Adverbial causal clauses as relative clauses:
on *siccome* 'because/since' from Old to Contemporary Italian

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This talk addresses the relation between adverbial causal clauses and relative clauses, asking to what extent the two structures can be reduced as one and the same phenomenon. I argue that at least some causal clauses can be analysed as relative clauses.

Various studies have proposed a unified account of adverbial subordination and relativization, claiming that adverbial subordinate clauses, e.g., temporal, conditional and comparative clauses, are underlyingly relative clauses (Geis 1970; Larson 1990; Donati 1997; Bhatt/Pantcheva 2006; Haegemann 2006; Arsenijević 2009; Hall/Caponigro 2010; Poletto/Sanfelici 2021, a.o.). These adverbial clauses have been shown (i) to involve a gap and (ii) to relate to an argument in the matrix clause, as relative clauses do. Moreover, (iii) their subordinators are often morphologically identical to relativizers. A challenge for this view is posed by causal clauses mainly for two reasons: they lack the intersective reading available in the other adverbial clauses (Cecchetto/Donati 2012) and there often is no morphological overlap between causal subordinators and relativizers. As a result, the literature has been hesitant to extend the relative clause analysis to causal clauses (but see Arsenijević 2021). I propose that at least some adverbial causal clauses are relative clauses and involve a comparison over situations. The claim is supported by the diachronic development of the Italian subordinator *siccome* 'because/since', an univerbated form morphologically composed of two items, the comparative-similative wh-pronoun *come* 'how' and the demonstrative adverbial pronoun *sì* 'so'.

In Contemporary Italian *siccome* introduces finite causal clauses.

(1)   ***Siccome***   *fuori*   *piove,*   *prendi*   *l'*   *ombrello*
        since   outside   rain.PRS   take.IMP   DET   umbrella
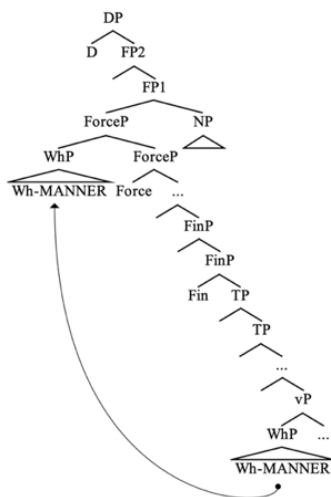   'Take the umbrella because it rains outside.'

By tracking the diachrony of the lexical item *siccome* 'because/since' (and of its non-univerbated variant *sì come*) through a survey of the MIDIA corpus, I show that the causal reading in (1) arises from the original Old Italian comparative-similative meaning (2).

(2)   ***Si-ccome***   *lo*   *vermine*   *consuma*   *il*   *legno*
        so-as   DET   worm   consume.PRS   DET   wood
        e   *le*   *tarme*   *le*   *vestimenta*   *così*
        and   DET   moth.PL   DET   cloth.PL   similarly
        consuma   *la*   *invidia*   *il*   *corpo*   *de-ll'*   *uomo*
        consume.PRS   DET   envy   DET   body   of-DET   man
        'As the worm consumes the wood and the moths consume the cloths, likewise the envy consumes the human body.' (Anonimo, first half XIV, Fiore di virtù, III)
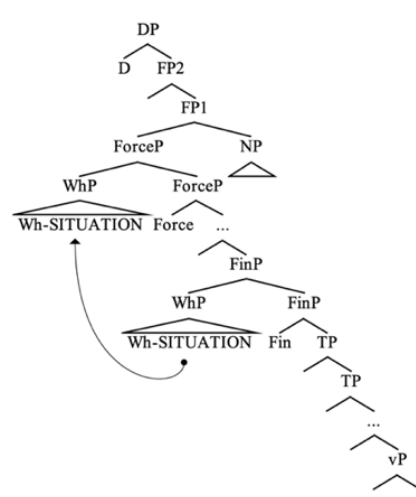
Siccome changed its status from a comparative-similative to a causal subordinator following a three-step diachronic path. This change is formalized by adopting Arsenijević's (2021) semantic analysis of causal clauses in terms of situation relatives and the relative clause analysis in Cinque (2013, 2020) and Poletto/ Sanfelici (2018). As in Cinque (2013, 2020) and Poletto/Sanfelici (2018), relative clauses are double headed: an internal head which is the XP merged inside the relative clause and an external head, non-distinct from the internal one, which is the XP modified by the relative clause itself. The two heads can be lexical expressions or null nominals (Kayne 2005). The difference between comparative and causal clauses are captured by means of two ingredients: (i) the type of null classifier paired with the wh-determiner and (ii) the movement of the wh-phrase involved in the relative clause. In comparative-similative clauses the null nominal is MANNER and

