



## **The etymological substance of the Italian first- and second-person oblique clitic pronouns**

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# The etymological substance of the Italian first- and second-person oblique clitic pronouns

## 1 Background and introduction

It is generally accepted that the first-person plural oblique clitic pronoun *ci* ‘us’ in modern standard Italian is etymologically identical to the locative clitic *ci* ‘here, there’. When it comes to the etymological substance of the old and dialectal form *ne* ‘us’ and the second-person pronoun *vi* ‘you (pl.)’, however, there are two main hypotheses. While some authors identify the origins of *ne* ‘us’ and *vi* ‘you (pl.)’ with the local clitics *ne* ‘from him/her/it/them; from here, from there’ and *vi* ‘here, there’, reflecting the Latin adverbs *inde* ‘from there’ and *ibi* ‘there’ (the “adverbial hypothesis”), others consider *ne* and *vi* to be more or less direct descendants of the Latin pronouns *nōs* ‘us’ and *uōs* ‘you (pl.)’ (the “pronominal hypothesis”).

In a text I wrote in 2004 I argued for the latter view. I sent the text to Erling Strudsholm (University of Copenhagen), and he kindly sent me his comments.<sup>1</sup> My text was never published, but a few years later Strudsholm, together with Lene Schøsler, criticised the hypothesis laid out in my text (Schøsler & Strudsholm 2009: 396–397).

Seen in isolation the problem may seem to be of little significance, but for Schøsler and Strudsholm and others (e.g. Russi 2008: 74–75) the scenario where adverbs of place develop into personal pronouns enters into a more general framework of the development of Italian paradigmatics. Furthermore, the analysis of the problem has implications for the broader typological discussion of what may be grammaticalised as what. It therefore seems appropriate to give a fuller presentation of the arguments and to address the issues that led Schøsler and Strudsholm to reject them.

I first present the material from modern standard Italian, from other (old and modern) Italo-Romance varieties and from Latin (§ 2). I then proceed to a historical analysis of the critical forms: the first-person plural clitics *ci* and *ne*, and the second-person plural clitic *vi* (§ 3). I discuss the details of the processes leading from Latin over old Italo-Romance to modern standard Italian, and I address the concerns raised by Schøsler and Strudsholm (§ 4). Finally I conclude the study (§ 5).

I should like to make it clear that I do not want to argue that adverbs cannot be grammaticalised as personal pronouns (see Heine & Kuteva 2002: 173–174 with examples from Chinese,

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1 As well as Erling Strudsholm, I would like to express my gratitude to Anders Richardt Jørgensen and Ursula Olander for their useful comments on an early draft of this paper, and to Riccardo Ginevra and Frederik Kortlandt for commenting a more recent version. I am also grateful to Lars Heltoft, who unknowingly prompted me to delve into the problem when he, teaching on a PhD course I participated in many years ago, presented the solution that I find unacceptable and thus aroused my interest in the problem. Finally, I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for the astute and constructive feedback on the submitted version of the paper (see especially § 4.1).

I have written Latin forms with macrons over long vowels even when referring to forms mentioned by authors who do not do so.

Japanese and Vietnamese, but without mentioning Italian). What I do intend to argue is that Italo-Romance pronominal clitics do not constitute a good example of a systematic grammaticalisation of adverbs as personal pronouns.

## 2 Material

Before proceeding to a discussion of the views on the etymological substance of *vi*, it is useful to have an overview of the material. The situation in modern standard Italian is well known (see e.g. Maiden & Robustelli 2000/2013: 95–110, with further details). The clitic pronominal forms we shall mainly deal with here are the first-person plural oblique clitic *ci* and the corresponding second-person plural form *vi*. Also of relevance is the clitic partitive pronoun *ne*, used for the third-person singular and plural as well as the reflexive. Italian also has the locative clitics *ci* and *vi*, which are functionally identical with each other, both replacing noun phrases indicating location. *Vi*, stylistically marked as more formal than *ci*, has a longer variant *ivi* used in literary style. Just like the clitic pronouns *mi ti si*, the clitics *ci* and *vi* also replace their *-i* with *-e* when a third-person direct object clitic follows, e.g. *ce lo da* ‘he gives it to us’.

