

Between Time and Discourse A Syntactic Analysis of Italian *poi*

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Abstract In this article the different functions of Italian *poi* are described and analysed from a cartographic perspective. We show that in addition to its use as a temporal adverb (*after, then*), *poi* can be used as a temporal or logical connective adverb, as a discourse marker and as a modal particle. These functions can be correlated with different positions in the clause and with differences in the internal structure of the element itself. Finally, we identify the syntactic environments and sentence types in which *poi* occurs in its function as a modal particle, as well as the special interpretations that are associated with its presence.

Keywords Connective. Discourse marker. Topic. Modal particle. Verum focus. Polarity.

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1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to describe and provide a comprehensive cartographic analysis of the different uses of Italian *poi*, “after, then”. Based on: i) literary examples, ii) data from corpora of spoken and written Italian and iii) our intuitions of native speakers of Italian, we show that as well as being used as a temporal adverb (1a), *poi* can be used as a temporal/logical connective adverb (1b, Ferrari 2010; Ferrari 2021; Ferrari, Zampese 2016), as a discourse/topic marker (1c, cf. Bazzanella 1995) and as a modal particle (1d, Thurmair 1989). The different usages are illustrated in (1); (1a-c) are examples from Cruschina and Cognola (2021, 55, 58).

- (1a) È Trebi, vivo, che voglio. I suoi casini li sapremo **poi**. (CORIS)
‘It’s Trebi, alive, that I want. We will get to know his troubles later.’
- (1b) Come si diventa orafi? Innanzitutto frequentando una scuola specializzata. **Poi** si apprendono “dal vivo” le tecniche adottate dai singoli artigiani. (CORIS)
‘How do you learn to become a goldsmith? First of all, by attending a specialist school. Then, you learn “in person” the techniques adopted by the individual craftsmen.’
- (1c) Un video così lo sanno fare pure i video amatori, ma la canzone **poi** che cosa mi rappresenta? (PAISÀ)
‘Even video amateurs are able to make a video like that, but then what does the song represent?’
- (1d) Non è **poi** così male! (Coniglio 2008, 112)
‘It’s not so bad, after all.’

Parts of this paper were presented at the Linguistic Colloquium at the University of Venice (17 November 2020). We thank the participants, in particular Anna Cardinaletti, Guglielmo Cinque, and Marco Coniglio, and two anonymous reviewers for useful comments and suggestions. Most of the examples discussed in this paper come from the following corpora of Italian: the corpus of written Italian CORIS, the platform PAISÀ for Italian language learning Italian on annotated corpora, the corpus of spoken Italian KIParla, and the corpus of texts from the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*. For orthographic consistency, some transcriptions have been adjusted (e.g. with respect to punctuation or the use of capital letters). In a few cases an equivalent of *poi* is missing from the English translation. The examples from Umberto Eco’s novels *Foucault’s Pendulum* (FP) and *The Name of the Rose* (NR) are taken from the parallel corpus *Intercorp* (<https://intercorp.korpus.cz/?lang=en>) and were collected by the student Valeria Trevisan for her internship at the University Ca’ Foscari of Venice (*Creazione di un corpus parallelo tedesco-italiano*, responsible: Federica Cognola). The editions used by *Intercorp* are the following: *Il Nome della Rosa*, Milano, Edizione RCS Libri SPA, 1998, and *Il pendolo di Foucault*, Milano, Bompiani, 1989.

Although this work stems from joint research, for the administrative purposes of Italian academia Federica Cognola takes responsibility for §§ 3, 4 and 5, and Silvio Cruschina for §§ 1 and 2.

We propose (cf. also Cruschina, Cognola 2021) that *poi* exhibits the function of:

- a. A connective, expressing a relationship between two linguistic items at inter-sentential level and it specifies how the event should be situated and establish logical relations between events;
- b. A discourse marker, i.e. an element with a discourse managing function;
- c. A modal particle (in the sense of Weydt 1969; Thurmair 1989), i.e. an element with a reduced categorial status with the purely pragmatic function of expressing the speaker's attitude toward the utterance's content.

Following Cruschina and Cognola (2021), we propose that this tripartite distinction correlates with different structural positions in which *poi* can occur: when used as a connective *poi* is assumed to be located in the CP and to a lesser extent in the IP; when used as a modal particle *poi* is bound to the IP; and when used as a temporal adverb it is hosted in an Adverb position in the IP. When used as a discourse marker, *poi* is compatible with all three positions.

We show that the functions of *poi* in (1) also correlate with differences in its internal structure (i.e. as a strong, weak or clitic element according to Cardinaletti, Starke 1999), and that the temporal and logical connective functions coexist with pragmatic functions typical of discourse markers and modal particles. More specifically, *poi* as a maximal category can only be interpreted as a temporal adverb or as a logical connective, in which case it is hosted in a Spec position of the left periphery or in the TP area (cf. Cinque 1999). When *poi* functions as a topic/discourse marker it is a weak element, i.e. it is destressed and pronounced with a low intonation. When used as a modal particle (MP), *poi* appears in negative clauses and interrogative clauses, and will be shown to feature all typical properties of MPs, i.e.: i) it is structurally a weak element; ii) it appears in the TP area between finite verb and auxiliary (lower than *mica*, cf. Cinque 1999); iii) it involves the activation of ForceP in the left periphery (cf. Coniglio, Zegrean 2012) and of FocusP and PolarityP (Cognola, Schifano 2018a; 2018b).

The paper is organised as follows. In section 2 we discuss the function of *poi* as an adverb and a connective. Section 3 deals with *poi* as a discourse marker, while in section 4 we provide evidence in favour of the fact that *poi* can also be a modal particle. Section 5 summarises the results.

2 *Poi* as an Adverb: Temporal and Logical Succession

The aim of this section is to investigate the distribution and syntactic properties of *poi* when used as an adverb with temporal meaning and connective function.

2.1 *Poi* as a Temporal Adverb

As a temporal adverb, *poi* may indicate posteriority with respect to (i) the speech time or (ii) a previous event (cf. Cruschina, Cognola 2021).¹ When the adverb *poi* expresses posteriority with respect to the speech time, it contributes to the temporal localisation and to the interpretation of the host sentence, situating the event at a later time, which is posterior to the utterance time (*afterwards*, *later*). In this function *poi* typically appears in the sentence-initial position.

- (2a) Belbo le passò teneramente il braccio intorno alle spalle, la baciò su una tempia, le ravviò i capelli, **poi** disse verso la sala: “Scusatela, non è abituata a bere così.” (FP)
‘Belbo put kindly his arm around her shoulders, kissed her on her head, fixed her hair, then said towards the room: “Sorry, she is not used to drinking like this”.’
- (2b) Arrivati a pochi metri gli uni dagli altri, i due gruppi si fronteggiarono, digrignanti, **poi** i capi si fecero avanti e parlamentarono. (FP)
‘When the two groups were a few metres apart, they faced each other, showing their teeth, then the leaders stepped forward and had a discussion.’
- (2c) Ascoltò per qualche secondo, **poi** mi guardò, pallido, e mi disse: “Hanno ammazzato il colonnello, o qualcosa del genere”. (FP)
‘He listened for a few seconds, then looked at me, pale, and said: “The colonel has been killed, or something like that”.’

A final (3a) or clause-internal (3b,c) position for *poi* is also possible when it is used as a temporal adverb:

- (3a) È Trebi, vivo, che voglio. I suoi casini li sapremo **poi**. (CORIS)
‘It’s Trebi, alive, that I want. We will get to know his troubles later.’
- (3b) Di organizzare questo primo incontro era stato appunto incaricato Guglielmo da Baskerville. Il quale avrebbe dovuto **poi** rappresentare il punto di vista dei teologi imperiali ad Avignone, se avesse ritenuto che il viaggio era possibile senza pericolo. (NR)
‘William of Baskerville was charged with organising this first meeting. He would later have to represent the point of view of imperial theologians in Avignon, if he considered the journey there to be safe.’

