Split intransitivity (and Unaccusativity) in Italian (and dialectal variations)

1) Unaccusative and Unergative Verbs

It has been observed that not all intransitives behave in the same way. For example, for some intransitives there is a transitive use, but not for others. In languages that use different auxiliaries, auxiliary selection is often different for different intransitive verb, like in Italian and French. Also, there are languages in which the realization of the only argument of intransitive verbs may be different. For example, in Guaran some intransitives encode their argument like the subject of transitive verbs, and some encode it like the object of transitives; in English, resultative constructions require a so called “fake reflexive” object for one type of intransitive verbs.

Dixon (chapter 4) writes: “There are pressure to identify S with A as in accusative languages or S with O as in ergative languages. And some languages pursue a middle course, marking some S like A and some like O; such languages fall into two kinds, ‘split-S’ for which each S has a fixed class membership -either Sa or So - generally on the basis of its prototypical meaning and ‘fluid-S’ for which each S can be both Sa or So, depending of the semantics of a particular instance of use split depends on the context. As split-S relates to the nature of the verb, for most languages of this type morphological marking is achieved by cross-referencing on the verb, but for some languages the split is shown by case marking on an NP or by constituent order. Italian also shows split intransitivity and this “paper” shows how it is realized.

**DISCLAIMER:** This paper does not pretend (by any means) to be original work. It’s just a compilation of several theories and data, (copied and pasted!) from several sources. Only the compilation and organization are original, and a short analysis of an Italian verb (rotolare) due to Annalisa Feletti (Section 6.2). I may have also forgotten to put some references. After all, this is only an oral presentation for a class taken for pass/fail…

1 The vase broke. / John broke the vase.
The vase glowed in the sun / *The sun glowed the vase.
2 The vase broke. / John broke the vase.
The vase glowed in the sun / *The sun glowed the vase.
3 See the difference between “The river froze solid” or the “vase broke into pieces” with “my mistress grumbled herself calm” or “the officers laugh themselves helpless” (herself and themselves are additional object NP, the so-called fake reflexive)
The two verb classes are generally also known as unaccusatives\(^4\) and unergatives \((S_o)\). For example, verbs like *arrive, be sick, be sleepy* are called unaccusatives, and verbs like *glow, walk, get up* are called unergatives. The term unaccusatives is motivated by the idea that the argument of these verbs actually is an object, that is, should have accusative case, but that they cannot assign that case. The term unergative is motivated by the idea that the argument is an agent, and would appear in the ergative case in ergative languages, but that the verb cannot assign ergative case.

Road map:
- Unaccusative verb behavior in Italian
- Semantic theories of unaccusatives
- Syntactic theories of unaccusatives
- (Other) Unaccusative Behaviors in Italian
- Dialect variations: Paduan

### 2) Unaccusative verb behavior in Italian\(^5\)

The features that are considered decisive for determining inclusion in the unaccusative class are the following:

1) *ne*-licensing
2) selection of the auxiliary *essere*
3) agreement of the past participle with the superficial subject in composed forms
4) possibility of entering as heads in adnominal past participle constructions
5) possibility of appearing with an expressed subject in absolute past participle constructions.

#### 2.1) Ne-licensing

In Italian, *ne*-cliticization applies to both the objects of transitives and the subjects of unaccusatives but not with subjects of unergative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitive</th>
<th>Intransitive Unaccusative</th>
<th>Intransitive Unergative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gianni trascorrera’ tre settimane a Milano. Gianni will spend three weeks in Milano. Gianni ne trascorrera’ tre a Milano. Gianni of-them will spend three in Milano.</td>
<td>Sono passate tre settimane are elapsed three weeks Ne sono passate tre. of-them elapsed three Sono arrivati molti esperti Many experts arrived Ne sono arrivati molti of-them arrived many</td>
<td>Hanno parlato tre ragazze. have spoken three girls *Ne hanno parlato tre of-them have spoken three Molti telefoneranno Many will phone *Ne telefoneranno molti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) Another terminology, going back to Burzio 1981, is ergative for what we have called unaccusatives

\(^5\) This discussion is based on [Dini, 1995]
2.2) Selection of the auxiliary essere

