

## CENTRAL AND PERIPHERAL CATEGORIES IN ITALIAN AND ENGLISH

Suppose that a word has two or more inflections. A Verb, for example, may be inflected both for Tense and for Person and Number. How then might the categories be marked? In principle, all three might share a cumulative exponent, coming either before the root:

**Tense/Person/Number + Root**

or after:

**Root + Tense/Person/Number**

Alternatively, Number might have its own markers, with Tense and Person marked cumulatively. The exponents might then come in this order:

**Root + Number + Tense/Person**

or in this:

**Tense/Person + Root + Number**

and so on. Or, again, there might be separate markers for each category, for instance in this order:

**Root + Number + Tense + Person**

Nothing in the 'Item and Process' or in any other purely formal model would rule any of these patterns out.

But let us consider the pattern that we do find in, for example, Italian. In, say, *mangiavano* '[they] were eating', the final *-no* is a cumulative marker of 3rd Plural, and it is always in this position, in the termination, that Person and Number have their exponents. The preceding stem, *mangiava-*, marks the Tense; the form is Imperfect Indicative, and these properties (or this property if Tense and Mood are seen as a single dimension) are regularly marked by *-v(a)-*. In summary, then, the pattern is like this:

**Root + Tense + Person/Number**

By rules of the kind outlined in chapter 9, the stem *mangiava-* would be derived by the suffixation of *-va-*. From that, the whole form would be derived by the further suffixation of *-no*.

Why are the affixes distributed in this way? The immediate answer is, of course, historical. The pattern we find in Italian partly continues a more complicated pattern that is attested in Latin, and, by comparison with other Indo-European languages, we can project it further back into prehistory. In one sense, therefore, it is simply a persisting characteristic of this family. Not surprisingly, we can find other patterns in languages that are not Indo-European. For example, in chapter 7 we cited a few forms from an Athapaskan language in which Aspect and the Subject Person and Number are marked in this order:

**Aspect + Person/Number + Root**

But the pattern in Italian is also partly iconic. Let us take first the cumulative marking of Person and Number. In syntax, these are categories that go together. They characterise both Verbs and Pronouns: as *mangiavo* 'I was eating' is 1st Singular, so is the clitic Pronoun *me* 'me, myself'. Both enter into the rule by which, if a Verb has a Pronoun or Noun Phrase as its Subject, there is agreement between them. For example, in *Le donne*

*mangiavano le uva* 'The women were eating the grapes', *le donne* 'the women' determines that the Verb is both 3rd Person and Plural. At the same time, neither is so closely related to Tense: this is a category of the Verb only, and Tenses are independent of the Subject. So, the distribution of exponents is iconic. The categories that belong together semantically are marked simultaneously; the one which is semantically separate is marked separately.

Let us now look at the ordering of the suffixes. The marker of Tense is formally more central: it is part of the stem and, as such, is close to the root. The marker of Person and Number is a termination, and is therefore formally further from the root. But this distribution also makes semantic sense. In *mangiavano*, the final *-no* identifies the participants responsible for the eating, and, although the word could stand without any further Subject (*Mangiavano* 'They were eating'), the participants could again be identified by a separate phrase (*Le donne mangiavano*). The properties marked by the termination are thus syntactically peripheral to the Verb, whose function as a lexical item is to identify the action itself. By contrast, Tense is again marked only on the Verb, and, as the category by which the action is located in time, is semantically central to it. Thus the properties of the Verb which are syntactically peripheral are also marked peripherally, by a termination. The property which is semantically central to it is marked centrally.

What conclusion can we draw from illustrations of this kind? The strongest conclusion might be to suppose that languages are subject to a law of iconicity. This would state that, if there are no disturbing factors, what is semantically more central will also be formally more central. From this, we might draw the corollary that, if categories are equally central, they will be formally cumulative. But such laws would quickly prove false. We would find that languages obeyed them in part and also, in part, disobeyed them.

At the other extreme, this might be no more than an interesting point about Italian. If there is a similar pattern in some unrelated language *X*, that will again be an interesting point about *X*. A third possibility, however, is that both Italian and *X* exemplify a general tendency. A tendency is not a law: we would not claim that such and such 'will' be the case. But, in any individual language, we would expect to find some iconic patterning. We would also expect to find that some particular patterns are widespread. Although we know there are exceptions, we might expect that, in many other languages or families of languages, a category which is semantically like Tense in Italian will be marked more centrally (whether by suffixes or prefixes may not matter) than categories like Person and Number. We might expect that the latter will, in general, tend to be marked cumulatively.