¹ In the latter case *poi* is analysed as a connective adverb (for an overview of the notion of ‘connective’ we refer the reader to Ferrari 2010; Ferrari 2021; Ferrari, Zampese 2016).

- (3c) Come faceva a prevedere che Michele stesso avrebbe **poi** deciso di appoggiarsi ai teologi dell'impero e al popolo per condannare il papa? (NR)
'How could he predict that Michele would later decide to use the imperial theologians and the people to condemn the Pope?'

When used as a temporal adverb, *poi* is a maximal category according to Cardinaletti and Starke's (1999) tests, and this holds for all potential positions for *poi*. Evidence for this is provided by the fact that *poi* can be modified by an element such as *solo*, as expected if it is a maximal category (weak elements and syntactic heads cannot be modified, as shown by Cardinaletti, Starke 1999).²

- (3a') È Trebi, vivo, che voglio. I suoi casini li sapremo **solo poi** / **Solo poi** sapremo i suoi casini
'It's Trebi, alive, that I want. We will get to know his troubles only later on.'
- (3b') Di organizzare questo primo incontro era stato appunto incaricato Guglielmo da Baskerville. Il quale avrebbe dovuto (**solo poi**) rappresentare (**solo poi**) il punto di vista dei teologi imperiali ad Avignone, se avesse ritenuto che il viaggio era possibile senza pericolo.
'William of Baskerville was charged with organising this first meeting. He would only later have to represent the point of view of imperial theologians in Avignon, if he considered the journey there to be safe.'
- (2b') Arrivati a pochi metri gli uni dagli altri, i due gruppi si fronteggiarono, digrignanti, (**solo poi**) i capi (**solo poi**) si fecero avanti (**solo poi**) e parlamentarono
'When the two groups were a few metres apart, they faced each other, showing their teeth, only later on the leaders stepped forward and had a discussion.'

2.2 *Poi* as a Connective Expressing Logical Succession

Instead of temporal succession (*afterwards*, *at a later time*), connective *poi* can express logical succession or sequence (*next in order*, *in addition*). The initial (scene-setting, cf. below) position is also frequent in this function:

- (4a) Come si diventa orafi? Innanzitutto frequentando una scuola specializzata. **Poi** si apprendono "dal vivo" le tecniche adottate dai singoli artigiani. (CORIS; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 57)
'How do you learn to become a goldsmith? First of all, by attending a specialist school. Then, you learn "in person" the techniques adopted by the individual craftsmen.'
- (4b) Quella verso il torrione immetteva nella stanza E che avevamo appena percorso. **Poi** c'era una parete piena e infine un'apertura che immetteva in una seconda stanza cieca con l'iniziale U. (NR)
'The one to the tower led to room E, which we had already taken. After this room there was a wall and at the end an opening which led into to a second room with no windows and the letter U.'

² We thank Marco Coniglio for suggesting us to use *solo* as a modification of *poi* here.

- (4c) Prima ce li ha presentati come sergenti di un film di John Ford, **poi** come dei sudicioni [...] (FP)
'At the beginning they were presented as sergeants from a John Ford movie, then as sinners [...].'
- (4d) Il criterio era rigoroso, e credo sia lo stesso seguito dai servizi segreti: non ci sono informazioni migliori delle altre, il potere sta nello schedarle tutte, e **poi** cercare le connessioni. (FP)
'The procedure was rigorous and I think it is the same one used by the Secret Service: no piece of information is better than another, the power follows from filing them all, and then searching for connections.'

Here the meaning and the connective function of *poi* have evolved from the basic temporal value to a logical value, establishing a logical (rather than temporal) order. This means that a connective can create logical connections between text parts, and not only temporal connections between events (cf. Cruschina, Cognola 2021). Both in its temporal and logical function, *poi* contributes to the structure and the hierarchical organisation of the text by marking the development of the events, the linear progression of the utterances. A similar semantic contribution is provided to its host sentence, that is, a binary relation between two utterances (for a similar development of German *denn* 'then', cf. Diewald 1997).

In this function, *poi* occurs predominantly in the initial position, but the middle position is also possible:

- (5a) Incontrando ieri i giornalisti, Riccio ha ricordato le difficili condizioni in cui era costretto a lavorare [...]. Riccio ha **poi** anche parlato del suo tenore di vita "quasi francescano". (CORIS; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 57)
'When he met the journalists yesterday, Riccio recalled the difficult conditions in which he was forced to work [...]. Riccio then also talked about his "almost-Franciscan" way of life.'
- (5b) Molto ricca anche la guida di SuperEva all'indirizzo <http://guide.supereva.it/salute-e-benessere>. Ci sono **poi** siti che hanno l'aspetto di una rivista ma forniscono molti servizi informativi. (CORIS; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 57)
'The SuperEva guide at the address <http://guide.supereva.it/salute-e-benessere> is also very rich (in information). There are in addition sites that look like a journal but provide many information services.'

When used as a connective logical adverb, *poi* is a maximal category in the sense of Cardinaletti and Starke (1999), and this holds for all potential positions for *poi*. Evidence for this is provided by the fact that *poi* can be modified by an element such as *solo*, and can appear in coordination, as expected if it is a maximal category (Cardinaletti, Starke 1999).

- (6a) Prima ce li ha presentati come sergenti di un film di John Ford, **solo poi** come dei sudicioni.
'First he introduced them to us as sergeants from a John Ford's film, only later on as sinners.'
- (6b) Riccio ha **poi e senza esitazioni/solo poi** anche parlato del suo tenore di vita "quasi francescano".
'Riccio then also talked about his "almost-Franciscan" way of life without hesitation.'
- (6c) **Poi e senza esitazioni / Solo poi** Riccio ha anche parlato del suo tenore di vita "quasi francescano".
'Only then did Riccio also talked about his "almost-Franciscan" way of life without hesitation.'

2.3 Derivation

We propose that when *poi* indicates temporal and logical succession, it is an adverb and a maximal projection in all positions (sentence initial, sentence final and sentence internal). The postverbal and clause-internal positions involve the same position for *poi* and different positions for the verb. We argue that, in this function, *poi* sits in the specifier position of a temporal (T) functional projection, which, following Cinque (1999), we understand as T(posterior), as in (7a). The postverbal position is derived by independent movement of the finite verb or past participle to the IP, to a position higher than the adverb (7c).³

- (7a) [_{CP} I *suoi casini* [_{IP} *li sapremo* [_{T(posterior)} **poi** [_{VP} VP]]]]
- (7b) [_{CP}... [_{IP} *avrebbe* [_{FP} *dovuto* [_{T(posterior)} **solo poi** [_{FP} *rappresentare* [_{VP}]]]]]]]]
- (7c) [_{CP}... [_{IP} *avrebbe* [_{FP} *dovuto* [_{FP} *rappresentare* [_{T(posterior)} **solo poi** [_{FP} *rappresentare* [_{VP}]]]]]]]]]]

Poi typically appears in the sentence-initial position when it is used as a temporal connective. In this function, *poi* behaves as a two-place predicate that contributes a binary relation over events to the semantics of the sentence. The arguments of this binary predicate are

3 Marco Coniglio (personal communication) suggests that the sentence-final and sentence-internal positions of the temporal adverb *poi* might involve two separate FPs specialised for tense and that the higher sentence-internal position involves a weak adverb while the lower sentence-final position involves a strong adverb. Cinque (2006) assumes, in fact, that there is a lower temporal specification above vP which modifies the event, which co-exists with a higher position (T posterior). We have no evidence for the presence of this lower position for *poi*, and in particular there is no evidence that the sentence-initial *poi* is syntactically different from sentence-final *poi*. In both positions, in fact, *poi* behaves as a strong element, as shown by the fact that it can be modified by *solo* 'only'.

