



PA11.1 - Presentational Particles in Romance languages. A diachronic syntactic study of French and Italian

Student: Katja Friedewald Supervisors: Guido Mensching, Anke Holler

Ext./Th.Com.: Gurmeet Kaur

I. The form-meaning mismatch

In the Romance languages, specific lexical items exist to construct presentative sentences. French *voici/voilà* and Italian *ecco* belong to this group of items:

(1)	a.	Voilà	Marie.	b. La voilà.	Fr.
		VOILA	M.	3fsg.acc=voila	

(2)	a.	Ecco	Maria.	b. Eccola.	It.
		ECCO	M.	ECCO=3fsg.ACC	

They

- state the existence of an (abstract) entity,
- localize the entity in space (or discourse), similar to a pointing gesture (cf. Lakoff's 1987 "pointing-out ICM"),
- invite the hearer to shift the attention to this entity and "make that entity the most salient in the discourse" (Wood/Zanuttini 2023, 37),
- announce that also the speaker will direct his attention to the entity so that Joint Attention (cf. Tomasello 2010; Diessel 2006) is established,
- combine functions of declarative, imperative and commissive speech acts.

At the same time, they

- behave syntactically like verbs,
- do not inflect and display obligatory null subjects.

Research questions:

- How did the presentative items voici/voilà and ecco develop diachronically, on a morphologic as well as on a semantic/pragmatic level?
- How to account for their syntactic and morphologic divergence from regular verbs in those languages, given that they are not etymologically linked to each other?

II. Methodology and hypotheses

Hypotheses:

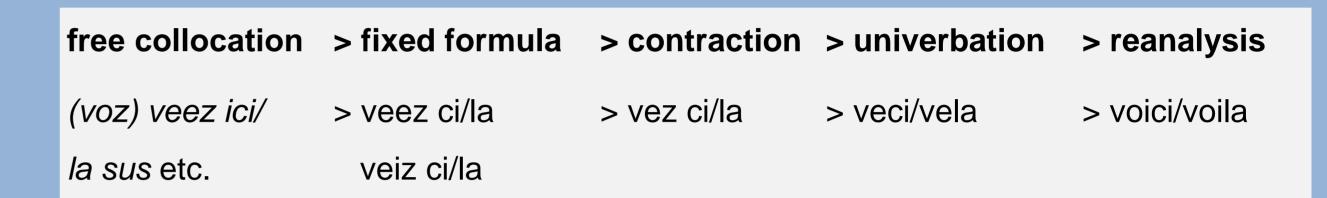
- Voici/voilà are the result of a grammaticalization process.
- Presentative sentences show universal tendencies as they represent a distinct presentative clause type.

Methods:

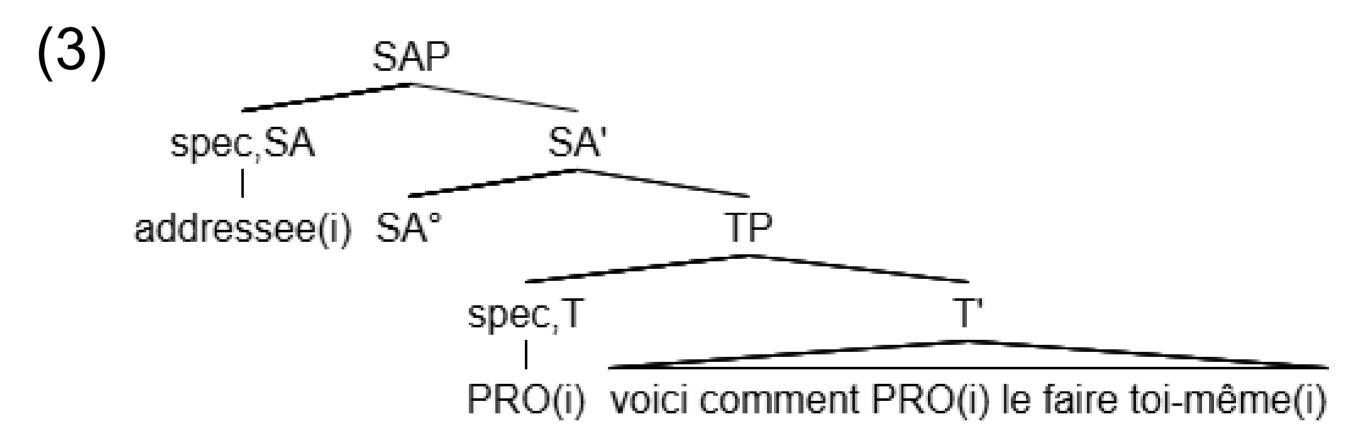
- diachronic corpus research using as main resources Base du Français Médiéval (BFM), Frantext, Opera del Vocabolario Italiano (OVI) and Morfologia dell'Italiano in Diachronia (MIDIA)
- syntactic analysis within the generative framework

III. Results and discussion

- It. *ecco* inherits its semantic and pragmatic features from Lat. ECCE.
- Fr. voici/voilà follows a complex grammaticalization path:



- Overt subjects with *voici/voilà* become ungrammatical at the moment in time when French looses its pro-drop property.
- Italian presentative sentences can be analyzed as imperatives.
- French presentative items share properties with non-finite verbs, taking PRO as subject.
- PRO in French presentative sentences can be arbitrary (due to the absence of a speeach-act-layer, cf. Ritter/Wiltschko 2018; Speas/Tenny 2003 for SAP) or controlled by the addressee, as sentences involving an impersonal intensifier show that a [+addressee] feature is obligatory (see (3)).



 A unified account for Italian and French presentative sentences is possible under the assumption that imperative and presentative clauses share the same type of subject, i.e. an addressee-oriented logophoric PRO.

IV. Consequences and follow-up questions

- The study of presentative constructions provides further arguments for the assumption that the pragmatic domain of the addressee directly effects the syntax.
- The convergence of the syntactic and pragmatic properties of French and Italian suggest that it exists, indeed, a universal presentative clause type.
- A wider typological study on presentative constructions families would be necessary to confirm this approach.
- Studies on the same 1:many mismatch type across modalities could clarify the intertwined relationship of presentatives with co-speech gestures (see PA11.2).

References: Diessel, Holger (2006): Demonstratives, joint attention, and the emergence of grammar. In: Cognitive Linguistics 17, 463–489; Kaur, Gurmeet (2020): On the syntax of addressee in imperatives: insights from allocutivity. In: Glossa: a journal of general linguistics 5 (1). DOI: 10.5334/gjgl.1083; Lakoff, George (1987): Women, fire, and dangerous things: what categories reveal about the mind. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.; Ritter, Elisabeth/Wiltschko, Martina (2018): Distinguishing speech act roles from grammatical person features. In: Proceedings of the 2018 annual conference of the Canadian Linguistic Association, article n° 11; Speas, Peggy/Tenny, Carol (2003): Configurational properties of point of view roles. In: Anne-Marie Di Sciullo (ed.): Asymmetry in Grammar. Volume 1: Syntax and Semantics, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 315–344; Tomasello, Michael (2010): Die Ursprünge der menschlichen Kommunikation. 1. [Nachdruck]. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.; Wood, Jim/Zanuttini, Raffaella (2023): The Syntax of English Presentatives. In: Language 99 (3), 563–602.