For the first- and second-person plural oblique clitics, early Italo-Romance texts document the forms *no* and *vo* (see e.g. Rohlfs 1968: 158, 161; Ambrosini 1980: 25; Loporcaro 1995: 1–2; Castellani 1958/1980: 131–132; cf. also Salvi & Renzi 2010: 428). These forms soon disappear to the advantage of *ne* (rarely *ni*) and *ve/vi* attested in old and modern varieties of Italo-Romance (Rohlfs 1968: 162 points to forms in the Salento region preserving the original *o*-vocalism in the second-person plural pronoun). The first-person plural clitic *ci*, now the only form found in modern standard Italian, is also recorded from the earliest documentation of Italo-Romance. It is possible that it originally functioned as a dative marker and only later also acquired an accusative function (thus already Parodi 1889: 619 n. 1; see also e.g. Rohlfs 1968: 159).

The locative clitics originally had different deixis, *ci* being proximal and *vi* distal, but this distinction disappeared in the 17th century (see Migliorini 1936/2019: 672; Cortelazzo & Zolli 1999: 1812; Ferrazzano 2003: 3–4). More conservative variants of *ci* are seen in forms like Old Tuscan *inci* and southern Calabrese *nčí*. In some of the varieties that show *ne* or *ni* in the first-person plural oblique clitic, this form is distinct from the partitive clitic *nde* (Loporcaro 1995, arguing against Rohlfs).

The Latin forms for the personal pronoun were (tonic) *nōs* and *uōs*, which functioned as both nominative and accusative and regularly yielded modern Italian tonic *nói* and *vói*. Latin had the adverbs of place *ibi* ‘there’ and *inde* ‘from there’. Furthermore, Italian *ci* and related forms point to the former existence of a Latin form (*\*)hince*. We shall return to this form in § 3.

Table 1 sums up the relevant material from Latin, old and modern Italo-Romance varieties, and modern standard Italian. Forms in brackets are analogical creations with respect to the preceding stage (see also Loporcaro 1995).

	Latin	old and modern Italo-Rom.	mod. stand. Italian
obl. 1pl. pron.	<i>nōs</i>	<i>no, ne, ni</i> (rare); ( <i>ci, nde</i> )	<i>ci</i>
obl. 2pl. pron.	<i>uōs</i>	<i>vo, ve, vi</i>	<i>vi</i>
locative (prox.)	(* <i>hince</i>	<i>inci, nči, ci</i>	<i>ci; vi, ivi</i>
locative (dist.)	<i>ibi</i>	<i>ivi, vi</i>	
partitive	<i>inde</i>	<i>nde, ndi, ne</i>	<i>ne</i>

Table 1. Relevant clitics in Latin, old and modern Italo-Romance varieties, and modern standard Italian.

### 3 Historical analysis

#### 3.1 *Ci*

In order to understand the processes that have given rise to the system of clitic pronouns and proforms in modern Italian, it is necessary to analyse the forms in question historically. The first-person plural oblique clitic pronoun *ci* is generally considered to be etymologically identical with the locative adverb *ci*, an idea already put forward by Diez (1838: 71–72) and accepted by virtually all subsequent scholars in the field. A notable exception is Corominas (1956: 181), who maintains that “La explicación de los pronombres personales *ne* y *ci* ‘nos’ por los adverbios *inde hince*, y la de *vi* (*vi*) ‘os’ por *ibi* no es verosímil por más que se venga repitiendo y por más variantes que se aduzcan” and ultimately traces back *ci* to either the impersonal pronoun *si* or to Latin *nōs*. However, the phonetic developments required by this hypothesis are hard to accept.