Whatever our general hopes or expectations, it is easy to find other examples of iconicity. In Turkish, as we saw in chapter 6, the Plural morpheme (*-ler* or *-lar*) is separate from the Case morphemes, and their order, when a Noun has both, is:

#### Root + PLURAL + Case

Formally, then, the marking of Plural is more central – that is, closer to the root – and that of Case peripheral. But now consider the semantics of these categories. A Noun Phrase, in the simplest case, identifies a referent; this may be one man or more than one man, one village or more than one village, and so on. The distinction between 'one' and 'more than one' is part of its identification, and in that way the Plural morpheme, by whose presence or absence the distinction is made, is semantically linked to the lexical morpheme. But the function of Cases is not, in general, to establish referents. Instead they indicate relations between words or phrases – the syntactic roles of Nouns within



the sentence, the dependence of one Noun on another, and so on. In that way they belong to a wider construction. We can therefore see a semantic structure which is parallel to the formal structure. Where the Plural morpheme is part of a potential referring expression:

### Root (PLURAL)

and therefore has a role essentially internal to the Noun Phrase, the Case supplies a syntactic modulation of the whole:

### [Root (PLURAL)] (Case)

In meaning, as in form, Case is peripheral.

Lexical formatives provide another striking illustration. Take, for instance, the Italian Verb-form *verdeggiavano* '[they] were turning green'. Like *mangiavano* '[they] were eating', this has a termination *-no*, which is added to an inflectional stem *verdeggiava-*:

[*verdeggiava*] + *no*

But within the inflectional stem there is a lexical stem *verdeggi-*:

[[*verdeggi*] + *ava*]

formed by the addition of *-eggi-* to the root of VERDE 'green'. Compare *rosseggiavano* '[they] were becoming red', with the root of ROSSO 'red'; or, less perspicuously, *galleggiavano* '[they] were afloat', with a Noun root also found in the phrase *agalla* 'afloat'. Formally *-eggi-*, the lexical suffix, is closer to the root and forms an inner stage of derivation. The inflectional suffixes, both of the stem (*-a-*, *-va-*) and in the termination (*-no*) are successively peripheral.

Such patterns are so widespread that, although there are exceptions, the formal position of 'derivational' formatives has often been taken as a criterion for distinguishing them. But we can again see this as an instance of iconicity. In *verdeggiavano*, the inner stem *verdeggi-* is that of a lexeme (VERDEGGIARE) whose meaning is potentially synthetic. Although that of VERDE enters clearly into it, and the formation itself has a meaning which is paralleled at least in ROSSEGGIARE, the result is a semantic unit on its own. It is therefore natural that the formal elements *verd(e)-* and *-eggi-* should be adjacent. The meaning of the rest is analytic: *verdeggi + a + va -f no* is semantically no more than a function of the complex lexeme VERDEGGIARE, plus Imperfect Indicative, plus 3rd Plural. It is therefore natural that the markers of the morphosyntactic categories should form successively outer layers.

The principle of syntagmatic iconicity has now been illustrated sufficiently. But it also has a bearing on the way in which the marking of categories overlaps. Suppose that a set of stems is formed by the main exponents of a category *A*. We may call them *A* stems: for example, in *verdeggiavano*, the inflectional stem *verdeggiava-*, which is derived by suffixing the marker of Imperfect Indicative, is a Tense (or Tense and Mood) stem. Now it is possible that each *A* might have a single exponent – that, morphophonemics apart, there might be no allomorphy. But suppose we do find alternation. In that case, we might expect that it should reflect only the features that are realised in the forms from which the *A* stems are derived. So, let *A* stems be the innermost inflectional stems. In that case, we might expect that any alternation should be lexically conditioned. For example, if *A* is Tense, the markers of Tenses might be expected to vary between different inflectional classes. Let *A* stems be derived instead from simpler inflectional stems: say, from stems whose formatives are the main exponents of a category *B*. In that case, we might again expect some alternations to be lexically conditioned; in addition, we

would not be surprised if the marking of some values of *A* – some Tenses, for instance – were to be conditioned by different values of *B*. But we would not expect an alternation to be conditioned by properties which, at this stage in the derivation, have yet to be realised. Let the next stage be the addition of a termination which will mark *C*. Then we would not expect that different values of *C* would also condition the marking of *A*.

