzonio (2004). Standard questions are those sentences that can be uttered out of the blue, and whose semantics is that of an interrogative. On the contrary, non-standard questions always come with some kind of special presupposition/expectation which modifies its semantics and can only be uttered in specific contexts.
The chapter is organized as follows. In section 2, a typological overview of yes/no question-marking in the world’s languages will be provided. Then, the discussion will be narrowed down to the major Romance languages. After a brief note on Latin, the strategies employed in Standard Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, French and Romanian will be presented. Eventually, the discussion will be further narrowed down to Italian dialects. This issue will be tackled in section 3, where a typological overview of all yes/no question-marking strategies available in Italian dialects will be provided. It will be shown that some of these strategies pose a challenge for standard typological classifications such as the one proposed by Dryer (2005). Section 4 includes a detailed discussion of these strategies. Furthermore, it explores the possible correlations between the availability yes/no question-marking strategies and other parameters in the Italian dialects. Section 5 will provide a summary and some general conclusions and questions for further research.

2. Typological aspects of yes/no question-marking

The languages of the world exhibit a very rich diversity in every aspect of their linguistic systems. Even though the degree of variation is remarkably high, there seem to be specific limitations which prevent different languages from following certain patterns. In fact, linguistic variation is not arbitrary. Only a small subset of all logically possible combinations of linguistic properties is actually attested in the world’s languages. Typology is the linguistic field which aims to defining the limits of linguistic variation through extensive cross-linguistic comparison (cf. Comrie 1989; Croft 2003; Greenberg 1963).

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the yes/no question-marking strategies that are found in the languages of the world from a typological perspective (cf. Moravcsik, 1971; Ultan, 1978; Sadock & Zwicky, 1985; Dryer, 2005; Miestamo, 2007). After discussing Dryer’s (2005) typology of polar questions in the world’s languages, the discussion will focus on Latin and Romance. It will be shown that Latin has a more articulated yes/no question-marking system than most Standard Romance languages. In addition, it will be shown that only a few of the strategies available in the world’s languages are actually attested in Romance.

2.1 Yes/no question-marking in the world's languages

The following main categories have been identified in recent and less recent typological studies on the marking of polar questions (cf. Moravcsik, 1971; Ultan 1978; Dryer 2005; Miestamo 2007):

- Question Particle (henceforth QP);
- Interrogative intonation;

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1 Dryer (2005) and Miestamo (2007) are taken as the main references here, as they provide the most comprehensive typological classifications.
Chapter 2

- Interrogative verb morphology;
- QP + interrogative verb morphology;
- Interrogative word order;
- Disjunction (A-not-A);
- Absence of declarative morpheme;
- No distinction between declarative and yes/no question.

Each of the strategies mentioned in the list above will be presented and discussed in detail in the next eight subsections.

2.1.1 QP

The most widespread morphosyntactic device for marking yes/no questions in the world’s languages involves the use of a QP. QPs can be found in several different positions in the clause. According to Dryer (2005, 2008), they occur most frequently in the sentence-final position, followed by the sentence-initial position. An example from Cantonese is provided in (3.a), where a sentence-final QP is shown. The Polish sentence in (3.b) shows a sentence-initial QP.

3) a. Lei yam gaafé maadé?
    you drink coffee QP
    ‘Do you drink coffee?’ (Kuong, 2008:1)
    [Cantonese]

    b. Czy idziesz nad morze?
    QP go-PRES.2.Sg. to-the sea
    ‘Are you going to the sea?’ (Pisarek, p.c.)
    [Polish]

Interestingly, Miestamo (2007) and Dryer (2008) classify French est-ce que questions as being headed by a sentence-initial QP. The morphological set-up of est-ce que strongly suggests that it is the result of a process of grammaticalization involving a verb, a demonstrative and a complementizer. Nevertheless, it is treated as a single interrogative element. An example is provided in (4) below:

4) Est -ce que Euphrasie est arrivée?
    be-PRES.3.Sg -it.CL that Euphrasie be-PRES.3.Sg arrive-PP
    ‘Did Euphrasie arrive?’ (Rooryck, 1994:216)
    [French]
The sentence-initial and sentence-final positions are not the only available sites for QPs (cf. Dryer, 2005, 2008; Bailey, 2010). QPs can also occur in the second position of the sentence, as shown in the Finnish example below:

5) Osti -ko Joni kirjan?
‘Did Joni buy the book?’ (Schardl, 2009:2)

In addition, QPs can occur in some other specific position other than initial, second or final position. This is the case of Niuean (Oceanic), where QPs always occur to the right of the verb:

6) Foaki age nakai e koe e fakamailaga ki a taha
give DIR QP ERG you ABS prize to PERS someone
‘Did you give the prize to someone?’ (Seiter 1980:25)

In some other languages, QPs have a relatively free order because their function is to focus and question one constituent of the sentence. They usually occur right after the constituent that they focus. An example from Bulgarian is provided in (7) below.

7) a. Mandzjata gotova li e?
Dish-the ready QP be-PRES.3.Sg.?
‘Is the dish ready?’ (Gulian, p.c.)

b. Mandzjata li e gotova?
Dish-the QP be-PRES.3.Sg ready?
‘Is the dish ready?’ (Gulian, p.c.)

As shown by the contrast between (6.a) and (6.b), the QP li can occur either after the subject or after the predicate. The positions where li is inserted correlate with a different interpretation of the sentence, as two different constituents are focused.

Finally, there are some languages, such as Hunde (Bantu), Ngiti (Nilo-Saharan), and Abun (West Papuan), where QPs can be placed in more than one of the positions discussed above. Dryer (2008) treats them as a separate category.

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4 As mentioned in Bailey (2010), there are two types of second-position particles: those that are placed after the first word and those that occur after the first constituent. This distinction is not discussed in this chapter.
2.1.2 Interrogative verb morphology

The second most widespread yes/no marking strategy in the world’s languages involves the use of a different verb morphology that is specific to interrogatives (Dryer, 2008). Frequently, an affix is attached to the verb to signal that the sentence is a yes/no question. An example from West Greenlandic (Eskimo) is illustrated in (8) below.

8) Niri -riir -p -it?
eat-PAST -already -QP -you
‘Have you already eaten?’ (Fortescue, 1984:4)

The morpheme -p unambiguously marks the sentence in (8) as a polar question. At first glance, one may argue that it does not actually attach to the verb, as it is not adjacent to it in the example in (8). However, this is due to the fact that Greenlandic is a polysynthetic language, which requires multiple morphemes to be attached to a root morpheme.

2.1.3 QP + interrogative verb morphology

Another morphosyntactic device that is commonly employed to mark polar questions in the world’s languages involves the use of a QP in combination with interrogative verb morphology. The languages that use this strategy can usually choose whether to mark the yes/no question either with a QP, or with an interrogative verbal suffix, or with a combination of both. An example from Pirahã is reported in (9):

9) a. Xii bait -áo -p -i béx
cloth wash -TEL -IMPF -PROX QP
‘Are you going to wash clothes?’ (Everett 1986:236-237)

b. Xisi ib -áo -p -óxóí
animal hit.arrow -TEL -IMPF -QP
‘Did you arrow fish?’ (Everett 1986:236-237)

The example in (9.a) shows a yes/no question formed by adding a sentence-final QP, while the example in (9.b) illustrates a yes/no question marked by an interrogative morpheme that attaches to the verb. According to Everett (1986), it is also possible to combine the QP and the interrogative morpheme in the same question.

2.1.4 Interrogative word order

A further strategy to mark yes/no questions involves the use of a word order that is different from that of the corresponding declaratives. Although this pattern is very
common in Indo-European languages (especially Germanic languages), it is not very frequent in the world’s languages from a typological point of view. An example from Dutch is illustrated in (10) below:

10) a. Ze heeft haast.
    she have-PRES.3.Sg hurry
    ‘She is in a hurry.’

    b. Heeft ze haast?
    have-PRES.3.Sg she hurry
    ‘Is she in a hurry?’

    [Dutch]

Dryer (2005) classifies English yes/no questions as a subset of this group. Although they do not display simple inversion between the subject and the lexical verb, as in the Dutch example in (10), they still employ a different word order as compared to the corresponding declaratives.

11) a. She has gone away.
    b. Has she gone away?
    [subject-auxiliary inversion]

12) a. She plays the piano.
    b. Does she play the piano?
    [do-insertion]

The sentences in (11) show a case of inversion between the subject and the auxiliary, which is reminiscent of the Germanic pattern of subject-verb inversion. The sentences in (12) illustrate an example of *do*-insertion instead. Although the order of the lexical verb and the subject is the same in (12.a) and (12.b), a dummy auxiliary verb appears before the subject in (12.b). Therefore, it can be argued that they involve interrogative word order, as the subject is never preceded by an auxiliary in simple declaratives.

2.1.5 Disjunction (A-not-A)

A further morphosyntactic device that needs to be included in a comprehensive typology of yes/no question marking is the type of disjunction that gives rise to the so-called A-not-A questions (cf. Li & Thompson, 1981; Huang, 1990, 1991b; Cheng, 1991; Hagstrom, 2005, Miestamo, 2007, 2011). A-not-A questions are polar questions that take a disjunctive form and require the addressee to confirm either the affirmative or the negative disjunct. Unlike disjunctive questions proper, however, A-not-A questions do not contain an overt disjunction such as ‘or’. An example form Mandarin Chinese is provided in (13) below.
From a diachronic point of view, it is generally agreed that this construction type is derived from a fully-fledged disjunctive question where a deletion process applied. However, it cannot be classified as a disjunctive question proper from a synchronic point of view. This is motivated by the fact that this construction type is now employed as a default yes/no question-marking device. It is very common in the Chinese languages, and relatively common in the world’s languages from a typological point of view.

2.1.6 Absence of declarative morpheme

A different yes/no question-marking strategy consists in the absence of a declarative morpheme. Languages such as Zayse (Omotic) and Kabardian (Northwestern Caucasian) display a specific morpheme in declarative sentences, which is not present in the corresponding yes/no questions. An example from Zayse is illustrated in (14):

    go-PRES -DECL -she
    ‘She will go’. (Hayward, 1990b:307)

     b. Háma -ysen?
    go-PRES -she
    ‘Will she go?’ (Hayward, 1990b:307)  

The lack of the declarative morpheme –/ turns the declarative sentence in (14.a) into a yes/no question, as shown in (14.b). This strategy is not very frequent in the world’s languages from a typological point of view.

2.1.7 Interrogative intonation

The most common non-morphosyntactic strategy to mark polar questions in the world’s languages is interrogative intonation. In fact, polar interrogatives typically come with an intonation that is different from that of the corresponding declaratives. This is also true of languages that may employ one (or more) morphosyntactic strategy to mark yes/no questions. In some languages, however, interrogative intonation is the only available grammatical device to distinguish declaratives from the corresponding polar interrogatives.

Among these languages is Standard Italian, as already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. The examples in (1.a) and (1.c) are reported below as (15.a-b). They show
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a declarative sentence and its interrogative counterpart, which is only marked by interrogative intonation:

15) a. Va al mare.  
   go-PRES.3.Sg to-the sea  
   ‘(S)he goes to the sea.’

       b. Va al mare?  
       go-PRES.3.Sg to-the sea  
   ‘Does (s)he go to the sea?’

   [Standard Italian]

A falling-rising intonational contour seems to be the most common pattern crosslinguistically, although the world’s languages exhibit a great deal of variation. This is due to the interplay of many different syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and phonological requirements on prosodic phrasing and accenting (c.f. Nespor & Vogel, 1986; Selkirk 1984, 1995, 2000; Vallduvi, 1990; Avesani, 1990; Schwarzschild, 1993-94, 1999; Büring, 1997, 2001; D’Imperio, 2002).

2.1.8  No distinction between declarative and yes/no question

A further language type discussed by Dryer (2005) and Macaulay (1996) includes those varieties that do not display any difference whatsoever between declaratives and the corresponding yes/no questions. It seems that this language type is very rare, as only one language is reported to show this pattern. An example is provided in (16) below.

16) Xakú -ro.  
    laugh-PRES -2.Sg  
    ‘You are laughing/ Are you laughing?’ (Macaulay 1996:126)  
    [Chalcatongo Mixtec]

The example in (16) is from Chalcatongo Mixtec, a language spoken in Mexico that belongs to the Oto-Manguean family. It is an ambiguous sentence; its force can only be inferred from the context.

2.2  Yes/no question-marking in Latin and Romance

The main yes/no question-marking devices that are found the world’s languages were presented in section 2.1 (cf. Dryer, 2005, Miestamo, 2007). The aim of the present section is to provide a typological overview of yes/no question-marking in the major Romance languages. The strategies employed in Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, French and Romanian will be thoroughly discussed in the next five subsections. The focus will

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3 No separate section will be dedicated to Standard Italian, as it has already been discussed in the introduction and in section 2.1.7.
lie on the grammatical choices made by these languages within the set of available strategies.

Before entering a discussion of modern Romance, an overview of polar question formation in Latin will be provided. It will be shown that Latin and modern Romance languages differ dramatically in this specific area of syntax. Despite their close relatedness, their yes/no question-marking systems display a number of unexpected differences.

No specific discussion of polar question formation in (Koinê) Greek will be included in this section. Although Greek influenced some specific areas of the syntax of Southern Italian dialects, no correlations could be found in the varieties included in the present study. I do not exclude the existence of (Romance) Southern varieties whose yes/no question-marking system might show some influence of Greek. However, this lies outside the scope of the present study.

As opposed to Standard Italian, Latin employs a number of morphosyntactic devices to mark polar questions. Declaratives can be turned into yes/no questions by adding a QP, -ne, which usually cliticizes onto the first word of the sentence. Therefore, -ne can be classified as a second-position QP, just like Finnish -ko (see section 2.1.1). The grammatical category of the word to which -ne attaches is not relevant. In fact, -ne can virtually attach to any kind element. The example in (17) shows a sentence where -ne attaches to the main verb:

17) Novisti -ne hominem?
know-PRES.2.Sg. -QP man-ACC

‘Do you know the man?’ (Plautus, Bacchides:837)

[Latin]

Although -ne usually appears in the second position of the clause, it may occur in other positions. To account for those cases, it has been proposed that the constituents preceding the word onto which -ne cliticizes are dislocated (cf. Brown, Joseph and Wallace, 2009). An example is given in (18) below, where -ne cliticizes onto the subject:

18) Postquam ceciderunt spes omnes consuli
after-that fall-PAST.3.Pl. hopes all consult-PRES.2.Sg

tu -n me?
you -QP me

‘After all hopes have fallen, do you ask me for advice?’
(Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, I2:2187)

[Latin]

The interrogative morpheme -ne, was never obligatory at any stage in the history of Latin. Its use is very frequent in the work of early authors who wrote in classical Latin, like Plautus and Terence. However, it tends to become less and less common in later writers, such as Petronius and Persius. An example of a yes/no question that is not marked by any dedicated morphosyntactic device is given in (19) below:
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19) Uis pugnare?
   want-PRES.2.Sg fight
   ‘Do you want to fight?’ (Plautus, Rudens:1011)

The question now arises whether interrogative intonation served as a grammatical strategy to mark polar question in the absence of any morphosyntactic device. Unfortunately, this issue will have to remain open, given the total absence of evidence for sentence intonation in Latin. However, some scholars (cf. Touratier 1994) pointed out that intonation might have played a role in distinguishing sentence-types in Latin. This claim is based on some passages from *Institutio Oratoria*, where Quintilian describes the ‘amazing force of *pronuntiatio*’. One of these passages is reported in (20) below:

20) ‘Quid, quod eadem uerba mutata pronuntiatione indicant, adfirmant, exprobrant negant, mirantur, indignantur, interrogant, irritent, eleuant?’

   ‘So what then of the fact that, by a change of delivery, one can use the same words to either demonstrate or affirm, express reproach, denial, wonder or indignation, interrogation, mockery, or to make light of something?’ (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*:11, 3, 5)  

   [Brown, Joseph and Wallace, 2009:496]

In addition to the QP -n(e), a further QP is used to signal polar questions in Latin. Biased yes/no questions that suggest a positive or a negative answer are marked by the QPs non(n), nihil(n) and num. These QPs are all sentence-initial. Non(n) and nihil(n) are used when a positive answer is expected, while num is employed in questions that expect a negative answer. Examples are provided in (21), (22) and (23) below:

21) Nonne ego nunc sto ante aedes nostras?
   neg-QP I now stand-PRES.1.Sg before house our
   ‘Am I not standing in front of our house right now?’ (Plautus, *Amphitryon*:406)

22) Nihilne te . . . fabulae malignorum terrent?
   nothing-QP you stories terrible frighten-PAST.3.PL
   ‘Didn’t those terrible stories frighten you?’ (Tacitus, *Dialogus de Oratoribus* :3)

23) Num negare audes?
   QP deny-INF dare-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘You don’t dare to deny it, do you?’ (Cicero, *In Catilinam*:1,8)

A further type of polar question in Latin involves the use of subjunctive mood. No QP is used in these constructions, which are usually referred to as deliberative questions. They probably originated as hortatory subjunctives and are usually found in
pragmatically marked contexts (Brown, Joseph and Wallace, 2009). An example is given in (24) below:

24) Ego _intus_ seruem?
   ‘Do I/Am I supposed to work inside?’ (Plautus, _Aulularia:_81–82)  

This question type can be classified as involving interrogative verb morphology. Although subjunctive mood is not specific to interrogatives, it still acts as a specific morphosyntactic device for marking the utterance as a polar question in contexts such as (24).