(con-)textually derived: the first argument coincides with an earlier event, typically denoted in the preceding utterance, while the second argument corresponds to the sentence that hosts *poi*:

- (8a) Guardò il babbo, **poi** si volse al fuoristrada. (CORIS; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 56)
'S/he looked at her father, then turned towards their off-road vehicle.'
- (8b) E tuttavia, posto che Venanzio fosse pazzo, o fosse pazzo l'autore del libro, questo non ci direbbe perché tante persone, e non tutte pazze, si sono date da fare, prima per nascondere il libro, **poi** per recuperarlo. (NR)
'However, the hypothesis that Venantius was mad, or that the author of the book was mad, would not tell us why so many people, not all of them mad, made the effort of first hiding and then retrieving the book.'

As discussed in Cruschina and Cognola (2021, 56), this is the typical function of temporal connectives that order two events in a temporal relation, since semantically, *poi* acts as a modifier of an underlying event variable (à la Davidson 1967):

when it occurs sentence-initially, *poi* contributes to the time frame and setting within which the main predication holds, restricting the temporal dimension of the sentence. Elements with this function, including adverbs and adverbials, have been identified as scene-setting topics (Chafe 1976), frame-setting topics (Krifka 2007) or limiting topics (Frascarelli 2017). They are not topics in the traditional sense, in that the sentences they introduce are not about them, nor do they constitute given information. Despite their slightly different functions, scene-setters generally "limit the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain" (Chafe 1976, 50) - a temporal dimension in the case of *poi*. (Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 56)

Like topics, scene-setters occur at the beginning of the sentence, in the higher part of the CP (Benincà, Poletto 2004; Frascarelli 2017; cf. the structure in (9) adapted from Frascarelli, Hinterhölzl 2007):

- (9) [_{FORCE-P} [_{SCENE SETTER} [_{SHIFT-P} [_{CONTR-P} [_{FAM-P*} [_{FOCUS-P} [_{FIN-P} finite verb [_{IP}]]]]]]]]]

We propose that, when fronted, temporal/logical *poi* appears in the scene-setting position, having been moved there from Spec,T(posterior).⁴

⁴ As noted by an anonymous reviewer, scene-setters can be base-generated elements in several languages (cf. Benincà, Poletto 2004 among others). We do not have compelling evidence against base-generation for *poi* here, but we think that it is more advantageous to only have a single element and to capture its different functions via syntactic movement.

- (10) [_{CP} [_{SCENE SETTER} POI [_{IP} finite verb [_{T(posterior)} POI past participle [_{VP}]]]]]

In this section, we have shown that when used as a temporal/logical connective adverb, *poi* can appear in three positions in the clause which correspond to two underlying positions: the scene-setting position when *poi* is sentence-initial, and T(posterior) when *poi* is sentence-internal or sentence-final. When it has this temporal/logical function, *poi* is a maximal category and a strong element in the sense of Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) in all positions.

3 *Poi* as a Discourse Marker: Conclusion, Contrast and Topic Marker

A further function of *poi* is the demarcation function as a discourse marker (cf. Sansò 2020 for a recent overview of this category). When the temporal or logical succession shifts from the text to the discourse, *poi* signals a demarcation between salient points, presenting the discourse as the development of an argumentative chain (Cruschina, Cognola 2021).⁵

3.1 Discourse Marker: Contrast and Conclusion

3.1.1 Distribution

In (11) we illustrate the use of *poi* as a discourse marker. In these cases, *poi* cannot be paraphrased with *dopo* (after), but roughly corresponds to *inoltre* (moreover), as a consequence of the fact that in this function *poi* indicates a demarcation between salient points within an argumentative chain.

- (11a) **Poi** non è che Severino abbia detto che non poteva trasportare il libro. (NR)
'Moreover it is not the case that Severinus said he could not bring the book.'
- (11b) Quando entra qualcuno a chiedere un libro, metti, con preghiere contro gli spiriti del male, suggeriscono al libraio il titolo giusto, che è **poi** quello che il libraio non ha. (FP)
'When somebody goes in to ask for a book, for example, with prayers against evil spirits, they suggest the right title to the librarian, which is in the end the one that the librarian does not have.'

⁵ Following Cruschina and Cognola (2021, 65), "by text we mean the linguistic material that is clearly identifiable in terms of utterances and their propositions in a given communicative situation. Discourse, by contrast, is a much more complex notion which also includes implied meanings such as inferences, presuppositions and implicatures, as well as the shared knowledge that is part of the common background of the conversation participants and that is not linguistically explicit".

- (11c) “Metta **poi** che a qualche mio collega venisse in mente che ad ammazzarla è stato lei, “ha aggiunto De Angelis con un bel sorriso,” e vede che ci conviene marciare uniti. (FP)
“Moreover, consider the fact that a colleague of mine might come up with the idea that it was you who killed her”, said De Angelis, smiling, “and you see we should go on together.”’

These examples show that the succession is not necessarily related to the content of the previous utterances or to the sequence of events described in the text, but can also be associated with the organisation of the discourse and of the argumentation. In this case, the utterance containing *poi* has a specific function: it adds new information. This is particularly evident when *poi* is used together with the conjunction *e* ‘and’ (i.e. *e poi*) with a salient argumentative value, in that it is typically used to add a new element in a line of reasoning.

- (12a) Avevo sino ad allora considerato Lorenza come proprietà di Belbo – almeno nei miei confronti – e **poi** da quando ero con Lia ero diventato insensibile ad altri fascino. (FP)
‘I had until then considered Lorenza as Belbo’s property – at least as far as I was concerned; **moreover**, since I had been with Lia I had become indifferent to the charms of others.’
- (12b) Il Papa ci crede e non ci crede, e **poi** sa che non è facile mettere le mani negli affari del Tempio. (FP)
‘The Pope believes in it and does not believe in it, **moreover**, he knows that it is not easy to get your hands on the Temple’s business.’

When used as a discourse marker *poi* is associated with pragmatic inferences that interfere with its basic meaning of temporal/logical succession and are not present in its uses as an adverb discussed in section 2. Therefore, the turning-point separation introduced by *poi* can also acquire a contrastive value, often along with a sense of aversion, dissent or counter-expectedness (*after all, at any rate, despite everything, in spite of expectations*, cf. Cruschina, Cognola 2021) as in the examples in (13). The contrast refers to the previous argument, which thus functions as a premise for the current statement including *poi*.

- (13a) Sophia era la parte femminile di Dio, perché allora Dio era più femmina che maschio, siete stati **poi** voi che gli avete messo la barba e lo avete chiamato Lui. (FP)
‘Sophia was God’s female part because God was more a female than a male; after all you were those who had given him a beard and called him Him.’
- (13b) Però appena quelli si mettono alla sua mercé, non solo li fa rinchiodare a chiave (che sarebbe **poi** la giusta usanza) ma gli diminuisce i cibi di giorno in giorno sino a che non abbiano preso una decisione. (NR)
‘But as soon as they put themselves at his disposal, he not only lets them be locked up (which would be after all the correct practice) but he also allows their food to be reduced day after day until they have made a decision.’

Poi can also indicate the conclusion of a previous discourse unit, thus helping to close off a whole discourse chunk (cf. Cruschina, Cognola 2021). In this function, the previous discourse unit is therefore marked as a premise to the current statement. This value is particularly common in interrogative sentences, where *poi* signals the conclusion and the end result from an argumentative succession or from previous knowledge (*in the end, finally, at last, ultimately*), as exemplified in (14); the same value, though, can also be found with declarative sentences, especially when commenting on decisions:⁶

- (14a) *È partito poi?* (Treccani, s.v. “poi”; cf. Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 59)
‘Did he finally leave?’
(14b) *S’è convinto poi?* (Treccani, s.v. “poi”; cf. Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 59)
‘Was he convinced at last?’