In Italian there are two different auxiliaries, i.e. essere (“to be”) and avere (“to have”). 
Essere is always associated with unaccusative past participles, while avere is associated 
with unergative ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unaccusative</th>
<th>Unergative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leo e' arrivato</td>
<td>Lia ha parlato a lungo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo is-ESSERE arrived</td>
<td>Lia has-AVERE spoken long</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3) Past Participle Agreement

While unaccusative past participles agree with their subject, past participles of unergative 
composed forms have always a masculine singular inflection, irrespective of the index of 
the subject:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unaccusative</th>
<th>Unergative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le pizze sono arrivate</td>
<td>I bambini hanno mangiato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pizzas-FEM.PLU have-ESSERE arrived-FEM.PLU</td>
<td>The children-MASC.PLU have-AVERE-PLU eaten-MASC.SING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le pizza e' arrivata</td>
<td>Le bambine hanno mangiato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il bambino e' arrivato</td>
<td>b. * I bambini hanno mangiati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il bambini sono arrivati</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4) Adnominal Past Participle

It is possible, in Italian, to use past participle VPs as nominal modifiers in constructions 
where the variable associated to the modified noun fills the semantic role of either the 
subject of unaccusatives (in a) or the object of transitives (in b) of the corresponding 
inflected form:

a. I soldati partiti per la guerra non sono mai tornati
   The soldiers left to the war never came back
b. I soldati mandati al fronte non sono mai tornati
   The soldiers sent to the war never came back

Past participles of unergative verbs are always ungrammatical

* I soldati camminati furono fucilati
  *The soldiers walked were shot

---

6 Avere is also the auxiliary for transitive verbs: “Io ho mangiato la pasta” (I HAVE eaten the pasta)
### 2.5) Absolute Past Participle

Italian absolute past participles (APs) usually occur in sentence initial position, playing the role of temporal modifiers. They are possible with transitive and unaccusative past participles, as shown in (a) and (b), respectively.

(a) Maltrattata Maria, Carla parti’
Mistreated-FEM.SING Maria-FEM.SING, Carla left (After having mistreated Maria, Carla left)
(b) Partita Maria, la mia vita cambio’
Left-FEM.SING Maria.FEM.SING, my life changed (After Maria's departure, my life changed)

An NP is usually present, as in (a) and (b), even though unaccusatives can lack of their subject, thus being involved in a control configuration:

PRO₁  scesa dal taxi, Maria scoppio’a piangere
Descended- FEM.SING from the taxi, Maria burst into tears

The same control relation holds for the subject of transitive APs, which cannot be expressed:

PRO₁  Bevuto un bicchiere di vino, Maria parti’
Drunk a glass of wine, Maria left
* Bevuto un bicchiere di vino Mario, Maria parti’
Drunk a glass of wine Mario, Maria left

Unergative verbs can form, under certain semantic conditions APs, but they are always ungrammatical when the subject NP is present:

Vendemmiato in fretta e furia, i contadini lasciarono la campagna
Harvested in a great hurry, the farmers left the country
* Vendemmiato in fretta e furia i contadini, lasciarono la campagna
Harvested in a great hurry the farmers, left the country

The past participle agrees with the NP contained within the AP, *irrespective of its grammatical function*. So in (a) the past participle of the verb *maltrattare* (mistreat) agrees in gender and number with the object NP Maria. The same holds for (b), where the NP is the subject of *partire* (leave). As for case, unaccusative verbs select nominative, transitive ones select accusative:

Partito io, nessuno ha p’u nutrito Fido
Left I.NOM, nobody has fed Fido
After my departure, nobody has fed Fido
Vistala, se ne innamor’o
Seen her ACC.cl, he fell in love with her
After having seen her, he fell in love with her
3) Semantic theories of unaccusatives

This distinction between two syntactic classes of intransitives is semantically interesting because it appears to reflect meaning differences among the class of intransitives, and these meaning differences are relatively similar across languages, though difficult to characterize. We briefly review here some of the semantic theories that have been proposed to account for the split.