To sum up, Latin makes use of a rich system of QPs to mark polar questions. These QPs are either found in the second position or in sentence-initial position. In addition, interrogative verb morphology may be used as a yes/no question-marking device. Given the optionality of QPs, the question remains open whether intonation alone played a role in marking yes/no questions in Latin.

### 2.2.1 French

The most common morphosyntactic device for marking yes/no questions in French involves the use of _est-ce que_. Following Dryer (2005), French _est-ce que_ questions are classified into the category of polar questions headed by a sentence-initial QP in the present study (see section 2.1.1). In fact, French _est-ce que_ is not a standard QP (cf. Bailey, 2010; Biberauer & Sheehan, 2011b). Rather, it is a complex interrogative element which results from a process of grammaticalization involving a verb, a demonstrative and a complementizer (cf. Rooryck, 1994). However, its syntactic behavior resembles more that of a sentence-initial QP in that it is invariable, cannot be modified and always occurs in the sentence-initial position. An example is given in (25) below:

25) a. Est _-ce que_ Paul avait réussi son examen?
   ‘Did Paul pass his exams?’  
   b. * Était _-ce que_ Paul avait réussi son examen?
   ‘Did Paul pass his exams?’  

As shown by the contrast between (25.a) and (25.b), the verb _être_ ‘be’ always occurs in the present tense, third person singular form. Sharing the same tense feature of the lexical verb results in ungrammaticality, as shown in (25.b).
Another grammatical strategy employed in French to mark yes/no questions is subject clitic-verb inversion. An example is provided below:

26) a. Il est là.
   he.Subj.CL be-PRES.3.Sg there
   ‘He is there.’

b. Est-il là?
   be-PRES.3.Sg -he.Subj.CL there
   ‘Is he there?’

c. *Est-Jean là?
   be-PRES.3.Sg -John there
   ‘Is John there?’

d. Jean est-il là?
   John be-PRES.3.Sg -he.Subj.CL there
   ‘Is John there?’

As shown in (26.a-b), it is possible to turn a declarative sentence into a polar question by moving the verb to the left of the subject clitic. This strategy is only allowed with pronominal subjects. Full DPs cannot participate in this type of syntactic inversion, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (26.c). As illustrated in (26.d), when the subject is a full DP (and not a pronoun), it remains in its preverbal position, and a resumptive subject pronoun is postponed to the verb. This type of inversion is often referred to as ‘complex inversion’ in the literature (cf. Harris 1988; Rizzi & Roberts, 1989; Byrne & Churchill 1993; Jones, 1996). It should be mentioned that complex inversion is commonly used in written and formal French but rarely used in the spoken language. Interestingly, French is the only Romance language where interrogative word order may be used to mark polar questions.

In addition to the two morphosyntactic strategies described so far, French yes/no questions may also be marked through interrogative intonation alone (c.f. Cheng & Rooryck, 2001). An example showing a declarative sentence and its interrogative counterpart is illustrated in (27.a-b) below:

27) a. Tu cuisines ce soir.
    you cook-PRES.2.Sg this evening
    ‘Are you cooking this evening?’ (Rooryck, p.c.)

b. Tu cuisines ce soir?
    you cook-PRES.2.Sg this evening
    ‘Are you cooking this evening?’ (Rooryck, p.c.)
This strategy is mainly confined to spoken French. In addition, it often comes with some kind of positive expectation with respect to the answer. Its intonation is different from polar questions headed by *est-ce que*.

### 2.2.2 Portuguese

The most common strategy to mark yes/no questions in both European and Brazilian Portuguese is interrogative intonation. A minimal pair including a declarative and its corresponding polar question is shown in (28.a-b) below:

28) a. (Ele) já encontrou a chave.
   ‘He has already found the key.’ (Santos, 2003:269)

   b. (Ele) já encontrou a chave?
   ‘He has already found the key.’ (Santos, 2003:269)

   [Portuguese]

In addition to interrogative intonation, some non-standard European Portuguese varieties may recur to a morphosyntactic strategy for marking yes/no questions. This involves a cleft-like construction that resembles very much the structure of French yes/no questions:

29) a. (Tu) o fazes?
   ‘Are you doing it?’ (Rudder, 2012:110)

   b. É que (tu) o fazes?
   ‘Are you doing it?’ (Rudder, 2012:110)

   [Non-standard European Portuguese]

As in French, a declarative sentence can be turned into a polar question by adding a copula, followed by an overt complementizer. I consider these constructions as an instance of sentence-initial QP, following up on Dryer’s treatment of *est-ce que* questions in French.

### 2.2.3 Spanish

As in many other Romance languages, interrogative intonation is the standard yes/no question-marking device in all Spanish varieties. An example is given in (30.a-b) below:

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6 As pointed out by a.o. Green (1988), Escandell Vidal (1999) and Butt & Benjamin (2000), verb-subject inversion is a specific word order associated with yes/no questions in Spanish.
30) a. Vienes a la fiesta.
   come-PRES.2.Sg to the party
   ‘You are coming to the party.’

                  b. ¿Viene a la fiesta?
                  come-PRES.2.Sg to the party
                  ‘Are you coming to the party?’

                  [Spanish]

However, in some (non-standard) varieties it is possible to mark yes/no questions with
a sentence-initial QP:

31) a. ¿Qué viene a la fiesta?
   QP come-PRES.2.Sg to the party
   ‘Are you coming to the party’? (Pablos, p.c.)
   [Colloquial Peninsular Spanish]

                  b. ¿Qué viene mañana?
                  QP come-PRES.2.Sg tomorrow
                  ‘Is (s)he coming tomorrow’ (Di Tullio, 2010:77)
                  [River-Plate Spanish]

The construction illustrated in (31.a) comes from peninsular Spanish and its use is
mostly confined to a colloquial register. It is characterized by a different intonation
from standard yes/no questions such as (30.b). It is very widespread in the production
of Catalan speakers of Spanish, probably due to the influence of Catalan.

The example in (31.b) comes from River-Plate Spanish, where such constructions are
very frequent. They are not necessarily limited to colloquial situations, as opposed to
what is observed in peninsular Spanish. However, polar questions headed by que often
come with an additional presuppositional meaning in this variety.

A further possibility for marking polar questions in Spanish comes from Dominican
Spanish’. As the Portuguese example in (29), it involves a construction including a
copula and a complementizer:

---

Nevertheless, it is not treated as a yes/no question-marking strategy proper in the present study
because its use is always motivated by language-specific information-structure requirements.
When the subject is a topic it stays in the preverbal position, while it appears after the verb when
it is interpreted as a focus. The same is true for Spanish simple declaratives. Similar
considerations can be extended to Catalan (cf. Hualde, 1992).

7 In fact, this construction type is found in all Spanish varieties but it usually comes with an
additional meaning. In Standard Spanish, for instance, it is only used when the speaker wants to
suggest a possible motivation for the behavior of the interlocutor. These cases will not be
discussed in the present work.
I consider these constructions as an instance of sentence-initial QP, following up on Dryer’s treatment of est-ce que questions in French.

### 2.2.4 Catalan

Polar questions may be introduced by a number of sentence-initial QPs in Catalan. As pointed out by Prieto & Rigau (2005, 2007), Catalan has a very rich system of sentence-initial QPs. This includes dedicated interrogative markers for (anti-)expectational and confirmatory questions. However, only unbiased yes/no questions will be discussed in this section.

Two minimal pairs of declaratives and their corresponding polar questions in two varieties of Catalan are provided in (33.a-b) and (34.a-b) below:

33) a. Plou.
   rain-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘It is raining’. (Prieto & Rigau, 2007:1)

   b. Que plou?
   QP rain-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘Is it raining?’ (Prieto & Rigau, 2007:1)

34) a. Vindran a Ciutadella.
   come-FUT.3.Pl to Ciutadella
   ‘They will come to Ciutadella.’ (Prieto & Rigau, 2007:1)

   b. O vindran a Ciutadella?
   QP come-FUT.3.Pl to Ciutadella
   ‘Will they come to Ciutadella?’ (Prieto & Rigau, 2007:1)

Both que and o are sentence-initial QPs and they do not trigger any special interpretation of the question that they introduce.

In addition to QPs, Central Catalan can also mark yes/no questions through Interrogative Intonation alone. An example is provided in (35.b):
The typology of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects

35) a. L’ heu llogada.
   it.Obj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg rented
   ‘You rented it’. (Prieto & Rigau, 2007:5)

   b. L’ heu llogada?
   it.Obj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg rented
   ‘Did you rent it?’ (Prieto & Rigau, 2007:5)

[Central Catalan]

Nevertheless, the use of QPs does not seem to be optional in Catalan. Their presence patterns with a specific intonation that is different from the intonation of polar questions not headed by QPs (cf. Payrató, 2002). This suggests that the choice between QPs and of a special intonation should be regarded as a grammatical choice between two different yes/no question-marking strategies.

2.2.5 Romanian

Interrogative Intonation is the most widespread yes/no question-marking strategy in Romanian. An example is given below:

36) a. Va ploua azi.
   go-3.Sg.PRES rain-PRES.3.Sg today
   ‘It is going to rain today’. (Camelia Constantinescu, p.c.)

   b. Va ploua azi?
   go-PRES.3.Sg rain-PRES.3.Sg today
   ‘Is it going to rain today?’ (Camelia Constantinescu, p.c.)

[Romanian]

In addition to Interrogative Intonation, a morphosyntactic device may be optionally employed to mark polar questions. The sentence-initial QP oare can be used to turn declarative sentences into yes/no questions, as shown in the example below:

37) Oare va ploua azi?
   QP go-PRES.3.Sg rain-PRES.3.Sg today
   ‘Is it going to rain today?’ (Camelia Constantinescu, p.c.)

[Romanian]

Oare is described in traditional grammars of Romanian as a QP that adds a dubitative meaning to polar questions. Unlike most QPs, however, it also occurs in embedded contexts. An example is provided in (38) below:
2.3 Summary and \textit{ad interim} conclusions

An overview of the yes/no question-marking strategies employed by the major Romance languages is provided in table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Yes/no question-marking strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP, interrogative word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalan</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data discussed in section 2.2.1 to 2.2.5 show that French is the language with the widest choice of grammatical strategies to mark yes/no questions among Romance languages. In addition to Interrogative Intonation, which is available in all Romance languages, French may employ two morphosyntactic devices: a sentence-initial QP and interrogative word order. Although the choice of these strategies is regulated by specific syntactic and pragmatic constraints, it is possible to conclude that French displays a richer system yes/no question-marking system than any other (standard) Romance language.

On the contrary, Standard Italian is the Romance language with the least articulated yes/no-marking system, interrogative intonation being the only available grammatical device.

Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan and Romanian score in between French and Italian in the richness of their yes/no question-marking systems. Two grammatical devices are available in these languages: Interrogative Intonation and a sentence-initial QP. Only Catalan, however, may optionally choose between Interrogative Intonation and a sentence-initial QP.

In Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, the use of a sentence-initial QP is constrained by pragmatic factors that do not arise in Catalan.

3. The typology of yes/no question-marking in Italian Dialects

In the previous sections of the present chapter, I provided an overview of the grammatical devices employed to mark yes/no questions in the world’s languages. Eventually, the discussion focused on Romance. It was shown that only a few of the yes/no question-marking strategies available in the world’s languages are actually attested in Romance.

In this section, the focus of our discussion will be further narrowed down to Italian dialects. The aim is to provide a comprehensive typological overview of the yes/no question-marking strategies available in the Italian dialects. Further, it will be investigated whether such a typological classification can fit into a broader typology of polar questions (Ultan, 1978; Sadock & Zwicky, 1985; Dryer, 2005).

As is well known, the degree of morphosyntactic microvariation found in Italian dialects is very high. Yes/no question-marking is not an exception in this regard. Whereas standard Italian can only mark polar questions through interrogative intonation, Italian dialects display a rich variety of morphosyntactic devices. Because of this huge variation, it is necessary to make some choices to categorize dialectal data according to general typological principles. The choices made to build up the typology of yes/no question-marking strategies in Italian dialects as presented in this chapter will be discussed in the following subsections.

The structure of the present section is as follows: the type of dialectal data collected for the present work will be discussed in section 3.1. Then, 4 subsections will follow, each of them dedicated to one main category of yes/no question-marking strategies found in Italian dialects. Some of these categories include several strategies. It will be shown that some yes/no question devices found in Italian dialects challenge typological classifications of polar questions as proposed by e.g. Dryer (2005). This issue will be tackled in the discussion in 4.
3.1 The data

Before beginning our exploration of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects, it is necessary to spend a few words to describe the type of dialectal data included in this chapter.

The rich literature available on the topic served as a starting point for my research. Although no comprehensive typology of polar questions in the Italian dialects has been proposed before, a considerable amount of work is available on strictly related topics such as subject clitic-verb inversion (cf. Poletto, 1993, 1999, 2000; Munaro, 1997, 2000; Manzini & Savoia, 2005; Pollock, 2000), non-standard interrogatives (cf. Munaro & Obenauer, 1999; Obenauer & Poletto, 2000; Munaro, 2005), question particles (cf. Poletto & Zanuttini, 2003, 2010; Munaro & Poletto, 2003; Garzorio, 2004; Manzini & Savoia, 2005; Munaro, 2005; Damonte & Garzorio, 2008, 2009) and clause typing (cf. Rizzi, 1997, Munaro, 2003). In fact, there are some works that offer a typological insight on question formation. However, they are mostly restricted to Northern Italian dialects and do not specifically focus on yes/no questions (cf. Benincà & Poletto, 1997; Munaro, 1997; Parry, 1997; Poletto & Vanelli, 1997; Hack, 2010). It should be mentioned that it is Cruschina’s (2008, 2012) work on yes/no question-marking in Sicilian and other Central and Southern varieties that paved the way for a typological approach to polar questions in Italian dialects.

A considerable amount of the data included in the present chapter, however, is the result of first-hand data collection. A questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was set up and mailed to 34 informants. It should be specified that only Italo-Romance dialects were included in my survey. As a result, non-Romance varieties, such as for instance Cimbrian, Griko and Arbëreshë were not taken into consideration. The traditional division of Italy in macrodialectal areas (Pellegrini, 1977) was taken as the main reference to determine the linguistic areas to be investigated in the present work. At least one speaker was chosen to represent each macrodialectal area. Defining the geographical space of linguistic variation is a central issue in dialectology. Over the last decades, there have been many significant developments on both a conceptual and methodological level as to how the locus and limits of dialectal variation should be defined. However, the remarkable amount of fine-grained linguistic variation that characterizes Italian dialects is still very hard to frame. More specifically, it is extremely difficult to define the boundaries between microdialectal areas and draw the areal limits of linguistic microvariation. This is due to the very high concentration of linguistic variants in such a limited geographical area. This unique situation resulted from interplay of historical, cultural, social and economic factors that has no parallel in any other European country. For these reasons, it is necessary to stress that the aim of the present work is to present an accurate picture of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects but by no means complete. A map illustrating the fieldwork locations covered in this study is provided in figure 1 below.
Fieldwork locations:
1. Abbadia Cerreto (LO), Lombardy
2. Albiano (TN), Trentino Alto Adige
3. Ancona, Marches
4. Arenzano (GE), Liguria
5. Arielli (CH), Abruzzo
6. Ayas (AO), Aosta Valley
7. Bari, Apulia
8. Bergamo, Lombardy
9. Carrara (MS), Tuscany
10. Castro dei Volsci (FR), Lazio
11. Civitella in Val dichiana (AR), Tuscany
12. Cosenza, Calabria
13. Dorgali (NU), Sardinia
14. Este (PD), Veneto
15. Florence, Tuscany
The questionnaire includes 15 questions on different aspects of yes/no question-marking and the complementizer system of Italian dialects (see Appendix 1 for the complete set of materials used in the questionnaire). No grammaticality judgments were required from the informants. Rather, they were presented with different yes/no question types and asked whether those types were productive in their dialects. Also, they were asked to translate several sentences which contained different kinds of complementizers and wh-elements. A special attention was dedicated to this part because I wanted to check whether any correlation exists between the complementizer system and the availability of certain yes/no question-marking devices. The questionnaire was not specifically designed for one dialect group. As a result, many questions were not relevant for speakers of Northern varieties and vice versa, which made the compilation of the questionnaire very fast.