In questions like those in (14), the linking expressed by *poi* can be between the interrogative and a presupposition present in the shared knowledge / common ground of speaker and hearer (<he was supposed to leave> and <he was not sure about something>):

- (15) E Mario?
‘And what about Mario?’
(15a) *È partito poi?* (Treccani, s.v. “poi”)
‘Did he finally leave?’
(15b) *S’è convinto poi?* (Treccani, s.v. “poi”)
‘Was he convinced at last?’

3.1.2 Derivation

When used as a discourse marker, *poi* is compatible with all three linear positions discussed in section 2: sentence-initial, sentence-final and sentence-internal.⁷ Unlike when it is used as a temporal/log-

⁶ Sentences such as those in (14) and (15) are taken from the online dictionary Treccani, where no indication of the felicitous contexts in which they could be uttered is given. It is clear, though, that such sentences imply the presence of a presupposition (“she/he had to leave; she/he needed to be convinced but he had not done so/that yet”) with reference to shared knowledge (which may derive from other sources or forms of shared knowledge, not necessarily from the previous discourse with the same participants). In these cases, the pragmatic import of *poi* is that of signalling that what is presupposed did not happen in the past and the speaker asks whether it happened later.

⁷ In terms of its distribution, *poi* can occur in almost all positions when it indicates the discourse relations discussed in this section, although we can identify some general tendencies: demarcation *poi* tends to occur in the initial position, while conclusive *poi* is more common in the final position (especially in questions); the other contrastive values are more frequently associated with the highest portion of IP. In the sentence-final position, a degree of ambiguity with a temporal interpretation with *poi* remains, insofar as the conclusion or the contrast can be intended in terms of posteriority with respect to the previous discourse.

ical adverb, *poi* as a discourse marker does not behave as a strong element in the sense of Cardinaletti and Starke (1999), as shown by the impossibility of modifying it with *solo*.

- (16a) * “Metta **solo poi** che a qualche mio collega venisse in mente che ad ammazzarla è stato lei,” ha aggiunto De Angelis con un bel sorriso, “e vede che ci conviene marciare uniti.”
“Moreover, consider the fact that a colleague of mine might come up with the idea that it was you who killed her”, said De Angelis smiling, “and you see we should go on together”.
- (16b) * Il Papa ci crede e non ci crede, e **solo poi** sa che non è facile mettere le mani negli affari del Tempio.
‘The Pope believes in it and does not believe in it, moreover, he knows that it is not easy to get your hands on the Temple’s business.’
- (16c) * Però appena quelli si mettono alla sua mercé, non solo li fa rinchiodere a chiave (che sarebbe **solo poi** la giusta usanza) ma gli diminuisce i cibi di giorno in giorno sino a che non abbiano preso una decisione.
‘But as soon as they put themselves at his disposal, he not only lets them be locked up (which would be after all the correct practice) but he also allows their food to be reduced day after day until they have made a decision.’

Based on (16), we claim that when used as a discourse marker *poi* is a weak element, i.e. it is a distressed maximal category which therefore cannot be focussed (Cardinaletti, Starke 1999).

We propose that in this function, *poi* appears in the same two underlying structures that host *poi* when it is used as a temporal/logical adverb/connective, i.e. the scene-setting position and T(posterior). We suggest that the linear sentence-final position is derived by movement of the non-finite verb form above T(posterior).

- (17) [_{CP} **poi** [_{IP} finite verb [_{FP} non-finite verb [_{Tposterior} **poi** [_{VP} non-finite verb]]]]]

According to the proposed analysis *poi* as a discourse marker occupies the same position as the adverbial/temporal connective *poi* and only differs from it as far as its internal structure is concerned: the former is a strong category, whereas the latter is a weak element. We suggest that there is only one lexical element *poi*, with the different functions being derived by movement. When it is a discourse marker, however, different positions are possible.

3.2 Topic Marker

3.2.1 Distribution

In this section we identify a special function of *poi* that is connected to that of a discourse marker, but differs from the contexts discussed in section 3.1 above, in which the discourse marker introduces new information. When *poi* characterises the structure and the progression of the argument, it can introduce a new topic or, more commonly, a sub-argument, thus serving the function of a boundary marker (*demarcativo* in Bazzanella 2011). This function can be easily derived from its original temporal meaning: temporal succession implies temporal separation between two events that do occur in a chronological order, rather than simultaneously. Along the same lines, when acting as a discourse marker, *poi* emphasises the logical separation between arguments or points in the discourse, providing a hierarchical order along an argumentative chain: as a result, a new topic or a topicalised sub-argument is introduced. The topic or the argument shift is usually indicated in the initial position, which is related to scene-setting topic functions and can be seen as a functional change from the temporal to the argumentative frame, as shown in (18).

- (18a) Un video così lo sanno fare pure i video amatori, ma la canzone **poi** che cosa mi rappresenta? (PAISÀ; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 58)
'Even video amateurs are able to make a video like that, but then what does the song represent?'
- (18b) Il crudo **poi** l'ho preso alla fine. (KIParla; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 61)
'The Parma ham, I took it in the end.'
- (18c) Per questo **poi** le città hanno favorito gli ordini mendicanti e noi francescani in particolare: perché permettevamo di stabilire un rapporto armonico tra bisogno di penitenza e vita cittadina, tra la chiesa e i borghesi che si interessavano ai loro mercati. (NR)
'Because of this the mendicant orders, and we Franciscans in particular, were favoured in the cities: we created a harmonious relationship between the need for penitence and city life, between the church and the middle class interested in their commerce.'

We think that cases such as those in (18) should be distinguished from the examples of *poi* discussed in section 3.1, because in (18) *poi* appears to serve specifically to introduce topicalised constituents rather than new information. The connection between *poi* and topicality is further confirmed by the data in (19), all of which involve an interrogative *wh*-element. In these examples we see that *poi* cannot follow a *wh*-element or a contrastive focus, but can always follow a topicalised XP appearing in the left periphery, the only exception being

perché ‘why’ (see § 3.2.2 below for an explanation).⁸

- (19a) Ma **a lei (poi)** chi (***poi**) la rappresenta?
but to her then who then her represents
‘Who represents her then?’
- (19b) *Ma a lei **chi poi** la rappresenta?
but to her who then her represents
- (19c) Ma Mario **poi** cosa ci guadagna?
but Mario then what in-it earns
‘What does Mario earn/gain from this?’
- (19d) *Ma Mario **cosa poi** ci guadagna?
but Mario what then in-it earns
- (19e) Tua mamma **poi cosa (*poi)** ci guadagna?!
your mother then what then in-it earns

Poi can follow any type of topic. In the examples in (20), we provide an example involving a familiar topic (i.e. “a given or accessible (cf. Chafe 1987) constituent, which is typically destressed and realised in a pronominal form Pesetsky (1987)”, Frascarelli, Hinterhölzl 2007, 88) and an example of a contrastive topic (which are constituents that introduce “alternatives which have no impact on the focus value and creates oppositional pairs with respect to other topics (Kuno 1976; Büring 1999)”, Frascarelli, Hinterhölzl 2007, 88; cf. also Benincà 2001 and Cruschina 2010 for a typology of topic constructions):

- (20a) Ne ho parlato con mia sorella, che lei **poi** è l’unica che mi capisce.
‘I have talked about it with my sister, she (poi) is the only one who understands me.’
- (20b) Non sono preoccupato per come andrà il processo. Perché a me **poi** mi rappresenta l’avvocato Rossi, mentre a mia sorella la segue l’avvocato Bianchi che sono i migliori.
‘I am not worried about how the trial will go. Because (me) I am defended by lawyer Rossi, while my sister is followed by lawyer Bianchi, who are the best.’

3.2.2 Derivation

The data indicate that *poi* can also not be considered to be a strong element when used in connection to a topic; this is illustrated in (21) where we see that in this function it is incompatible with a modification (*solo*) and should thus be considered a weak element.

