Italian Quantifiers and Unaccusative Verbs

By: Drew Knochenhauer, Krystal Galdamez, Lyndsey Olsen, Reuben Raff, Lindsey Hayes, and Ryan Whitaker

Introduction:

In this paper we will discuss observations related to Italian unaccusative and unergative predicates. We will show that unergative and unaccusative verbs differ in allowances and requirements in Italian. Specifically, we will show that unaccusative predicates in Italian require the use of auxiliary essere while unergative predicates require the use of avere. Additionally, we will show that a quantifier may raise when attached to the clitic ne in unergative predicates but not unaccusative ones.

Italian word order:

First we will briefly discuss options for word order of Italian. Consider (1-3) below.

1. Dei profughi ungheresi sono rimasti nel paese
   Some refugees Hungarian are remained in-the country
   “some Hungarian refugees remained in the country.”

2. Sono rimasti nel paese dei profughi ungheresi
   Are remained in-the country some refugees Hungarian
   “Some Hungarian refugees remained in the country.”

3. Sono rimasti dei profughi ungheresi nel paese
   Are remained some refugees Hungarian in-the country
   “Some Hungarian refugees remained in the country.”

In (1) we find that the DP dei profughi ungheresi is in a position in front of the verb. This is an observation contrary to both (2) and (3). If we assume that (1) involves raising of the DP into subject position (spec T), then neither (2) nor (3) may involve raising to the left edge. This would lead us to suggest that, possibly, Italian has right-edge VP specifiers where the direct objects are base-generated. If we assumed as well that Italian is left headed, then we would expect that objects of a predicate could line up along the right-edge. Rimasti is a predicate that, we argue, takes two predicates: what/who remained, and the location in which they remained. This would therefore result in the DP and PP being direct and indirect objects respectively. The deep structure below reflects the assumptions and proposals so far stated.
In order to generate the word order for (2), PP complement to V raises into spec of v, to generate the word order of (3), we can’t tell whether or not there is movement, but it could be the case that the DP has moved into spec of v just as the PP would need to in order to accomplish the word order of (3). (1) can be generated through raising of the DP to spec of T. Without more examples to consider, we will assume this structure for the remainder of the paper; it should be noted that introducing new examples could require alterations to this set of assumptions.

Auxiliaries and Intransitive Predicates:

In this section we will consider the distribution of auxiliary verbs in the context of unergative and unaccusative predicates. We are given that: predicates in Italian perfective structures select for either essere or avere (English translation: be and have respectively); all transitive verbs require avere; and “passive participles always co-occur with” essere and never with avere. We further find the distinction of (4) and (5).

4. Maria è arrivata.
Maria be_pres arrived
“Maria has arrived.”

5. Giovanni ha telefonato.
Giovanni have_pres called
“Giovanni phoned.”
We find, in (4), an intransitive predicate that is preceded by *essere* while in (5) *telefonato* is preceded by *avere*. Additional distributional data to consider is provided in the difference of auxiliaries in the sentences in (6) below.

6. Distribution of Auxiliaries
   a. *L'artiglieria ha affondato due navi nemiche.*
      The-artillerie have sunk two ships enemy
      “The artillery sank two enemy ships.”
   b. *Due navi nemiche sono affondate.*
      Two ships enemy be_PRES sunk
      “Two enemy ships sank.”

   With regard to (6), the predicate in question in each instance is *affondato*. If this were a simple issue of the form of the predicates, we would expect the difference in distribution not to result. We might instead attribute the difference in distribution to the arguments of the predicates in each case; in (6)a, *affondato* has two arguments—one of which is an agentive subject acting on the other, while (6)b is an example of an unaccusative case of *affondate* where the ships are not agentive subjects in the sinking action. The distinction obtained in (6) can also be used to explain the distribution of (4) and (5). From the observations in (6) it would be tempting to suggest that the distribution is a matter of transitivity of the predicate, but the occurrence of *avere* in (5) demonstrates that this must not be the case. Instead, we should consider the idea that the use of *essere* is used in unaccusative cases while *avere* is used in non-unaccusative instances; this would include unergative predicates, transitive predicates, and, potentially, non-passive constructions. When we consider the list of additional predicates of Italian that can co-occur with *essere* we find that this is a relatively sound analysis.

7. Essere Predicates:
   a. Fall, leave, arrive, remain, exist, grow, explode, faint happen, turn out, become, appear, collapse

   All of these predicates can be considered prototypical examples of unaccusative predicates and we will therefore adopt for the remainder of this paper that unaccusative predicates require, through an unknown mechanism, that a form of *essere* precedes them.

