

Article

# Not Only Anteriority in the Past: The Functions of the Pluperfect in Spoken Italian

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**Abstract:** Three distinct anaphoric functions and one deictic function are, with fair confidence, associated with the Italian Pluperfect in the existing literature. In recent studies, it has been hypothesized that the Italian Pluperfect may also have an aoristic use. The present study attempts to assess the semantics of the Italian Pluperfect, by a corpus-based methodology. It will be shown that the data do not support the hypothesis of an aoristic use of the Pluperfect: rather, they suggest the need to extend the analysis of the Pluperfect's semantics to domains other than tense and aspect. It will be argued that (inter)subjectification may have a key role in describing the layered semantics of the Italian Pluperfect, especially concerning its possible modal-evidential developments.

**Keywords:** Pluperfect; discontinuous past; Italian

## 1. Introduction

The Italian Pluperfect displays a rather prototypical semantic core, with four distinct temporal–aspectual functions that have been identified by previous research: past-in-the-past; perfect-in-the-past; reversed result; and past temporal frame (Squartini 1999). In recent studies (Bertinetto 2003, 2014; Bertinetto and Squartini 1996; Scarpel 2017), it has also been hypothesized, albeit not specifically dealt with, that the Pluperfect may have an additional aoristic use in spoken Northern Italian. This paper aimed to assess the existence of such a use by analyzing Pluperfect occurrences in ParlaTO (Cerruti and Ballarè 2020), a corpus of spontaneous speech collected in Turin between 2018 and 2020. It will be shown that the data did not support the hypothesis of an aoristic use, but that they suggested that the Italian Pluperfect was developing secondary semantic values that could be explained by taking (inter)subjectification<sup>1</sup> paths Traugott (2003, 2010) of grammaticalization into account.

The relationship between grammaticalization and (inter)subjectification has been extensively discussed by Traugott (2010). Having once defined grammaticalization as “[t]he change whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions, and once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions” (Hopper and Traugott 2003), Traugott (2010) states that subjectification is likely to occur in grammaticalization “presumably because grammaticalization by definition involves recruitment of items to mark the speaker’s perspective on [a series of] factors”, among which are tense (“how the proposition (ideational expression) is related to speech time or to the temporality of another proposition”) and aspect (“whether the situation is perspectivized as continuing or not”), i.e., the categories that the present study is mostly concerned with, but also modality (“whether the situation is relativized to the speaker’s beliefs”) and discourse markers (“how utterances are connected to each other”), i.e., those categories that are known to be mostly involved in the Pluperfect’s development of secondary meanings (Plungian and van der Auwera 2006).

In what follows, it will be shown how tense, aspect and modality intertwine in defining the Pluperfect’s semantics. Concerning modality, it will be argued in Sections 3 and 4 that possible Pluperfect developments include modal-evidential values, for the analysis of which the interplay of subjective and intersubjective values may be especially relevant.



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As outlined in the existing literature, the prototypical meaning of the Pluperfect is locating an Event (E) prior to a Reference Time (RT), at which the resulting state of E holds, and which is, in turn, in the past, with respect to the Speech Time (ST), as in:

- (1) Bill had arrived at six o'clock (Comrie 1976)

Nevertheless, as Comrie (1976) explains, Figure 1 accounts for just one of the possible readings of the sentence *Bill had arrived at six o'clock*. It could also be interpreted that Bill arrived precisely at six o'clock, before an unspecified RT.

In the case of Figure 1, the event encoded by the Pluperfect (Bill's arrival) is related to the state of affairs at six o'clock (Bill still being there), and Comrie (1976) therefore dubs this reading as perfect-in-the-past. In the case of Figure 2, the event encoded by the Pluperfect (Bill's arrival) is understood to precede another (unknown) past event, but it is not related to it, and Comrie (1976) therefore dubs this reading as past-in-the-past.

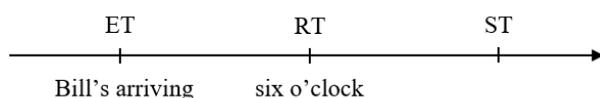


Figure 1. Perfect-in-the-past reading

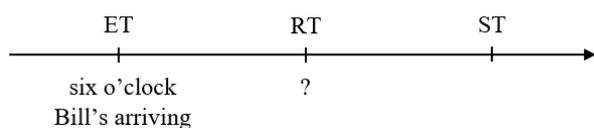


Figure 2. Past-in-the-past reading

Beyond recognizing both these functions as pertaining to the semantics of the Italian Pluperfect, Squartini (1999) identifies two additional functions that the Italian Pluperfect may have, i.e., reversed result and past temporal frame. The reversed result function emphasizes that the result of the event encoded by the Pluperfect is no longer valid.

- (2) Me lo aveva promesso, ma adesso fa finta di non ricordarsene (Squartini 1999)  
'(S)He had promised me, but now (s)he acts as if (s)he didn't'

Given that the event encoded by the Pluperfect is related to the (reversed) state of affairs that holds at a later time, the reversed result function can be interpreted as a subcategory of the perfect-in-the-past function (Squartini 1999), as depicted in Figure 3.

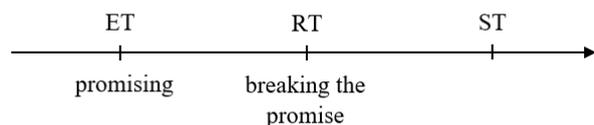


Figure 3. Reversed result reading

On the other hand, the past temporal frame function stresses the idea that the event encoded by the Pluperfect belongs to a closed temporal section that is grounded in the past.