⁸ *Poi* can follow a wh-element when it is used as a modal particle in interrogative clauses: *Chi poi si interessa a te?* Crucially, the examples in (19) show that when a topicalised XP is present in the left periphery, *poi* appears most naturally after it, rather than after the interrogative wh-element: *Maria poi cosa ci guadagna?* / **Maria cosa poi ci guadagna?*

- (21a) *Ma **a lei solo poi** chi la rappresenta?
 but to her then who then her represents
 ‘Who represents her then?’
 (21b) *Il crudo **solo poi** l’ho preso alla fine.
 ‘The Parma ham, I took it in the end.’

We propose that when *poi* is used as exemplified in section 3.2, it involves two underlying structures that can be distinguished prosodically. As shown in (22), *poi* can be either separated from the topicalised constituent by a pause (22a), or pronounced together with it as in (22b).⁹

- (22a) Il crudo, **poi**, l’ho preso alla fine.
 (22b) Il crudo **poi**, l’ho preso alla fine.
 ‘The Parma ham, I took it in the end.’

We suggest that in (22a) *poi* is a weak element appearing in the Spec position of a TopicP of the left periphery. The linear word order *topic-poi* is derived via movement of a topicalised XP past *poi*. This operation is licit in Italian, as Italian allows multiple topics (Benincà 2001).¹⁰

- (23) [_{CP} [_{TopicP} il crudo [_{TopicP} poi [_{TP} l’ho [_{FP} preso [_{NP} ~~il crudo~~ [_{FP} alla fine]]]]]]]

⁹ Building on Coniglio’s (2020) proposal for the grammaticalisation of adverbs into modal particles in the history of German, which correlates with the development of a higher dedicated position for the modal use of adverbs in the higher portion of the *Mittelfeld* (roughly corresponding to the higher portion of the IP layer), we propose that the position of *poi* as a Spec or as a head of TopicP results from the grammaticalisation of *poi*. The process in question involves the development of more abstract discourse functions, which correlates with the possibility for *poi* to appear in a higher position within the clause where it is associated with a more abstract meaning and with presuppositions. In (22) the pragmatic import of *poi* is that of signalling that the action of “buying the Parma ham” was carried out at some point after talking about it, when the intention of “buying the Parma ham” was only mentioned. The presence of *poi* thus serves to connect the sentence in which it appears to a previous discourse and to indicate that an event took place or an action was carried out after discussing it. In this sense, *poi* can be considered referential, since its presence directly connects the utterance to the moment in the past in which an action was under discussion.

¹⁰ Cardinaletti (2015, 75) proposes an alternative analysis of *poi* used as a “demarkative”. She argues that the syntactic position of *poi* results from a roll-up derivation to the left periphery, and in this function *poi* should receive the same derivation as in right dislocation. For a sentence like the following: *L’ha comprata, poi, la casa?* ‘Did he buy the house? (I’m wondering)’, Cardinaletti (2015, 75) proposes that the linear position of the past participle and *poi* within the left periphery follows from remnant movement of the Spec of a TopicP in the topic field, as shown in the following structure:

- a.# [YP poi Y [ZP l’ha comprata]]
 b.# [XP [ZP l’ha comprata] X [YP poi Y [ZP l’ha comprata]]]
 c.# [FamTopicP [DP la casa] FamTopic [XP [ZP l’ha comprata] X [YP poi Y [ZP l’ha comprata]]]]
 d.# [TopicP [XP l’ha comprata, poi] Topic [FamTopicP [DP la casa] FamTopic [XP [ZP l’ha comprata] X [YP poi Y [ZP l’ha comprata]]]]]

We think that this analysis is potentially compatible with the case in which *poi* is preceded and followed by a prosodic pause, but more difficult to apply to cases in which no prosodic pause is present.

For sentences involving the absence of any prosodic break between the topicalised XP and *poi*, we claim that *poi* behaves as a topic particle realising the head of TopicP which then attracts the XP to be topicalised in its Spec (cf. Catasso et al. 2021; van Kemenade 2009).

- (24) $[_{\text{TopicP}} \text{DP} [_{\text{Topic}'} [_{\text{Topic}'} \text{poi}]]]$

Technically, we propose, following Catasso et al. (2021) and van Kemenade (2009) on topic particles in Old High German and Old English respectively, that the TopicP entailing the topic particle *poi* and an XP in its Spec starts out in the TopicP of the vP periphery (Belletti 2004) and then is moved as a remnant to the left periphery, as in (25).¹¹

- (25) $[_{\text{CP}} [_{\text{TopicP}} <\text{il crudo poi}> [_{\text{TP}} \text{l'ho} [_{\text{FP}} \text{preso alla fine} [_{\text{LowTopicP}} [_{\text{Spec, LowTopicP}} \text{it-crudo}]]]]]]] [_{\text{LowTopic}'} [_{\text{LowTopic}'} \text{poi}]] [_{\text{VP}} \text{preso} [_{\text{NP}} \text{it-crudo}]]]]]]]$

As discussed above, there is only one exception to the generalisation that *poi* is specialised for topics, namely the wh-element *perché* (why), which, as repeated in (26), can be followed by *poi*.

- (26) **E perché poi** valgono le ragioni dei lavoratori della centrale e non quelli della pesca, del turismo, dei servizi ad essi legati, numero ben maggiore? (PAISÀ)
'And why are only the reasons of the workers of the power station considered and not of those working in fishing, tourism, services – who are definitively more numerous?'

We suggest that the special behaviour of *perché* follows from the fact that it is not hosted in FocusP in the left periphery, unlike other wh-elements. Following Rizzi (2001) we assume that *perché* appears above FocusP, in InterrogativeP. Since *perché* is hosted in a higher position than the other wh-elements, it can be followed by the discourse marker *poi* which appears in a CP position. We therefore propose that in (26) *poi* does not serve to mark a topic, but instead functions as a discourse marker.¹²

¹¹ Here we follow van Kemenade's (2009) and Catasso et al.'s (2021) analyses of topic particles, which rely on the idea of the presence of a vP periphery and on the cyclicity of movement. Alternatives are obviously available, i.e. topics could be base-generated in CP, specifically in the Spec of a TopicP that hosts a topic particle in its head. We think that the proposed account has the advantage of explaining why nothing can intervene between the XP and topic particle: if topics can be base-generated in the left periphery and topic particles can lexicalise the Topic head, it is not immediately obvious why the topicalised XP and the topic particle would constitute an indivisible unit, i.e. why the topic would appear in precisely that TopicP (given that TopicPs are multiple).

¹² At this stage of research we have not yet explored how the topic marker and discourse marker uses might be distinguished in cases like (26).

4 *Poi* as a Modal Particle

4.1 Definition of ‘Modal Particles’

In this section, we examine a further function of *poi* which should be distinguished from the uses of *poi* discussed in sections 2 and 3: that of a modal particle. We use the term ‘modal particles’ (also *discourse particles*, *Einstellungspartikeln*, *Abtönungspartikeln*, *Satzpartikeln*) to refer to a category of grammar typically used in German linguistics (Weydt 1969; Thurmair 1989; Coniglio 2011 among others) which captures special uses of elements such as *mal*, *ja*, *doch*, *auch*, *aber*, *halt*, *eben*, *nur*. When used as modal particles, these elements have an adverbial meaning but are assumed to constitute an autonomous class, since they differ from regular adverbs in the following ways: i) they must appear in the (highest portion of) the IP layer (the German *Mittelfeld*); ii) they are only found in main clauses and in embedded clauses with main clause status; iii) they are bound to specific illocutionary types (illocution modifiers, cf. Thurmair 1989 among others) and cannot therefore be found in all sentences.