Usually, old informants that live in isolated communities are regarded as the unique source of authentic dialectal data. Nevertheless, I decided not to concentrate on the more archaic forms found in the speech of a minority of elderly speakers in remote locations. Rather, I investigated Italian dialects as they are currently spoken by the majority of the population, in order to obtain truly synchronic data. Therefore, I selected a group of informants composed of relatively young, high educated dialect speakers, with an average age of 38 years. An overview of their gender, age, educational level and region of origin is provided in table 2 below.
Table 2: Overview of the informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Trentino Alto Adige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Liguria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Abruzzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Aosta Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Apulia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Liguria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>Lazio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>Tuscany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Calabria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Sardinia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Veneto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Apulia</td>
</tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Tuscany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>Abruzzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>BA degree</td>
<td>Campania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>BA degree</td>
<td>Campania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Tuscany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Lombardy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Sicily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Lazio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Apulia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Apulia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Friuli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>MA degree</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>Molise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Interrogative word order

As discussed in section 2.1.4, interrogative word order is a relatively uncommon yes/no question-marking strategy in the world’s languages from a typological point of view. This device is mostly found in Indo-European and is particularly frequent in Germanic languages. Against this trend, one of the most wide-spread morphosyntactic devices

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8 Among Romance languages, only French may use interrogative inversion to mark yes/no questions.
for marking polar questions in Italian dialects involves the use of Interrogative Word Order. More specifically, three strategies found in Italian dialects fall under the category of Interrogative Word Order:

- subject clitic-verb inversion;
- *do*-support;
- clefted polar constructions.

Subject clitic-verb inversion will be discussed in section 3.2.1. *Do*-support will be the topic of section 3.2.2. Finally, clefted polar questions will be tackled in section 3.2.3.

Before entering the discussion, however, it is necessary to mention another construction that is often described as being typical of polar questions in traditional grammars. In Sardinian and Sicilian, it is very frequent to find yes/no questions characterized by predicate fronting (cf. Jones, 1993; Cruschini, 2006, 2010; Cruschini & Remberger, 2009; Remberger, 2010; Mensching & Remberger, 2010b):

40) a. Mandicatu as?
eaten-PP have-PRES.2.Sg
‘Have you eaten?’ (Jones, 1993:339)

b. Spusata sini?
mariied-PP be-PRES.2.Sg
‘Are you married?’ (Cruschini, 2010:252)

Nevertheless, this construction is not specific to yes/no questions. It is found very frequently in exclamative and declarative sentences, too. In addition, there are no restrictions on the syntactic categories that can be fronted. Cruschini (2006, 2010), Mensching & Remberger (2010b) and Cruschini & Remberger (2009) analyze these constructions as instances of Focus Fronting, which arises as a consequence of the information structure packaging of the sentence in these varieties. For these reasons, predicate fronting will not be analyzed as a yes/no question-marking device in the present study.

3.2.1 Subject clitic-verb inversion

Subject clitic-verb inversion, or interrogative inversion, is a morphosyntactic phenomenon that consists in the encliticization of a pronominal subject onto the inflected verb. In fact, interrogative inversion is a general term which refers a heterogeneous class of phenomena with different syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties. At least three types of subject clitic-verb inversion have been described in the literature so far (cf. Poletto, 1993, 1999, 2000; Munaro, 1997, 2000; Manzini & Savoia, 2005; Pollock, 2000). The first type is subject clitic-verb inversion proper, i.e. the configuration that obtains when a subject clitic appears preverbally in declarative sentences and postverbally in yes/no questions. The postverbal form is usually slightly different from the preverbal one from a morphological point of view. Also, it is
frequent to find mixed paradigms, where only one or two persons display inversion and the other persons display a different pattern. An example of this type of subject clitic-verb inversion is provided in (41) below.

41) a. dərmə 'I sleep'
   ti dərmə 'you sleep'
   a/la dərmə 'he/she sleeps'
   dormimo 'we sleep'
   dormə 'you sleep'
   i/le dərmə 'they sleep'

b. dərmə? 'do I sleep?'
   dərmis-tu? 'do you sleep?'
   dərm-elo/-ela? 'does he/she sleep?'
   dormimo? 'do we sleep?'
   dormə? 'do you sleep?'
   dərm-eli/-ele? 'do they sleep?' (Manzini & Savoia, 2005:363) [Chioggia, VE]

The paradigm reported in (41.a) is defective, as it lacks subject clitics for the 1st person singular and plural, and for the 2nd person plural. As a result, no inversion can take place when polar questions are formed, as shown in the corresponding forms in (41.b). All other persons display inversion; the preverbal subject clitics in (41.a) become enclitic elements attached to the verb. Constructions of this type have been traditionally analyzed as a combination of the raising of the inflected verb to C, followed by encliticization of the subject pronoun with the inflected verb in C. Constructions of this type have been traditionally analyzed as a combination of the raising of the inflected verb to C, followed by encliticization of the subject pronoun with the inflected verb in C (cf. Poletto, 1993, 2000, 2003; Rizzi & Roberts, 1989).

In fact, it is not clear whether the subject clitics found in the declarative paradigm are distinct from those found in the interrogative paradigm. Some scholars have argued that subject clitics and interrogative clitics are of a fundamentally different nature. It has been proposed that interrogative clitics fall under the category of inflectional morphology, as opposed to the subject clitics found in declaratives (cf. Fava, 1993; Hulk, 1993; Vanelli, 1998; Sportiche, 1999; Goria, 2002). In this study, Poletto’s (2000b) criteria will be taken as the main diagnostics to establish whether or not a set of subject clitics is distinct from the corresponding set of interrogative clitics in a given dialect. According to Poletto (2000b), whether subject clitics are distinct from interrogative clitics depends on:

- whether the number of clitics inside each paradigm is different;
- whether or not subject clitics and interrogative clitics have a different morphology;
- whether or not they co-occur.

---

9 Some scholars have proposed that interrogative enclitics target the highest projection of the IP rather than C (see Munaro, 1997).
Following these criteria, the clitics found in declarative and interrogative paradigm of the dialect of Chioggia (see ex. 41) are not distinct. I will treat similar cases as instances of subject clitic-verb inversion proper rather than as verbal affixation. This pattern is found in five of the investigated dialects. These are the dialects spoken in:

- Albiano (TR), Trentino;
- Bergamo, Lombardy;
- Este (PD), Veneto;
- San Bonifacio (VR), Veneto;
- Sutrio (UD), Friuli.

It is necessary to point out that none of these dialects display inversion for all grammatical persons. However, they all use inversion whenever they can, i.e. whenever there is a subject clitic in the declarative paradigm, there is one in the interrogative paradigm, too. In addition, the morphological shape of the clitics found in the interrogative paradigm is the same of (or at least very similar to) the clitics in the declarative paradigm. Finally, the clitics found in the interrogative paradigm never co-occur with those found in the declarative paradigm. For these reasons, it possible to conclude that they are in fact the same elements. The dialects of Este (PD) and San Bonifacio (VR) only display inversion for the 2nd and 3rd person singular and the 3rd person plural. Yes/no questions involving other grammatical persons are only marked through Interrogative Intonation. The data are reported in (42) and (43) below:

42) a. dormo  'I sleep'
    te dormi  'you sleep'
    el dorme  'he sleeps'
    dormimo  'we sleep'
    dormite  'you sleep'
    i dorme  'they sleep'

    b. dormo?  'Do I sleep?'
    dormi-to?  'do you sleep?'
    dorme-o?  'does he sleep?'
    dormimo?  'do we sleep?'
    dormite?  'do you sleep?'
    dorme-i?  'do they sleep?'  

    [Este, PD]

43) a. dormo  'I sleep'
    te dormi  'you sleep'
    el/la dorme  'he/she sleeps'
    dormimo  'we sleep'
    dormi  'you sleep'
    i dorme  'they sleep'
The typology of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects

b. dormo? ‘do I sleep?’
   dormi-to? ‘do you sleep?’
   dorme-lo/la? ‘does he/she sleep?’
   dormimo? ‘do we sleep?’
   dormi? ‘do you sleep?’
   dorme-li? ‘do they sleep?’

[San Bonifacio, VR]

The dialect of Bergamo only displays inversion for 3rd person, both singular and plural. Yes/no questions involving 1st and 2nd person singular are only marked through interrogative intonation. A different clitic is attached to the verb when the question involves 1st and 2nd person plural. The declarative and interrogative paradigms are shown in example (44) below:

44) a. dórme ‘I sleep’
   te dórmet ‘you sleep’
   (a)l dórma/la dórma ‘he/she sleeps’
   an dórma ‘we sleep’
   dormí ‘you sleep’
   i dórma ‘they sleep’

b. dórme? ‘do I sleep?’
   te dórmet ? ‘do you sleep?’
   dórme-l/-la? ‘does he/she sleep?’
   an dórme-i ? ‘do we sleep?’
   dormí-f? ‘do you sleep?’
   dórme-i? ‘do they sleep?’

[Bergamo]

Finally, the dialect of Sutrio (UD) only applies inversion with the 2nd and 3rd person singular. Polar questions involving all other grammatical persons are formed by attaching an invariable clitic to the verb, which never shows up in the declarative paradigm. An example is shown in (45):

45) a. i duarmi ‘I sleep’
   tu duarmis ‘you sleep’
   al duarm ‘(s)he sleeps’
   a durmin ‘we sleep’
   i durmis ‘you sleep’
   a duarmin ‘they sleep’

b. duarmi-o? ‘do I sleep?’
   duarmis-tu? ‘do you sleep?’
   duarmi-al? ‘does (s)he sleep?’
   durmin-o? ‘do we sleep?’
   durmis-o? ‘do you sleep?’
   duarmin-o? ‘do they sleep?’

[Sutrio, UD]
A second type of subject clitic verb-inversion that occurs in many Italian dialects involves clitic doubling. It results in a configuration where a proclitic subject co-occurs with an enclitic one (Poletto, 1993; Manzini & Savoia, 2005; Munaro, 2010), as shown in the example below:

46) a. t 'durum 'you sleep'
   e/la 'do rm 'he/she sleeps'
   a dur'm 'we sleep'
   a dur'mi 'you sleep'
   a/al 'do rm 'they sleep'

b. a durm-at? 'do you sleep?'
   a do rm-al? 'does (s)he sleep?'
   a do rm-e-ma? 'do we sleep?'
   a do rm:-i? 'do you sleep?'
   a do rm-i? 'do they sleep?' (Manzini & Savoia, 2005:374)

As already mentioned, it is not uncommon to find mixed paradigms exhibiting different morphosyntactic properties. In the paradigms reported in (46), only the 2nd and 3rd person singular display this type of complex interrogative inversion. As shown by the contrast between (46.a) and (46.b), the preverbal subject cliticizes onto the verb and co-occurs with an invariable preverbal clitic, which is absent from the corresponding forms in the declarative paradigm. Manzini & Savoia (2005) point out that the preverbal clitic is not always invariable. In some Piedmontese dialects, for instance, it can encode person specification. This type of complex inversion is not found in any of the dialects that were investigated for the present study.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there is a third type of interrogative inversion that also displays a type of clitic doubling. However, it differs from the inversion shown in (46) in that the preverbal clitic does not cliticize onto the verb in the interrogative paradigm. Rather, it stays in its preverbal position and co-occurs with a different postverbal clitic, which is absent from the declarative paradigm (cf. Manzini & Savoia, 2005). This type of doubling will not be treated as an instantiation of interrogative inversion in the present work. It will be analyzed as a type of verbal affixation that falls under Dryer’s (2005) category of interrogative verb morphology (see section 2.1.2).

3.2.2 Do-support

In some Alpine Lombard dialects, polar questions are characterized by the insertion of a dummy auxiliary that supports inflectional features and triggers inversion with the subject clitic (Benincà & Poletto, 1998; Manzini & Savoia, 2005). This is especially striking because such a syntactic device only finds a parallel in Modern English do-

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10 The first person singular was not reported in the original example of Manzini & Savoia (2005:374).
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support. Following Dryer’s (2005) categorization of do-support in English, this strategy will be analyzed as an instance of interrogative word order in the present study. Benincà & Poletto (1998) report the insertion of a dummy auxiliary to form yes/no questions for the dialect spoken in Monno (BS). The verb fare ‘do’ is obligatorily inserted in root yes/no questions but never surfaces in declarative sentences. An example is shown in (47) below:

47) a. Fe -t majà?
    do-PRES.2.Sg -you.Subj.CL eat-INF
    ‘Are you eating?’ (Benincà & Poletto, 1998:41)

b. Fa -l plöer?
    do-PRES.3.Sg -it.Subj.CL rain-INF
    ‘Is it raining?’ (Benincà & Poletto, 1998:41)

[Monno, BS]

As in English, do-support is not restricted to polar interrogatives in Monnese. It occurs in wh-questions too, where it is in complementary distribution with simple subject clitic-verb inversion. A minimal pair is illustrated in (48.a-b).

48) a. Ngo fe -t ndà?
    where do-PRES.2.Sg -you.Subj.CL go-INF
    ‘Where are you going?’ (Benincà & Poletto, 1998:42)

b. Ngo ve -t?
    where go-PRES.2.Sg -you.Subj.CL
    ‘Where are you going?’ (Benincà & Poletto, 1998:42)

[Monno, BS]

Benincà & Poletto (1998) analyze Monnese do-support as a last resort strategy, triggered by the impossibility of the verb to raise to a given functional projection in the IP domain.

There are many interesting differences and similarities between English and Monnese do-support but for the time being they will not be included in the present discussion. From the examples reported in (47) and (48), however, it is possible to conclude that Monnese do-support is not a specific morphosyntactic device for marking yes/no questions. Rather, it appears to be a general question-marking strategy.

Another interesting set of data comes from the Sicilian varieties spoken in Cefalù and Pollina (PA). As shown in the examples in (48), it is possible to insert a dummy do in yes/no questions:

49) a. Iri m’ Palermo fai?
    go-INF to Palermo do-PRES.2.Sg
    ‘Are you going to Palermo?’ (Bentley, 2011:5)
b. L’ armali sempri suppurtari avi a fari?
   the animal always put.up.with-INF have-PRES.3.Sg. to do-INF
   ‘Does (s)he always have to put up with the animal?’ (Mirto, 2009:157)
   [Cefalù and Pollina, PA]

As opposed to the Alpine Lombard dialects discussed in Benincà & Poletto (1998) and Manzini & Savoia (2005), however, do-insertion is not limited to interrogative contexts. It appears very frequently in declaratives too, as illustrated in (50) below:

50) a. Babbiari fa.
   joke-INF do-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘He is joking.’

b. U Palermu sempri pareggiari fa.
   the Palermo always draw-INF do-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘The Palermo team always draws (in its matches).’
   [Cefalù and Pollina, PA]

According to Mirto (2004, 2009) and Bentley (2011), these constructions are in fact pseudo-clefts where the infinitival part represents new or contrastive information. Therefore, this strategy is not specific to yes/no questions. However, it is interesting to point out that English do-support is not specific to yes/no questions either. It can be used as an intensifier in declarative contexts, as shown in (51):

51) She DID call.

In the English sentence in (51), do is focused and carries a pitch accent. The reverse is true for Sicilian, where the infinitival verb that precedes fare is focused and carries pitch accent:

52) DORMIRI fai?
   sleep do-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘Are you sleeping?’ (Bentley, 2011:5)
   [Cefalù and Pollina, PA]

Although the parallelism between the dialects of Cefalù and Pollina and English is an imperfect one, it still provides evidence for classifying Sicilian do-support as a possible yes/no question-marking strategy.