So far we have said nothing about iconicity. But suppose, in addition, that what is formally more central is also more central in meaning. So, if *A* stems are derived from *B* stems, *B* is semantically more central than *A*, and if *C* is marked by terminations, *C* is semantically peripheral. In that case, what we are saying is that, in our expectations at least, an alternation should be conditioned typically by features that are in both respects more central. For example, in a language like Italian, we would not be surprised if an alternation in the marking of Person and Number, which are peripheral categories, were to be conditioned by the class of the lexeme or by Tense. But we would not expect that the marking of Tenses should vary according to the Person and Number. Still less would we expect a lexical formative, like *-eggi-* in *verdeggiano*, to vary in the light of any inflectional category. For they are all both semantically and formally peripheral to it.

These have been phrased as expectations only; it is therefore important that we should look at one fairly complex system to see how far they are borne out. In the Verb in Latin, the category which is at least formally most central is that of Aspect. For example, in *monueram* 'I had advised', Perfect Aspect (with a meaning in this form like that of the English Auxiliary HAVE) has as its main exponent a suffix *-«-*, which is added directly to the root *mon-*. This is the normal formation for the inflectional class that is traditionally called the 2nd Conjugation. But the Perfect stem varies strikingly from one lexeme to another. In Verbs like *AMO* 'love', the root is followed by a vowel plus [w]:

[am]- → [am-a:-w] –

(writ ten *amav-*). That is the normal pattern in the regular (ist) Conjugation. In many irregular Verbs, the stem is derived by suffixing *-s*:

man- → man-s-

(*MANEO* 'remain'); in others by partial reduplication:

mord- → mo-mord-

(*MOFDEO* 'bite'); in others by a lengthening of the root vowel:

[wen]- → [we:n]-

(*VENIO* 'come'), and so on. Thus, for the most central of the inflectional categories, we find lexical conditioning in plenty. But, in line with our expectations, we do not find morphological conditioning. In each paradigm, the Perfect stem is constant; so too the contrasting (and more regular) Non-Perfect.

The next most central categories are those of Tense and Mood. Here too we find lexical conditioning: note therefore that, as in the case of morphosyntactic categories in chapter 9, we cannot limit the factors affecting alternations to features which are realised adjacently. But the classes involved are now very broad. For example, in *ama bis* you will love the Future Indicative is marked by *-bi-* that is the pattern found throughout the traditional 1st and 2nd Conjugations. In *venie is* 'you will come' it is marked by *-e:-*, and that is found throughout the remainder. At the same time, the Tense and Mood markers vary, as we might expect, with Aspect. In *ama bis* 'you will love', *-bi-* is, in addition, a subsidiary exponent of Non-Perfect. The corresponding Perfect is *ama veris* 'you



will have loved', with (arguably) a sequence of formatives *am-ai-[w]-er-i-s*. Similarly for the Past Indicative. In the Non-Perfect *amaibais* 'you were loving', it is marked by *-ba-*; this suffix is found in every Verb except the most irregular. But it is found only in Non-Perfects: in the corresponding Perfect, *amaiverais* 'you had loved', there is again a form without *b* (arguably *am-ai-[w]-er-ai-s*). Once more, this is the kind of conditioning that does not surprise us, Aspect being more central.

Is there also conditioning by categories that are more peripheral? The answer is, at one point, Yes: whereas in a Future Indicative like *venies* 'you will come' the Tense and Mood are generally marked by *-ei-*, in the 1st Singular, and only in the 1st Singular, they are marked instead by *-ai-*. Thus *veniam* (from *-a:-m* by a morphophonemic rule of vowel shortening) I will come. This exception reminds us that we are dealing with tendencies, not laws. But it is very much an exception. It affects only the smaller (3rd and 4th) Conjugations: in a regular Verb like AMO 'love' the suffix, as we have seen, is different. It is, moreover, the only case in which our expectations are not satisfied. Morphophonemics apart, the Tense and Mood stems do not vary otherwise except with respect to lexical classes and the more central category of Aspect.

Person, Number and Voice are then marked – in part cumulatively, in part separately – in the termination. For example, in *amaibaitur* '[he or she] was being loved' the termination *-tur* has a *-t-*, marking 3rd Singular, followed by *-wr*, which in 3rd Persons Non-Perfect is a separate exponent of Passive. Here there is little lexical conditioning; that is again what might be expected, for categories that are semantically peripheral and formally so far removed from the root. But there is rather more conditioning by Aspect, Tense and Mood. In most of the paradigm, the 1st Singular is marked by *-m* in the Active and *-r* (arguably from basic *ra-r*) in the Passive: thus *amaibam* 'I was loving', *amaibar* 'I v as being loved'. But in the Present Indicative, in particular, it is marked in the Active by *-o*: and in the Passive by *-or* (more convincingly from basic *-o:-r*). In the terms in which we spoke in chapter 9, *-o*: in a form like *amo*: 'I love': is the main exponent of 1st Singular, but also, given that this rule would be the exception, a subsidiary exponent of Tense and Mood. First Singular has yet another marker in *amaivi*: 'I have loved': here the termination, *-i-*, is limited to forms that are both Present Indicative and Perfect.