Moreover, all modal particles are special uses of XPs that belong to different grammatical classes (typically adverbs, particles, conjunctions) which have undergone a process of grammaticalisation (cf. Diewald 1997 among others). Syntactically, modal particles are analysed as weak adverbs, since they do not pass Cardinaletti and Starke’s (1999) tests for strong categories (cf. Coniglio 2008; Cardinaletti 2011; Müller 2014). Finally, modal particles are inherently presuppositional / anaphoric, i.e. they connect the sentence in which they appear to presuppositions made by the speakers or to claims present in the common ground. These properties of modal particles are illustrated below, starting with the example in (27) (from Cognola, Moroni, forthcoming, 8) in which an authentic dialogue between a mother and her daughter is given. Mother and daughter are arranging where the mother is going to pick her up. In (27) we see that *ja* is used as a modal particle and appears in the IP layer. The pragmatic contribution of *ja* in this interaction is that of presenting the utterance in which the particle shows up as uncontroversial and shared.

- (27) (Phonecall/Picking up. Datenbank Gesprochenes Deutsch für die Auslandsgermanistik)¹³
- 22 Daughter [...]: Wahrscheinlich ähm müsst ihr uns dann (1.0)
23 in Seen von der Bushaltestelle wieder abholen.

13 The layout of example (27) reproduces the spontaneous speech and is a simplified version of the way in which spontaneous speech is represented in conversation-analysis studies (cf. Selting et al. 2009).

- 24 weil wir dann mit dem Bus aus Leer weiterfahren.
25 Mother: Ja.
26 Das ist **ja** kein Problem.
27 Daughter: Ja,
28 sag ich aber noch mal bescheid.
'Daughter: Maybe you should come to pick us up in Seen in front of the bus stop because we're getting the bus from Leer. Mother: Sure, **you know** this is not a problem. Daughter: I'll let you know.'

When used as a modal particle in the IP layer, *ja* does not pass any of the tests for a strong category (Cardinaletti, Starke 1999). See for instance the impossibility of coordinating *ja* with another modal particle (28a). Moreover, it is specialised for main clauses (28b) and is only homophonous with the answering particle *ja* (28c).¹⁴

- (28a) *Das ist ja und halt kein Problem.
'This is not a problem.'
(28b) *Was hast du ja gekauft?
'What did you buy?'
(28c) Ja, das ist kein Problem.
'Yes, it is not a problem.'

Modal particles are a particularly common means of expressing modality in German, but are also present in Italian (cf. Coniglio 2008; Cardinaletti 2011; 2015; Hinterhölzl, Munaro 2015; Manzini 2015). Modal particles appear to be especially frequent in regional/colloquial Northern Italian varieties, as shown by Cognola and Schifano (2018a; 2018b) who have carried out a comprehensive study on *ben* as a modal particle across Italian varieties, and showed that this modal particle is extremely rare in Central and Southern Italian varieties.

4.2 Evidence for *poi* as a Modal Particle

Coniglio (2008) and Cardinaletti (2015) propose that *poi* can be analysed as a modal particle in Italian. More specifically, Coniglio (2008, 111-14) shows that when *poi* appears sentence-internally in the IP, it behaves as a modal particle, in that it cannot be i) focussed, ii) coordinated, iii) fronted, iv) questioned; or v) isolated, as expected from the fact that *poi* belongs to the special class of modal particles in the contexts examined.

¹⁴ The two forms are obviously related to each other and its use as a modal particle is assumed to derive precisely from its function as an answering particle (cf. Diewald 1997 and 2006, and Abraham 1991 on the grammaticalisation of modal particles).

Coniglio (2018, 111) also observes that *poi* is only compatible with interrogative clauses and declarative clauses when used as a modal particle – and this is fully expected from the behaviour of modal particles described in section 4.1 above. With regard to its meaning, Coniglio proposes that in interrogatives *poi* expresses the speaker's concern or interest with respect to the information and in declaratives it functions as a mitigation of the assertion.

Hack (2011) carried out a study of *po* 'poi' in Northern Italian varieties (cf. also Munaro, Poletto 2008), and showed that it functions either as a modal particle expressing wonder or impatience (in interrogative clauses) or as a focus / negation intensifier (in main clauses).

These abstract meanings of *poi* emerge from the connection (made possible by the presence of *poi*) between the utterance in which *poi* appears and the presuppositions/assumptions made by the speaker.

4.2.1 *Poi* in Sentences Sensitive to Polarity

4.2.1.1 Declarative Clauses with Negative Polarity

In (29) we provide several examples of *poi* as a modal particle in main declarative clauses.

- (29a) Non siamo **poi** così lontani dalla verità. (Bazzanella 1995, 226)
'We are not so far from the truth, after all.'
- (29b) Non è **poi** così male! (Coniglio 2008, 112)
'It's not so bad, after all.'
- (29c) "Gli avversari dei Templari non erano **poi** così selvaggi," dissi in tono conciliante.
'“The Templars' enemies were not so savage”, I said in a conciliatory tone.' (FP)
- (29d) L'opera non è **poi** così rara: costa meno di una Mercedes. (FP)
'The masterpiece is not so rare: it costs less than a Mercedes.'
- (29e) Non è poi un gran labirinto. (NR)
'It is not a big labyrinth.'
- (29f) Non è **poi** così abile allora, osservò Michele. (NR)
'He is not so skilled, then – Michele observed.'

Alongside the syntactic restrictions described in Coniglio (2008), this type of *poi* exhibits a series of special properties that make this use different from all the other contexts discussed so far in this paper. First of all, in the examples in (29), *poi* cannot be paraphrased by temporal *dopo*, while the translations *inoltre* (moreover) and *alla fine* (in the end) are possible, as shown in (30), but only with different functions, that is as a connective (*inoltre*) or as a discourse marker (*alla fine*). However, these two functions differ from that of *poi* as a modal particle discussed here because they are not sensitive to the polarity of the sentence, but are felicitous in both positive and negative sentences (see (34) below for *poi* as a polarity-sensitive element).

- (30a) Non siamo **poi**/***dopo** / **#inoltre** / **#alla fine** così lontani dalla verità.
'We are not so far from the truth, after all.'
- (30b) Non è **poi**/***dopo** / **#inoltre** / **#alla fine** così male!
'It's not so bad, after all.'

When *poi* appears in examples like (29), it can express wonder and also reassurance, i.e. it has a more abstract meaning. All these nuances follow from the counter-expectational value of *poi*; in the examples in (29), in fact, *poi* has an anaphoric / counter-expectational value. This means that the sentences can only be felicitous in the context of a positive presupposition <siamo lontani dalla verità > and <è molto male> (*Prättext* in Diewald 1997) which is then negated in the sentence featuring *poi*.¹⁵

- presupposition: <We are far from the truth>
- (31a) Non siamo **poi** così lontani dalla verità. (Bazzanella 1995, 226)
'We are not so far from the truth, after all.'
- presupposition: <something is bad>
- (31b) Non è **poi** così male! (Coniglio 2008, 112)
'It's not so bad, after all.'

What is also special about the use of *poi* as a modal particle is that it can also appear in exhortative sentences and is thus compatible with the exhortative discourse markers *dai che / su che*:

- (32a) Su che / dai che / su, dai che non siamo **poi** così lontani dalla verità.
'Come on, we are not so far from the truth, after all.'
- (32b) Su che / dai che / su, dai che non è **poi** così male!
'Come on, it's not so bad, after all.'

As expected under the hypothesis that *poi* is a modal particle, *poi* cannot be fronted in sentences that also feature the exhortative discourse markers:

- (33a) *Dai su, poi non siamo così lontani dalla verità.
'Come on, we are not so far from the truth, after all.'
- (33b) *Su dai, poi non è così male!
'Come on, it's not so bad, after all.'