- (3) Su questo argomento tanti anni fa N. ci aveva scritto un libro (Squartini 1999)  
'N. wrote a book on this many years ago'

This is the only function, amongst the four functions Squartini (1999) associates with the Italian Pluperfect, that is deictic rather than anaphoric, i.e., its representation does not

involve an RT. This distinguishes the past temporal frame function from the past-in-the-past function, in the sense that, whereas a past-in-the-past Pluperfect places the event in the past with respect to an RT, a past-temporal-frame Pluperfect places the event in the past with respect to the ST directly, with no relationship of anteriority being identifiable (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Past temporal frame reading

In recent studies (Bertinetto 2003, 2014; Bertinetto and Squartini 1996; Scarpel 2017), it has been hypothesized that the Pluperfect can have an aoristic (i.e., deictic) use in spoken Northern Italian. It is important to note that while being deictic, the past temporal frame function cannot be described as aoristic, as it does not concern past events in general, but rather a smaller number of cases, i.e., events whose non-relevance at the ST is stressed<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, an alleged aoristic Pluperfect should be able to potentially encode all cases of perfectivity in the past (except for the Perfect type).

Undoubtedly, the two ‘new’ functions identified by Squartini (1999)—reversed result and past temporal frame—have a strong subjective component, given that they encode the speaker’s perspective on the present (ir)relevance of past events. Furthermore, the past temporal frame function can also be understood as subjective, in that deictic grammatical functions “localize the linguistic entity they apply to with respect to the coordinates of the speaker” (Diewald 2011). It will be shown in Section 4 that additional semantic values arising from that data, while not always closely related one to the other, can all be subsumed under the category of (inter)subjectivity.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research was carried out on ParlaTO<sup>3</sup> (Cerruti and Ballarè 2020), a corpus of spontaneous speech collected through semi-structured interviews in Turin between 2018 and 2020. ParlaTO is designed to account for diastratic variation in the Italian spoken in Turin: it is balanced for the speaker’s age (16–29, 30–59 and 60+ years old), and provides a large set of additional metadata (Cerruti and Ballarè 2020). However, as the bibliography did not suggest that the aoristic use of the Pluperfect was related to a particular diastratic variety, the corpus was queried in its entirety as being simply representative of a variety of Northern Italian. One additional aspect of ParlaTO to consider when discussing the results of the present study is that the interviewees were often encouraged to talk about the past or to share memories: as a result, the corpus presented a high number of contexts relating to personal past experiences.

As the ParlaTO corpus was not POS tagged, the following query was used to extract Pluperfect occurrences:

```
[word = "avev.*|er.*"] [word = ".*at.?.*ut.?.*it.?.*fatto|detto|visto|messo|preso"]
```

Given that the Italian Pluperfect is formed with the Imperfect of the auxiliary verb and the Past Participle of the lexical verb, the query searched for the Imperfect of one of the possible auxiliary verbs (*avere* ‘to have’ or *essere* ‘to be’) followed either by a word ending with regular Past Participle desinences or by one of the most frequent irregular Past Participles (*fatto* ‘done’, *detto* ‘said’, *visto* ‘seen’, *messo* ‘put’, *preso* ‘taken’) according to the frequency list of the LIP corpus (De Mauro et al. 1993).

The query, run on 12 April 2021, produced 600 results: given the length of the analysis, it was decided to limit it to the first 300 results, 245 of which were actual Pluperfect occurrences.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Past-in-the-Past

The Pluperfects classified as instances of past-in-the-past numbered 145 (out of a total of 245). The clearest examples displayed adverbial modifiers (underlined in the following example) that clarified the deictic/anaphoric collocation of the events referred to:

- (4) TOI052: e quindi stavo facendo fare  
 TOI052: ehm  
 TOI052: dei lavoretti per pasqua e pasquetta  
 TOI051: si  
 TOI052: e invece una volta prima gli *avevo fatto* [113] fare delle cornici  
 TOR007: che carini  
 TOI052: e dei quadretti cose cosi' e poi *avevamo fatto* [114] proprio la mostra eh ce'  
  
 TOI052: and so I was having them make  
 TOI052: uhm  
 TOI052: Easter crafts  
 TOI051: yes  
 TOI052: and one time before I *had had* [113] them make frames  
 TOR007: how cute  
 TOI052: and small paintings things like that and then we *had done* [114] a proper exhibit I mean<sup>4</sup>

In (4), TOI052 was speaking about her volunteering experiences by showing pictures. The modifier *una volta prima* 'one time before' leaves no doubt about the fact that Pluperfects [113] and [114] preceded the event spoken about in the first lines (i.e., the making of Easter crafts).

In other cases, the anteriority of the Pluperfect was recognizable only because of world knowledge, by which we knew how certain events usually preceded others:

- (5) TOR004: si' ma sai che *avevo sentito* [22] di uno che *aveva fatto* [23] causa a starbucks perche' non aveva scritto che il bicchiere poteva essere bollente quello si *era bruciato* [24] la mano  
  
 TOR004: yeah but do you know that I heard (lit. *had heard* [22]) about someone who *had sued* [23] Starbucks because they didn't write (lit. *hadn't written*) that the cup could've been hot that one *had burned* [24] his hand

In (5), the only possible collocation of the events was: person burns his hand > person sues Starbucks > TOR004 hears about this. While [23] and [24] were therefore past-in-the-past Pluperfects, [22] seemed to be deictic, and was classified as a past-temporal-frame Pluperfect. In fact, (5) also contained one additional Pluperfect (*non aveva scritto* 'they hadn't written') that was not italicized in the text and was not associated with a number: this was because, being formed with an irregular past participle, it could not be identified by the query. Although only the Pluperfects identified by the query were included in the counts, it could still be observed that *non aveva scritto* 'they hadn't written' in turn displayed anteriority with respect to [24], and was therefore also classified as a past-in-the-past Pluperfect.