It thus seems clear that *ci* does not have a pronominal origin, but reflects an adverbial formation, although the actual etymological substance is uncertain. According to some authors it reflects (\**hince*, an extended form of the Latin adverb *hinc* ‘from here’ (Rohlf 1968: 159; Maiden 1995: 167–168; Loporcaro 1995; see also Negri 1977: 223); a form *hince* is actually attested once in an Old Latin inscription (Rohlf 1969: 255). A reconstructed Latin point of departure \**hīce* (Prati 1951: 272; Ambrosini 1980: 24–25) or \**hīc-ce* is also found in the literature (Meyer-Lübke 1911/1935: 346; cf. also Devoto 1968/1980: 76). Other scholars believe we are dealing with a reflex of \**ecce hīc* (Meyer-Lübke 1901/1941: 161; Lausberg 1962/1972: 142; Tekavčić 1972: 241; De Mauro & Mancini 2000: 387). According to Vanelli and Renzi standard Italian *ci* reflects (*ec*)*ce hīc*, while southern Italo-Romance forms like Barese *ndʒə* reflect (*hi*)*nice* (1997: 110).

While it seems that Old Tuscan *inci* ‘there’ (Rohlf 1969: 255–256) and southern Italo-Romance forms like *nči, nǰə* meaning ‘to him/her/them’ and ‘to us’ (Rohlf 1968: 160–161) would overwhelmingly favour the etymon (\**hince* (thus also Maiden 1995: 167), the ultimate origin of *ci* has no bearing on the main purpose of this study, and so I shall not pursue this matter further.

#### 3.2 *Ne*

An important, yet largely misinterpreted, player in the history of the Italian plural pronominal clitics is *ne*. In modern standard Italian *ne* has partitive semantics and thus forms part of the system of local clitics together with the locative clitics *ci* and *vi*. What is interesting about *ne* in our context is that old and modern Italo-Romance varieties present a form *ne* that serves as the first-person plural oblique clitic and has been replaced with *ci* in modern standard Italian.

The partitive clitic *ne* shows an interesting array of forms in old and modern Italo-Romance varieties. Crucially, the most conservative varieties show that the clitic originally contained a cluster *-nd-*, e.g. Old Tuscan *nde*, Leccese *ndi*, Old Sicilian (14th–15th c.) *ndi* (see Loporcaro 1995 for an exhaustive overview and analysis of the material; for Old Sicilian see also La Fauci 1993). The partitive clitic *ne* can, beyond any reasonable doubt, be traced back to the Latin local adverb *inde* ‘from there’.

The matter is more controversial when it comes to the first-person plural oblique clitic pronoun *ne* found in dialects and old texts and later replaced by *ci* in most varieties. According to Negri (1977: 223) *ne* and *ve* go back to Latin *\*nes* and *\*ues*, allegedly dialectal variants of *nōs* and *uōs*. While a development of *\*nes* and *\*ues* to *ne* and *ve* is impeccable from a phonetic point of view, this idea is not particularly attractive as the very existence of these forms is speculative. Negri’s hypothesis is occasionally mentioned but has not found acceptance among specialists.

According to a more popular hypothesis, *ne* ‘us’ is etymologically identical to the partitive clitic *ne*, reflecting Latin *inde* by a process similar to the one assumed for *ci* ‘us’ and, at least in the opinion of some authors, for *vi* ‘you’, for both of which an adverbial origin has been suggested (see §§ 3.1, 3.3). This view is defended by numerous authors (e.g. Meyer-Lübke 1890: 210; 1901/1941: 161–162; 1911/1935: 360; Johnston 1898: 17, who presents this explanation as “doubtless the correct one”; Prati 1951: 546; Rohlfs 1968: 158–159; Tekavčić 1972: 241; Battisti & Alessio 1975: 4044; Negri 1977: 223; Maiden 1995: 167–168). Already Diez (1838: 72), however, pointed out that the discrepancy in meaning between pronominal *ne* ‘us’ and adverbial *ne* from *inde* ‘from there’ would preclude a common origin.

Others derive *ne* ‘us’ from the Latin first-person plural nominative–accusative pronoun *nōs*, yielding *nói*, the tonic form of the pronoun in modern Italian. An unaccented variant was reduced to *no*, found in old texts (see § 2), which eventually became *ne* and the occasionally attested *ni* (see § 4 for an analysis of the details of the developments). This idea is found already in Diez 1838: 72 and is also supported e.g. in Caix 1878: 43–44; Clédat 1925: 92–93; Ambrosini 1980: 24–25; Varvaro 1986: 92; La Fauci 1993; Loporcaro 1995; De Mauro & Mancini 2000: 1316.