3.2.3 Cleft constructions

A final type of yes/no question-marking strategy that falls under the category of interrogative word order is represented by cleft constructions. Clefts are very frequent in Northern Italian dialects and occur both polar and wh-questions. By contrast, they are completely absent from most Central and Southern Italian dialects.
Although cleft questions are usually associated to a specific information packaging of the sentence, the data collected through my questionnaire strongly suggest that this is not always the case. There seems to be no clear-cut distinction between cleft questions that come with a specific information structure-driven interpretation and neutral yes/no questions in some dialects. An example of a neutral clefted yes/no question in a Piedmontese dialect is provided in (53) below:

53) É -lo da sì k’ as passa?
   be-PRES.3.Sg -it.Subj.CL through here that IMP.CL pass-3.Sg.PRES
   ‘Does one pass by here?’ (Brero & Bertodatti, 1988, in Parry, 1997:95)
   [Piedmontese]

It is true that most speakers of Northern Italian Dialects regard polar clefted questions as more appropriate in communicative situations where there is some mutually shared background information. Nevertheless, they might use this type of constructions also when such information is missing. These considerations apply to the dialects spoken in Este (PD) and Ortonovo (SP), for instance, but can probably be extended to larger dialectal areas above the Massa-Senigallia line. Two examples from these varieties mentioned above are reported in (54) below:

54) a. Sé el pan che te ghe comprà?
   be-PRES.3.Sg the bread that you.Subj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg buy-PP
   ‘Is it bread that you bought?/Did you buy bread?/You bought bread, right?’
   [Este, PD]

b. I è l pan k a comprà?
   it.Subj.CL be-PRES.3.Sg the bread that you.Subj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg buy-PP
   ‘Is it bread that you bought?/Did you buy bread?’
   [Ortonovo, SP]

In the dialect of Este, clefted polar questions are also used as confirmation questions, as shown by the multiple translation of the sentence in (54.a). This indicates that their semantics is no longer entirely dependent on information structure constraints. Further evidence in favor of this idea is provided by the generalized use of clefted wh-questions in (almost) all Northern Italian Dialects. An example is shown in (54) below:

55) Chi xe che ti ga visto?
   who be-PRES.2.Sg that you.Subj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg see-PP
   ‘Who did you see?’ (Franco, p.c.)
   [Venetian]

As opposed to clefted polar questions, clefted wh-questions are completely equivalent to standard wh-questions without clefts. They do need to be licensed by a specific context.
3.3 Interrogative verb morphology

As discussed in section 3.2, Northern Italian Dialects display at least three phenomena that fall under the category of interrogative word order. One of them is characterized by the enclicitization of the subject clitic onto the verb. Another one involves clitic doubling and results in a configuration where the preverbal clitic cliticize onto the verb in polar questions, while a different clitic is inserted in a preverbal position. These two types of interrogative inversion have been classified as instances of interrogative word order because they both involve movement of the verb to the left of the subject clitic. Poletto’s (2000b) criteria for determining whether the set of subject clitic is distinct from the set of interrogative clitics in a given dialect were taken as the main diagnostic indicator.

The third type of interrogative inversion, however, was not included in the section on interrogative word order. Described in Manzini & Savoia (2005) as complex inversion, it involves the insertion of an interrogative affix onto the verb, which never shows up in the declarative paradigm. The preverbal subject clitic retains its preverbal position in interrogatives, too. If there are more preverbal subject clitics, the same order of the declarative is preserved. This configuration suggests that no inversion takes place and that the set of subject clitics is distinct from the set of interrogative clitics in these dialects. Taking a look at these data through the lens of Poletto’s (2000b) criteria corroborates this idea, as preverbal clitics always co-occur with interrogative affixes and have a different morphological shape. For these reasons, these constructions will be analyzed as an instance of interrogative verb morphology rather than as interrogative word order in the present work.

An example from a dialect that marks polar questions through interrogative verb morphology is provided below:

56) a. a dромm /uni027Eø:m     ‘I sleep’
i t dромm /uni027Eømi     ‘you sleep’
u/a dромm /uni027Eøm       ‘he/she sleeps’
a dримма /uni027Eøm-a       ‘we sleep’
i dромm /uni027Eøm-i       ‘you sleep’
i dрому /uni027Eøm-i       ‘they sleep’

b. a дром-m-nі? /uni027Eøm-ni? ‘do I sleep?’
i t dром-m-tи? /uni027Eøm-ti? ‘do you sleep?’
u dром-ле/a дром-m-a ‘does he/she sleep?’
a dримм-m-nі? /uni027Eøm-m-a ‘do we sleep?’
i дромм /uni027Eøm ‘do you sleep?’
i dром-m-n-u? /uni027Eøm-n-u? ‘do they sleep?’ (Manzini & Savoia, 2005:377) [Cortemilia, CN]

As illustrated in (56), polar questions are formed by adding an interrogative affix to the verb in the dialect of Cortemilia. Preverbal subject clitics maintain their preverbal position also in the interrogative paradigm. The interrogative affixes encode person specification, i.e. each grammatical person has a dedicated interrogative affix. Although
the set of interrogative affixes is relatively rich in this dialect, the paradigm in (56.b) is
defective as it lacks an interrogative affix for the 2nd person plural. Polar questions
involving the 2nd person plural are only marked through Interrogative Intonation.
It should be pointed out, however, that most dialects that mark polar questions through
Interrogative Verb Morphology display paradigms that are way more defective than that
of the dialect of Cortemilia. An example is provided by the dialect spoken in Forlì,
whose paradigm has been mentioned before in the discussion on interrogative
inversion involving clitic doubling (see section 1.3.2.1). The paradigm in (46) is repeated
here as (57).

57) a. a dorum   ‘I sleep’
    t durum   ‘you sleep’
    e/la do̞rmə ‘he/she sleeps’
    a durmə ‘we sleep’
    a durmə ‘you sleep’
    a/al do̞rmə ‘they sleep’

b. (ɔ̃-ja da v’nì?) ‘do I have to come?’
    a durm-at?  ‘do you sleep?’
    a do̞rm-al?  ‘does (s)he sleep?’
    a dûrmè-mə? ‘do we sleep?’
    a dûrmè-t? ‘do you sleep?’
    a do̞rm-i?  ‘do they sleep?’ (Manzini & Savoia, 2005:374)

As shown in (57), the dialect of Forlì only displays specific interrogative verb
morphology for 1st, 2nd and 3rd person plural. Whereas the preverbal undifferentiated
clitic a maintains its preverbal position, an interrogative affix that encodes person
specification cliticizes onto the verb. This sharply contrasts with the pattern exhibited
by the 2nd and 3rd person singular, where the preverbal clitic a only appears in the
interrogative paradigm.
Among the dialects investigated for the present work, only three employ interrogative
verb morphology to mark polar questions. These are the dialects spoken in:

- Bergamo, Lombardy;
- Sutrio (UD), Friuli;
- Frabosa Soprana (CN), Piedmont.

The dialects of Bergamo and Sutrio have already been mentioned in the section on
interrogative word order because they display a mixed paradigm where different yes/no
question-marking strategies are employed. The declarative and interrogative paradigm
for the dialect of Bergamo was given in example (44), repeated here as (58).
The paradigm reported in (58) shows that an interrogative affix cliticizes onto the verb in the interrogative form for the 1st and 2nd person plural. This interrogative affix is not present in the declarative paradigm. As in the dialects of Cortemilia and Forlì, it encodes person specification in the dialects of Bergamo.

A different pattern is found in the Friulian dialect of Sutrio, where the interrogative affix is undifferentiated. As the dialect of Bergamo, the dialect of Sutrio has already been mentioned in the section on interrogative word order, as the 2nd and 3rd person singular display subject clitic-verb inversion. The declarative and interrogative paradigms shown in (45) are reported in (59) below:

59) a. i duarmi  ‘I sleep’
tu duarmis  ‘you sleep’
al duarm  ‘he/she/it sleeps’
a durmin  ‘we sleep’
i durmis  ‘you sleep’
a duarmin  ‘they sleep’

b. duarmi-o?  ‘do I sleep?’
duarmis-tu?  ‘do you sleep?’
duarmi-al?  ‘does he/she/it sleep?’
durmin-o?  ‘do we sleep?’
durmis-o?  ‘do you sleep?’
duarmin-o?  ‘do they sleep?’

[Sutrio, UD]

As shown in (59.b), the undifferentiated interrogative affix -o cliticizes onto the verb to mark yes/no questions involving the 1st person singular and plural, and the 2nd and 3rd person plural. The preverbal subject clitics that occur in the declarative paradigm never show up in the interrogative paradigm. This configuration is not likely to result from interrogative inversion because the preverbal clitics are differentiated with respect to person in the declarative paradigm, as opposed to the interrogative paradigm. The only true instances of interrogative inversion in the dialect of Sutrio are found with the 2nd and 3rd person singular. For these persons, the subject clitics encode person
specification and maintain the same morphological shape in both the declarative and the interrogative paradigm. Another example of a dialect that marks polar questions through interrogative verb morphology is provided by the Piedmontese variety spoken in Frabosa Soprana (CN). The data are shown in (60) below:

60) a. i drøm    'I sleep'
    t drømi    'you sleep'
    u/a drøma   'he/she sleeps'
    i drümima   'we sleep'
    i drømi    'you sleep'
    i drømu    'they sleep'

b. (i) drøm-le?   'do I sleep?'
   (it) drøm-tu?   'do you sleep?'
   (u/a) drøm-lu?/-le? 'does he/she sleep?'
   i drümima?   'do we sleep?'
   i drømi?    'do you sleep?'
   (i) drøm-le?   'do they sleep?'

[Frabosa Soprana, CN]

As in most dialects discussed so far, the interrogative paradigm in (60.b) displays more than one yes/no question-marking strategy. While questions involving the 1st and the 2nd person plural are only signaled through interrogative intonation, the other persons are marked by an interrogative affix. The 1st person singular and the 3rd person plural display the same affix, -le. This suggests that -le does not encode person specification. The same undifferentiated affix is found in questions involving the 3rd person singular feminine. On the contrary, a specific affix is used for the 3rd person masculine, as well as for the 2nd person singular.

The fact that preverbal subject clitics are optional in polar questions and can co-occur with interrogative affixes provides further evidence for their distinct status in the varieties discussed in the present section.

3.4 QPs

As discussed in section 2.1.1, QPs are very wide-spread in the world’s languages from a typological point of view (Dryer, 2005, 2008). They are generally classified according to the position they occupy in the sentence. They can occur in the sentence-initial, sentence-final or second position (either after the second word or the second constituent of the sentence). In addition, some types of QPs always occur right after a specific constituent, such as for instance the lexical verb. Finally, some other QPs may have a relatively free word order because they function as focus markers and appear right before or after the element that they focalize.

QPs are used quite frequently in Romance languages too, such as French and Catalan (and marginally Portuguese and Spanish). All QPs found in standard Romance languages are sentence-initial.
Italian dialects do not represent an exception in this respect. The use of QPs is indeed very pervasive in many local varieties. Although more frequent in Central and Southern Italian dialects, QPs are found in many Northern dialects too. The syntactic and semantic features of QPs in Italian dialects represent a fertile field for research, as shown by the growing interest in this topic in recent years (cf. Munaro & Poletto, 2002; Obenauer, 2004, 2006; Garzonio, 2004, 2012; Cruschina, 2008, 2012). In fact, the distribution of QPs is subject to a very high degree of microvariation throughout the Italian peninsula, which has never been described in detail before. Therefore, it is necessary to provide some analytical tools before discussing the data, in order to be able to capture the complete picture in all its facets.

To start with, QPs in Italian dialects can be classified both on a syntactic and on a semantic level, yielding different types of typological distinctions. Both the syntactic and the semantic sides of the issue will be explored in the present section.

It should be mentioned that there is no widely shared consensus as to which grammatical elements can be regarded as actual QPs (cf. Bailey, 2010; Biberauer & Sheehan, 2011b). One very general property of the elements traditionally labeled as QPs is that they all exhibit some degree of semantic, phonological and/or morphosyntactic defectivity. Some of the specific properties that all QPs seem to have in common are discussed in Bailey (2010), following up on Struckmeier’s (2008) and Bayer & Obenauer’s (2008) analysis of German modal particles with QPs. Bailey’s (2010) summary of the core properties of QPs in the world’s languages is reported below:

- they constitute a closed lexical class;
- they are often stressless (or may be phonologically null);
- they do not select an argument as a complement;
- they lack descriptive content;
- they are invariant in form;
- they usually have a lexical counterpart to which they are historically related;
- they are immobile;
- they are typically monosyllabic;
- they cannot be modified;
- they appear in fixed order in relation to other particles of the same class;
- they are sensitive to sentence type;
- they usually appear only in matrix clauses.

[Bailey, 2010:25]

As pointed out in Biberauer & Sheehan (2011b), however, features such as those listed in Bailey (2010) might just be surface rather than core properties of QPs, which result from the complex interaction of a limited number of deficiency sources. They mention the following potential sources of deficiency:

- inability to project in any way (Toivonen, 2003);
- inability to project full structure (van Riemsdijk, 1998; Cardinaletti, 2011);
- inability to select (Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts, 2010);
- lack of categorial identity/syncategorematicity (Rothstein, 1991; Biberauer, 2009; Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts, 2010; Bayer & Obenauer, 2011);
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- inability to assign Case (Abboh, 2004);
- inability to realize a featurally complex head (cf. Giorgi & Pianesi, 1997; Starke, 2009; Caha, 2009).

The set of properties discussed in Bailey (2010) and Biberauer & Sheehan (2011b) will be taken as a general criterion to determine whether a given grammatical element can be defined as a QP proper in the present work.

As previously mentioned, not only the syntactic side of QPs in Italian dialects will be explored. A discussion of the semantic properties of QPs will also be included in this section. This is necessary because Italian dialects display a rich degree of microvariation when it comes to the semantic contribution of QPs. On the one hand, there are QPs that do not add any specific meaning to the questions where they occur. On the other hand, however, there are many QPs that convey a number of fine-grained semantic interpretations, both in Northern and Southern Italian dialects. An outline of the QPs found in Italian dialects will be provided in section 3.4.1. The semantic properties of QPs will be discussed in itinere.

3.4.1 QPs in Italian dialects

In the present work, the following QPs found in Italian dialects will be discussed:

- Sardinian a and its variants (Jones, 1993, Manzini & Savoia, 2005, Remberger, 2010; Mensching & Remberger, 2010b; Bentley, 2010);
- Tuscan o (Poletto, 2000; Chinellato & Garzonio, 2003; Garzonio, 2004; Lusini, 2008);
- Calabrian ca (Damonte & Garzonio, 2009);
- Central and Southern che (fare) (Leone, 1995; Cruschina, 2008, 2012) and its variants;
- Marchigian perché.

The sentence-initial QP a (and its variants e and e) is mostly found in Northern Sardinian dialects. An example of a yes/no question introduced by a is shown in (61):

61) A faches su brodo?
QP make-PRES.2.Sg the broth
‘Are you making broth?’ (Jones 1993:358)

As shown by the contrast between (62.a) and (62.b), a is in complementary distribution with predicate fronting (see section 1.2.2).
62) a. Istracco ses?
   tired be-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘Are you tired?’ (Jones 1988:339)

b. *A istraccu ses?
   a tired be-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘Are you tired?’ (Remberger & Mensching, 2010:2)  

The QP a may make a semantic contribution to the semantics of the sentences where it occurs, although this is not necessarily the case. As pointed out in Jones (1993) and Bentley (2010), it may signal requests, invitations and offers, in addition to simple requests for information.

The QP po/pa is found in many Lombard, Piedmontese, Venetian, Trentino and Friulian dialects (cf. Munaro & Poletto, 2002, 2003; Manzini & Savoia, 2005). It is obligatory in both yes/no and wh-questions in many Central Dolomitic Ladin varieties (Hack, 2010). As opposed to Sardinian a, it is not sentence-initial. Rather, it displays a relatively free word order, although it occurs most frequently in the sentence-final position. An example from a Lombard dialect is given in (63.a). The data provided in (63.b-c) come from two Trentino dialects:

63) a. /uni0321/ -ei po?
    come-PRES.3.Pl -they.Subj.CL QP
    ‘Are they coming?’  

b. Neg be-PRES.3.Sg -he.Subj.CL QP come-PP
   ‘Didn’t he come?’  

As shown in the examples (63), po/pa co-occurs with subject clitic-verb inversion. Its semantic contribution to the interpretation questions containing po/pa is subject to a great deal of microvariation. In some dialects, such as the Gherdeina dialects described in Hack (2009, 2010), po/pa does not modify the semantics of the questions where it occurs. In other dialects, however, it may induce specific presuppositions and mark the speaker’s surprise or disapproval, for instance. Among others, this is the case of the Pagotto dialect discussed in Munaro & Poletto (2003).

A further case of QP proper is represented by Tuscan o (Poletto, 2000; Chinellato & Garzoni, 2003; Garzoni, 2004; Lusini, 2008). o can be classified as a sentence-initial
QP. If one (or more) element is left-dislocated, it may duplicate and appear before the dislocated element, too\(^\text{11}\). An example is shown in (64) below:

64) a. O un viene anche Maria alla festa?
QP neg come-PRES.2.Sg too Mary to-the party
‘Isn’t Mary coming to the party too?’

b. O alla festa o un ci viene
QP to-the party QP neg there-CL come-PRES.3.Sg
anche Maria
too Mary?
‘Isn’t Mary coming to the party too?’

[Sienese]

The QP *o appears in both yes/no and *wh*-questions, as shown in (65.a-b).

65) a. O un lo conosci?
QP neg Obj.CL know-PRES.2.Sg
‘Don’t you know him?’

b. O che hai comprato?
QP what have-PRES.2.Sg buy-PP
‘What did you buy?’