For other cases, the anteriority value of the Pluperfect was unquestionable, yet it was not the most salient, as illustrated in example (6):

- (6) TOI008: san giovanni che io ho trovato incredibile perche' eh mh  
 TOI008: appunto io abito vicino al po quindi ci metto cinque minuti ad andare li'  
 TOR001: mh mh  
 TOI008: e tutti gli anni sempre andato tantissima gente sempre strapieno quest'anno eh mh ho detto non vado nemmeno perche' ci *avevano messo* [64] i tornelli il

TOR001: no certo

TOI008: tutti i vari controlli e ho detto non ci vado nemmeno

TOI008: San Giovanni<sup>5</sup> which I found incredible because uh uhm

TOI008: indeed I live close to the Po so I'm there in five minutes

TOR001: uhm uhm

TOI008: and every year I always went lots of people always super full this year uh uhm I said I'm not even going because they *had put* [64] the turnstiles the

TOR001: no of course

TOI008: all the controls and I said I'm not even going

Pluperfect [64], for instance, seemed to emphasize the cause/effect relationship between the placement of the turnstiles and the decision not to attend the event, rather than the temporal anteriority of the former with respect to the latter. Nevertheless, in all such cases where an anteriority relationship could still be identified, the Pluperfects under scrutiny were classified as past-in-the-past: this may also explain the numerical prevalence of the Pluperfects categorized as such.

### 3.2. Perfect-in-the-Past

The Pluperfects classified as instances of perfect-in-the-past numbered 28, which was likely an undervaluation of the actual occurrence of this category, since the query could only identify Pluperfects if no word(s) occurred between the auxiliary and the lexical verb, which meant that Pluperfects combined with the adverb *già* 'already' (highly compatible with a perfect reading)—as in *avevo già mangiato* 'I had already eaten'—were excluded from the analysis. Nevertheless, the potential compatibility of the Pluperfects under scrutiny with the adverb *già* 'already' was an important clue to guiding their classification as perfect-in-the-past, as exemplified in (7).

(7) TOI065: eravamo frutto di una mh

TOI065: di una riforma

TOR001: mh mh

TOI065: e non potevamo passare al secondo biennio era ancora quadriennale

TOI065: se non *avevamo dato* [60] quattro obbligatori del primo

TOR001: okay

TOI065: ma eh

TOI065: io ce n'era ne *avevo dati* [61] due gli altri due erano enormi

TOI065: we were the result of a uhm

TOI065: of a reform

TOR001: uhm uhm

TOI065: and we couldn't move to the third and fourth years it was still four years long

TOI065: if we *hadn't passed* [60] four mandatory [exams] of the first two years

TOR001: okay

TOI065: but uh

TOI065: I there was I *had passed* [61] two the other two were huge

It was not only Pluperfects [60] and [61] that were undoubtedly compatible with the adverb *già* 'already'<sup>6</sup>—given that the students needed to have already passed four exams to continue their course of study—but also the resultative value of the Pluperfect, which was evident from the fact that having (not) passed four exams was extremely relevant at the RT (i.e., the start of the second half of the course of study).

In other cases, the compatibility of the Pluperfect with the adverb *già* 'already', seemed to depend on matters of interpretation, as in the following case:

- (8) TOI077: le parole testuali aveva fatto  
 TOR004: fai occhio  
 TOI077: han fatto effetto evidentemente  
 TOR004: quanto te le sei preparate  
 TOI077: no niente perche' non e'  
 TOI077: non avevo intenzione  
 TOR004: non era neanche previsto  
 TOI076: non voleva  
 TOI077: si' *avevo capito* [31] che x vabbe' questa<sup>7</sup>  
 TOI077: vuol<sup>8</sup> che io x che la accompagno
- TOI077: he said those literal words  
 TOR004: watch out  
 TOI077: clearly they worked  
 TOR004: how much did you prepare them  
 TOI077: no nothing because it's not  
 TOI077: I had no intention  
 TOR004: it wasn't even planned  
 TOI076: he didn't want  
 TOI077: yes I *had understood* [31] that well this one  
 TOI077: she wants me to give her a ride

In the part of the conversation preceding (8), TOI076 talked about when TOI077 (who was her boss at the time) finally agreed to give her a ride, and confessed to reciprocating her feelings. As its object was not expressed, Pluperfect [31] could have had two readings: either TOI077 already understood that TOI076 wished to get a ride from him because she had feelings for him (perfect-in-the-past, compatible with *già* 'already'), or TOI077 initially (mis)understood that TOI076 simply had a genuine need for a ride (reversed result)<sup>9</sup>. In such cases, reading the entire conversation was essential to determining which interpretation was the most likely (e.g., the perfect-in-the-past reading for (8), as confirmed by the audio track, given that TOI077 speaks with a mocking tone).

There were also cases where clues others than compatibility with *già* 'already' had to be taken into account:

- (9) TOI051: perche' l l la sua mamma era podalica e' stato un parto bruttissimo  
 TOR007: mh anch'io sono nata podalica  
 TOI051: eh  
 TOI051: mah  
 TOR007: eh ha sofferto molto mia mamma  
 TOI051: ma io da una parte era solo un un anno e mezzo che *avevo avuto* [118] il primo figlio  
 TOI052: mh mh  
 TOI051: e allora le ossa erano ancora  
 TOI051: eh  
 TOR007: si' si'  
 TOI051: abbastanza aperte
- TOI051: because her mom was podalic it was a terrible delivery  
 TOR007: uhm I was born podalic too  
 TOI051: uhm  
 TOI051: bah  
 TOR007: uhm she suffered a lot my mom  
 TOI051: well on one hand for me it had been just a year and a half since I *had had* [118] my first child  
 TOI052: uhm uhm

TOI051: and so the bones were still  
 TOI051: uhm  
 TOR007: yes yes  
 TOI051: pretty open

Pluperfect [118] was not really compatible with *già* 'already'; nevertheless, the expression *era solo un anno e mezzo che* 'it had been just a year and a half since' measured the temporal distance of Pluperfect [118] from the RT, and therefore suggested a perfect reading.

### 3.3. Reversed Result

The Pluperfects classified as instances of reversed result numbered 16. In many cases, these Pluperfects conveyed exactly the opposite meaning of an Italian Present Perfect<sup>10</sup>.