A strong argument in favour of the pronominal hypothesis for *ne* is provided by the above-mentioned varieties of Italo-Romance that display *nd* or its reflexes in the partitive clitic. Many of them have a simple *n* in the first-person plural pronoun, thus showing that the two clitics have distinct origins. For instance, we find *ne*, with simple *n*, for the first-person plural clitic in Old Tuscan texts and in Leccese, and *ni* in Old Sicilian texts (as opposed to *nde*, *ndi* for the partitive clitic). This indicates that the partitive clitic and the first-person plural clitic, though homophonous in many other varieties, were originally two different words. It is true that some varieties also show *nd* in the first-person plural clitic, but they have convincingly been shown by Loporcaro to be the result of hypercorrection (1995: 22–24, arguing against Rohlfs).

### 3.3 *Vi*

The locative clitic *vi* doubtlessly (and uncontroversially) reflects the Latin locative adverb *ibi* ‘there’. This origin is confirmed by the longer variant *ivi* still used in literary style. The earlier properties of the locative clitics *ci* and *vi*, with proximal and distal deixis respectively (see § 2), also fit nicely with this interpretation.

As mentioned in § 2, the second-person plural oblique clitic pronoun had the form *vo* in early texts, which was soon replaced by *ve* and *vi*. For the forms *ve* and *vi* there are two main

hypotheses, parallel with the two hypotheses about the origin of the first-person plural clitic *ne* (§ 3.2). Most often they are identified etymologically with the locative clitic *vi*, which, as we have just seen, reflects the Latin adverb *ibi*. An early proponent of this hypothesis was Diez, who stated that “[*c*] *i* und *vi* sind eigentlich Ortsadverbien mit der Bedeutung ‘hier’ und ‘dort’”, adding the remark that “Beziehungen zwischen dem Pronomen und dieser Wortgattung [i.e. local adverbs] sind auch in andern Sprachen anerkannt” (Diez 1838: 71–72), an observation which remains of interest (see § 4), although Diez does not identify the “other languages” he alludes to (similarly Ambrosini 1980: 24 speaks of “il principio che avverbi locali entrino a far parte dei pronomi personali non solo come intensivi [...] ma come sostituti semantici dei pronomi” without giving examples).

Support of the adverbial hypothesis for *vi* ‘you (pl.)’ is often encountered in the literature, e.g. Ling 1869: 4; 1886: 77–78; Parodi 1889: 619; Meyer-Lübke 1890: 210 (mistakenly mentioning Caix as a proponent of this hypothesis, corrected in Meyer-Lübke 1901/1941: 161); 1911/1935: 354; Johnston 1898: 17–18; D’Ovidio & Meyer-Lübke 1906: 166; Prati 1951: 558; Tekavčić 1972: 241; Battisti & Alessio 1975: 4044; Negri 1977: 223; Vincent 1988: 290; Cortelazzo & Zolli 1999: 1812 (quoting Parodi, somewhat unprecisely in my view, for describing the pronominal and not the adverbial hypothesis as metaphysical); Maiden 1995: 167–168; De Mauro & Mancini 2000: 2273; Ferrazzano 2003: 2, 16; Como : 105–106; cf. also Russi 2008: 74; and, finally, Schöslers & Strudsholm 2009, to which we shall return in § 4.

According to the other hypothesis, not quite as commonly encountered as the adverbial hypothesis but still frequent in the scholarly literature, *vi* ‘you (pl.)’ is essentially unrelated to the locative clitic *vi*. Instead, the second-person plural clitic *vi* directly continues the nominative–accusative form of the Latin second-person plural pronoun *uōs*, which, in its accented variant, yielded the Italian tonic second-person plural pronoun *vó*. Accented *vó* became *vo*, attested in old Italo-Romance texts, subsequently yielding *ve* and *vi*. We shall get back to the details of these developments in § 4.