[Sienese]

The distribution of *o in yes/no questions is, however, characterized by some syntactic restrictions. It can only occur either in negative yes/no questions (see the examples in (64.a-b) and (65.a)), or in yes/no questions introduced by the QP *che*\(^\text{12}\) (see (66.a)). The absence of the negation or of the QP *che* results in ungrammaticality, as shown in (66.b).

66) a. O che vai al mare domani?
QP QP go-PRES.2.Sg to-the sea tomorrow
‘Are you going to the sea tomorrow?’

b. O *(un/che)* vai al mare domani?
QP neg/QP go-PRES.2.Sg to-the sea tomorrow
‘Are you going to the sea tomorrow?’

[Sienese]

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\(^{11}\) As shown in Garzonio (2004) and Damonte & Garzonio (2009) for Florentine, *o can only appear before left-dislocated elements but not before hanging topics. If both elements are present, *o occurs after hanging topic and before left-dislocated elements. The same applies to Sienese (Lusini, 2008).

\(^{12}\) A detailed discussion of the QP *che will be provided later on in this section.
As pointed out in Garzonio (2004), o is used to mark what he calls *non-standard interrogatives* in Florentine. He assumes that o encodes additional properties that modify the default interpretation of questions. In Florentine, o-questions may be of the following types: surprise, can’t-find-the-value, rhetorical, exlamative or imperative questions. As expected, the interpretation of o-questions is subject to variation in Tuscan dialects. As a result, some of the interpretations mentioned above may or may not be present in a given dialect. Nevertheless, it is worth to mention that o always appears in questions that have a special semantics (Garzonio, 2004; Lusini, 2008). Calabrian ca is of a similar nature (Damonte & Garzonio, 2009). It is a sentence-initial QP13 and it is compatible with both yes/no and wh-questions. An example is illustrated in (67) below:

67) a. Ca i/ddru ancora ccà è?
   QP he still here be-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘Is he still here?’
   [Catanzaro]

b. Ca chini u dicià?
   QP who Obj.CL say-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘Who’s saying it?’
   [Crucoli, KR]

As Tuscan o, Calabrian ca always triggers a non-standard interpretation of the question in which it occurs. Some of the most common semantic nuances conveyed by ca are surprise and disapproval. Again, this is subject to a great deal of cross-dialectal variation.

The last bullet in the list provided at the beginning of this section refers to a large family of QPs that is found in all Central and Southern Italian dialects (islands included) under the Massa-Senigallia line. For some reason, this set of data has been overlooked for too long by Italian dialectologists, with the exceptions of Cruschina (2008, 2012) for Sicilian, Garzonio (2004) for Florentine and Lusini (2010) for Sienese. As a result, the data that will be discussed in this section come from my own fieldwork (unless stated otherwise). In these dialects, yes/no questions are introduced by a QP homophonous with the wh-word corresponding to *what*. In some of these dialects, the QP can be followed by a form of the verb *fare ‘do’* or *essere ‘be’*, which is not interpreted lexically but may modify the default semantics of the questions where it occurs. This construction exhibits a very high degree of microvariation in both its syntactic and semantic properties. In the proposed typology of yes/no question-marking strategies in Italian dialects, I chose to categorize this morphosyntactic device into the category of sentence-initial QPs. As will become clear, however, this construction poses several problems for a typological classification such as the one proposed by Dryer (2005). These problems will be discussed in detail in the following pages.

First, an overview will be provided of those dialects where polar questions can be introduced by a sentence initial QP homophonous with the *wh*-word *what*. Then, the

13 As Tuscan o, it occurs between hanging topics and left-dislocated elements (Damonte & Garzonio, 2010).
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Discussion will focus on those dialects where this sentence-initial QP can be followed by a form of the verb *fare* 'do' or *essere* 'be'. The question will be tackled whether the construction with and without *fare* or *essere* are actually the same.

Among the dialects that were investigated for this study, 21 dialects display a yes/no QP that is homophonous with the *wh*-word *what*. A map showing the geographical distribution of these varieties is provided in figure 2.

![Figure 2: Map of locations where yes/no questions can be introduced by a sentence-initial QP homophonous with the *wh*-word *what.*](image)

1. Arielli (CH), Abruzzo;
2. Bari, Apulia;
3. Castro dei Volsci (FR), Lazio;
4. Civitella in Valdichiana (AR), Tuscany;
5. Cosenza, Calabria;
6. Dorgali (NU), Sardinia;
7. Florence, Tuscany;
8. Francavilla Fontana (BR), Apulia;
Some examples of yes/no questions in these dialects are provided in (68) below:

68) a. Che uscite domani?
QP go.out-PRES.3.Pl tomorrow
‘Are you going out tomorrow?’
[Civitella in Valdichiana, AR]

b. Che stamo a anna’?
QP stay-PRES.3.Pl to go-INF
‘Are we leaving?’
[Rome]

c. Che dourmi?
QP sleep-PRES.2.Sg
‘Are you sleeping?’
[Pizzoli, AQ]

d. Chə chiagnə?
QP cry-PRES.2.Sg
‘Are you crying?’
[Trivento, CB]

e. Ce sta chiangi?
QP stay-PRES.2.Sg cry-INF
‘Are you crying?’
[Squinzano, LE]

The question immediately arises whether these QPs are actually derived from a complementizer or from a *wh*-word. In order to find out, a closer look was taken at the complementizer and *wh*-systems of the dialects investigated. Special attention was given to Southern Italian dialects. Most Central dialects only have one complementizer. As a result, the chances of it being homophonous with the *wh*-word corresponding to *what* are high. By contrast,
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many Southern Italian dialects display a very articulated complementizer system. The morphological shape of the complementizer introducing basic declarative clauses is often different from that of the *wh*-word corresponding to *what*. As a result, these dialects are ideal candidates for telling us more about the nature of their yes/no QPs. Among the dialects investigated, the complementizer that introduces basic declarative clauses and the *wh*-word corresponding to *what* were different only in the following locations:

- Bari;
- Cosenza;
- Dorgali (NU);
- Martano (LE);
- Mussomeli (CL);
- Ponticelli (NA);
- Serradifalco (CL);
- Soleto (LE);
- Squinzano (LE).

An overview of the *wh*-words corresponding to *what* and the complementizer that introduces basic declarative clauses in these dialects is provided in table 3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>Declarative complementizer</th>
<th><em>wh</em>-word corresponding to <em>what</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bari</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>ci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosenza</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorgali (NU)</td>
<td>chi</td>
<td>itte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martano (LE)</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussomeli (CL)</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponticelli (NA)</td>
<td>che</td>
<td>ca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serradifalco (CL)</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soleto (LE)</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squinzano (LE)</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>ce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all the dialects mentioned in the list above, it is the *wh*-word corresponding to *what* that is used as a QP rather than the complementizer. Using the complementizer to introduce yes/no questions would yield ungrammaticality in these varieties. A different use of this particle is found in the dialects spoken in the Marchigian city of Macerata and some surrounding areas. In these varieties, it is possible for *che* to double and appear both in sentence-initial and sentence-final position (Giusti and Paciaroni, p.c.). An example of this construction is shown in (69) below:
This doubling process is not attested in any other dialectal area among those investigated.

As far as the semantic contribution of this QP is concerned, it should be mentioned that it does not modify the standard interpretation of the yes/no questions where it occurs. Unlike Tuscan o and Calabrian ca, che (and its variants) does not induce any specific presupposition, nor marks the speaker’s attitude toward the answer in any way. These considerations apply to all dialects included in the maps in figure 2, Florentine being the only exception. In Florentine, yes/questions introduced by che are not standard interrogatives. They are only licensed in contexts where the speaker wants to express his/her disapproval or surprise towards the topic of the question, or when (s)he has specific expectations with respect to the possible answer.

As already anticipated, the QP che (and its variants) can be followed by a form of the verb fare ‘do’ and/or essere ‘be’ in many Central and Northern Dialects. In fact, this is possible in all dialects mentioned in figure 2. However, there are several differences between the use of this construction in these dialects both on a syntactic and on a semantic level. Concerning its syntax, two main variables play a role:

- whether fare ‘do’\(^{14}\) shares the phi- and tense feature of the lexical verb of the question;
- whether essere ‘be’ can be employed alongside with fare ‘do’.

In the following dialects, fare shares the phi- and tense features of the lexical verb:

- Bari, Apulia;
- Florence, Tuscany;
- Civitella in Valdichiana (AR), Tuscany;
- Rome, Lazio;
- Cosenza, Calabria;
- Francavilla Fontana (BR), Apulia;
- Martano (LE), Apulia;
- Pizzoli (AQ), Abruzzo
- Quarto (NA), Campania
- Siena, Tuscany
- Soleto (LE), Apulia
- Squinzano (LE), Apulia
- Trivento (CB), Molise

Some examples of yes/no questions in these dialects are provided in (70) below.

\(^{14}\) Essere ‘be’ never shares the same phi- and tense features of the lexical verb, so this question only concerns fare ‘do’.
As shown in the sentences in (70.a-e), fare always shares the phi- and tense features of the lexical verb. The opposite situation arises in another group of dialects, where fare always appears in a default form displaying 3rd person singular and present tense. In these dialects, using a default form of fare would yield ungrammaticality. Among the dialects investigated in this study, the following display this pattern:

- Arielli (CH), Abruzzo;
- Castro dei Volsci (FR), Lazio
- Mussomeli (CL), Sicily
- Serradifalco (CL), Sicily

---

15 Speakers of these varieties pointed out that it may be possible to use an agreeing form of fare. However, this is only possible under the conditions that the sentence has another prosody and the verb fare is interpreted lexically. For these reasons, I argue that sentences containing an agreeing form of fare are not polar questions in these varieties, as opposed to the sentences that contain a non-agreeing form of fare. Rather, they are biclausal discourses containing a wh-question and a yes/no question proper. This topic will be discussed extensively in chapters 3, where some syntactic tests to distinguish monoclausal yes/no questions from their corresponding biclausal discourses will be proposed. Additional experimental evidence in favor of the monoclausal status of che fare questions in the varieties that only display an agreeing form of fare will be provided in chapter 4.
Some examples of polar questions displaying an invariable form of *fare* are reported in (71).

71) a. Chi fa a minutö quillo?
    QP do-PRES.3.Sg have-PRES.3.Pl come-PP those
    ‘Did they come?’
    [Arielli, CH]

    b. Che fa sciate?
    QP do-PRES.3.Sg go.out-PRES.3.Pl
    ‘Are you going out?’
    [Castro dei Volsci, FR]

    c. Che fa veneno?
    QP do-PRES.3.Sg come-PRES.3.Pl
    ‘Are they coming?’
    [Ponticelli, NA]

    d. Chi fa chianci?
    QP do-PRES.3.Sg cry-PRES.2.Sg
    ‘Are you crying?’
    [Serradifalco, CL]

    e. Chi fa vinniru?
    QP do-PRES.3.Sg come-PAST.3.Pl
    ‘Did they come?’
    [Mussomeli, CL]

As shown in (71.a-e), *fare* always displays the same default phi- and tense features. The sentences in (71.a-d) show a person mismatch, while the sentence in (71.e) displays both a person and a tense mismatch.

Let us now take a look at the dialects where *essere* can be employed along with *fare*. Among the investigated dialects, the following display this pattern:

- Bari, Apulia;
- Rome, Lazio
- Martano (LE), Apulia
- Serradifalco (CL), Sicily

It should be mentioned that the Sardinian dialect of Dorgali (NU) is the only variety where only *essere* can be optionally employed. *Fare* would yield ungrammaticality. Some examples of yes/no questions introduced by a *wh*-like QP followed by a form of the verb *essere* are provided in (72).
As shown in the examples above, essere always occurs in an invariable form, disregarding the phi- and tense features of the lexical verb. As mentioned earlier, both fare and essere are available in these dialects. Whereas essere is always invariable, however, fare might or might not share the features of the lexical verb. An example contrasting an agreeing form of fare with a non-agreeing form of essere is provided in (73) below:

73) a. Che fate sta a venì?
   QP do-PRES.3.Sg stay-PRES.3.Pl to come-INF
   ‘Are you coming?’
   [Rome]

b. Che è sta a venì?
   QP be-PRES.3.Sg stay-PRES.3.Pl to come-INF
   ‘Are you coming?’
   [Rome]

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the syntactic microvariation of this construction, it should be pointed out that two of the investigated dialects display a different pattern. As mentioned earlier, all dialects where yes/no questions can be introduced by a wh-like QP can optionally make use of a form of the verb fare and/or essere. Nevertheless, the data show that the reverse is not always true. In the Marchigian dialects spoken in Isola del Piano (PU) and Ancona, polar questions cannot be
introduced by a wh-like QP alone. If the QP is employed, it is obligatory to use a form of the verb *fare* or *essere*. The data are provided in the examples below:

74) a. Co(sa) *(fet)* scapet?
   QP do-PRES.2.Pl go.out-PRES.2.Pl
   ‘Are you going out?’

   b. Co *(è)* scapet?
   QP be-PRES.3.Sg go.out-PRES.2.Pl
   ‘Are you going out?’

   [Isola del Piano, PU]

75) a. Cusa *(fai)* piangi?
   QP do-PRES.2.Sg cry-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘Are you crying?’

   b. Cus *(è)* piangi?
   QP be-PRES.3.Sg cry-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘Are you crying?’

   [Ancona]

As illustrated in (74) and (75), either *fare* or *essere* must be included in polar questions headed by a wh-like QP in the dialects of Isola del Piano (PU) and Ancona. The absence of one of these two verbs would yield ungrammaticality.

It should be mentioned that the sentences in (74) and (75) can be rescued if co(sa) is interpreted as a why-like element. This is the only available reading in the absence of *fare* or *essere*. Nevertheless, they cannot be classified as grammatical yes/no questions because their semantics is that of a why-question headed by why. Questions headed by a why-like element homophonous with *what* are common in many Italian dialects, as well as in many Romance and non-Romance languages, such as Icelandic, Czech, Hungarian, Hebrew, Japanese, Bangla (cf. Bayer & Obenauer, 2011). An example from German is provided below:

76) Was lachst du denn so dumm?!
   what laugh-PRES.2.Sg you then so stupidly
   ‘Why do you laugh so stupidly?!’ (Bayer & Obenauer, 2011: 468)

   [German]

A further peculiarity of the dialect of the dialect of Isola del Piano (PU) consists in the choice of the QP. While in the dialect of Ancona the QP is always *cusa* (and its phonological variants), the dialect of Isola del Piano (PU) differentiates between the questions that contain *fare* and those that contain *essere*. In the sentences with *fare* it is possible to choose between *co* and *sa*, while in the questions with *essere* the choice is limited to *co*.

The morphological shape of these QPs leaves no room for doubts about their nature. They clearly are homophonous with the wh-word corresponding to *what*, rather than with the complementizer.
One may wonder whether these Marchigian dialects can be classified on a par with the other Central and Southern Italian dialects that display a similar yes/no question-marking device. The fact that the presence of a verb after the QP is obligatory may be taken to suggest that the constructions in (74) and (75) are biclausal discourses containing two questions, rather than monoclausal yes/no questions. However, there seems to be some more compelling evidence to show that this is not the case. In biclausal discourses containing a *wh*-questions and a yes/no question proper, the verbs of both questions are of course interpreted lexically. This imposes some restrictions on the possible combinations of verbs in this type of biclausal discourse if the subjects of the two sentences have the same referent. Among others, there is a restriction on the theta-roles that these verbs can assign to their subjects. For instance, it is not allowed to combine a question containing a verb that assigns an agentive theta-role with a question containing a verb that assigns a different theta-role to its subject. An example is shown in (77) below:

77) a. Che fa? Esci stasera?  
what do-PRES.2.Sg go.out-PRES.2.Sg tonight  
“What are you doing? Are you going out tonight?”

b. #Che fa? Ti piace la pizza?  
what do-PRES.2.Sg to.you.CL please-PRES.3.Sg the pizza  
“What are you doing? Do you like pizza?”

[Standard Italian]

The biclausal discourse in (77.a) is felicitous, as both fare and uscire ‘go out’ assign an agentive to their subjects. On the contrary, the biclausal discourse in (77.b) is infelicitous (as indicated by the # sign) because the verb of the second question, piacere ‘like’ assigns an experiencer role to its subject. This contrasts with the agentive theta role assigned by fare to the subject of the first question, yielding an infelicitous combination. In fact, this is a general semantic requirement rather than a specific restriction of Italian or the Italian dialects. In the dialects of Isola del Piano (PU) and Ancona it is possible to combine fare with verbs that do not assign an agentive theta-role to their subjects. This is not allowed in the Northern Italian dialects that were investigated for this study, which indeed do not recur to this construction to mark polar questions. An example is provided in (78).

78) a. Co/sa fa piov?  
QP do-PRES.3.Sg rain-PRES.3.Sg  
‘Is it raining?’

b. * Se fa, (el) pioe?  
what do-PRES.3.Sg it.Subj.CL rain-PRES.3.Sg  
‘What is it doing? Is it raining?’