(10) TOI003: ha perso tantissime cose torino  
 TOR001: mh  
 TOI003: se uno pensa  
 TOI002: no pero' si e' arricchita parecchio con le olimpiadi a pa guarda prima non c'era  
 TOI003: a partire da sperimenta  
 TOI003: a partire da un macello di cose che io mi ricordo quando andavo a scuola potevi fare  
 TOI003: un casi *era diventata* [187] la citta' delle delle mh  
 TOI002: mado' ma prima tu vede mado' ma tu prima vedevi turismo a torino  
 TOI003: del libro e poi l'ha spostata a milano

TOI003: Torino lost a lot of things  
 TOR001: uhm  
 TOI003: if one thinks  
 TOI002: no but it developed a lot with the Olympics look before there wasn't  
 TOI003: starting from Esperimenta  
 TOI003: starting from a lot of things that I remember when I still went to school you could do  
 TOI003: a lot it became (lit. *had become* [187]) the city of of uhm  
 TOI002: God but before you saw God but before you saw tourism in Torino  
 TOI003: of books and then they moved it to Milano

In (10), not only did TOI003 explicitly provide a motivation for the results of the event (i.e., Turin becoming the city of books) being considered as reversed (the city of books was now Milan), but also Pluperfect [187] itself encoded this semantic. Had a Present Perfect replaced Pluperfect [187], it would likely have been inferred that Turin was still the city of books<sup>11</sup>.

While Pluperfect [187] (and most of the other reversed-result Pluperfects analyzed) displayed exactly the opposite semantic of a Perfect result (see Comrie (1976) for a description of types of Perfect, and Bertinetto (1986) for Italian), there were also instances of reversed-result Pluperfects functioning as the opposite of a Perfect of persistent situation:

(11) TOI054: e quello mi *aveva fatto* [88] mi aveva un po' pero'  
 TOI054: poi mi e' passato  
 TOI054: and that did (lit. *had done* [88]) me a little but  
 TOI054: then it went away

TOI054 was referring to an alarming road trip that she had experienced, and likely meant to say that it scared her (*mi aveva fatto paura* 'it scared (lit. *had scared*) me'). While in (10) the Pluperfect reversed the result of the event, in (11) the Pluperfect reversed the state of affairs itself, given that it stopped taking place. In other words, Pluperfect [88]'s meaning

could be understood as *it scared me, but it doesn't anymore*, while the meaning of Pluperfect [187] was *Turin became the city of books but it isn't anymore*, rather than *\*Turin became the city of books, but it doesn't become anymore*. This will be further discussed in Section 4.

In other cases where 'anti-Perfect' semantics were not particularly evident, contextual and cotextual clues played an important role in guiding the classification of the Pluperfects. An example thereof is the following:

- (12) TOI077: ci hanno proposto il viaggio al cairo in pullman abbiam detto vabbe' quando ci ricapita  
 TOR004: perche' era organizzato  
 TOI077: si'  
 TOR004: okay  
 TOI076: e c *avevano detto* [44]  
 TOI076: meno ore e invece poi alla fine siam stati sei ore in quel  
 TOI077: si'  
 TOI077: cinque sei ore  
 TOI076: sei ore

TOI077: they proposed us the trip to Cairo by bus we said well this won't happen a second time

TOR004: because it was organized

TOI077: yes

TOR004: okay

TOI076: and they told (lit. *had told* [44]) us

TOI076: less hours and instead then in the end we've stayed six hours in that

TOI077: yes

TOI077: five six hours

TOI076: six hours

Given that receiving information about the flight's length must have preceded the landing, Pluperfect [44] could be understood as having been a past-in-the-past. Nevertheless, as TOI076 clearly stated that the results of the event encoded Pluperfect [44] had been reversed (the information turned out to be wrong), it was classified as an instance of reversed result.

### 3.4. Past Temporal Frame

The Pluperfects classified as instances of past temporal frame numbered 63. It was not surprising that many past-temporal-frame Pluperfects occurred in contexts of remembering, and were often signaled as such by the speakers themselves:

- (13) TOR004: eh ma tortoli' eh mizzeca e' bellissima  
 TOR004: c'e' la spiaggia del saraceno quello con la torre ti ricordi eravamo andati [48] anche insieme l'anno che sei venuta

TOR004: uh but Tortoli' uh my goodness is really beautiful

TOR004: there is the Saraceno beach that with the tower do you remember we also went (lit. *had gone* [48]) together the year you came

By asking the addressee whether she remembered, TOR004 implicitly assigned the event encoded by Pluperfect [48] to a temporal frame (that of the memory) past and closed, further specified by the temporal indication *l'anno che sei venuta* 'the year you came'. It is worth clarifying that Pluperfect [48] was indeed deictic: even by analyzing a broader section of the conversation, it was not possible to retrieve any RT, and the sentence would also have been acceptable if a Present Perfect (in its aoristic function) had replaced Pluperfect [48] (*siamo andati* 'we went', lit. 'we have gone').

In other cases, the belonging of the event encoded by the Pluperfect to a past temporal frame could be signaled by expressions with the noun *volta* 'time' (e.g., *la volta* 'the time (that)', *la prima volta* 'the first time (that)', etc.) or simply inferable from context:

- (14) TOR004: avevi degli amici nel paese dove vivevi  
 TOI054: no io tantissimi amici  
 TOI054: sempre avuto tante c tante conoscenze ma tanti amici anche tanta gente che le piaceva stare con me  
 TOR004: e ma organizzavate delle feste facevate delle cose  
 TOI054: perche' comunque  
 TOI054: si' anche a casa mio padre per i miei sedices e il mio sedicesimo anno  
 TOR004: compleanno  
 TOI054: compleanno  
 TOI054: e mh  
 TOI054: mh  
 TOI054: sopra il mio al nostro alloggio dove avevamo la casa  
 TOI054: e avev c'era una mansarda  
 TOI054: to tutta unica e lui  
 TOI054: e per un po' di tempo ha diviso tutte ha fatte delle stanze poi aveva messo [80] la moquette avevamo messo [81] addirittura la tappezzeria  
 TOI054: e io per il mio sedicesimo anno  
 TOI054: avevo tutto e poi mi aveva comprato [82] lo stereo  
 TOI054: e avevam fatto [83] la festa
- TOR004: did you have friends in the town you lived in  
 TOI054: no me lots of friends  
 TOI054: I always had lots lots of connections but lots of friends too lots of people that liked being with me  
 TOR004: well but did you organize parties do things  
 TOI054: because however  
 TOI054: yeah also at home my dad for my 16th for my 16th year  
 TOR004: birthday  
 TOI054: birthday  
 TOI054: and uhm  
 TOI054: uhm  
 TOI054: over mine our flat were we had the house  
 TOI054: and we had there was an attic  
 TOI054: all open and he  
 TOI054: for a while he divided all he made rooms then he put (lit. *had put* [80]) the carpet we even put (lit. *had put* [81]) the wallpaper  
 TOI054: and I for my 16th year  
 TOI054: I had it all and then he bought (lit. *had bought* [82]) me the stereo  
 TOI054: and we made (lit. *had made* [83]) the party