An early proponent of the pronominal hypothesis was Caix (1878; see also 1880: 212), although he does not explicitly state that it was the accidental merger of *uōs* and *ibi* that made possible the replacement of the reflex of *nōs* with *ci* in the first-person plural. This point is made clear by Clédat (1925: 92–93), according to whom “l’identité de forme entre le pronom *vi* et l’adverbe *vi* = *ibi* a fait rattacher instinctivement le pronom à l’adverbe, et a provoqué l’emploi de l’adverbe *ci* (= *eccehic*) comme pronom régime proclitique de la 1<sup>re</sup> pers. du pluriel”. This hypothesis is supported by Lausberg (1962/1972: 130; on pp. 141–142, however, Lausberg states that the adverb *ibi* is used suppletively for the second-person plural pronoun in Italian, a wording I find somewhat surprising); Mendeloff 1969: 75; Pulgram 1978: 324 (referring to the introduction of *ci* as the first-person plural pronoun due to the phonological merger of *uōs* and *ibi* in Italian *vi* as a “a very unusual process”); Grandgent 1927: 136; Anderson & Rochet 1979: 126, 142 n. 12; D’hulst 2006: 1325; Togeby 2011: 127; 1325.

#### 4 Discussion

Before we conclude, a few things need to be discussed in more detail, namely the phonetic and/or analogical processes leading to the replacement of first- and second-person plural clitics *no* and *vo* with *ne* (*ni*) and *ve/vi*, and the motivation for the subsequent substitution of *ne* by *ci*.

4.1 The replacement of *no* and *vo* with *ne (ni)* and *ve/vi*

As we have seen (§ 2), the earliest documented varieties of Italo-Romance display *no* and *vo*, reflecting Latin *nōs* and *uōs*, for the first- and second-person plural clitics. These forms have generally been replaced by *ne (ni)* and *ve/vi* in Italo-Romance. Among the authors who derive Italo-Romance *ne (ni)* and *ve/vi* from Latin *nōs* and *uōs* (see §§ 3.2, 3.3), some imagine a purely phonetic development (Lausberg 1962/1972: 130, assuming a monophthongisation of *\*noi* and *\*voi* in unaccented position; cf. also Parodi 1889: 618–619 n. 1; Devoto 1968/1980: 279, 456; Ambrosini 1978: 195; 1980: 25). Note, however, that Maiden (1996: 154) assumes that *-ōs* would have yielded *\*-u* > Tuscan *\*-o*, as kindly pointed out to me by an anonymous reviewer. It is probable that the phonetic difficulties with a direct development of *nōs uōs* to *ni vi* have contributed to the widespread rejection of a genetic relationship between *nōs uōs* and *ni vi* to the advantage of the adverbial hypothesis for both clitics (Meyer-Lübke 1901/1941: 161; Rohlfs 1968: 158).

An alternative solution is to assume that the vocalism has been introduced by analogy with the unaccented variants of the personal pronouns of the 1st and 2nd singular, *mi* and *ti*, and the reflexive pronoun 3rd person, *si* (thus e.g. Caix 1878: 43–44; 1880: 212; Clédat 1925: 92–93). These forms are likely to be the regular reflexes of Latin *mē tē sē*, either as the generalised results of proclitic *ē* (D'Ovidio 1886: 70; cf. the discussion in Rohlfs 1968: 151) or as the result of a general development of Latin word-final *ē* to *i* in the Romance languages as argued by Whitehead Nielsen (2012), although she does not address the *-i* of the Italian pronouns.

This type of replacement is quite trivial and has parallels in other linguistic systems. For instance, in Common Slavic the first-person plural nominative pronoun is *\*my* ‘we’ for expected *\*mi* due to analogy with the corresponding second-person plural form *\*γy* ‘you (pl.)’ (Vaillant 1958: 451–452; Olander 2015: 237–238). Similarly, the Danish third-person plural nominative pronoun *de* ([d̥i]) ‘they’ is pronounced with [i] instead of [e] by analogy with the first-person plural nominative *vi* [vi] ‘you (pl.)’ and the second-person plural nominative *I* [i] ‘you (pl.)’ (Hansen 1962: 80).