3.1 Aspectual Approaches

[Van Valin 1990] starts from the four aspectual classes

- states (love, know)
- activities (walk, snore, watch)
- achievements (reach, arrive)
- accomplishments (recover, eat an apple)

Van Valin argues that various languages draw the dividing line between unaccusatives and unergatives according to such aspectual criteria. The basic claim is that whenever an intransitive verb is atelic (a process or an activity) from the point of view of the aktionsart it is syntactically mapped as an unergative, whereas, when it is telic (or bounded, like for achievements), it is realized as an unaccusative. This claim is substantiated by a long list of pairs of Italian verbs, most strikingly by the behavior of verbs of movement, which behave as telic unaccusatives if a goal phrase is realized, as unergative processes, otherwise:

- Giovanni e’ corso a casa in due ore
  - Giovanni has-ESSERE run home in two hours
- Giovanni ha corso per tre ore
  - Giovanni has-AVERE run for three hours

3.2 Unaccusatives in the Theory of Dowty

[Dowty 1991] has developed a theory of the mapping of thematic roles to syntactic argument positions based on semantic properties of these roles. Dowty considers two sets of such properties:
Proto-agent properties
a. volitional involvement in the event or state
b. sentience and/or perception
c. causing an event or state in another participant
d. movement relative to the position of another participant
e. exists independently of the event named by the verb.

Proto-patient properties:
- undergoes change of state
- incremental theme
- causally affected by another participant
- stationary relative to movement of another participant
- does not exist independently of the event, or not at all.

The more proto-agent properties a particular thematic role has, the higher the chances for it to be realized as the subject in the basic verb form; the more proto-patient properties it has, the higher the chances for it to be realized as the object. Dowty uses these proto-role properties for the unaccusative/unergative distinction. The underlying idea is that unaccusative verbs are intransitive verbs whose argument has predominantly proto-patient properties. We observe the following:

- Intransitive verbs that imply volitional involvement and sentience for their argument are always unergative.
- Intransitive verbs that imply a change of state for their argument, that are causally affected by another participant, or that do not exist independently of the event, tend to be unaccusative.

Dowty’s rules allow that languages draw the border between unergatives and unaccusatives differently. For example, various linguistic criteria led the following classification of verbs as unergative or unaccusative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Unergative</th>
<th>Unaccusative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Die</td>
<td>Choctaw</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweat</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Choctaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bleed</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffer</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Choctaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneeze</td>
<td>Italian, Dutch, Choctaw</td>
<td>Choctaw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 The Linking Rules of Levin & Rappaport-Hovav

Levin & Rappaport Hovav (1995) is similar to Dowty’s proposal, as it works with linking rules for thematic roles that take semantic properties of arguments into account. They do not link the semantic arguments to grammatical functions, but to positions (internal or external) in argument structures.
Levin and Rappaport Hovav’s Linking Rules:

a. Immediate Cause Linking Rule: The argument of a verb that denotes the immediate cause of the eventuality described by that verb is its external argument (i.e. if the verb is intransitive, it will be unergative.)

b. Directed Change Linking Rule: The argument of a verb that corresponds to the entity undergoing the directed change described by the verb is its direct internal argument i.e. if the verb is intransitive, it will be unaccusative

c. Existence Linking Rule: The argument of a verb whose existence is asserted or denied is its direct internal argument

d. Default Linking Rule: An argument of a verb that does not fall under the scope of any of the other linking rules is its direct internal argument

Notice that these rules apply for transitive verbs as well, where they describe subject or object position.

3.4 Sorace’s hierarchies

[Sorace 1992] has shown that (potentially universal) gradient continua ("hierarchies") distinguish core unaccusative and unergative verbs from progressively more peripheral verbs. These hierarchies, which are based on aspectual parameters, identify the notion of "telic dynamic change" at the core of unaccusativity and that of "atelic non-dynamic activity" at the core of unergativity. The closer to the core a verb type is, the stronger the link between its single argument and the position of internal or external argument at argument structure, and the more determinate its syntactic status as either unaccusative or unergative. This theory substantiates the intuition that, within the class of unaccusative verbs, some are "more unaccusative" than others, and within the class of unergative verbs, some are "more unergative" than others.