While the action of remembering was not mentioned in (14), it is clear that TOR004's questions encouraged TOI054 to share memories. The adverbs *poi* ('then') could be interpreted as having had a listing function rather than a temporal one: indeed, while Pluperfects [80]–[82] necessarily preceded Pluperfect [83], the focus did not seem to be on the temporal collocation of each event with respect to the others, but rather on the totality of the elements that made up the memory of the party.

- (15) TOR004: e non sei mai andata all'universita'  
 TOI054: no  
 TOI054: si'  
 TOI054: scherzando andavo

TOR004: ah  
 TOR004: in che senso  
 TOI054: del tipo  
 TOI054: che andavo a scuola a ragioneria  
 TOR004: eh  
 TOI054: a cirie'  
 TOI054: prendevo il treno con la mia amica  
 TOR004: okay  
 TOI054: e andavamo a torino  
 TOI054: e poi andavamo all'universita'  
 TOI054: ed e' successo d ascoltare anche delle lezioni  
 TOR004: delle lezioni di cosa  
 TOI054: e *avevamo ascoltato* [79] delle lezioni di biologia  
 TOR004: ah  
 TOI054: e poi prendevamo il quaderno con degli appunti facevamo  
 TOI054: facevamo le le universitarie

TOR004: and you never went to university  
 TOI054: no  
 TOI054: yes  
 TOI054: I went as a joke  
 TOR004: oh  
 TOR004: what do you mean  
 TOI054: like  
 TOI054: I went to high school  
 TOR004: uhm  
 TOI054: in Ciriè  
 TOI054: I took the train with my friend  
 TOR004: okay  
 TOI054: and we went to Torino  
 TOI054: and then we went to the university  
 TOI054: and it happened that we listened lessons too  
 TOR004: what lessons  
 TOI054: well we listened (lit. *had listened* [79]) biology lessons  
 TOR004: oh  
 TOI054: and we took the notebook with notes we played  
 TOI054: we played university students

The event encoded by Pluperfect [79] might be considered a memory too; nevertheless, the main reason why it belongs to a time frame in the past, and closed, is that, as it appears by reading a broader section of the conversation, it did not have any consequence on TOI054's life (e.g., she did not enroll in a biology course afterwards). Interestingly, had a Present Perfect been used instead, it would have received an experiential interpretation, i.e., it would have been considered to indicate that the situation, of having heard biology lectures, occurred at least once during a period of time extending to the present (Comrie 1976). While there is no doubt that the situation did indeed occur, the use of the Pluperfect seems to suggest (in contrast to the Present Perfect) that it was nonetheless of little significance to the speaker. This will be further discussed in Section 4. In more than one case, the events encoded by the past-temporal-frame Pluperfects displayed quite specific characteristics.

- (16) TOR002: pensa che dove c'e' adesso l'areoporto di caselle mio nonno aveva un terreno che gli hanno espropriato  
 TOI119: si'  
 TOI119: eh  
 TOR002: quando han costruito l'areoporto nuovo

TOI118: mh  
 TOI119: ah si' ma poi era caduto [17] anche l'aereo la' nelle case  
 TOI118: caselle  
 TOR002: eh si'

TOR002: think that where there now is the Caselle airport my grandpa had land that they expropriated  
 TOI119: yes  
 TOI119: uhm  
 TOR002: when they built the new airport  
 TOI118: uhm  
 TOI119: oh well but then even the plan fell (lit. *had fallen* [17]) there in the houses  
 TOI118: Caselle  
 TOR002: yeah

In (16), the event encoded by Pluperfect [50] had two characteristics: on the one hand, as suggested by the preceding *ah si ma poi* 'oh well but then', it discursively appeared as a digression. On the other hand, given that TOI118 did not comment on the matter, and TOR002 simply answered with *eh si* 'yeah', it was also shared knowledge between the speakers.

- (17) TOI077: minchia l'ho portata in camper  
 TOI077: gia' che  
 TOI077: saliva in camper  
 TOI077: poi siamo arrivati a sto posto li'  
 TOR004: non era  
 TOI076: eh eh la racconto io  
 TOR004: non eri convinta  
 TOI076: no  
 TOI077: ma per niente aveva paura voleva andarsene via  
 TOI076: ah gia' e' vero avevo chiamato [46] mia mamma  
 TOI076: mentre tu eri sceso a parlare
- TOI077: shit I brought her camping  
 TOI077: already  
 TOI077: getting on the camper  
 TOI077: then we arrived in that place there  
 TOR004: it wasn't  
 TOI076: uh uh I tell it  
 TOR004: you weren't convinced  
 TOI076: no  
 TOI077: not at all she was scared she wanted to leave  
 TOI076: oh right that's true I called (lit. *had called* [46]) my mom  
 TOI076: while you had gotten off to talk

The event encoded by Pluperfect [46] seemed to come with a sense of surprise, on the part of the speaker, in recalling the event itself. In Section 4, it will be argued that these findings should be considered by further research addressing the hypothesis of the Pluperfect having additional functions to those analyzed in this paper.