¹⁵ When *poi* appears with negation, it does not appear to be connected to an autonomous presupposition, but it strengthens the same presupposition implied by the negation (Hack [2011] defines this use as a "focus/negation intensifier"). It should be noted that, despite the fact that here *poi* is not connected to a specific, individual presupposition, it appears to force a presupposition: when *poi* is present, in fact, a presupposition is implied, whereas with negation alone there is not necessarily a presupposition.

Another property of *poi* as a modal particle is its sensitivity to polarity (like *mica* / *ben* which are sensitive to negative / positive polarity, see also Spanish *bien*, Hernanz 2011). As shown in (34), *poi* can only appear in a sentence with negative polarity (cf. Hack 2011 for *po*).

- (34a) Non siamo *poi* così lontani dalla verità.
'We are not so far from the truth, after all.'
- (34b) * Siamo *poi* così lontani dalla verità.
'We are so far from the truth, after all.'
- (34c) * Dai, siamo *poi* così lontani dalla verità.
'Come on, we are so far from the truth, after all.'

The connection between *poi* and negative polarity in main clauses is further confirmed by the examples in (35) and (36), where we combine *poi* with *ben* (35) and *mica* (36) (cf. Cinque 1991; 1999; Belletti 1990), the distribution of which is specialised for polarity.¹⁶ In (35) we see that *mica* can only appear in sentences with negative polarity, whereas *ben* can only appear in sentences with positive polarity.¹⁷

- (35a) Non siamo *mica* così lontani dalla verità.
'We are not so far from the truth.'
- (35b) Siamo *ben* lontani dalla verità.
'We are indeed far from the truth.'
- (35c) * Non siamo *ben* lontani dalla verità.
'We are not indeed far from the truth.'
- (35d) * Siamo *mica* così lontani dalla verità.
'We are not so far from the truth.'

As expected under the hypothesis that *poi* is specialised for negative polarity, *poi* can only appear in sentences that feature *mica*, and not those that feature *ben* (cf. Cinque 1999):¹⁸

16 *Ben* and *mica* have an identical pragmatic function and differ in their distribution in relation to polarity. Moreover, *mica* is classified as an adverb in Cinque (1999) – a claim also supported by Coniglio (personal communication). *Ben*, on the other hand, is considered a modal particle (cf. Coniglio 2008; Cognola, Schifano 2018a; 2018b; Cognola, Moroni, forthcoming). Cognola and Moroni (forthcoming) discuss the hypothesis that *mica* could be analysed as a modal particle paralleling German *doch*.

17 The judgements on sentences featuring *ben* come from a speaker of central Trentino, which Cognola and Schifano (2018a; 2018b) have shown to be the most permissive Italian variety in the acceptance of *ben*. For speakers of this variety *ben* is possible in with all verbs and in all main clauses, except in embedded clauses with no root properties. Sentence (35d) might be judged grammatical by speakers of those dialects (for instance Lombard varieties) in which *mica* has developed into sentence negation. When used as negation, *mica* has lost its anaphoric and adverbial value.

18 Sentence (36) would be acceptable if *ben* had a meaning that was not presuppositional but corresponded roughly to 'very' (possibly following from a scalar function of *ben*) and *poi* were absent.

- (36a) Non siamo *mica poi* così lontani dalla verità.
‘We are not so far from the truth, after all.’
- (36b) *Siamo *ben poi* lontani dalla verità.
‘We are indeed far from the truth, after all.’

In negative declarative clauses in which *poi* appears as a modal particle, only TopicPs are available in the left periphery of the sentence, and not FocusPs:¹⁹

- (37a) Dai, [_{Topic} dalla verità] non siamo *poi* così lontani.
‘Come on, from the truth we are not so far, after all.’
- (37b) Dai, [_{Topic} il suo lavoro] non è *poi* così male.
‘Come on, his work is not so bad, after all.’
- (37c) #Dai, chi non è *poi* così lontano dalla verità?
‘#Who is not so far from the truth, after all.’
- (37d) #Dai, cosa non è *poi* così male?
‘#What is not so bad, after all.’
- (37e) ??/*Dai, DAL PROCESSO non siamo *poi* così lontani (ma non dalla fine di questa storia)
‘Come on, we are not so far from the trial, (but not from the end of this story).’

In order to account for this distribution of *poi* we apply Cognola and Schifano’s (2018a; 2018b) analysis of the Trentino modal particle *ben* which is specialised for positive polarity and is the ‘positive’ counterpart of *mica* (Belletti 1990; Cinque 1999). Following Zimmermann (2011) and Coniglio and Zegrean (2012), we propose that all modal particles appearing in the IP area involve the activation of ForceP, which must be understood as the FP of the left periphery “facing the outside” (Rizzi 1997) and thus involved in the encoding of the special anaphoric interpretation of modal particles which are considered to be “illocution modifiers”. Following Cognola and Schifano (2018a; 2018b), we propose that when activated due to the presence of a modal particle, ForceP always hosts an illocutionary operator which, in the case of *poi*, can be optionally lexicalised by *su che / dai che*.

These assumptions that rely on analyses of modal particles in German are not sufficient to account for the syntax of *poi*, in particular for i) the presence of *poi* only in sentences with negative polarity and ii) the impossibility of having focused XPs in the left periphery of negative sentences featuring *poi* (with only topicalised XPs allowed).²⁰

¹⁹ Clitic resumption would be obligatory in (37) if the direct object were fronted: *Dai, il suo lavoro non l’ha poi fatto così male*, meaning that the position before the negation actually hosts a topicalised constituent. Sentences (37c) and (37d) would be acceptable as indirect questions embedded under an implicit imperative verb of saying (i.e. (Tell me) who/what...).

²⁰ The data discussed in this paper and in Cognola, Schifano 2018a and 2018b appear to indicate that Italian modal particles are sensitive to polarity, whereas this is not the

Following Cognola and Schifano (2018a; 2018b) we propose that in these sentences PolarityP in the left periphery hosts a negative operator that licenses *poi* and then raises to FocusP, thus blocking the insertion of a focus in the left periphery.²¹ The same proposal was made for Spanish *bien* by Batllori and Hernanz (2013), who also argued that elements realising PolarityP must raise to FocusP because they are associated to two features: [+polarity] and [+emphasis]. We propose that *poi* is only found in negative sentences because when it is used as a modal particle in this configuration it is hosted in Neg,PresuppositionalP (Cognola, Schifano 2018b, relying on Zanuttini 1997 for an articulated NegP).

- (38) $[_{CP} [_{ForceP} \text{dai/su} [_{TopicP} [_{FocusP} \text{no} [_{PolarityP} \text{no} [_{IP} [_{NegPresuppositionalP} \text{poi}]]]]]]]]]]$

4.2.1.2 Yes/No Interrogative Clauses with Positive Polarity

The analysis proposed for negative declarative clauses can be partially carried over to another use of *poi* as a modal particle. *Poi* can appear in interrogative sentences introduced by *ma* ‘but’ with a counter-expectational meaning (cf. Giorgi 2018).

In this sentence type, *poi* emphatically expresses a toned-down dissent or the rejection of a previous claim (Cardinaletti 2011, 513) by contrasting the current utterance with prior specific presuppositions on the part of the hearer and/or the speaker and by directing the hearer to an update of the common ground.

- (39) <Telecom ha bisogno di alleati italiani>
 (39a) Ma Telecom ha **poi** così bisogno di alleati italiani? (*La Repubblica*; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 60)
 ‘Does Telecom really need Italian partners?’
 <Siete sicuri>
 (39b) Ma siete **poi** sicuri che i giocatori selezionati non hanno fatto meglio? (*La Repubblica*; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 60)
 ‘Are you really sure that the selected players didn’t do better?’

case in German. In German the only modal particle that exhibits sensitivity to polarity is *etwa*, which is only compatible with negative polarity, or – as expected for elements with negative polarity – with interrogative polarity. We thank Marco Coniglio and an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to us.