[Isola del Piano, PU]

[Abbadia Cerreto, MI]
The ungrammaticality of (78.b) shows that fare is interpreted lexically. This suggests that the (78.b) should be analyzed as a biclausal discourse rather than as a monoclausal yes/no question.

A possible explanation for the syntactic behavior of this construction in the dialects of Isola del Piano (PU) and Ancona might rely on their geographical proximity with the Massa-Senigallia line. As is well known, this line demarcates a number of isoglosses that distinguish Northern Italian from Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects. All investigated dialects that are spoken above this line do not employ to a wh-like QP (optionally followed by a form of the verb fare or essere) to mark yes/no questions. On the contrary, this strategy is available in all investigated dialects that are spoken below the Massa-Senigallia line. Isola del Piano (PU) and Ancona are respectively situated slightly above and slightly below this line. As a result, it is not surprising that they might exhibit mixed patterns where features of both Northern and Central/Southern dialects emerge. With respect to yes/no question-marking, they align with Northern dialects in that they do not allow wh-like yes/no QPs. At the same time, however, they align with Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects because it is possible to introduce yes/no questions with a wh-like elements followed by a form of the verb fare or essere.

After discussing the syntactic microvariation of che (fare/essere) yes/no questions, let us now turn to the issue of their semantic interpretation. On a semantic level, two criteria need to be taken into consideration. First, it is necessary to make a distinction between the dialects where a wh-like QP does not make any semantic contribution to the interpretation of the sentence, and those where it does. Second, a boundary should be traced between those dialects where adding fare/essere to the question modifies its standard semantics and those where it doesn’t.

As mentioned earlier, the use of a wh-like QP does not make any semantic contribution in any investigated varieties except for Florentine. In Florentine, che is only used to mark yes/no questions that come with some presupposition with respect to the answer. It can also signal the speaker’s attitude towards the topic of the question, such as for instance surprise or disapproval. Crucially, they can never be uttered out of the blue. In all other dialects shown in figure 2, QPs only have the role of marking yes/no questions. They are purely functional elements whose only function is to mark sentence type. They do not induce any presupposition, nor any link to the speaker’s attitude toward a possible answer. Of course, it is possible to use them as special questions in the sense of Obenauer (2006, 2008) if an appropriate linguistic context is provided. But this is a general property of languages and depends on pragmatic and extra-linguistic factors rather than on the specific use of these QPs.

So far, the insertion of fare and/or essere in yes/no questions headed by a wh-like QP has been described as an optional process. It was pointed out that the dialects of Isola del Piano (PU) and Ancona represent an exception, as they always require the presence of fare and/or essere in order for yes/no questions to be grammatical. However, the insertion of fare/essere is not always completely optional. Rather, it depends on whether the verb makes a semantic contribution to the interpretation of the question or not. In the following dialects, it does not modify the standard semantics of polar questions in any way:

- Civitella in Valdichiana (AR), Tuscany
- Castro dei Volsci (FR), Lazio
Of all varieties included in the list above, however, Florentine deserves a special mention. As discussed earlier, yes/no questions introduced by *che* are not standard yes/no questions in Florentine. Inserting *fare* does not modify the semantics of these questions, which is already a non-standard one. In this sense, *fare* insertion is optional in Florentine. The presupposition and discourse-related features that it may introduce are already present in Florentine yes/no questions headed by *che*. Because of the exceptional restrictions on the use of this construction, the question now arises whether Florentine should be analyzed on a par with Northern dialects rather than with Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects. As was done for the dialects of Isola del Piano and Ancona, the availability of this construction with verbs that do not assign an agentive role to their subject will be taken as a diagnostic criterion here. Let us take a look at the examples in (70.a) and (78.b), repeated here as (79.a) and (79.b) respectively:

79) a. Che fa piove?
   QP do-PRES.3.Sg rain-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘Is it raining?’
   [Florence]

   b. * Se fa, (el) piöfi?
      what do-PRES.3.Sg it.Subj.CL rain-PRES.3.Sg
      ‘What is it doing? Is it raining?’
      [Abbadia Cerreto, MI]

As shown by the contrast between (79.a) and (79.b), it is allowed to combine *fare* with a meteorological verb in Florentine, as opposed to the dialect spoken in Abbadia Cerreto (MI). This shows that *fare* is not interpreted lexically, which implies that the sentence in (79.a) is probably monoclausal and should be analyzed on a par with Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects. On the contrary, the ungrammaticality of the sentence in (79.b) suggests that it is probably a biclausal discourse containing two questions, where each verb is interpreted lexically. The semantic restrictions found in Florentine might be due to its proximity to the Massa-Senigallia line. In fact, Florentine is a Tuscan dialect but it exhibits typical features of Northern dialects too, such as subject clitics. In all the other varieties mentioned in the list above, *fare/essere* can be optionally inserted in any context. There is no difference in meaning between questions with and without *fare/essere*. They can both be uttered in contexts where the speaker does not have any presupposition, expectation or special attitude towards the topic of the question. By contrast, *fare/essere* insertion always triggers a special interpretation of the question in the following dialects:

- Arielli (CH), Abruzzo
In these dialects, the presence of *fare*/*essere* is always bound to some type of presupposition or attitude that the speaker has with respect to the topic of the question. This special interpretation is not triggered if *fare/essere* is absent.

A further QP that needs to be included in a comprehensive typological overview of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects is Marchigian *perché*. In some central Marchigian dialects, such as for instance the varieties spoken in Senigallia (AN), Falconara (AN) and Ancona, it is possible to mark polar questions by adding the sentence-final QP *perché* (Branchini, p.c.). This QP is homophonous with the *wh*-word *why*. An example is shown in (79) below:

80) Sei andato al mare perché?
be-PRES.2.Sg go-PP to-the sea QP
‘Did you go to the sea?’

Although this QP has the morphological shape of a *wh*-word, the sentences where it appears are polar questions proper. The only possible answers are *yes* or *no*.

As opposed to *che* (*fare/essere*) questions, however, polar questions marked by *perché* do not have the standard semantics of polar interrogatives. They always need an appropriate context to license their interpretation. A possible context to license the question in (80) is provided in (81.a) below. The question in (80) is repeated here as (81.b).

81) a. Guarda, mi sono scottato la pelle!
look-IMP to.me.CL be-PRES.1.Sg burn-PP the skin
‘Look, my skin got burnt!’

b. Sei andato al mare perché?
be-PRES.2.Sg go-PP to-the sea QP
‘Did you go to the sea?/Is it because you went to the sea?’

*Perché*-questions are always a follow-up on a previous sentence. The speaker tries to find possible motivations for the content of the sentence uttered by the interlocutor. This is
made explicit in the second translation of (81.b). Notice that the part of the question that precedes perché is not a piece of information that was previously introduced in the discourse. Therefore, a speaker who utters a question such as (81.b) is genuinely asking whether the interlocutor went to the sea. This is confirmed by the fact that both an affirmative and a negative answer would be appropriate.

3.5 Interrogative verb morphology + QP

As discussed in section 2.1.3, marking polar questions through a combination of interrogative verb morphology and a QP is a relatively common strategy in the world’s languages (Dryer, 2005).

As far as the Italian dialects are concerned, there is one yes/no question-marking device that may be classified under this category. Some Northern dialects may mark yes/no questions by using a QP homophonous with the complementizer. In addition, the verb appears in the subjunctive mood rather than in the indicative mood. This construction is found in the following dialects among those investigated:

- Ayas (AO), Aosta Valley
- San Bonifacio (VR), Veneto
- Este (PD), Veneto
- Sutrio (UD), Friuli
- Torino, Piedmont

Some examples are shown in (82) below:

82) a. Qu’ ou séi malado?
   QP he.Subj.CL be-PRES.SUBJ.3.Sg sick
   ‘Is he sick?’
   [Ayas, AO]

b. Che la dorma?
   QP she.Subj.CL sleep-PRES.SUBJ.3.Sg?
   ‘Is she sleeping?’
   [San Bonifacio, VR]

c. Che a dorma?
   QP she.Subj.CL sleep-PRES.SUBJ.3.Sg
   ‘Is she sleeping?’
   [Este, PD]

d. Ch’ al duarmi?
   QP she.Subj.CL sleep-PRES.SUBJ.3.Sg
   ‘Is she sleeping?’
   [Sutrio, UD]
e. Ch’a dorma?
QP she.Subj.CL sleep-PRES.SUBJ.3.Sg
‘Is she sleeping?’

The morphological shape of the QP leaves little room for doubts about its nature. An overview of the complementizers introducing basic declarative clauses and the wh-words corresponding to what in these varieties is provided in table 4 below.

Table 4. A comparison between complementizers that introduce basic declarative clauses and wh-words corresponding to what in dialects that employ a combination of QP and interrogative verb morphology to mark polar questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>Declarative complementizer</th>
<th>Wh-word corresponding to what</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ayas, AO</td>
<td>qué</td>
<td>qué</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bonifacio, VR</td>
<td>che</td>
<td>(co)sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Este, PD</td>
<td>che</td>
<td>cossa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutrio, UD</td>
<td>che</td>
<td>ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torino</td>
<td>che</td>
<td>có</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 4, all dialects but Ayas’ (AO) have two different lexical entries for the complement and the wh-word corresponding to what. On the basis of this observation, it seems reasonable to assume that the QPs found in these constructions are homophonous with the declarative complementizer also in those varieties where they cannot be distinguished from the wh-word corresponding to what.

At first sight, the data provided in (82) may look mildly controversial to the eyes of native Italian speakers. One may argue that in fact they do not show an additional yes/no question-marking strategy in Italian dialects. Rather, they could be instances of conjectural questions marked by dubitative subjunctive mood, which are also found in standard Italian. An example is given in (83) below:

83) [Suonano alla porta] Che sia Gianni?
ring-PRES.3.PL at-the door QP be-PRES.SUBJ.3.Sg John
‘[Somebody’s ringing the bell] Will it be John?’ (Squartini, 2010: 114)

These types of polar question are only uttered when the speaker makes a conjecture, based on some evidence in his/her direct environment or previously introduced in the discourse. They aren’t standard requests for information and cannot be uttered out of the blue. According to the judgments of the speakers of the dialects mentioned in (81), however, this construction is not necessarily used in conjectural contexts. It is in fact very frequent. It may be employed also when the question is a genuine request for information.

Crucially, this construction is completely absent from any Tuscan, Central and Southern varieties investigated in this study. No speakers indicated that this construction is available in their dialects, not even in conjectural contexts. Its systematic absence in Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects and its widespread occurrence in Northern
The typology of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects

...suggest that it should be classified as a typologically different yes/no question-marking strategy.

### 3.6 Interrogative intonation

After discussing all morphosyntactic devices to mark yes/no questions in Italian dialects, let us now focus on those dialects where Interrogative Intonation is the only available grammatical device.

As discussed in section 2.1.7, interrogative intonation is frequently used as a formal device to mark polar questions in the world’s languages. It is classified as the second most frequent strategy in Dryer’s (2005) survey, being only surpassed by QPs.

In some of the investigated varieties, interrogative intonation is the only available yes/no question-marking device. In some others, speakers can optionally choose whether to employ a morphosyntactic device or recur to intonation alone. In addition, some dialects display a mixed paradigm where the choice of the yes/no question-marking strategy depends on grammatical person. All these differences will be discussed in detail in this section.

Among the investigated dialects, Interrogative Intonation is employed as a formal yes/no question-marking device in the following:

- Abbadia Cerreto (MI), Lombardy
- Albiano (TR), Trentino
- Ayas (AO), Aosta Valley
- Carrara (MS), Tuscany
- Este (PD), Veneto
- Frabosa Soprana (CN), Piedmont
- Gatteo a mare (FC), Emilia Romagna
- Isola del Piano (PU), Marches
- Ortonovo (SP), Liguria
- San Bonifacio (VR), Veneto
- Torino, Piedmont

In the dialects of Abbadia Cerreto (MI), Carrara (MS), Gatteo a Mare (FC), Isola del Piano (PU), Ortonovo (SP), and Torino, interrogative intonation is the only available yes/no question-marking strategy. These varieties all have a full set of preverbal subject clitics.

On the contrary, the varieties spoken in Ayas (AO), Este (PD), Frabosa Soprana (CN) and San Bonifacio (VR) may optionally choose between intonation and subject clitic-verb inversion. However, optionality should not be considered a uniform and unambiguous feature of these dialects. In fact, there are specific restrictions on what can be optional in each of these dialects. For instance, interrogative intonation is in the process of becoming the only available strategy in the dialect of Ayas (AO). The other yes/no question-marking device found in this variety is subject clitic-verb inversion, but it is now perceived as obsolete by a majority of the speakers. It is only present in the production of elderly speakers and it involves all grammatical persons. Therefore, it is...
not possible to conclude that the use of interrogative intonation and subject clitic-verb inversion is completely optional in the dialect of Ayas (AO). Rather, it depends on extralinguistic factors, such as the age of the speaker.

A different pattern is found in the dialects of Este (PD), Frabosa Soprana (CN) and San Bonifacio (VR). In these dialects, optionality seems to be restricted to specific persons. For these persons, it is possible to choose between interrogative intonation and a morphosyntactic device. For the other persons, only interrogative intonation is available.

Let us start our discussion with some data from the Romagnol dialect of Gatteo a Mare (FC):

84) a. a dorum   ‘I sleep’
    t durum    ‘you sleep’
    e durma    ‘he sleeps’
    a durmem   ‘we sleep’
    a durmei   ‘you sleep’
    i dorma    ‘they sleep’

b. a dorum?   ‘do I sleep?’
    t durum?   ‘do you sleep?’
    e durma?   ‘does he sleep?’
    a durmem?  ‘do we sleep?’
    a durmei?  ‘do you sleep?’
    i dorma?   ‘do they sleep?’

[ Gatteo a Mare, FC ]

As shown in (84.a-b), yes/no questions can only be marked through interrogative intonation. Although this variety has a full set of subject clitics, it does not use subject clitic-verb inversion for any person. Subject clitics appear in a preverbal position in questions, too. The paradigm is regular in that the same yes/no question-marking strategy is employed for all grammatical persons.

By contrast, the Piedmontese dialect of Frabosa Soprana (CN) exhibits a person-specific paradigm. An example is given in (85):

85) a. i drom   ‘I sleep’
    t dromi    ‘you sleep’
    u/a droma  ‘he/she sleeps’
    i drumima  ‘we sleep’
    i dromi    ‘you sleep’
    i dromu    ‘they sleep’
First of all, the contrast between (85.b) and (85.c) shows that two strategies can be used to mark polar questions in this variety. One option is to recur to Interrogative Intonation, as shown in (85.b). In this case, the paradigm is not defective. Yes/no questions involving all grammatical persons may be marked through interrogative intonation alone. A second option involves the use of a different verbal morphology, as discussed in section 2.1.2. A morpheme that is different from the preverbal clitic attaches to the verb. However, this strategy does not apply to questions involving just any grammatical persons. As shown in (85.b), the 1st and 2nd person plural are excluded. The only possible strategy to form a polar question involving the 1st and 2nd person plural is interrogative intonation alone.

According to the judgments of my informants, there isn’t any semantic difference between the paradigms in (85.b) and (85.c). The choice between one and the other strategy seems to be completely optional.

A different situation is found in the dialect of Este (PD), where interrogative intonation alternates with subject clitic-verb inversion. The data are given in the example below:

86) a. dormo  ‘I sleep’
   te dormi  ‘you sleep’
   el dorme  ‘he sleeps’
   dormimo  ‘we sleep’
   dormite  ‘you sleep’
   i dorme  ‘they sleep’

   b. dormo?  ‘Do I sleep?’
   te dormi?  ‘do you sleep?’
   el dorme?  ‘does he sleep?’
   dormimo?  ‘do we sleep?’
   dormite?  ‘do you sleep?’
   dorme?  ‘do they sleep?’

As in the dialect of Frabosa Soprana (CN), interrogative intonation can be used to mark questions involving any grammatical persons in this variety. This is shown in (86.b). On the contrary, subject clitic-verb inversion is limited to the 2nd and 3rd person singular and to the 3rd person plural. Questions involving the 1st person singular and the 1st and 2nd person plural can only be marked through Interrogative Intonation, as shown in (86.c).

As opposed to the dialect of Frabosa Soprana, however, the choice between Interrogative Intonation and a different morphosyntactic device does not seem to be
completely optional in the dialect of Este (PD). In fact, the 1\textsuperscript{st} person singular and the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} person plural do not display any subject clitic in the declarative paradigm in (86.a). Therefore, subject clitic-verb inversion is not expected to be available for those persons. Interrogative intonation is the only available grammatical device in these cases and seems to work as a repair strategy in the paradigm in (86.c). However, the data in (86.b) suggest that Interrogative Intonation can also function as an independent yes/no question-marking device, as it can mark a fully-fledged interrogative paradigm.

