

Optional Insituness in Northern Italian dialects: derivation(s)

Background. Differently from “pure in situ” languages like Chinese (Huang 1982), insituness in Romance languages co-exists with wh-fronting (Munaro 1999, Manzini&Savoia 2005). The *in situ-ex situ alternation* is seemingly optional, but actually applies to various degrees: some languages only allow “insituness” with non-D-linked wh-items (*Bellunese*, Munaro 1999) (1a-b), other license *any* wh-item sentence-internally (*Trevigiano*, Bonan 2018) (2a-b):

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| <p>(1) a. * <i>A-tu sièlt che vestito?</i>
 have=you chosen which dress
 “Which dress did you choose?”</p> <p>(2) a. <i>Ga-tu leto cuanti libri?</i>
 have=you read how.many books
 “How many books did you read?”</p> | <p>a. <i>A-tu parecià che?</i>
 have=you prepared what
 “What did you prepare?”</p> <p>b. <i>Ga-tu leto cossa?</i>
 have=you read what
 “What did you read?”</p> |
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Also, while in languages like Bellunese “insituness” is a root phenomenon realized at the sentential edge (Munaro 1999), in some Lombard dialects and Trevigiano sentence-internal wh-words needn’t occupy the rightmost position and appear in embedded environments (Manzini&Savoia 2005, Bonan 2018). Bellunese-like languages have been argued to derive insituness using a low *left peripheral* projection (Munaro et al. 2001, Poletto&Pollock 2015). These approaches were criticised by Manzini&Savoia (2005;2011) discussing Lombard in-situ wh-words that appear in their argumental position. However, neither can account for the whole range of morpho-syntactic variations observed in Northern Italian Dialects (NIDs).

Novel data. Manzini (2014) mentions the possibility for sentence-internal wh-words to target the *vP*, as in Brazilian Portuguese (Kato 2013). Bonan (2018) develops this intuition using data from Trevigiano, whose sentence-internal wh-words *systematically* target a position below the finite *V* (3a-b):

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| <p>(3) a. <i>Ga-tu meso dove el me reojo?</i>
 have=you put where the my watch
 “Where did you put my watch?”</p> | <p>b. * <i>Ga-tu meso el me reojo dove?</i>
 have=you put the my watch where</p> |
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Another difference between Bellunese and Trevigiano is that the latter has “insituness” in long distance (4a) and in indirect questions (4b) (Bonan 2018):

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| <p>(4) a. <i>Pensi-tu ke-l ne ciamarà cuando?</i>
 think=you that=he us call.FUT when
 “When do you think he will call us?”</p> | <p>b. <i>A vol saver se-l ne ciamarà cuando</i>
 she wants know se=he us call.FUT when
 “She wants to know when he will call us”</p> |
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Finally, whereas Bellunese excludes “insituness” both from weak (5a) and strong (5b) islands (Munaro 1999), this is perfectly fine in Trevigiano (6a-b):

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| <p>(5) a. * <i>No te-ol andar andé?</i>
 NEG you=want go where
 “Where don't you want to go?”</p> <p>(6) a. <i>No te vol ndar dove?</i>
 NEG you want go where</p> | <p>b. * <i>Te piase i libri che parla de che?</i>
 you like.it the books that speak of what
 “You like books about what?”</p> <p>b. <i>Te piase i libri che parla de cossa?</i>
 you like the books that speak of what</p> |
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The properties listed so far clearly set Bellunese and Trevigiano apart - which makes it implausible to posit a derivation that is strong enough to explain “insituness” in both languages.

Discussion. In Comunnovese, a Lombard dialect, different derivations can be posited for different types of wh-words (Donzelli 2018) - while both wh-items of the *basic*-type (*cosa*) and of the *è*-type (*cosè*) appear sentence-internally (7a-b), only the latter can be embedded (8a-b):

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| (7) a. <i>Te vest cosa?</i>
you saw what
“What did you see?” | b. <i>Te vest cosè?</i>
you see what |
| (8) a. * <i>Ma se domande al fa cosa</i>
I myself ask he does what
“I wonder what he does” | b. <i>Ma se domande al fa cosè</i>
I myself ask he does what |

Wh-words of the *è*-type have a Trevigiano-like behaviour – they undergo *IP*-internal wh-movement (9a) and are fine inside of islands (9b):

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| (9) a. <i>L’ha est cosè in-del prat?</i>
He’has seen what in=the garden
“What did he see in the garden?” | b. <i>I vol mia cosè?</i>
They want NEG what
“What is it that they don’t want?” |
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Predictably, wh-words of the *basic*-type have opposite behaviour.

Contra Munaro et al. 2001, Manzini&Savoia 2005;2011, Poletto&Pollock 2015, it appears implausible to posit a *one-fits-all* derivation of “insituness” for NIDs. In fact, intra- and inter-linguistically, different wh-items target different wh-projections - a low left peripheral one in Bellunese, an *IP*-internal one in Trevigiano, either of the two depending on the wh-word in “mixed” languages like Comunnovese. Also, Chinese-like *argumental* insituness ought to be posited for the Lombard varieties described in Manzini&Savoia (2005;2011).

Conclusions. A unique derivation cannot explain the wide range of variation observed in the *in situ-ex situ alternation* in NIDs. A novel model is proposed here, which ranges languages from Chinese-like varieties whose sentence-internal wh-elements are literally *in-situ* (in argumental position), to Bellunese-like varieties that exploit a *left peripheral* wh-projection – via many intermediate steps. The claim is that one can explain all cross- and intra-linguistic variations looking at two major variables:

- i) the focal position(s) available for sentence-internal wh-words (left peripheral, *IP*-internal, argumental);
- ii) the nature of wh-items and their movement properties.

References: Belletti. 2004. Aspects of the low IP-area. Bonan. 2018. On Insituness and (very) low Wh-positions. Donzelli. 2018. Two types of wh in situ in Lombard dialects. Huang. 1982. Logical Relations in Chinese and the Theory of Grammar. Kato. 2013. Deriving ‘wh-in-situ’ through movement in BP. Manzini. 2014. Grammatical categories: Strong and weak pronouns in Romance. Manzini&Savoia. 2005. I dialetti italiani e romanci. Manzini&Savoia. 2011. Wh- in situ and wh-doubling in Northern Italian varieties: Against remnant movement. Munaro. 1999. Sintagmi interrogativi nei dialetti italiani settentrionali. Munaro et al. 2001. Eppure si muove! Poletto&Pollock. 2015. Arguing for remnant movement in Romance.