Languages choose different “minimal triggers” of unaccusativity along these hierarchies: for example, "existence of state" in Italian is sufficient to guarantee unaccusative status, whereas in French - which has a narrower class of syntactically unaccusative verbs - the crucial component is "change of location". On this view, linking rules governing the mapping between lexical semantics and syntax are language-specific and may be regarded as the main locus of cross-linguistic variation. In the next table, the Unaccusative Hierarchy for monadic verbs and the particular minimal triggers of unaccusativity (indicated in all caps) selected by four languages (where ("A >> B" = "A is more central than B")

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Minimal Triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>CHANGE OF LOCATION &gt;&gt; change of state &gt;&gt; continuation of state &gt;&gt; existence of state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Change of location &gt;&gt; CHANGE OF STATE &gt;&gt; continuation of state &gt;&gt; existence of state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Change of location &gt;&gt; change of state &gt;&gt; CONTINUATION OF STATE &gt;&gt; existence of state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Change of location &gt;&gt; change of state &gt;&gt; continuation of state &gt;&gt; EXISTENCE OF STATE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This theory predicts that (a) the greater the distance between the minimal trigger and the core, the larger the class of syntactic unaccusatives, and the more degrees of variation a
language displays, and (b) verb categories adjacent to the minimal trigger exhibit a higher degree of syntactic variation. This can be considered a refinement of Dowty's (1991) idea that the unaccusative/unergative distinction corresponds semantically to the two concept clusters of Proto-Patient and Proto-Agent, which are inherently non-discrete.

4) Syntactic theories of unaccusatives

Syntactic theories of the distinction between unaccusatives and unergatives have concentrated on the fact that the argument of unaccusatives appears to be related to the direct object position, at some level of derivation. In the Relational Grammar analysis of [Perlmutter 1978], the argument of unaccusatives is a deep-structure object that then is assigned the role of a subject due to a general restriction against subjectless constructions. In the analysis of Burzio (1981) in a Government and Binding framework, unaccusative (ergative) verbs subcategorize only for an object NP that then is moved to the subject position. Unergative verbs, on the other hand, have a deep structure subject that surfaces as a subject. Also, patients can't be (originally) in subject position, so they start as objects and then get moved to the subject position. This is what happens for “the ship sinks”

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S
| VP
  | V NP
    | sink the ship
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This type of analysis has been combined with the proposal of [Williams 1981] who distinguishes between “external” and “internal” arguments. The argument position of the subject of transitives and the subject of unergatives is external, the argument position of the object of transitives and the subject of unaccusatives is internal.

[Dini 1995] is an interesting paper that, contrary to the previous GB literature, rejects the assumption that movement of constituents is at the base of an explanation for the unaccusative behavior. It shows that an analysis which refuses movements and relies on the more ‘economical’ hypothesis that unaccusative behavior is always lexically determined, can fully account for the data in question. The central claim of such an analysis, which is casted in the version of the HPSG theory described in Chapter 9 of Pollard and Sag (1994), is that while unergative forms are characterized by the presence of the subject within the SUBJ list, unaccusative forms have an empty SUBJ list, their surface subject being the first member of the COMPS list:
[Dini 1995] shows the implement ability of this approach with respect to unaccusatives verbs and other unaccusative behaviors in Italian such as passives and si-constructions.

5) (Other) Unaccusative Behaviors in Italian

[Dini 95] says that, whereas a semantic generalization grouping together the unaccusatives verbs can be found (see Section 3), convincing semantic generalizations grouping together all verbs and verbal constructions which manifest an 'unaccusative behavior' (in Italian) are still missing. This class includes:

1) Unaccusatives verbs
2) Passive constructions.
3) Reflexive constructions.
4) Si constructions.

For example, the theory that links aktionsarten to unaccusativity succeeds in isolating the class of verbs traditionally labeled as unaccusatives, however, as soon as we try to apply these semantic parameters to the whole class of ergative constructions, their individuating power immediately fades. For instance, this same theory fails to explain the following behavior for the passive. It would be hardly tenable to argue that a verb like osservare ("to watch") at the passive form has either an agentive/causative semantics (it allows purpose clauses, thus the agent is not necessarily backgrounded: a) or a telic aktionsart (it allows for-adverbial: b)

a. E' stato osservato per capirne il comportamento
   (He) has been observed to understand-of-him-CL the behavior
b. E' stato osservato per un paio d'ore
   (He) has been observed for a couple of hours

Yet it clearly shows a syntactically unaccusative behavior, in that it selects essere as an auxiliary, it shows agreement and it allows ne-cliticization:

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7 See the examples a. (accomplishment) vs b. (activity):
   a. Giovanni e' corso a casa in due ore (Giovanni has-ESSERE run home in two hours)
   b. Giovanni ha corso per tre ore (Giovanni has-AVERE run for three hours)
Giovanna has been observed
Of-them-CL have been observed many

The basic idea of [Dini 95] is that the features determining an unaccusative behavior are syntactic in nature, even though they can be semantically derived.