4. Discussion

In this section, the proposed typology of yes/no question-marking strategies in Italian dialects will be discussed in detail. First, the choices made in the categorization process will be made explicit. The discussion will focus on those morphosyntactic devices that pose a challenge for Dryer's (2005) typology of polar questions. Then, all strategies will be summarized and presented in order of frequency. Several maps showing the distribution of all yes/no question-marking strategies in Italian dialects will be provided in itinere. It will be shown that an additional isogloss should be added to the Massa-Senigallia line. Some final remarks concerning the origins and the possible correlations of these strategies with other features will be made. More specifically, the availability of subject clitics and the realization of non-veridicality in Italian dialects will be taken into consideration. As widely discussed in the previous sections, Dryer's (2005) typology of polar questions was taken as a starting point for classifying yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects. It was shown that all grammatical devices found in Italian dialects can be classified into one of the categories attested in the world’s languages. A schematic representation of the typology proposed in the previous sections is provided in figure 3 below:
Only the two of the categories attested in the world’s languages are not represented in Italian dialects. First, yes/no questions are never marked by the absence of a declarative morpheme. This follows from the fact that there are no declarative morphemes, neither in Italian dialects, nor in Standard Italian. Furthermore, there is no dialect in which yes/no questions and their corresponding declarative clauses are identical. This is not surprising, as the latter strategy is only very rarely attested in the world’s languages (Dryer, 2005).

The overall categorization process, however, did not always go smoothly. Some strategies could be classified easily. This is the case of subject clitic-verb inversion,
which can be unambiguously classified into the category of interrogative word order. For some others, however, it was necessary to make a choice because their features do not tilt strongly towards a specific category among Dryer’s (2005). This is the case of the following constructions:

- do-support in Lombard and Sicilian dialects;
- clefted polar questions in Venetian, Piedmontese and Ligurian dialects;
- *che fare*/*essere* questions in Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects.

The use of do-support could be analyzed as an instance of both interrogative verb morphology and interrogative word order. The lexical verb is realized as an infinitive, losing therefore its original morphological shape. A support verb is introduced, which realizes the features of the lexical verb. On the basis of these arguments, one may analyze do-support as an instance of interrogative verb morphology. However, I decided to follow Dryer’s (2005) analysis of English do-support and include Lombard and Sicilian do-support in the category of interrogative word order. As in English, do-insertion triggers inversion with the subject:

87) a. It rains often there.
   b. Does it rain often there?

88) a. El *pjøtë.*
   it.Subj.CL rain-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘It is raining.’ (Manzini & Savoia, 2005:602)

   b. Fa -l *pjøtër?*
   do-PRES.3.Sg -it.Subj.CL rain-INF
   ‘Is it raining?’ (Manzini & Savoia, 2005:602)

   [Vezza d’Oglio, BS]

The English declarative and interrogative paradigms reported in (87.a-b) are parallel to those of the Lombard dialect of Vezza D’Oglio in (88.a-b). The subject occurs before the finite (lexical) verb in the declarative sentences in (87.a) and (88.a), whereas in the polar questions in (87.b) and (88.b) it appears after the finite (auxiliary) verb. The fact that the subject clitic undergoes phonological reduction and cliticizes onto the auxiliary corroborates the idea that the subject clitic actually moved to a higher position. It is not possible to extend the same reasoning to Sicilian do-support. Sicilian does not have subject clitics and is a pro-drop language. As a consequence, it is hard to determine whether the subject actually moves up to a higher projection when do-support comes into play. In fact, there are more differences between Lombard and Sicilian do-support, as discussed in section 3.2.2. However, Sicilian do-support was classified as an instance of interrogative word order by analogy with the Lombard and English data.

Another problematic case is provided by clefted polar questions, as found in some Venetian, Piedmontese and Ligurian dialects. The example in (53.a) is repeated below as (89.b):
The typology of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects

89) a. Te ghe comprà el pan.
   you.Subj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg buy-PP the bread
   ‘You bought bread.’

b. Sé el pan che te ghe comprà?
   be-PRES.3.Sg the bread that you.Subj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg buy-PP
   ‘Is it bread that you bought?/Did you buy bread?/You bought bread, right?’

[Este, PD]

As with Lombard and Sicilian do-support, clefted polar questions are difficult to fit into Dryer’s (2005) typology. They could be treated as an instance of interrogative verbal morphology, given that the verb displays a different mood feature in the interrogative paradigm. Nevertheless, it seems more reasonable to analyze them as a case of interrogative word order. They are still different from questions with simple subject clitic-verb inversion in that their structure is biclausal, as opposed to their corresponding declaratives. At the same time, however, it is clear that the object moved to some higher projection in a sentence like (89.b), yielding a different word order from (89.a). This follows from the fact that a relativization process took place, triggering movement of the object. For this reason, clefted polar questions are treated as instances of interrogative word order in this study.

Finally, a few words should be spent on the most problematic yes/no question-marking device found in Italian dialects: che fare/essere questions (and their variants) in Tuscan, Central and Southern Italian dialects. As shown in section 3.4.1, all dialects where yes/no questions can be marked by a sentence-initial QP homophonous with the wh-word corresponding to what also allow this QP to be followed by a finite form of the verb fare and/or essere. As discussed earlier, this verb may or may not share the phi-and tense-features of the lexical verb. An example illustrating the two different patterns is provided below.

90) a. Chi fa chianci?
   QP do-PRES.3.Sg cry-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘Are you crying?’

   [Serradifalco, CL]

b. Che fai piangi?
   QP do-PRES.2.Sg cry-PRES.2.Sg
   ‘Are you crying?’

   [Siena]

The only exceptions are the dialect of Isola del Piano (PU) and Ancona, where both the QP and the verb must be present in order for the question to be grammatical (see the discussion in 3.4.1).
Sentences such as (90.a), where fare does not share the features of the lexical verb, can be easily classified as polar questions introduced by a sentence-initial QP. This is motivated by the fact that fare is invariable, as it always occurs in the 3rd person singular, present form. Further, nothing can occur between chi and fa. Therefore, chi and fa can be interpreted as a single QP that results from the reanalysis of a wh-element and a verb. As regular QPs, it is invariant, immobile, it cannot be modified, it only appears in matrix questions and has a lexical counterpart to which it is clearly historically related.

Some additional evidence for the idea that chi and fa should be analyzed as a single head comes from its spelling in contemporary written texts, both formal and informal. In fact, chi and fa are always spelled as a single word: chiffà\(^1\). Here are a few examples taken from the internet:

\[
\begin{align*}
91) & \quad \text{Chiffà pigghi po’ culu?} \\
& \quad \text{QP take-PRES.2.Sg for-the bottom} \\
& \quad \text{‘Are you kidding me?’ (scrittoripersempre.forumfree.it/?t=60566167)} \\
& \quad \text{b. Chiffà nun lu sapiti ca nasci} \\
& \quad \text{QP neg it-Obj.CL know-PRES.2.Pl that be.born-PAST.3.Sg} \\
& \quad \text{Jesus} \\
& \quad \text{‘Don’t you know that Jesus was born?’} \\
& \quad \text{(http://www.clesio.net/clipes/VINITI/)} \\
& \quad \text{c. Chiffà ci fusti?} \\
& \quad \text{QP there.CL be-PAST.3.Sg} \\
& \quad \text{‘Did you go there?’ [Leone, 1995: 61] [Sicilian]}
\end{align*}
\]

By contrast, sentences such as (90.b) pose a challenge for a typological classification of polar questions such as the one proposed by e.g. Dryer (2005). There is no category in Dryer’s (2005) classification that can properly represent che fare questions when fare shares the same features of the lexical verb. No changes in the word order are involved, nor can be argued that they are an instance of interrogative verb morphology. At the same time, it is also problematic to fit them in the category of QPs because fare is not invariant, as its features depend on the features realized on the lexical verb. In fact, most of the canonical properties of QPs, as proposed by e.g. Biberauer & Sheehan (2011b), do not seem to apply to che fare. However, the syntax and semantics of this construction suggest that the most appropriate category is indeed that of QPs, if a label has to be chosen among the existing ones. Since this construction is hard to frame and

\(^1\) The consonant f geminates as a result of Raddoppiamento Fonosintattico. In fact, Raddoppiamento Fonosintattico between che/Chi and fare always takes place in all Central and Southern dialects that display this construction. In the present study, it is only marked in the Sicilian data. Although there are no official spelling conventions for Sicilian, native speakers tend to write chi and fa as a single word and mark the gemination of the consonant f. I decided to follow this unwritten convention in the present study.
exceptional in many respects, a detailed discussion of its properties and underlying structure will be provided in chapter 3.

Do-support and clefts are also difficult to fit into Dryer’s typology, but it is still possible to find a proper motivation to fit them into the category of interrogative word order. As discussed earlier in this section, relativization movement in clefts, and subject clitic-inversion in questions with do-support yield a word order that is different from the corresponding declaratives.

Let us now summarize the results and implications of the typology of polar questions in Italian dialects as proposed in the present section. The categories of strategies employed in Italian dialects to mark yes/no questions (in order of frequency) are listed below:

- QP;
- Interrogative intonation;
- Interrogative word order;
- Interrogative verb morphology + QP;
- Interrogative verb morphology.

The use of QPs is the most frequent yes/no question-marking device employed in Italian dialects. Different types of QPs are present in Northern, Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects.

The data presented in this chapter strongly suggests that a further isogloss should be added to the series of isoglosses marked by the Massa-Senigallia line. In all investigated dialects that are spoken below this line, polar questions can be introduced by a sentence-initial QP that is homophonous with the wh-word what. Despite the high degree of microvariation in the syntax (possibility for the QP to be followed by a form of the verb fare/essere) and the semantics (absence/presence of a specific semantic contribution of the QP) of these constructions, this pattern is very consistent across all Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects.

As far as the origins of this QP are concerned, it is likely to have developed from the Latin wh-word quid ‘what’. In fact, quid appeared very frequently before yes/no questions in the production of both classical Latin writers, such as Cicero, and post-classical writers, such as Petronius. Some examples from these writers are given below:

92) a. Quid? Hoc planius egissem, si ita narrassem?

‘What? Could I have done this more openly, if I had told it in this way?’

(Cicero, In Verrem: 1, 10, 27)
As shown in (92.b), *quid* can occur before polar questions that are marked by the QP -ne. It also occurs before polar questions that are only marked through interrogative intonation, as shown in (92.a) and (92.c). As far as its semantic contribution is concerned, *quid* is often associated with deliberative, rhetorical and echo-questions, although this is not always the case.

As pointed out by Brown, Joseph and Wallace (2009), the standard punctuation used in Latin texts suggests that *quid* was interpreted as a distinct phrasal unit. However, they argue that this may not always have been the case. For instance, they take the position of the vocative *Caecili* and the QP -ne in the sentence in (92.b) to suggest that *quid* and *illa* should be interpreted as a singular prosodic unit. Whether QPs that are homophonous with the *wh*-word *what* actually derive from Latin *quid* is debatable. Still, *quid* remains the best candidate to account for the massive presence of *what*-like QPs in Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects from a diachronic point of view.

Another QP that is likely to have developed from a *wh*-element is Calabrian *ca*. According to Rohlfs (1969), *ca* derives from the Latin *wh*-element *quia* ‘why’. A similar origin should be attributed to Marchigian sentence-final QP *perché*, which is homophonous with the Italian word corresponding to *why*.

All QPs derived from a *wh*-element are found below the Massa-Senigallia line. However, the reverse is not always true. Not all QPs found below the Massa-Senigallia line are derived from a *wh*-element. This is the case of Tuscan *o*, which probably developed from the homophonous exclusive alternative operator *o* (Rohlfs, 1969). A similar origin is attributed to Sardinian *a*, which likely derives from the Latin exclusive alternative operator *aut* (Rohlfs, 1969). Crosslinguistically, exclusive alternative operators are in fact a very common source for sentence-initial QPs (Bencini, 2003). Despite their common origin, QPs such as *ca/perché* on the one hand, and *o/aut* on the other hand, have different morphological shapes. This suggests that they underwent a process of reanalysis and entered the language at different historical stages.

A different case is provided by the QP *po/pa*, which is found in many Piedmontese, Lombard, Trentino and Friulian dialects. As pointed out by Pellegrini (1972), this QP probably originated from the Latin adverb *post* ‘then, afterwards’ and developed into a focus marker. Eventually, it became an obligatory QP in several dialects. In some dialects, however, it still works as a focus marker rather than as a QP proper (cf. Hack, 2010).
A map showing the distribution of QPs in Italian dialects is provided in figure 4. Both data from the existing literature and from my own fieldwork studies are included. QPs derived from a *wh*-element are marked by a triangle. This group includes *che* (*fare/essere*) questions (and their variants) in Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects, as well as Marchigian *perché*-questions and Calabrian *a*-questions. By contrast, QPs that do not derive from *wh*-elements are marked by a circle. This group includes Piedmontese, Lombard, Trentino and Friulian *po/pa*, Sardinian *a* and Tuscan *a*.

Figure 4: Distribution of QPs in Italian dialects.

●  = QPs that do not derive from *wh*-elements
▲ = QPs that derive from *wh*-elements

1. Albiano (TR), Trentino ●
2. Ancona, Marches ▲
3. Arielli (CH), Abruzzo ▲
4. Bari, Apulia ▲
5. Castro dei Volsci (FR), Lazio ▲
As discussed in section 3.6, the second most frequent yes/no question-marking strategy in the investigated dialects is interrogative intonation. It was shown that all dialects where interrogative intonation is the only available yes/no question-marking strategy have a full set of subject clitics. These are the dialects spoken in Abbadia Cerreto (MI), Carrara (MS), Gatteo a Mare (FC), Isola del Piano (PU), Ortonovo (SP) and Torino. Although subject clitic-verb inversion is not available in these dialects, it is very widespread in many neighboring varieties, and it is largely attested in many old texts from closely-related linguistic areas (cf. Poletto, 1993; Murelli, 2006; Polo, 2007). In addition, it was shown that some dialects can optionally choose between subject clitic-verb inversion and Interrogative Intonation alone (for a discussion of optionality in this respect see the discussion in 1.2.6). These are the dialects spoken in Ayas (AO), Este (PD), Frabosa Soprana (CN) and San Bonifacio (VR). Also these dialects have subject clitics, although not all of them display a full set thereof. Evidence from both speakers’ judgments\(^{18}\), comparisons with neighboring varieties, and diachronic data corroborates the idea that subject clitic-verb inversion is a more archaic strategy than intonation alone. This is in line with what has been argued by, among others, Poletto (1993) and Polo (2007) for Venetian and Murelli (2006) for Lombard dialects.

All Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects, which lack subject clitics, may employ recur to some morphosyntactic device in addition to interrogative intonation alone. This

\(^{18}\) As mentioned in 3.6, speakers of the dialect of Ayas pointed out that subject clitic-verb inversion is in principle possible, although it sounds extremely obsolete. Interrogative intonation alone is largely preferred by non-elderly speakers.
suggests that there might be a correlation between the availability of subject clitic-verb inversion and the absence of morphosyntactic yes/no question-marking devices. A geographical representation of the varieties that mark polar questions through interrogative intonation alone is provided in figure 5. Both the varieties that may only recur to intonation for all grammatical persons, as well as the varieties that display optionality and/or a defective paradigm are included.

Figure 5: Distribution of the varieties that mark polar questions through interrogative intonation alone.

1. Abbadia Cerreto (MI), Lombardy
2. Albiano (TR), Trentino
3. Ayas (AO), Aosta Valley
4. Carrara (MS), Tuscany
5. Este (PD), Veneto
6. Frabosa Soprana (CN), Piedmont
7. Gatteo a mare (FC), Emilia Romagna
8. Isola del Piano (PU), Marches
9. Ortonovo (SP), Liguria
The third most frequent yes/no question-marking device in the dialects investigated in this study involves the use of interrogative word order. As discussed in section 2.1, there are three constructions that may be classified in the category of interrogative word order: questions with subject clitic-verb inversion, questions with *do*-support and clefted polar questions. Minimal pairs showing each interrogative type and the corresponding declarative clause are shown below. The declarative form is shown in the examples in (a), while the interrogative form is shown in the examples in (b).