Furthermore, as very kindly pointed out to me by an anonymous reviewer of this paper, Latin unaccented *nōs* and *uōs* developed into *nă* and *vă* in Old Romanian. These forms are preserved in most branches of Daco-Romance, but in the dialects spoken in Romania, including Standard Romanian, the first-person pronoun *nă* has been replaced by *ne* by analogy with the other clitic pronouns: third-person dative plural *le*, feminine accusative plural *le*, first-person singular accusative Old Romanian *me* (> modern *mă*; see below), second-person singular accusative *te* and third-person reflexive accusative *se* (cf. Rothe 1957: 80; Rosetti 1986: 137). The same analogy probably also originally affected the second-person pronoun, but due to the development of *e* to *ă* after a labial also seen in *me* > *mă* (Rothe 1957: 25, 79), *ve*, though attested dialectally, mostly changed back to *vă*. Since there are no traces of Latin *inde* or *ibi* in Romanian, the adverbial hypothesis is not applicable here, and Romanian thus provides a nice parallel in support of the pronominal hypothesis for Italian.

I should like to adduce an important argument in favour of the pronominal hypothesis for *vi*. To my knowledge no instances of the longer form *ivi* have been reported, which indubitably reflects the Latin adverb *ibi*, being used as a first-person plural oblique clitic in any variety of Italo-Romance; *ivi* can only represent the locative clitic. This observation, which has been largely overlooked in the literature (an exception is D'hulst 2006: 1325), needs further scrutiny from specialists in Italo-Romance historical grammar, but if it holds true, I consider it to be a

strong piece of evidence against the view that pronominal *vi* has an adverbial origin. Furthermore, as rightly emphasised by the anonymous reviewer of this article, the adverb (*i*)*vi* does not seem to be particularly widespread in Italian dialects, and yet its presence, at least at an early stage, is a crucial prerequisite for the adverbial hypothesis; and it is also relevant for the pronominal hypothesis, where the replacement of pronominal *ne* with adverbial *ci* is much easier to understand in a system comprising pronominal *vi* (from *uōs*) and adverbial *vi* (from *ibi*). Again, this is a problem that could benefit from further examination by specialists.

The pronominal hypothesis for *ne* and *ve* is thus straightforward (pronouns simply reflect pronouns), economical (no wholesale replacements of the system) and typologically unremarkable (parallels are found in other languages). This raises the question as to why it has not been generally accepted in the literature, especially since the adverbial hypothesis assumes a semantic development that puzzles even the authors who adhere to it. For instance, Parodi (1889: 619) admits that “[q]uanto a ciò che sto per dire della 2. persona, temo di cascare addirittura nella metafisica”. Tekavčić (1972: 241) describes the substitution of pronouns with adverbs as “difficile da spiegare dal punto di vista semantico”. And Russi (2008: 74) also has difficulties with the replacement of *no* and *vo* with the locative forms *ci* and *vi*, stating that “[f]rom a cognitive (i.e., language external) perspective though, this replacement does not appear to adhere to the universal metaphorical trajectory of change captured by the grammaticalization chain”, where the chain she refers to is “PERSON > OBJECT > SPACE > TIME > QUALITY” (from Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer 1991).

Of course, the phonetic difficulties of assuming a development of Latin *uōs* to Italian *vi* have played a role, but it may also have to do with the authority of scholars like Meyer-Lübke and Rohlf, who favoured the competing idea of an adverbial origin of the pronoun *vi*. The main reason, however, is likely to be the attractiveness of an apparent systematic replacement of the plural oblique clitics with adverbs. We shall have a closer look at this aspect in the following subsection.