In Dini’s “mixed” approach there is no need to find a semantic generalization able to group together unaccusatives, passives, reflexive and si-constructions: unaccusativity is semantically derived but syntactically implemented as a particular configuration of the valence structure. Thus the kind of valence structure which characterizes the unaccusative behavior can be derived by resorting to different devices allowed by the grammar: Linking Theory in the case of unaccusatives, morphological-lexical rules in the case of passives, rules of clitic affixation in the case of si-construction. [Dini 95] attempts to explain unaccusative behavior in Italian with these devices.

In the following part of this section, we show some of the evidence for unaccusative behavior in Italian (other than unaccusative verbs, seen already in Section 2) without attempting to explain the syntactic theory.

The features that we consider decisive for determining inclusion in this class are the same than for the unaccusative verbs: ne-licensing, selection of the auxiliary essere, agreement of the past participle with the superficial subject in composed forms, possibility of entering as heads in adnominal past participle constructions and possibility of appearing with an expressed subject in absolute past participle constructions.

5.1) Passive constructions

Auxiliary essere
  Giovanni e' stato osservato
  Giovanni has been observed

Ne-cliticization
  Ne GN=R stati osservati molti
  Of-them-CL have been observed many

Agreement of the past participle
  La proposta fu apprezzata
  The proposal-FEM.SING was-ESSERE appreciated-FEM.SING

Adnominal Past Participle
  I soldati mandati al fronte non sono mai tornati
  The soldiers sent to the war never came back

Absolute Past Participle
  Abbandonata da tutti, Maria viveva in solitudine
  Abandoned-FEM.SING by everybody, Maria.FEM.SING was-living in loneliness
5.2) Reflexive constructions

**Auxiliary essere**
- Io (Leo) mi *sono* lavato (but: *Io ho* lavato la macchina)

**Agreement of the past participle**
- Io (Barbara) mi *sono* lavata (but: *Io ho* lavato la macchina)

**Absolute Past Participle**
- Lavatosi, Gianni si allontano’
  - Washed himself, Gianni went away

5.3) Si-constructions

Italian *si*-constructions are characterized by the fact that the subject of the “original” verbal form is not overtly realized (it is understood as either a generic or a first plural person participant) and the clitic *si* surfaces.

Basically these constructions can be divided in three different types:

1. The base form is a monoargumental verb (i.e. a verb subcategorizing just for one NP):
   - it always receive a third singular inflection (impersonal *si*):
     - *Si parlava a bassa voce*
     - *Si spoke-THIRD-SING with soft voice One used to spoke softly*

2. The base stem is transitive and the direct object agrees with the verb (passive *si*):
   - *Si mangiavano gli spaghetti*
   - *Si ate-THIRD-PLUR the spaghetti-THIRD-PLUR One used to eat spaghetti / spaghetti used to be eaten*

3. The base stem is transitive and the verb gets a third singular inflection (non agreeing "si"):
   - *In quel ristorante si mangia spaghetti*
   - *In that restaurant SI eat-THIRD-SING spaghetti-THIRD-PLUR In that restaurant one used to eat spaghetti*

**Auxiliary essere:**
- *Si e’ parlato troppo*
  - *Si has-ESSERE spoken*
- *Si e’ vissuto bene*
  - *Si has-ESSERE lived well*

**Agreement of the past participle**

Unaccusative past participles trigger agreement
- *Si e’ andati/*o a casa*
  - *SI has-ESSERE gone-MASC-PLUR / *MASC-SING home*

While unergative past participles never trigger semantic agreement
- *Si e’ cenato/*i*
  - *Si has-ESSERE dined-MASC-SING / *MASC-PLUR*

But

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8 *Parlare* is unergative, therefore “*io ho* parlato troppo”
9 *Vivere* is unaccusative, therefore “*io sono* vissuto bene”
6) Dialect variations: Paduan

