Building on previous studies on the syntacticization of features pertaining to the syntax-discourse interface (cf. Speas & Tenny (2003), Sigurdsson (2004), Bianchi (2006), Baker (2008), Giorgi (2010), Miyagawa (2012), Haegeman & Hill (2013), Haegeman (2014)), in this work I will sketch a formal account of the syntactic and interpretive properties of interjections based on evidence from Emilian dialects and standard Italian. Adopting a cartographic approach to the functional layout of the highest portion of the left periphery, I will basically argue that interjections can be split into three categories according to whether they must, they can or they cannot be integrated with the associated clause; the degree of prosodic integration of the interjection is strictly connected to its discourse linking properties and depends ultimately on its (first or second) merge position.

The first class includes interjections that must be integrated with the associated clause and are intrinsically discourse-linked, in the sense that they can only be used to reply to a previous utterance in the discourse situation and to express emphatically the speaker’s personal stance. They are exemplified in (1) with *mo vaca* and *mo deg* in the Emilian dialects of Modena and Reggio and in (2) with *eccome/altroché* in standard Italian:

(1) a. *Mo vaca s’l’è èlt*
   
   Interjection if-cl-is tall

   b. *Mo deg c’l’è èlt*
   
   Interjection that-cl-is tall

(2) *Eccome/Altroché *(se) Gianni ha passato l’esame!*

In (1)/(2) the clause initial interjection is obligatorily followed by the complementizer *se/che* and is clearly prosodically integrated with the associated clause. As discussed by Alessandrini (2012), no lexical element can intervene between *mo* and *vaca/deg*; moreover, a topicalized constituent must follow the complementizer, which suggests that *se/che* occupy the head Force° - rather than a lower head of the CP layer - if, as proposed by Rizzi (1997), Topic projections are lower than Force. As to the discourse particle *mo*, Poletto & Zanuttini (2003)/(2010) argue that it contains an evaluative component which is clearly present in (1), where *mo* is intrinsically related to the speaker’s perspective and to his commitment with respect to the relevant propositional content. Following Hinterhölzl & Munaro (2015)’s proposal that the particle *mo* is linked to (the head EvalS° of) an Eval(uctive)S(peaker) projection immediately dominating ForceP, I will suggest that *mo* in (1) is first merged as the head EvalS° of the projection EvalSP, while the items *vaca/deg* occupy spec,ForceP (which captures in terms of spec-head agreement the selectional link between the element filling spec,ForceP and the type of complementizer lexicalizing the head Force°):

(3) [EvalSP [EvalS° Mo] [ForceP vaca/deg [Force° se/che] [FinP l’è èlt!]]]

Concerning *eccome* and *altroché*, which diachronically result from *e+come* and *altro+che*, on the basis of their compositional nature I will assume that they were originally maximal projections, occupying spec,EvalSP, and are being reanalyzed as filling the head EvalS° as a consequence of a well attested process of specifier to head reanalysis (cf. van Gelderen (2004), Willis (2007)):

(4) [EvalSP Eccome/Altroché [ForceP [Force° se] [FinP Gianni ha passato l’esame!]]]

The second category of interjections, the ones that can (but need not) be integrated with the associated clause, is exemplified by items like *sorbla/madosca* in the Emilian dialects and by
caspita/accidenti in standard Italian; the interjection can either be followed by se or be prosodically and syntactically independent, in which case it can either precede or follow the associated clause:

(5) a. Caspita/Accidenti se Gianni ha passato l’esame!
   Interjection if John has passed the exam!
   
b. [Caspita!Accidenti!] Gianni ha passato l’esame! [Caspita!Accidenti!]
   Interjection John has passed the exam! Interjection

These interjections are structurally ambiguous as they can be analyzed by the speakers either as the head EvalS\(^0\), like in (6a), or as the head of a contiguous SpeechAct projection (cf. Haegeman & Hill (2013), Haegeman (2014)), like in (6b), where the interjection occupies the adjacent SpeechAct\(^0\) licensing an exclamative clause typing feature in Force (which in this case is not lexicalized by se); the clause final position of the interjection can be derived by fronting the associated clause FinP to spec,SpeechActP in order to satisfy a criterial constraint à la Rizzi, like in (6c):

(6) a. [EvalSP [EvalS\(^0\)Caspita/Accidenti] [ForceP [Force\(^0\) se] [FinP Gianni ha passato l’esame!]]]
   
b. [SpeechActP [SA\(^0\)Caspita/Accidenti!\(_x\)] [EvalSP [EvalS\(^0\) \(_x\) [ForceP [FinP Gianni ha passato l’esame!]]]]
   
c. [SpeechActP [FinP Gianni ha passato l’esame!\(_x\) [SA\(^0\)Caspita/Accidenti!] [EvalSP [ForceP \(_x\)]]]]

The third type of interjections, exemplified in (7) with the Italian interjection però, represent independent illocutionary acts, as they cannot be integrated with the associated clause and do not need any linguistic antecedent in the speech situation; I surmise that these interjections are always first merged as heads of SpeechActP, giving rise to the word order with clause initial interjection; as for the reverse order, the clause final position of the interjection can be derived again by fronting the associated clause FinP to spec,SpeechActP, like in (8):

(7) [Però!] Gianni ha passato l’esame! [Però!]
   Interjection John has passed the exam! Interjection

(8) [SpeechActP [FinP Gianni ha passato l’esame!\(_x\) [SA\(^0\) Però!] [ForceP \(_x\)]]]

Interjections express an emotional reaction to a linguistic or extra-linguistic event which is manifest in the speech situation and have an intrinsically deictic nature in the sense that they can only be uttered in the presence of the mental state they give vent to. Interestingly, only the interjections belonging to the second and third class can be uttered in isolation in out of the blue contexts; this property can be derived by the hypothesis that only interjections occupying the head SpeechAct\(^0\) - and attracting the associated cause to the corresponding specifier - can reach the head of the adjacent Speaker projection where, according to Giorgi (2010), the speaker’s spatio-temporal coordinates are codified:

(9) [SpeakerP [Sp\(^0\) Sorblà!/Caspita!/Però!\(_x\)] [SpeechActP Ø [SA\(^0\) \(_x\) [ForceP [FinP ]]]]]

Only after the interjection has raised to the next higher head Speaker\(^0\) can be provided the appropriate contextual anchoring of the utterance, which allows for the non-realization of the associated clause; in other words, only in that case can take place the deictic reference to the event of the external world that is the source of the speaker’s mental state.