

ITALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL VERBS, A FINE GRAINED ANALYSIS OF THE VP

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INTRODUCTION

Although this topic has been largely studied in the literature, none of the approaches so far proposed is able to account entirely for their particular behaviour. Psych-v pose a serious problem for all those linking theories which predict a (strong) relationship between thematic position and structural position (as the UTAH by Baker (1988)) in that the Experiencer (Exp) θ -role does not always occupy the same structural position within the sentence. In fact, there are Subject Exp verbs and Object Exp verbs class (Obj-Exp) (Pesetsky 1995). Moreover, following Belletti and Rizzi (1988) (B&R), Italian Obj-Exp has been further split in two subclasses depending on the Case assigned to the Exp (dative or accusative) namely the *piacere* ‘please’ and the *preoccupare* ‘worry’ classes. B&R further analyze these latter classes as unaccusatives, selecting two internal arguments and a non-thematic subject.

GOAL OF THE WORK

Since the unaccusative analysis proposed by B&R failed in accounting some aspects of the Italian psych-v (for instance, *preoccupare* psych-v select *avere* ‘have’ as their auxiliary and not *essere* ‘be’ as they should), the main aim of my work has been to try to draw a rather different approach which can account completely for the psych-v special behaviour. Contrary to many of the approaches so far assumed, I postulate that some aspects of the semantics of the verbal lexeme might be compositionally built up by the syntax. Hence, I propose a fine-grained analysis of the VP in order to account for a variety of data not yet or poorly explained so far in the literature.

BRIEF LIST OF THE DATA

As already mentioned I observed that, following the B&R analysis, many linguistic facts concerning *preoccupare* psych-v would remain unpredicted. Briefly, following their analysis, we could not explain why: not all the *preoccupare* psych-v can nominalize (as a class they all should be able to); not all of them have the present participle derivation (*preoccupante* exists whereas *inferocente* not); some of them can passivize (which should be impossible being them unaccusatives); they select *avere* ‘have’ as their auxiliary and not *essere* ‘be’ which is the unaccusative verbs auxiliary; some of them can be used intransitively, with a *pro* object (Rizzi 1986); why with some of them the *ne*-extraction (Belletti and Rizzi 1981) seems to be possible.

SKETCHING THE SOLUTION

Following ideas of Landau (2010), Arad (2000), and Alexiadou (2001) I claim psych-v have a special syntactic structure which resemble the transitive verbs one but with a more fine-grained structure. Moreover, I argue that psych-v are not merged in the structure as verbs but they become so through a syntactic derivation which is self-evident with some psych-v (*impaurire* ‘frighten’ is formed by *in* ‘in’ and *paura* ‘scare’) though not always. In fact, with other psych-v this is derivation is not immediately visible but still present (*allarmare* ‘alarm’ = *mettere* ‘put’ *in allarme* ‘allarme’). I further claim that locative prepositions play an important role in the psych-v derivation in that almost all psych verbs can be semantically decomposed as displacement of the Experiencer inside a mental state or vice-versa (*impensierire* ‘make sb. worry’ = Exp *in pensiero* ‘worry’; *preoccupare* ‘worry’ = *preoccupazione* ‘anxiety’ *in* Exp) caused by a third element (Causer or Stimulus). In my approach this semantic distinction is mapped into the syntax. The *emotion* (L°) is first merged with either the Causer or the Stimulus (L') and then select a PP which contains the Exp: $LP[PP[in\ Exp] L'[emotion]\ Causer/Stimulus]$. In order to become a psych-v, the state of mind (*paura* ‘scare’ for instance) needs to move up incorporating the locative preposition (which can be either overt or not) and a verbalizing morpheme +V which is Be° (head of BeP which is just a functional phrase). Following a fine-grained approach of the VP, all of the problematic data cited in the preceding section can be predicted.

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