93) a. I dormirà.
   they.Subj.CL sleep-FUT.3.Pl
   ‘They will sleep’.

   b. Dormirà -i?
   sleep-FUT.3.PL -they.Subj.CL
   ‘Will they sleep?’
   [Bergamo: subject clitic-verb inversion]

94) a. El plöf.
   it.Subj.CL rain-PRES.3.Sg
   ‘It is raining’.

   b. Fa -l plöer?
   do-PRES.3.Sg -it.Subj.CL rain-INF
   ‘Is it raining?’ (Benincà & Poletto, 1998: 41)
   [Monno, BS: *do*-support]

95) a. Te ghe comprà el pan.
   you.Subj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg buy-PP the bread
   ‘You bought bread’.

   b. Sé el pan che te ghe comprà?
   be-PRES.3.Sg the bread that you.Subj.CL have-PRES.2.Sg buy-PP
   ‘Did you buy bread?’
   [Este, PD: cleft structure]

As introduced in section 2.1.4, yes/no question-marking strategies involving interrogative word order are not very common in the world’s languages (Dryer, 2005). They are frequent in Germanic, but rare from a typological point of view. Similar considerations can be made with respect to Italian dialects. In fact, interrogative word order is only found in a subgroup of Northern Italian dialects above the Massa-Senigallia line. As far as subject clitic-verb inversion is concerned, the data show that it
is losing ground in favor of interrogative intonation alone. This might be due to the influence of Standard Italian. The origins of this construction are certainly to be found in the influence of Germanic languages, which make massive use of inversion to mark polar questions.

A second strategy that was classified into the category of interrogative word order is do-support. English-style do-support is a typologically rare yes/no question-marking strategy in the world's languages. It is typically found in Germanic. Surprisingly, it is also employed in a well-delimited Alpine area in Lombardy, which includes the villages of Malonno (Benincà & Poletto, 1998), Monno (Benincà & Poletto, 1998), Incudine (Manzini & Savoia, 2005) and Vezza D'Oglio (Manzini & Savoia, 2005) in the Province of Brescia. As pointed out by Benincà & Poletto (1998), this is probably due to the influence of Swiss Germanic dialects, in combination with the geographical isolation of this area. All these villages could only be reached on foot until 1963. In addition, they are close to an ancient route that connected the city of Brescia with Romansch Switzerland.

In addition to Lombardy, do-support is also found in some Sicilian dialects, such as those of Cefalù (PA) and Pollina (PA) (Mirto, 2009). However, there is a fundamental difference between Lombard and Sicilian do-support. Whereas Lombard do-support patterns with English, in that it only appears in questions, Sicilian do-support patterns with German dialects, in that it is optional in both interrogatives and declaratives. The origins of this strategy are not easily identifiable, given the geographical distance that separates Sicily from the Germanic-speaking world. However, influence from Germanic varieties cannot be excluded.

Finally, the last strategy classified into the category of interrogative word order involves the use of clefted polar questions. As discussed in 3.2.3, clefted polar questions are relatively productive in a number of Northern Italian Dialects. Although they are not always interpreted as standard polar questions in these varieties, it is still worth to point out that they are completely absent from any Central and Southern dialects19. All yes/no question-marking strategies found in Italian dialects that involve an interrogative word order are shown in figure 6. Different icons are used to signal subject-clitic verb inversion, do-support and clefted polar questions.

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19 In fact, the dislocated constituent is often focalized in clefted polar questions in these dialects, in a similar fashion to Sardinian and Sicilian questions involving Focus Fronting (see the discussion in section 3.2). As opposed to Sardinian and Sicilian questions involving Focus Fronting, however, this strategy does not always imply focalization of the dislocated constituent. For this reason, it is classified as a yes/no question-marking strategy proper in the present study.
One of the least common yes/no question-marking strategies in the investigated dialects involves the use of a QP in combination with interrogative verbal morphology. As discussed in section 3.5, some Northern dialects can mark polar questions through a QP that is homophonous with the complementizer, followed by a subjunctive verb (see section 3.5 for a discussion of the semantics of these questions). This construction
The typology of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects reminds of the Standard Italian dubitative subjunctive, but it is not necessarily restricted to the same contexts. It is worth mentioning that it in these dialects is relatively productive, whereas it is completely absent from any Northern and Southern dialects. A map showing its distribution in the investigated dialects is provided in figure 7.

Finally, the least common strategy for marking yes/no questions in the investigated dialects involves the use of interrogative verbal morphology. As discussed in 3.3, some Northern dialects mark polar questions through an interrogative affix that attaches to the verb. This affix co-occurs with subject clitics, which maintain their preverbal position in interrogatives too. A map showing the distribution of the dialects that employ this strategy is provided in figure 8.
Figure 8: Distribution of the dialects that mark polar questions through interrogative verb morphology.

1. Bergamo, Lombardy;
2. Sutrio (UD), Friuli;
3. Frabosa Soprana (CN), Piedmont.

This construction is only found in a subgroup of Northern Italian dialects that have a full set of subject clitics but do not use subject-clitic verb inversion in polar questions. It is never found in dialects that lack subject clitics. None of the dialects reported in figure 8, however, display a full interrogative paradigm marked by interrogative verb morphology. As discussed in section 1.2.3, only some grammatical persons are marked through interrogative verb morphology in these dialects. The dialect of Sutrio (UD), for instance, only marks the 1st person singular and all plural persons through interrogative verb morphology. Questions involving the remaining grammatical persons are marked through subject clitic-verb inversion.
The data discussed in this chapter confirm the role of Italian dialects as an ideal source of comparative data for investigating morphosyntactic variation from a typological perspective. It was shown that five yes/no question-marking strategies are attested in Italian dialects. Such availability of typologically diverse yes/no question-marking devices is unexpected in closely-related languages, such as the Italian dialects. In addition, it was shown that some of these strategies challenge standard typological classifications of polar questions as proposed by e.g. Dryer (2005). This is the case of Tuscan, Central and Southern che fare questions that include an agreeing form of the verb fare.

Standard Romance languages other than Italian do not display such a remarkable variation. Whereas Italian dialects display at least five typologically different yes/no question-marking devices, only one or two are available in Standard French, Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan and Romanian (see sections 2.2.1-2.2.5). It would be interesting to check whether a comparable situation is found in other Romance varieties spoken in these regions.

In addition to being a rich source of data, the microvariation provided by Italian dialects may serve as an inspiring testing ground for hypotheses concerning the general architecture of language. One feature that most yes/no question-marking strategies share is that some clause-typing projection in the CP field must be activated. More specifically, a head must be merged, either externally or internally. On the one hand, internal merge accounts for instances of interrogative word order such as subject clitic-verb inversion (cf. Benincà, 1994, 1997; Poletto, 1993, 2000) and do-support (cf. Pollock, 1989). A similar analysis can be extended to cases of polar questions marked by interrogative verb morphology, as many scholars have argued that the verb moves also if no inversion takes place (cf. Rizzi & Roberts, 1989; Cardinaletti & Roberts, 1991; Roberts, 1994; Manzini & Savoia, 2005). On the other hand, external merge of a question-typing particle in the CP area accounts the presence of QPs (cf. Cruschina, 2008, 2012; Mensching & Remberger, 2010b; Remberger, 2010).

However, the morphosyntactic strategies mentioned above are not only employed in interrogative contexts. As pointed out by many scholars (cf. Benincà, 1989; Munaro, 1997, 2001, 2009; Poletto, 2000), for instance, subject clitic-verb inversion marks a whole class of clause types. This includes optative, hypothetical, disjunctive and concessive clauses. In addition, questions that come with specific presuppositions may be marked by inversion. Needless to say, a high degree of microvariation is displayed with respect to the specific clause types that may or may not be marked by inversion within each dialect. However, these clauses share one common feature: they all refer to non-veridical contexts, in the same way polar questions do. Some examples taken from Benincà (1989) are provided below:

96) a. Vinisi -al tjo pari, o podaresin là.
   ‘If your father came, we could go’. (Benincà, 1989 in Munaro, 2001:158)
   [Friulian: Conditional sentence]
b. Ti vêss -jo dit la verètât!
   to-you.CL have-PAST.1.Sg -1.Subj.CL said the truth
   ‘If only I had told you the truth!’ (Benincà, 1989 in Munaro, 2001:158)
   [Friulian: Optative sentence]

c. No mi toci -al di pajà
   what to.me-CL force-PRES.3.Sg -it.Subj.CL to pay-INF
   la multe!!
   the fine
   ‘I even have to pay the fine!!’ (Benincà, 1989 in Munaro, 2001:158)
   [Friulian: sentence with negative presupposition]

Similar cases of inversion have been analyzed as instances of raising of the auxiliary verb to the Comp head by Rizzi (1982). A comparable analysis was proposed by Poletto (2000), according to which the auxiliary verb raises to a low head position in the CP field in order to check a [-realis] feature.

Interestingly, there seems to be a similar requirement about marking non-veridical contexts also in Central and Southern dialects. As amply discussed, the most widespread yes/no question-marking device in Central and Southern dialects involves the use of a sentence-initial particle homophonous with the \textit{wh}-word corresponding to \textit{what}.

In these dialects, a sentence-initial QP homophonous with the \textit{wh}-word \textit{what} or the complementizer\footnote{Complementizers tend to occur more often than \textit{wh}-elements in these contexts. In some dialects, such as the Abruzzese dialect of Arielli (CH), both the \textit{wh}-element corresponding to \textit{what} and the declarative complementizer can be employed. However, they yield a different semantic interpretation of the sentence:}

97) a. Ca stèv chiù attind, non avess
       COMPL stay-PAST.3.Sg more careful neg have-PAST.2.Sg
       arrvat a stu pund.
       come-PP to this point
       ‘If he had been more careful, he wouldn’t have reached this point’.
       [Barese: Conditional sentence]
The striking parallelism between the data in (96) and those in (97) suggests that these dialects may mark veridicality or the absence thereof rather than clause type. In light of Poletto’s (2000) proposal, we could hypothesize that a projection in the CP field hosts a [-realis] feature in non-veridical contexts in these dialects. This feature needs to be deleted before everything is sent to Spell-out. Internal merge, i.e. movement of the verb to a low head position in the CP field satisfies this requirement in the Northern dialects that have inversion. In a similar fashion, external merge of a particle satisfies this requirement in Central and Southern dialects. Dialects that lack a [-realis] feature do not need to satisfy this requirement, hence no internal or external merge comes into play.

As a matter of fact, no dedicated morphosyntactic device could be found in the Italian dialects that is exclusively employed in polar questions, neither in the literature nor in the data collected in this study. Only interrogative intonation seems to be specific to polar questions. All morphosyntactic devices that mark polar interrogatives are also employed in other non-veridical contexts, in addition to yes/no questions. A thorough investigation of the morphosyntactic realization of veridicality (or the absence thereof) in Italian dialects would be needed to shed some light on this issue. This falls outside the scope of the present work.

For the time being, however, it is worth to point out that some data from Standard Germanic display an interesting parallelism with Italian dialects. In English and German, for instance, Interrogative inversion may be used in a number of non-veridical contexts in addition to polar questions. The most common crosslinguistically are conditional, optative and concessive clauses (cf. Roberts, 1992; Grosz, 2011; Iatridou & Embick, 1993). Some examples are given below:

   come-PRES.3.Sg Hans then go-PRES.3.Sg Susanne  
   ‘If Hans comes, Susanne goes’. (Iatridou & Embick, 1993:190)  
   [German: Conditional sentence]

   b. Had he said that he liked artichokes… (Iatridou & Embick, 1993:190)  
   [English: Conditional sentence]

As a final remark, the data discussed throughout the present section are not taken to indicate that syntactic marking of veridicality is a property of Italian dialects or of language in general. However, they suggest that more research is needed to establish whether this might actually be the case.
5. Summary and conclusions

The aim of this chapter was twofold: first, to provide a typological overview of yes/no question-marking in Italian dialects. Further, to investigate whether the yes/no question-marking strategies found in Italian dialects can fit into a broader typology of polar questions as proposed by Ultan (1978), Sadock & Zwicky (1985) and Dryer (2005).

First, all yes/no question-marking strategies available the world’s languages were presented according to Dryer’s (2005) categorization. It was shown that they can be reduced to eight main categories:

- QP;
- Interrogative intonation;
- Interrogative verb morphology;
- QP + interrogative verb morphology;
- Interrogative word order;
- Disjunction;
- Absence of interrogative morpheme;
- No distinction between declarative and yes/no question.

The discussion was eventually narrowed down to Romance languages. It was shown that only a few grammatical yes/no question-marking devices among those attested in the world’s languages are available in the major Romance languages. The most widespread grammatical strategy in Romance is interrogative intonation. Most Romance languages may use a sentence-initial QP in addition to Interrogative Intonation, as opposed to Standard Italian. French represents an exception to this pattern, being the only Romance language that may recur to interrogative word order to mark polar questions. The fact that inversion is only found in French among the major Romance languages suggests that it may be due to the influence of Germanic.

An overview is given in table 1, repeated below as table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Yes/no question-marking strategy</th>
<th>Yes/no question-marking strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP, interrogative word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalan</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
<td>Interrogative intonation, sentence-initial QP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The availability of yes/no question-marking strategies in Romance is not remarkable if compared to the variety yes/no question-marking strategies found in the world’s languages. Whereas six morphosyntactic devices are found in the world’s languages in addition to intonation, Standard Romance languages only display two. This picture contrasts sharply with the situation found in Latin, where a very articulated system of QPs was used in addition to interrogative verb morphology and intonation. An even sharper contrast is provided by the comparison of Italian dialectal data with Standard Italian on the one hand, and with the world’s languages on the other hand. As amply discussed in the previous sections, Standard Italian does not show an important typological variation in yes/no question-marking. Only Interrogative Intonation distinguishes polar questions from the corresponding declaratives. As opposed to Standard Italian, Italian dialects display an unexpectedly high degree of typological variation in yes/no question-marking. Five of the eight grammatical strategies available in the world’s languages are represented in Italian dialects:

- QP;
- Interrogative intonation;
- Interrogative word order;
- Interrogative verb morphology + QP;
- Interrogative verb morphology.

The typological variation within these languages is surprising considering their close relatedness. This confirms once again the importance of Italian dialects as a fertile field to explore language diversity in all its aspects.

However, the profusion of linguistically diverse data found in Italian dialects may sometimes be hard to fit into an established grammatical model. With respect to yes/no question-marking, it was necessary to make some specific choices to fit all strategies into one of Dryer’s (2005) category. In fact, at least three of the morphosyntactic yes/no question-marking devices found in Italian dialects pose a challenge for standard typological classifications such as the one proposed by e.g. Dryer (2005):

- *do*-support in Lombard and Sicilian dialects;
- clefted polar questions in Venetian, Piedmontese and Ligurian dialects;
- *che fare*/*essere* questions in Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects.

Although *do*-support and clefted questions may look problematic at first sight, it is still possible to fit them into the category of interrogative word order for a number of reasons (see the discussion in 1.2.7).

This is not so for *che fare/essere* questions. As discussed in section 3.4.1, it is possible to classify these constructions as being headed by a sentence-initial QP when *fare/essere* is invariable. This is the case of Sicilian and many other Southern dialects. When *fare*\(^{21}\) shares the phi- and tense features of the lexical verb, however, it is not possible to claim

\[\text{Estre} \] always occurs in the 3rd person singular form, disregarding the features of the lexical verb. Therefore, *che* and *essere* can always be interpreted as a single QP, similarly to *est-ce que* in French polar questions.

\[\text{21} \]
that che and fare form a unit and should be analyzed as a single QP. This is the case of Sienese and many other Tuscan and Central dialects. In order to shed some light on the syntax of these typologically exceptional constructions, a detailed analysis of their syntactic properties will be provided in chapter 3.

Two research questions were raised in the introduction. First, whether there is a correlation between the frequency and distribution of the yes/no question-marking strategies found in Italian dialects and other parameters. This question was partially tackled in the discussion in 4. It was shown that if a dialect has subject clitics, then the most common available yes/no question-marking strategies are interrogative inversion or intonation alone. In a subgroup of these dialects, it is possible to use a different verb morphology and/or verb morphology in combination with a QP. Crucially, no sentence-initial QPs are found in any dialect spoken above the Massa-Senigallia line, i.e. in any dialect that has subject clitics. Vice versa, strategies such as interrogative inversion, verb morphology and verb morphology in combination with a QP are never found in any dialect spoken below the Massa-Senigallia line, i.e. in any dialects that lack subject clitics. In all Tuscan, Central and Southern dialects, polar questions can be introduced by a sentence-initial QP homophonous with the wh-word corresponding to what.

Second, there was the question of what the typological set-up of yes/no question-marking strategies in Italian dialects can tell us about the structure of natural language. As discussed in section 4, the data presented in this chapter seem to suggest that there might be more to yes/no question-marking than what is traditionally assumed. It was shown that most morphological yes/no question-marking devices found in Italian dialects are commonly employed in many other non-veridical contexts. A parallelism was drawn between interrogative inversion in Northern dialects, and the placement of sentence-initial QPs in Central and Southern dialects. Although many differences make this parallelism imperfect, it is striking to notice that the same non-veridical contexts are marked by these two strategies in different dialects. This may be taken to suggest that what we see in Italian dialects is a syntactic expression of veridicality (or the absence thereof), rather than of sentence type. I leave it to future research to establish whether this may be a property of Italian dialects or of language in general.