

# Italian

The material in this assignment is based on important work on the syntax of Italian done by Luigi Burzio in the 1980's – see his book *Italian Syntax*, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1986. Burzio's work was in turn in an important sense a re-interpretation of pioneering work on Italian done by David Perlmutter within the context of Relational Grammar.

Your task is to make as much sense of the facts described briefly below in the context of the framework developed so far this quarter.

## BACKGROUND ONE: WORD ORDER

- (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.”

## BACKGROUND TWO: AUXILIARY 'SELECTION'

Italian uses two different auxiliaries in the formation of perfective structures. It uses *essere* ('be') for one class of verbs and *avere* ('have') for a second class of verbs.

All transitive verbs (those take a direct object) demand *avere*, the have-auxiliary.

Passive participles always co-occur with the be-auxiliary, never with the have-auxiliary:

- (4) a. Maria è stata accusata.  
Maria be.PRES been accused  
'Maria has been accused.'
- b. \*Maria ha stata accusata/o.

The class of intransitive verbs divides into those which demand *avere* and those which demand *essere*. For example, the verb corresponding to English 'arrive' takes *essere* and the verb corresponding to English 'call (on the phone)' takes *avere*:

- (5) a. Maria è arrivata.  
 Maria be.PRES arrived  
 'Giovanni has arrived.'  
 b. Giovanni ha telefonato.  
 Giovanni have.PRES called  
 'Giovanni phoned.'

Sometimes two uses of the 'same verb' will have different auxiliaries:

- (6) a. L'artiglieria ha affondato due navi nemiche.  
 the-artillery have.PRES 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.'

The pattern in (6) is found with a broad array of similar pairs, such as *increase*, *decrease*, *melt*, *freeze*, *harden*, *break*, *stop*, *start*, *wake-up*, *make/get-angry*, *make/go-crazy* and many others.

In (7) there is a list (in their English translations) of intransitive verbs which demand the have-auxiliary:

- (7) defend, phone, smile, cough, quarrel, sleep, travel, joke, cheat, lie, struggle, bark, buzz, flirt, snort, tremble, resist, swim, walk, stagger, reply, gesture, chat, operate, sin, go-on-strike, collaborate, delay

In (8), there is a list (again in English translation) of intransitive verbs which demand the be-auxiliary:

- (8) fall, leave, arrive, remain, exist, grow, explode (intransitive), faint, happen, turn out, become, appear, collapse, die, be-born, blush, go-crazy, come, go, disappear, happen, wither, rot, leak.

### BACKGROUND THREE: AGREEMENT

Finite verbs agree with their 'subjects' in person and number. This will be apparent if you examine the verbal forms in the examples below.

Participles (perfective and passive) agree with their 'subjects' in number and gender if the auxiliary used is *essere* – this is why in the a-example of (5) the participle ends in *-a* (feminine singular) and why in the b-example of (6) the participle ends in *-e* (feminine plural).

When the auxiliary is *avere* the participle does not agree but rather appears in a default masculine singular form. This is why in the a-example of (6) the participle ends in *-o*.

## NE-CLITICIZATION

Given a structure [DP Q NP], the preverbal clitic *ne* (meaning roughly ‘of them’) functions as a pronominal correspondent of the NP constituent (the Italian equivalent of French *en*).

### CLITICIZATION IS POSSIBLE FROM THE OBJECT OF A TRANSITIVE VERB

- (9) a. Gianni trascorrerà tre settimane a Milano  
           will-spend three weeks at  
           “Gianni will spend three weeks in Milan.”  
       b. Gianni *ne* trascorrerà tre a Milano  
           of-them will-spend three at  
           “Gianni will spend three (of them) in Milan.”

### CLITICIZATION IS IMPOSSIBLE FROM THE PREVERBAL SUBJECT

- (10) 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.”

### CLITICIZATION IS IMPOSSIBLE FROM THE POST-VERBAL SUBJECT OF AN UNERGATIVE VERB

- (11) 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.”

### CLITICIZATION IS POSSIBLE FROM THE POST-VERBAL SUBJECT OF AN UNACCUSATIVE VERB

- (12) 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.”

## CLITICIZATION IS IMPOSSIBLE FROM THE PRE-VERBAL SUBJECT OF A PASSIVE

- (13) 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.”
- (14) a. Due macchine sono state vendute  
two cars were been sold  
“Two cars have been sold.”  
b. \*Due ne sono state vendute  
two of-them were been sold  
“Two (of them) have been sold.”

## CLITICIZATION IS POSSIBLE FROM THE POST-VERBAL POSITION OF A PASSIVE

- (15) a. Furono invitati molti esperti  
were invited many experts  
“Many experts were invited.”  
b. Ne furono invitati molti  
of-them were invited many  
“Many of them were invited.”

## RAISING

- (16) Sembra che i bambini siano stanchi  
seems that the children are tired  
“It seems that the children are tired.”
- (17) a. Molti profughi ungheresi sembrano essere rimasti nel paese.  
many refugees Hungarian seem be.NON-FIN remained in-the country  
“Many Hungarian refugees seem to have remained in the country.”  
b. \*Molti ne sembrano essere rimasti nel paese.  
many of-them seem be.NON-FIN remained in-the country  
“Many of them seem to have remained in the country.”  
c. Sembrano essere rimasti dei profughi ungheresi nel paese.  
seem[P<sub>3</sub>] be.NON-FIN remained some refugees Hungarian in-the country  
“Some Hungarian refugees seem to have remained in the country.”  
d. Sembrano esser -ne rimasti molti nel paese.  
seem[P<sub>3</sub>] be.NON-FIN of-them remained many in-the country  
“Many of them seem to have remained in the country.”