   Now there's a clear question how NOT you can draw:
   *essere* *avere* is used when (after 4-moment)
   there is a direct agent (i.e. V has a DP complement)
Ne-cliticization:

As we saw in the discussion of auxiliary distribution, there seem to be inherent differences that arise from the presence of an unaccusative predicate in a structure versus other types. This theme will continue with our discussion of Ne-cliticization. In this part we will show that while both unergative and unaccusative predicates allow cliticization, unergative predicates require that any quantifier attached to it is raised along with the clitic, while unaccusative predicates disallow this operation.

First we will show that cliticization with unergative predicates requires for the clitic to remain a complement to the predicate in surface structure. Although the following data does not contain evidence that the entire predicate and clitic constituent may rise to the specifier of T, we have no evidence to the contrary, and we will assume that such a structure is grammatical. Both the quantifier and clitic must remain a constituent in surface structure when raised from the specifier of the unergative verb in deep structure. Not doing so results in ungrammaticality.

8. Unergative Cliticization:
   a. Hanno parlato tre ragazze
      Have spoken three girls
      “Three girls have spoken.”
   
   b. *Ne hanno parlato tre
      Of-them have spoken three
      “Three of them have spoken”

The observations in (8) are in contrast then with those in (9) where an unaccusative predicate obtains grammaticality with an identical distribution.

9. Unaccusative Cliticization:
   a. Sono passate tre settimane.
      Are elapsed three weeks
      “Three weeks have elapsed.”
   
   b. Ne sono passate tre
      Of-them are elapsed three
      “Three (of them) have elapsed.”

   In (9)b we find that the clitic ne has raised into what we will assume is the specifier of T. Here we find that the result is grammatical with the quantifier three left in the base-generation position. (10) illustrates the ungrammaticality that results when we attempt to raise the quantifier with the clitic.

   No, that’s not very likely, since the clitic is a clitic. It attaches to a verb (to the left if the V is non-finite).
10. Ungrammatical Quantifier Raising:

a. *Tre settimane passano rapidamente

Three weeks pass quickly

“Three weeks pass quickly.”

b. *Tre ne passano rapidamente

Three of them pass quickly

“Three of them pass quickly.”

The distributional difference between (9) and (10) is the placement of the quantifier with respect to the clitic; in (9) the quantifier did not raise while it did in (10). In (8) we saw that the non-raising of the quantifier resulted in ungrammaticality. We, therefore, might be able to suggest the following hypothesis regarding ne-cliticization and quantifiers: unaccusative constructions disallow movement of a quantifier of ne to raise while unergative (and indeed perhaps other constructions) require that the quantifier raises with ne. Saying this, would then predict that (11) - an altered version of (8) - would be grammatical.

11. *Tre ne hanno parlato.

Three of them have spoken

“Three of them have spoken.”

Without further data, we cannot determine whether unergative constructions would require this generalization; however, if (11) were grammatical in previous data sets, this hypothesis would be accurate.

When we consider (12) below, we find that the passive constructions of the non-unaccusative verbs obtain the same distribution of clitic-quantifier raising.

12. Passives:

a. *Molti esperti saranno invitati

Many experts will be invited

“Many experts will be invited.”

b. *Molti ne saranno invitati

Many of them will be invited

“Many of them will be invited.”
This seems to imply an inherent connection between the construction of clauses with an unaccusative predicate and passive constructions. In passive constructions, the subject — including both quantifier and clitic — raises from the complement of the verb to the specifier of T, as with unaccusative verbs. The deep structure position of the subject in both unaccusative and passive constructions is the complement of the verb rather than its specifier, as in unergative constructions, demonstrating that such constructions are permit this flavor of clitic-quantifier raising.

Conclusion:

In this paper we have briefly considered observations in Italian that point toward inherent idiosyncratic differences between unaccusative and unergative predicates. These differences revolved around our analyses of auxiliary distribution in forming the perfective and clitic-quantifier movement. In each case, we saw and inherent distributional difference that was mainly focused on unaccusative predicates. In the final portion of our investigation, we observed that passives pattern with unaccusative verbs in the cliticization process, indicating a relationship between their similar argument structures and the movement operations that are allowed.

Consider the claim discussed:

All we need is that ne as DTR may only be licensed from a (post A-movement) Z (i.e. a complex A or A V).

Some of your comments came from trying to analyze the movement of ne as a kind of A movement; this clitic movement doesn't behave like A-movement.

A clitic adjacent to a head (in the Italian case, a V).