#### 4.2 The replacement of *ne* with *ci*

The reasoning underlying the adverbial hypothesis is that since *ci* ‘us’ clearly has an adverbial origin, then it is likely that *ne* ‘us’ and *vi* ‘you (pl.)’ also have it. Thus, for instance, D’Ovidio (1886: 78) states that “negando l’origine pronominale [read: “avverbiale”] a *ne* e *vi*, si renderebbero discordi questi da *ci*, con cui fan sistema, e del quale niuno dubita che sia un avverbio (*ecc’ hīc*)”. Similarly Tekavčić (1972: 241–242) writes:

Questa terza forma [i.e. *ci*] è una prova perentoria dell’identità originaria dei sostituti e delle particelle avverbiali: anche qualora si potesse ancora sospettare che in *ne* e *vi* sia confluuto forse un ultimo resto delle forme ridotte di NOS e VOS, la forma *ci* esclude qualsiasi possibilità di provenienza diretta da NOS e può risalire soltanto allo stesso etimo che sta alla base della particella omofona.

The adverbial hypothesis assumes that the original forms of the first- and second-person plural oblique clitic pronouns have been systematically replaced by local adverbs, apparently without any internal or external motivation. Only rarely do the proponents of the adverbial hypothesis

address the problem of motivation, but Maiden (1995: 167–168) does adduce the phonetic similarities between the pronominal forms (first-person plural *n-*, second-person plural *v-*) as a motivating factor for the substitution of these forms with the etymologically adverbial forms *ne/ci* and *vi* (from *inde*, *(\*)hince* and *ibi*). In contrast to the suggestion presented here, however, Maiden still believes that the etymological substance of the pronouns is adverbial.

In my view, the proponents of the adverbial hypothesis overlook the fact that if we accept that the plural oblique clitics *ne* and *vi* descend from the Latin pronominal forms *nōs* and *uōs* and secondarily merged with the local clitics *ne* and *vi*, then we have – for free, so to speak – a simple motivation for the substitution of *ne* with *ci*. Thus I assume, together with many other authors (see §§ 3.2, 3.3), that when the reflexes of Latin *nōs* and *inde* merged in *ne*, and those of Latin *uōs* and *ibi* merged in *vi*, the apparent identity of *vi* ‘you (pl.)’ and *vi* ‘there’ triggered the replacement of *ne* ‘us’, identified with *ne* ‘from there’, with *ci* ‘here’. The motivation for the replacement of *ne* with *ci* in the first place was, in my opinion, that the use of *ne* for both first-person plural ‘us’ and partitive ‘from there’ was perceived as asymmetric with respect to the two meanings of *vi*, namely second-person ‘you (pl.)’ and locative ‘there’ (distal deixis). The system made more sense, from the speakers’ perspective, if pronominal ‘us’ was identified with locative ‘here’ (proximal deixis), thus leading to the replacement of *ne* with *ci* in most varieties.

I assume the following chain of development:

- 1 From Latin to the earliest stages of Italo-Romance
  - a *nōs* and *uōs* > tonic *nōi* and *vōi*, and clitic *no* and *vo*
  - b *(\*)hince* > *inci* > *ci* ‘here’
  - c *inde* > *nde* > *ne* ‘from there’
  - d *ibi* > *ivi* > *vi* ‘there’
- 2 Early Italo-Romance
  - no* and *vo* → *ne* (*ni*) and *ve/vi* (by analogy with *me/mi se/si te/ti*)
- 3 From early Italo-Romance to modern standard Italian
  - ne* ‘us’ → *ci* (due to the interpretation of *vi* ‘you (pl.)’ and *vi* ‘there’ as the same word)

It is, thus, the merger of Latin *uōs* and *ibi* in *vi*, together with the merger of *nōs* and *inde* in *ne*, that facilitated the introduction of the adverbial clitic *ci*, from Latin *(\*)hince*, into the pronominal system.

#### 4.3 Concerns: Schøsler & Strudsholm 2009

Before I conclude, I shall comment on the specific concerns about the pronominal hypothesis raised by Schøsler and Strudsholm (2009: 396–397). While their criticism is directed towards a study of mine (see § 1), it should be clear from the preceding sections that the idea of a pronominal origin of the pronouns *ne* (*ni*) and *ve/vi* is very widespread and has been floating around in the literature for more than a century. In fact, the sheer amount of literature quoted in § 3 in favour of the pronominal hypothesis invalidates their claim of “general enighed” [“general agreement”] about the adverbial origin of the Italian first- and second-person plural clitics (Schøsler & Strudsholm 2009: 395; similarly, Negri 1977: 223 speaks of a “dottrina comune”, and Maiden 1995: 167 speaks of “consensus”).