[Sorace, Cennamo] applies the theoretical framework described in see Section 3.4 in order to explore the syntactic manifestations of split intransitivity in the grammar of Paduan, a dialect spoken in the Northeastern region of Veneto. In the existing descriptions of auxiliary usage in Paduan attested variation in auxiliary selection is well-documented but tends to be left unexplained, or is simply attributed to lexical idiosyncrasy. [Sorace, Cennamo] shows that the pattern of variation is systematic and that it can be accounted for in terms of Sorace’s unaccusative and unergative hierarchies (Section 3.4)

As predicted, two classes of verbs present no variation at all in auxiliary selection: (a) verbs denoting inherently telic change of location/state (e.g. vignere ‘come’, rivare ‘arrive’) and (b) verbs denoting non-motional volitional activity (e.g. lavorare ‘work’). These verb types have been identified in previous work as core unaccusative and core unergative, respectively: they have been found to be consistent in selecting auxiliaries essere and avere in various languages that have a choice of auxiliaries. Paduan is no exception in this regard: all informants, regardless of age, select essere with inherently telic verbs of change of location and avere with verbs of non-motional volitional activity.

On the other hand, alternations in auxiliary selection in Paduan appear to occur with the following classes of verbs:

a. anticausative verbs in reflexive form (e.g. romperse ‘break’)
b. anticausative verbs in non-reflexive form (e.g. aumentar ‘increase’)
c. monadic verbs denoting non inherently telic change of state/location (e.g marcire ‘rot’)
d. stative verbs denoting continuation of a pre-existing state (EX) or existence of a state (e.g. durar ‘last’, bastar ‘suffice’)
e. verbs denoting manner of motion (e.g. correre, ‘run’)
f. verbs of (smell, light, substance and sound) emission (e.g. spussare ‘stink’, splender ‘shine’).

The patterns of variation appear to be sensitive to age differences among the informants: in general, the younger the speaker, the stronger the influence of standard Italian, and thus the more extensive the use of essere. The data have been analyzed according to four

\[10\] Here, the predicate contenti, ‘happy’, modifies the agent of the dining action. Since it is reasonable to assume that the behavior of these kinds of adjuncts is governed by semantic principles, we expect the secondary predicate to be able to ‘pick up’ the index it predicates of in the semantic part of the sign it modifies. If this is the case, since adjectives are agreeing category in Italian, the masculine plural inflection of the adjective is accounted for as a reflex of the fact that the arb index, while being unable to trigger past participle agreement, is still active in the semantics of the verbal sign.
The variation in the Paduan data confirms that, in general, inherent lexical aspect determines auxiliary choice with core verb categories, whereas compositional aspect (i.e. the event structure of the whole predicate) affects auxiliary selection with peripheral verb categories. The data support the prediction that in Paduan, as in other languages, auxiliary selection with core verb types is a lexical phenomenon and is relatively insensitive to compositional factors. The degree of sensitivity to these factors increases for non-core verb types as they get more distant from the core.

6.1 Unaccusative verbs

One of the interesting facts uncovered by this paper is the behavior of reflexive anticausative verbs which, unlike in standard Italian, display a sensitivity to parameters such as external/internal causation and the eventive/stative nature of the predicate.

a. Go provà metare la ciave ma la porta no se ga verto / *no se ze verta
   have-1s tried put the key but the door not refl-has opened / not refl-is opened
   I provato a metere la chiave ma lo porta non si è aperta
   have-1s tried put the key but the door not refl-IS opened / not refl-is opened
   I tried to put the key in but the door didn’t open

b. La porta ze verta de colpo
   the door refl-is opened suddenly
   The door suddenly opened

b. is acceptable only if it is understood that the door opened by itself, or by virtue or an inanimate (and unexpressed) causer (e.g. the wind). In contrast, the choice of avere in a. is related to an interpretation in which the event is seen as being brought about by an external (animate) causer.

Note that in Italian we would use the auxiliary essere in either case.

c. Go butà par tera el vaso ma no se ga roto / *no se ze roto
   have-1s thrown on the floor the vase but not refl-has broken / *not refl-is broken
   I threw the vase on the floor but it didn’t break

d. El vaso ze andà in tera e se ga spakà / se ze spakà
   the vase is gone to floor and refl-has broken / refl-is broken
   The vase fell on the floor and it broke

In c. the choice of avere reflects the presence of external causation while when there is no indication of the eventive/stative or internally/externally caused nature of the situation, as in d. both auxiliaries are possible. Again, in Italian, we would use essere in either case.