In summary, then, the pattern is (with one exception) as we expected. The subsidiary marking of categories extends outwards from the formally central to the formally peripheral: Aspect conditions Tense and Mood, all three partly condition Person and Number. With the single exception, it does not extend inwards from the peripheral to the central. For any reader who has learned Latin by the traditional method, it will be clear that this largely explains the way that paradigms are set out. No one would dream of starting from the peripheral categories – of listing first, say, all 1st Singulars, then all 2nd Singulars, and so on. Instead one begins with those that are more central, listing first all forms of the Present Indicative Non-Perfect; then other Indicatives; then the Subjunctives; then similarly for the Perfects.

We have again put this without explicit reference to meaning. But the pattern we have described is also, if we leave aside the formally peripheral marking of the Passive Voice, iconic. So, what is semantically more central tends to condition the marking of what is semantically less central, not vice versa.

## REFERENCES

1. Bauer, Morphology, Introducing Linguistic Morphology, Edinburgh, University Press, 1988.
2. Bozzone Costa R., Viaggio nell' italiano, Torino, 1995.
3. Danesi M., Complete Italian Grammar Review, Barron's Foreign Language Guides, USA, 2006.
4. Dardano M., Trifone P., La lingua italiana, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1985.
5. Fisiak J., Historical Morphology, The Hague, Mouton, 1980.
6. Lepschy G. C., Lepschy A. L., La lingua italiana, Milano, Bompiani, 1981.
7. Scalise, Generative Morphology, Foris, 1984.
8. Sobrero A. A. Introduzione all' italiano contemporaneo, vol. 1 Le strutture, 1993

Ֆ. ՅՈՎԴԱՆՆԻՍՅԱՆ

### ՄԻՋՈՒԿԱՅԻՆ ԵՎ ԵԶՐԱՅԻՆ ԲԵՐԱԿԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԿԱՐԳԵՐՆԵ ԻՏԱԼԵՐԵՆՈՒՄ ԵՎ ԱՆԳԼԵՐԵՆՈՒՄ

Սույն հոդվածը նվիրված է իտալերենի և անգլերենի գոյականի և բայի բերականական կարգերի ձևաբանական և իմաստագործառական առանձնահատկությունների վերհանմանը: Հոդվածում հեղինակը մանրագին քննությամբ փորձում է բացահայտել բերականական կարգերի իմաստագործառական առանձնահատկություններից մեկը՝ պարտադիր լինելու հատկանիշը: Կարգը պարտադիր է, եթե այդ դասի յուրաքանչյուր բառ արտահայտում է այդ կարգի որոշակի նշանակություն: Օրինակ հոդվածում հեղինակը եզրակացնում է, որ իտալերենում և անգլերենում պարտադիր բերականական կարգերին են դասվում բայի ժամանակի և գոյականի թվի բերականական կարգերը:

Փ. ՕԳԱՆԵՅԱՆ

### ЯДЕРНЫЕ И ПЕРИФЕРИЙНЫЕ КАТЕГОРИИ В ИТАЛЬЯНСКОМ И АНГЛИЙСКОМ

В разных языках число грамматических категорий различно; существуют языки с очень развитой «грамматической анкетой», в других языках набор грамматических категорий весьма ограничен (языки, полностью лишенные грамматических значений, все же не засвидетельствованы).

Далеко не все языковые категории могут считаться грамматическими. Для этого необходимо, чтобы категория удовлетворяла второму свойству, то есть свойству обязательности (в современной лингвистике это утверждение получило широкое признание, главным образом, после работ Р. Якобсона, но подобные идеи высказывались и ранее). Категория является обязательной (для некоторого класса слов), если всякое слово из этого класса выражает какое-либо значение данной категории. Так, в итальянском и английском языках обязательной являются, например, категория времени глагола и грамматическая категория числа существительного. Например, всякая форма глагола в тексте выражает одно из значений этой категории (либо прошедшее, либо настоящее, либо будущее время), и не бывает такой личной формы глагола, о которой можно было бы сказать, что она «никакого времени», то есть не охарактеризована по времени в грамматическом отношении.