²¹ The negative operator can optionally be lexicalised by *no che* as in *Dai, no che non siamo poi così lontani dalla verità* (cf. Laka 1990 and Zanuttini 1997 for the idea that PolarityP can host both negative and positive polarity elements).

In this sentence type, *poi* is not sensitive to polarity, as the examples in (40) show:

- (40) <Telecom non ha bisogno di alleati italiani>
 (40a) Ma Telecom non ha **poi** così bisogno di alleati italiani, giusto?
 ‘Does Telecom really need Italian partners?’
 < Non siete sicuri>
 (40b) Ma non siete **poi** sicuri che i giocatori selezionati non hanno fatto meglio?
 ‘Aren’t you really sure that the selected players didn’t do better?’

Following Cognola, Moroni and Bidese’s (forthcoming) analysis for *anche*, we propose that *poi* functions here as a common ground managing element (in the sense of Krifka 2008), i.e. as an element that does not interfere with the common ground and whose function is to signal the communicative goals of the interlocutors. Following Repp’s (2013) analysis of German *doch*, we propose that *poi* is associated with a verum focus, i.e. a focus on the truth value of the whole sentence. VERUM and FALSUM are common ground managing operators whose function is to signal that a proposition should (VERUM) or should not (FALSUM) be added to the common ground. They are formalise Höhle’s (1988; 1992) notion of *verum focus*.

Based on these works we propose that in the examples in (39) above *poi* is in the scope of the common ground managing operator VERUM, and its function is thus that of signalling that the proposition over which it scopes should be added to the common ground, as shown in (41).

- (41) $[_{CP} [_{ForceP} \text{ma} [_{TopicP} [_{FocusP} [VERUM [_{PolarityP} Op [_{IP} [_{FP} \text{poi}]]]]]]]]]]$

Given that the *verum focus* causes the proposition to be added to the common ground, it follows that these utterances are not genuine questions. They are in fact sentences with a special interpretation, but they are still questions, although they are biased questions. At the compositional level the interrogative operator is higher and has scope over the whole sentence (cf. Bianchi, Cruschina 2016).

4.2.1.3 Interrogative Clauses

In interrogative clauses *poi* has primarily an anaphoric/presuppositional function. When *poi* is present, it can additionally “express speaker’s concern or interest with respect to the information being asked for” (Coniglio 2008, 112), as in (42):²²

²² This function of *poi* resembles the use of German modal particle *denn* in root questions, where “it gives rise to an attitude of wondering on the side of the speaker” (Bayer 2012, 14).

- (42a) Ha **poi** cantato alla festa?
'Did s/he sing at the party?'
(42b) L'ha **poi** scritto quel romanzo? (*La Repubblica*; Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 61)
'Did he eventually write that novel?'
(42c) Raccontami di te, piuttosto: hai **poi** regolarizzato la tua posizione? (CORIS;
Cruschina, Cognola 2021, 61)
'Tell me about you, instead: Did you finally regularise your position?'

Like the interrogative clauses introduced by *ma* discussed in section 4.2.1.2 above, interrogatives featuring *poi* can also be special questions; the fine typology of their special interpretations is yet to be determined, but they are mostly surprise disapproval questions, as well as confirmation or biased questions. The special interpretation that can be associated with these sentences is not in conflict with their interrogative force (it is still possible to reply to these sentences), but it must be understood as being under the scope of an interrogative operator that is encoded higher than the syntactic locus in which the special interpretation is generated (as is typical of questions with a [narrow] focus; cf. Bianchi, Cruschina 2016).

In combination with an epistemic future tense or a verb in the conditional in the host sentence (43), in partial questions *poi* can contribute to the uncertainty of a question (Coniglio 2008, 112) and to the expression of wonder to a certain extent.

- (43a) Chi avrà **poi** telefonato? (Coniglio 2008, 112)
'Who has phoned then?'
(43b) Cosa avrà **poi** detto che l'ha offesa? (Coniglio 2008, 112)
'What have I said then to offend her?'
(43c) Che stupidaggine, pensò adesso Drogo, chiamare gente per una simile inezia.
E chi sarebbe **poi** venuto? (CORIS)
'It was silly, thought now Drogo, call people for such a small thing.
And who would have come in the end?'

We suggest that this function follows from the fact that *poi* appearing in IP²³ can establish an Agree relation with an interrogative feature in ForceP modifying the clause's illocutionary Force (cf. Bayer 2012; Coniglio 2011), thus slightly modifying the question's pragmatic meaning.

- (44) [_{CP} [_{ForceP} interrogative [_{TopicP} [_{FocusP} wh [_{PolarityP} [_{IP} [_{FP} **poi**]]]]]]]]

23 We suggest that *poi* has a dedicated position in the IP area when used as a modal particle because in this function *poi* cannot follow the non-finite verb form, i.e. it cannot appear in Spec,T(posterior) according to our account; see also Coniglio (2011), who shows that MPs cannot appear below certain adverbs (higher repetitive ones) in Cinque's functional hierarchy.

5 Conclusions

Based on novel data from written and oral corpora of Italian, and from our own intuitions as native speakers of Italian, we have discussed the three main functions of *poi* in present-day Italian, namely: i) a temporal/logical connective adverb, ii) a discourse/topic marker and iii) a modal particle. In the three functions *poi* exhibits three slightly different meanings. When used as a temporal/logical connective, *poi* means ‘after’ and expresses temporal and logical succession. When it is a discourse topic / topic marker, *poi* corresponds to ‘moreover’ and its function is not that of expressing temporal/logical succession, but of signalling a demarcation between salient points, presenting the discourse as the development of an argumentative chain. Finally, the meaning of *poi* as a modal particle is more abstract (as is typical of modal particles in general), and its presence either expresses the speaker’s concern or interest with respect to the information (in interrogatives) or mitigates the assertion (in declaratives). These abstract meanings of *poi* emerge from the connection (made possible by the presence of *poi*) between the utterance in which *poi* appears and the presuppositions/assumptions made by the speaker. Technically, this takes place through an Agree relation between ForceP and the modal particle. Therefore, *poi* interacts with tense and logical succession, with discourse and with illocution (when it is a modal particle).

We have suggested that this tripartite division in the functions of *poi* correlates with and is directly fed by i) different positions of *poi* within the clause structure, and ii) differences in its internal structure. When used as a temporal/logical connective adverb, *poi* is a strong element (Cardinaletti, Starke 1999) and appears either in Spec,T(posterior) or in the scene-setting positions in the left periphery. When used as a discourse marker *poi* appears in the same positions (scene-setting position and T(posterior)), but should be considered as a weak element. *Poi* can also be used as a topic marker, in which case it is a syntactic head that combines with an XP in the TopicP of the vP periphery and is then fronted, or else it is directly merged in Spec,TopicP of the left periphery. In the former case no prosodic break between the XP and *poi* is found, whereas in the latter a prosodic break appears between XP and *poi*. When used as a modal particle, *poi* is also a weak element (cf. Coniglio 2008; Cardinaletti 2015), and it is restricted to interrogative and declarative clauses. In main declarative clauses, *poi* only appears in negated sentences where it interferes with polarity. We have suggested that in this function it appears in NegpresuppositionalP where it is licensed by polarity and agrees with ForceP, in common with all modal particles. In interrogative clauses, we proposed that *poi* occurs in a FP of the IP area and establishes an Agree relation with ForceP modifying the sentence’s illocutionary force.

We suggest that the three functions of *poi* and their correlation with different internal structures of *poi* (strong, weak, clitic element) point towards the conclusion that the uses of *poi* result from a grammaticalisation process. This is further supported by the fact that *poi* exhibits a core meaning in all its functions that can be roughly paraphrased as ‘succession’ (between two events: temporal/logical connective; between two arguments: discourse marker; between an utterance and the presuppositions/assumptions made by the speaker).

We leave for future research the question of exactly how this grammaticalisation process took place.

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