Not all past-temporal-frame Pluperfects belong to a remote past, as one might assume, based on the previous examples (remember that the corpus was unbalanced in favor of remote contexts, as mentioned in Section 2):

- (18) TOI051: delle maschere ho fatto tanti di quei vestiti  
 TOI052: tre  
 TOR007: anche mia nonna uguale

TOI052: bellissimi  
 TOI052: bellissimi proprio  
 TOI052: davvero  
 TOI052: anche  
 TOI052: quello che *avevi fatto* [120] vedere l'altro giorno di quando mamma ha fatto la  
 TOI051: ah la danzatrice

TOI051: some masks I made so many dresses  
 TOI052: three  
 TOR007: also my grandma the same  
 TOI052: very beautiful  
 TOI052: very beautiful really  
 TOI052: for real  
 TOI052: also  
 TOI052: the one that you showed (lit. *had showed* [120]) the other day of when mom was  
 TOI051: oh the dancer

Indeed, the temporal location of Pluperfect [120] was *l'altro giorno* 'the other day', i.e., quite recently in the past. This will be further discussed in Section 4.

### 3.5. Left-Out Occurrences

Six Pluperfects could not be assigned to either of the four functions: in two of these cases, the events encoded by the Pluperfects seemed to be digressions in discourse:

- (19) TOR004: e com'e' che siete finiti la'  
 TOI054: non lo so  
 TOI054: da questa superstrada che dava la cartina  
 TOI054: oltretutto ero andata [87] con aldo eh  
 TOR004: pensa te  
 TOI054: e quindi lui era uno che  
 TOI054: sapeva girare nel senso guardare la cartina non era un  
 TOI054: uno che si perdeva ecco
- TOR004: and how is it that you ended up there  
 TOI054: I don't know  
 TOI054: from this highway the map said  
 TOI054: besides I went (lit. *had gone* [87]) with Aldo uh  
 TOR004: just think  
 TOI054: and so he was one that  
 TOI054: he knew how to travel I mean look at the map he wasn't a  
 TOI054: one that got lost okay

Note that (19) is from the same conversation as (11). By reading the whole conversation, Pluperfect [87] appears to be deictic, and (19) seems to be a past-temporal-frame prototypical context (TOI054 was recalling the past experience of a road trip). Nevertheless, no other Pluperfects were used in recalling the trip. 'Having gone with Aldo' does not seem to be a more past-bound element than the others, but rather accessory information, added as it came to TOI054's mind—not different, in this aspect, from Pluperfect [50] in (16) (the latter, however, still displayed past temporal frame semantics, and had therefore been categorized as such, as explained in the previous section).

On the other hand, the other four left-out occurrences displayed a greater difference from the other Pluperfects analyzed so far (see above), in that they also seemed to be deictic,

but did not appear to be digressions, and not even the context they belonged to was past temporal frame.

- (20) TOI076: perche' abbi<sup>am</sup> fatto ho fatto diverse lampade o anche lampadari  
 TOI076: eh queste si' ci mi piacciono mi piacciono tanto  
 TOR004: eh come fate per fare i lampada cioe' dovete farvi tutto lo studio dei  
 TOR004: dei cavi  
 TOI076: si'  
 TOI076: so fare collegamenti elettrici io eh  
 TOI077: eh quello che gli *avevo insegnato* [27] io  
 TOI076: ho imparato da  
 TOI076: da giulio anche eh dal mio suocero  
 TOI077: si' anche mio padre

TOI076: because we made I made many lamps or also chandeliers  
 TOI076: uh these yes we I like I like these a lot  
 TOR004: uhm how do you do to make chandeliers I mean you have to study all  
 TOR004: the cables  
 TOI076: yes  
 TOI076: I know how to make electrical connections duh  
 TOI077: well that that I taught (lit. *had taught* [27]) her  
 TOI076: I learnt from  
 TOI076: from Giulio also uhm from my father-in-law  
 TOI077: yes also from my father

It may have been the case that TOI077 was remembering the time he taught TOI076 how to make electrical connections, but this would not justify a past temporal reading of the event, given that its consequences were still extremely relevant (TOI076 knew how to make electrical connections). The relevance at the ST of the event encoded by the Pluperfect is perhaps more noticeable in (21), where TOI052 was showing TOI051 (her grandmother) videos that she had received:

- (21) TOI052: guarda nonna ti faccio vedere  
 TOI052: eh  
 TOI052: marco  
 TOI051: si'  
 TOI052: la bimba e' cresciuta guarda eh qui  
 TOI051: uh uh  
 TOI052: gli ha fatto una canzone sai che suona marco  
 TOI051: certo lo so  
 TOI051: guarda guarda x com'e' attenta  
 TOI052: guarda qui bella  
 TOI051: guarda co  
 TOI051: ma che cara  
 TOI052: si' son e' bellissima  
 TOI052: eh  
 TOI052: e invece giulia *aveva mandato* [125]  
 [...] (addressees don't listen as they are still commenting on the video of the song)  
 TOI052: e invece giulia  
 TOI052: ha mandato  
 TOI052: si sente il cuoricino di adele aspetta
- TOI052: look grandma I'll show you  
 TOI052: uh  
 TOI052: Marco

TOI051: yes  
 TOI052: the baby has grown look here  
 TOI051: uh uh  
 TOI052: he wrote her a song you know that Marco plays  
 TOI051: of course I know  
 TOI051: look look how she's alert  
 TOI052: look here pretty  
 TOI051: look how  
 TOI051: she's so sweet  
 TOI052: yes they she's very beautiful  
 TOI052: uhm  
 TOI052: and Giulia send (lit. *had sent* [125]) instead  
 [...] (addressees don't listen as they are still commenting on the video of the song)  
 TOI052: and Giulia instead  
 TOI052: has sent  
 TOI052: you can hear Adele's little heart wait

Clearly, the fact that Giulia had sent TOI052 a video was still relevant, given that the video was about to be played. It is interesting to note that when TOI052 repeated the information, she switched to a Present Perfect (*ha mandato* 'has sent').