Schøsler and Strudsholm (2009: 396) maintain that my hypothesis

implies that the original adverbial forms were in use with local meaning for a long time, and that the formal replacement only occurs after the creation of the forms *vi* and *ci*. This is not correct. The Latin local adverbs can be used with reference to persons [implicerer [...] at de oprindelige adverbielle former blev anvendt længe med lokal betydning, og at den formelle udskiftning først sker efter opståen af formerne *vi* og *ci*. Dette er imidlertid ikke korrekt. Allerede de latinske stedsadverbier kan anvendes med reference til personer]

As for the first part of this statement, I find it hard to understand how it could possibly not be correct that the adverbial forms continued to be used with local meaning. After all, *vi* still has local meaning in modern Italian.

As for the second part, that my scenario requires the replacement of *nōs* with *ci* to have occurred after the merger of *uōs* and *vi*, Schøsler and Strudsholm give two examples, both from Terence, showing the use of *inde* and *ibi* in the sense of ‘of them’ and ‘with her’, i.e. with third-person reference: *nati filii duo: inde ego hunc maiorem adoptavi mihi* (*Ad.* 1, 1, 21) and *duxi uxorem: quam ibi miseriam* [not *miseram*] *uidi* (*Ad.* 5, 4, 18); this use of *ibi* is marked “very rare” according to Lewis and Short (1879/1958: 875). I fail to see how the occasional use of adverbs with third-person reference in Latin could mean that the formal replacement of first- and second-person plural pronouns had already taken place. In my view this use of adverbs is an entirely different and much less esoteric phenomenon from the postulated grammaticalisation of local adverbs as first- and second-person pronouns in Italo-Romance.

Thus, if I understand them correctly, the arguments adduced by Schøsler & Strudsholm against the pronominal hypothesis are not convincing.

## 5 Conclusion

In the preceding sections I have argued for a scenario where locative *ci* ‘here’ (proximal deixis) became a first-person plural clitic by imitation of the relationship between locative *vi* ‘there’ (distal deixis) and the second-person plural clitic *vi*, which had merged accidentally. The motivation for the replacement of the original first-person plural clitic *ne* is likely to have been the fact that it had merged with partitive *ne* ‘from there’, a meaning that was incompatible with that of a first-person plural pronoun.

The main attractiveness of this hypothesis is that, fundamentally, a scenario where pronouns reflect pronouns is considerably more attractive than one where pronouns reflect adverbs. Thus accepting this relatively straightforward and well-motivated scenario, we avoid the complicated, somewhat esoteric and largely unmotivated hypothesis of a direct grammaticalisation of adverbs as pronouns in Italo-Romance. Accordingly, contrary to what is sometimes stated in the literature, Italo-Romance does not provide a good example of a systematic grammaticalisation of adverbs as pronouns.

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**Abstract and keywords**

The first- and second-person plural oblique pronouns in modern standard Italian are *ci* and *vi*; other varieties of Italo-Romance present *ne* (rarely *ni*) and *ve*. The pronominal clitics *ci*, *ne* and *vi* are often identified etymologically with the local adverbs *ci*, *ne* and *vi*, reflecting Latin *(\*)hince*, *inde* and *ibi*. According to a competing view only *ci* has an adverbial origin, whereas the pronominal clitics *ne* and *vi* reflect Latin *nōs* and *uōs*.

In this study I present the material and analyse it historically. I conclude that the latter hypothesis is more plausible: it was precisely the accidental merger of pronominal *ne* and *vi* (from Latin *nōs* and *uōs*) with adverbial *ne* and *vi* (from Latin *inde* and *ibi*) that triggered the replacement of *ne* with *ci* (from Latin *(\*)hince*).

Italian, Italo-Romance, Latin, grammaticalisation, pronouns, historical grammar