the wh-phrase moves from the vP to the left periphery as in (3a). In causal clauses the wh-determiner is paired with the null nominal SITUATION (Arsenijević 2021) and it is merged within the CP layer (3b). As in Arsenijević (2021: 13-15), causal clauses introduce the relevant presupposed implication, asserting that the antecedent obtains in the actual situation in which the antecedent is also asserted to obtain. The meaning of causality results from an implicature of exhaustive relevance: the antecedent of the presupposed implication is the only relevant antecedent for the given result.

(3)   a. Comparative clause   b. Causal clause

[Tree diagram (3a): DP > D, FP2 > FP1 > ForceP, NP > WhP (Wh-MANNER), ForceP (Force …) > FinP > FinP > Fin, TP > TP > … > vP > WhP (Wh-MANNER), … with movement from Wh-MANNER in Spec,vP to the left periphery]

[Tree diagram (3b): DP > D, FP2 > FP1 > ForceP, NP > WhP (Wh-SITUATION), ForceP (Force …) > FinP > WhP (Wh-SITUATION), FinP > Fin, TP > TP > … > vP > … with movement from Wh-SITUATION in FinP]

In both **Stage I** (1200-1300) and **Stage II** (roughly from 1400 to end 1600), only derivation (3a) is available. In **Stage I**, the WhP is interpreted in its lower position, i.e., Spec,vP, and a comparison over manners/degrees is established, yielding the reading 'in the same manner/way/to the same degree in which…'. In addition to this interpretation, in **Stage II** the WhP can also be interpreted in its derived position inside the CP, under specific conditions, i.e., when the dependent event (i) is factual, (ii) is temporally simultaneous to or immediately precedes the main event, and (iii) shares its participants with the main event. In these contexts, the Wh-MANNER is interpreted at the situation level, giving rise to a pragmatic inference of causality. As a result, various examples appear ambiguous between a comparative and a causal reading: *Siccome avete guarito lui del male della lonzeria, così dovete ora guarire me* 'Since/So as you cured him from the illness of the *lonzeria*, so you must now cure me […]' (*Lettere inedite a Lorenzo Magalotti*). These two readings available in a single structure in Stage II are mapped onto two different structures, (3a) and (3b), in **Stage III** (from 1700). When the WhP moves from the vP to the left periphery, it introduces manner/degree comparative clauses (3a). Conversely, the WhP interpreted at the situation level is reanalyzed as being externally merged in the left periphery (van Gelderen 2004; Roberts 2007): the wh-determiner is paired with the null nominal SITUATION (3b) and introduces a comparison over situations leading to a pragmatic inference of causality (Arsenijević 2021). As a consequence of the upward reanalysis, the syntactic conditions triggering the situation-level reading in Stage II become relaxed and are eventually lost. Concomitantly, the two WhPs in (3a-3b) become morphologically distinct: the non-univerbated form *sì come* lexicalizes wh-MANNER and the univerbated variant *siccome* lexicalizes wh-SITUATION, while in Stages I and II both items had a same distribution and interpretation.

In conclusion, I propose that the relative clause analysis in Cinque (2013, 2020) can be extended also to (at least some) adverbial causal clauses. Moreover, this talk demonstrates that adverbial causal clauses can originate from comparative-similative clauses, thereby adding a novel path to the diachronic development of causal clauses (cf. Jędrzejowski 2022 for Polish; Moline 2006 for French).

Selected References: Arsenijević B. 2021. Situation relatives: Deriving causation, concession, counterfactuality, condition, and purpose. In Blümel A. et al. (eds.), *Advances in formal Slavic linguistics*. Brelin: Language Science Press, 1-34. *Cinque G. 2020. *The Syntax of Relative Clauses. A Unified Analysis*. Cambridge: CUP. *Gelderen van E. 2004. *Grammaticalization as Economy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. *http://www.corpusmidia.unito.it/, D'Achille, P./M.Grossmann. 2017. *Per la storia della formazione delle parole in italiano: un nuovo corpus in rete (MIDIA) e nuove prospettive di studio*. Firenze: Franco Cesati.