(22) TOI052: e tra l'altro il nonno quando  
 TOI052: lui non c'e' quando si fanno i compleanni pero' se lo chiami la canzoncina  
 te la canta sempre  
 TOI051: no l  
 TOI051: si' si' e' vero  
 TOI051: l lo canta anche per telefono eh  
 TOI052: certo si' infatti lo chiami  
 TOI051: eh perche'  
 TOI052: quest'anno tra l'altro vabbe' quest'anno ci siamo visti quindi alla fine non  
 mi *aveva chiamato* [111]  
 TOI051: si' eravamo li' eh

TOI052: and by the way grandpa  
 TOI052: he doesn't come when we celebrate birthdays but if you call him he always  
 sings you the song  
 TOI051: no  
 TOI051: yes yes it's true  
 TOI051: he also sings it over the phone duh  
 TOI052: of course yes you call him indeed  
 TOI051: uhm because  
 TOI052: this year by the way well this year we saw each other so in the end he  
 didn't call (lit. *hadn't called* [111])  
 TOI051: yes we were there uh

In (22), the temporal frame to which Pluperfect [111] belongs is undoubtedly still open, i.e., it includes the ST, as signaled by the time indication *quest'anno* 'this year'. The expression *tra l'altro* 'by the way' could indeed suggest that the event encoded by Pluperfect [111] was a digression; nevertheless, it could also be interpreted as shared knowledge between the speakers, given that TOI051 (TOI052's grandmother) confirmed that her husband (TOI052's grandfather) and she were with TOI052 on her last birthday.

(23) TOR002: io guido si chiama io guido  
 TOR001: bravo  
 TOI012: bravissimo  
 TOI013: si'

TOI012: e' vero

TOR001: e' iniziato molto pr perche' io mi ricordo che quando *ero venuta* [227] qua a torino c'erano gia' e a milano no

TOR002: Io guido it's called Io guido

TOR001: bravo

TOI012: bravissimo

TOI013: yes

TOI012: it's true

TOR001: it began very early because I remember that when I arrived (lit. *had arrived* [227]) here in Torino there were already but not in Milano

In (23), car sharing services were being discussed. Despite being deictic, Pluperfect [227] encoded an event belonging to a temporal frame still open, given that the adverb *qua* 'here' suggests that TOR001 was still in Torino.

#### 4. Discussion

The four temporal–aspectual functions described by Squartini (1999) (past-in-the-past, perfect-in-the-past, reversed result and past temporal frame) have proven to be indeed relevant for a description of spoken Italian, given that they managed to account for 239 of the 245 Pluperfect occurrences. The use of authentic language samples has allowed a further description of the aforementioned categories and of their prototypical context or context of use:

- the past-in-the-past function (145/245) is used to temporally organize events with respect to one other, i.e., to locate the event encoded by the Pluperfect prior to another past event (which can also be a proper consequence of the former). The temporal collocation of the events may be further specified by the presence of adverbial modifiers (e.g., *una volta prima* 'one time before').
- The perfect-in-the-past function (28/245) is used to highlight the relevance of the event encoded by the Pluperfect at a later past time. This reading is naturally compatible with the adverb *già* 'already', and with expressions measuring the temporal distance of the event encoded by the Pluperfect to the RT.
- The reversed result function (16/245) is used to stress that the results of the event encoded by the Pluperfect have been reversed at a later time in the past. This reading can often be confirmed by a following sentence describing the reversed situation that holds at the ST (eventually introduced by adverbs such as *invece* 'instead' or *poi* 'then').
- The past temporal frame function (63/245) is used to stress that the event encoded by the Pluperfect is past-bound. It is often used in contexts of remembering, and may co-occur with expressions with the noun *volta* 'time' (e.g., *la volta* 'the time (that)', *la prima volta* 'the first time (that)', etc.).

The reversed result and past temporal frame functions can be understood as instances of discontinuous past marking. Plungian and van der Auwera (2006) define the meaning of discontinuous past markers as "past with no present relevance" or "past and not present", and explicitly state that the terms they use to distinguish these two subtypes (i.e., canceled result and framepast) are close to those employed by Squartini (1999) to refer to the Pluperfect's two derived values. This suggests that the notion of discontinuity (Plungian and van der Auwera 2006) may be relevant for a description of the Italian verb system. Furthermore, it was shown in Section 3 that reversed-result Pluperfects (and past-temporal-frame Pluperfects, occasionally) can shape their meaning in opposition to the main kinds of Perfects (i.e., Perfect of result, Perfect of persistent situation and experiential Perfect). This suggests that discontinuity, while being considered purely temporal by Plungian and van der Auwera (2006), could be researched in the future as a double-faced notion. In fact, while the notion of past temporal frame can easily be interpreted as temporal, the reversed result notion seems to be closely related to aspect in its 'anti-Perfect' meaning.

Concerning the hypothesis of the existence of an aoristic use of the Pluperfect, the deictic Pluperfect occurrences that could not be classified as instances of the past temporal frame function (the only deictic function among those analyzed) were not only too small in number to prove the existence of an aoristic use, but also displayed different main connotations (i.e., discourse digression, shared knowledge) that also arose as secondary meanings amongst past-temporal-frame Pluperfects (in addition to surprise on behalf of the speaker). In fact, the typological literature has already highlighted that one of the most common derived uses of the Pluperfect is the marking of background information (e.g., digressions) (Plungian and van der Auwera 2006), and literature on Italian (Bertinetto 1986; Maiden and Robustelli 2007) has confirmed the existence of this use, albeit apparently considering it as arising from the original anaphoric meaning of the Pluperfect, which is considered to be preserved. On the other hand, according to Bermúdez (2011), the Castilian Pluperfect can be used as a marking of evidential distance, which includes shared access to the source of information (i.e., shared knowledge) and mirativity (i.e., surprise on behalf of the speaker). It is possible that a number of Pluperfects in the data encode new functions yet to be identified by exploring the domains of discourse and evidentiality, which have been subsumed under the past temporal frame category—probably also due to ParlaTO displaying a lot of past temporal frame contexts itself.