With verbs denoting non-inherently telic change of state/location, middle-aged and older informants show avere/essere alternations which appear to be sensitive to the degree of
subject control and to the degree of telicity of the action. Thus, (a) implies that Maria slid, but did not fall, whereas (b) implies that she actually fell. In (c), essere is the only possible auxiliary. In Italian also, again, essere is the only possible auxiliary.

a. Maria la ga sbrissà su na scorsa de banana
   Maria she has slid on a skin of banana
   Maria slid on a banana skin
b. Maria la ze sbrissà su na scorsa de banana
   Maria she is slid on a skin of banana
   Maria slid on a banana skin
c. Maria la ze sbrissà su na scorza de banana e se ga spakà na gamba
   Maria she is slid on a skin of banana and refl-has broken a leg
   Maria slid on a banana skin and broke her leg

6.2 Unergative verbs

Variation in auxiliary selection is displayed by verbs denoting manner of motion. In most cases, auxiliary alternations are constrained by compositional aspect (like in standard Italian), and in particular by the presence of a directional phrase indicating telicity. Thus, essere and avere are the only possible choices in a. and b. respectively (like in Italian)

a. Maria la ze corsa casa
   Maria she is run home
   Maria ran home
b. Maria la ga corso par tre ore in tel parco
   Maria she has run for three hours in the park

With ne-cliticization the telic/atelic distinction no longer holds, and both essere and avere may occur even if the directionality is overtly expressed, as in c.

c. Ghe ne ga corso /ghe ne ze corsi tanti a casa
   of-them have run many / of-them are run many home
   Many of them ran home

In other cases, the choice of auxiliary is determined by whether the emphasis is on the process or on the endpoint of the action. In a. the interpretation is that the ball rolled for a while before it fell into the hole; in b. the focus is on the ball in the hole: a natural continuation might be "now take it out". If directionality is not specified, as in c., both auxiliaries are possible.

a. La bala la ga rodola in tel buzo
   the ball it-fem has rolled in the hole
   The ball rolled into the hole
b. La bala la ze rodolada in tel buzo
   the ball it-fem is rolled in the hole
   c. Ghe ne ga rodola tre / ghe ne ze rodolae tre
   there of-them have rolled three / there of-them are rolled three
In Italian we can also use both auxiliaries with *rotolare* but the use is slightly different.

It seems therefore that auxiliary selection in Paduan is not only determined syntactically by the unaccusativity or unergativity of the verb, but also semantically conditioned by aspectual factors in a hierarchical way. Auxiliary *avere* has a wider distribution in Paduan than in standard Italian, but variation affects only peripheral verb classes. In both languages, core verb classes exhibit stronger unaccusativity / unergativity and thus are categorical in auxiliary selection. Paduan non-core verb types, to a greater extent than their Italian equivalents, display a sensitivity to factors other than the inherent lexical features of the verb, such as the eventive nature of the predicate and the degree of affectedness of the subject.

References


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11 With *avere* the emphasis is on the subject (that “controls” the action), not the endpoint (and this is similar to Paduan) but to such a point that we can’t follow the action by an endpoint but only by a modal or a temporal adverb:

a’. *La palla ha rotolato nel buco*  
*The ball rolled into the hole*

b’. La palla *ha rotolato lentamente/per 1 minuto*  
*The ball rolled slowly/for 1 minute*

With *essere* the focus is on the action *rotolare* and we can have an endpoint

La palla *e’ rotolata nel buco*  
*The ball rolled into the hole*

We can have both versions if modality or directionality is not specified

c. La palla *ha rotolato*  
d. La palla *e’ rotolata*

where c. would answer the question “how did the ball get into the hole?”, while d. would answer “what rolled into the hole”? In general, *essere* is always acceptable, while *avere* only in certain (few) contexts. It seems therefore that, in Italian, when we have the choice of the auxiliary, we are more constrained in the choice than Paduan speakers. (Paduan is more fluid-S than Italian?)

(Note: the discussion in this footnote is not from [Sorace Cennamo] but from personal communication with Annalisa Feletti)