While further research is needed to identify the precise semantic scope of the Italian Pluperfect, its less prototypical functions (reversed result and past temporal frame), and the semantic values that arise in uncategorized data and/or in the past-temporal-frame Pluperfects, are all, in one way or another, based on the speaker's perspective and/or on the speaker's attention to the addressee. In principle, both reversed result and past temporal frame functions can be considered subjective in a proper semantic sense, as they both involve the speaker's deictic center. In fact, although only the past temporal frame function is properly deictic, the reversed result function expresses a (reversed) resulting state that holds at ST—see (10), repeated in (24):

- (24) TOI003: ha perso tantissime cose torino  
 TOR001: mh  
 TOI003: se uno pensa  
 TOI002: no pero' si e' arricchita parecchio con le olimpiadi a pa guarda prima non c'era  
 TOI003: a partire da esperimenta  
 TOI003: a partire da un macello di cose che io mi ricordo quando andavo a scuola potevi fare  
 TOI003: un casi *era diventata* [187] la citta' delle delle mh  
 TOI002: mado' ma prima tu vede mado' ma tu prima vedevi turismo a torino  
 TOI003: del libro e poi l'ha spostata a milano
- TOI003: Torino lost a lot of things  
 TOR001: uhm  
 TOI003: if one thinks  
 TOI002: no but it developed a lot with the Olympics look before there wasn't  
 TOI003: starting from Esperimenta  
 TOI003: starting from a lot of things that I remember when I still went to school you could do  
 TOI003: a lot it became (lit. *had become* [187]) the city of of uhm  
 TOI002: God but before you saw God but before you saw tourism in Torino  
 TOI003: of books and then they moved it to Milano

In (24) the reversed resulting state of the event encoded by Pluperfect [187] was relevant to the speaker's deictic center: Turin was not the city of books at the ST. In addition to being deictic, past-temporal-frame Pluperfects often occur in digressions, as in (16), repeated in (25):

- (25) TOR002: pensa che dove c'e' adesso l'areoporto di caselle mio nonno aveva un terreno che gli hanno espropriato  
 TOI119: si'  
 TOI119: eh  
 TOR002: quando han costruito l'areoporto nuovo  
 TOI118: mh  
 TOI119: ah si' ma poi era caduto [17] anche l'aereo la' nelle case  
 TOI118: caselle  
 TOR002: eh si'
- TOR002: think that where there now is the Caselle airport my grandpa had land that they expropriated  
 TOI119: yes  
 TOI119: uhm  
 TOR002: when they built the new airport  
 TOI118: uhm  
 TOI119: oh well but then even the plan fell (lit. *had fallen* [17]) there in the houses  
 TOI118: Caselle  
 TOR002: yeah

In (25), the speaker's perspective on the textual relevance of the event was at stake. Subjectivity was then involved, from at least two points of view: a more strictly semantic one and a textual one. The speaker's perspective was also in focus in cases in which his own surprise was highlighted, as in (17), repeated in (26):

- (26) TOI077: minchia l'ho portata in camper  
 TOI077: gia' che  
 TOI077: saliva in camper  
 TOI077: poi siamo arrivati a sto posto li'  
 TOR004: non era  
 TOI076: eh eh la racconto io  
 TOR004: non eri convinta  
 TOI076: no  
 TOI077: ma per niente aveva paura voleva andarsene via  
 TOI076: ah gia' e' vero avevo chiamato [46] mia mamma  
 TOI076: mentre tu eri sceso a parlare
- TOI077: shit I brought her camping  
 TOI077: already  
 TOI077: getting on the camper  
 TOI077: then we arrived in that place there  
 TOR004: it wasn't  
 TOI076: uh uh I tell it  
 TOR004: you weren't convinced  
 TOI076: no  
 TOI077: not at all she was scared she wanted to leave  
 TOI076: oh right that's true I called (lit. *had called* [46]) my mom  
 TOI076: while you had gotten off to talk

On the other hand, the shared knowledge value that arose in (25) can be understood as intersubjective, given that it required the speaker's attention to be conveyed towards the (alleged) knowledge of the addressee.

It appears that the notion of (inter)subjectification might be crucial in structuring a more integrated description of the less prototypical uses of the Italian Pluperfect, and in explaining its grammaticalization of new functions over time.

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## Notes

- 1 Traugott (2003, 2010) uses the term (inter)subjectification to refer to the semanticization of subjectivity (the expression of the speaker's perspective and attitudes) and intersubjectivity (the expression of the speaker's attention to the self of the addressee).
- 2 This becomes particularly clear when one considers that a speaker of Northern Italian, referring to a deceased person, would not say *è nato* (lit. 'he has been born', i.e., using a present perfect which, in the variety under analysis, also encodes an aorist aspect) but *era nato* (lit. 'he had been born').
- 3 It is a module of the larger KIParla corpus (Mauri et al. 2019).
- 4 An effort has been made to provide translations as close as possible to the Italian texts, preserving the characteristics of the spoken language where possible.
- 5 The celebration of Turin's patron saint, St. John, that usually consists of a firework display on the river Po.
- 6 The sentences concerned would look as follows:  
*e non potevamo passare al secondo biennio se non avevamo già dato quattro esami obbligatori del primo*  
 "and we couldn't move to the third and fourth years if we hadn't *already* passed four mandatory exams of the first two years"  
  
*io ne avevo già dati due, gli altri due erano enormi*  
 "I had *already* passed two, the other two were huge"
- 7 'x's stand for incomprehensible text.
- 8 The transcription displays *vuoi* (want.PRS.2.SG), but from listening to the audio track it appears that TOI077 says *vuol* (want.PRS.3.SG) instead.
- 9 One can imagine that the complete sentence resembled either *avevo già capito che il passaggio era solo una scusa* ('I had *already* understood that the ride was just an excuse') or *avevo capito che le servisse davvero un passaggio* ('I had understood that she genuinely needed a ride').
- 10 The original (Perfect) meaning of the Italian Present Perfect is being considered here, albeit it has come to encode an aoristic aspect too, especially in Northern Italy.
- 11 The sentence would look as follows:  
*Torino è diventata la città del libro*  
 'Turin *has become* the city of books'.

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