

# **Finiteness and suppletion: evidence from Romance**

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- morphological splits
  - external vs internal
  - tense-based: *go* vs *went*
- morphomic
  - finite internal: N and 1pl  $\neq$  2pl
  - bridging finite and non-finite – French *savoir*
- two verbs vs one
  - Catalan *anar*
  - Italian *gire* and *andare*
- finiteness
  - the case of Lollovese
  - PYTA revisited
  - pseudo-coordination
  - insubordination
- conclusions

# Morphological splits

- Corbett (2022) distinguishes internal splits which are only relevant inside the paradigm of a given lexical item and external splits in which the realization of the lexeme varies according to the syntactic context.
- Internal may be motivated or non-motivated or (meta)morphomic = ‘covert’ vs ‘overt’ in the terminology of Smith (2013)
- Corbett’s opening example of an internal split is Italian *andare*:
  - *va/andava in biblioteca* ‘(s)he goes/went to the library’
  - *va/andava leggendo* ‘(she) is/was reading’
  - *va/andava letto* ‘it has/had to be read’

- *went* as a case of tense motivated suppletion
  - and compare tense related generalization in *have went* ('an American usage problem' – Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Kostadinova 2015: 293)
1. Some of my students also say, and write, 'I **have went**.' (62-year-old American female English professor)
  2. I hear people say **have went**, not have gone (64-year-old American female teacher)
  3. I would probably be more likely to say, 'I could **have went** to the party. . .' (27-year-old American female teacher)
  4. Where I live, people will say, 'I could **have went** to that party.' (55-year-old American female teacher)

# *went* and past

- *went* as both past tense and past participle can be defined as a natural class in neo-Reichenbachian terms:  
past tense = utterance/speech time > situation/event time  
past part = topic/reference time > situation/event time
- and hence the generalization of *went* is motivated in morphosemantic terms

# Suppletion and morphological motivation

“It is not just that lexical suppletion *may* assume morphomic patterns of distribution in Romance: apparently it *must*. ... lexical suppletion will replicate whatever patterns of allomorphy are to hand, regardless of whether their paradigmatic distribution 'makes sense' in terms of any possible extramorphological motivation. There is practically no non-morphomic lexical suppletion in most Romance languages because of the rarity of non-morphomic patterns of root allomorphy.”

[Maiden 2018: Chap. 11]

# Examples of internal and external splits

Catalan has an external split between lexical and auxiliary uses of *anar* ‘go’ – and note overabundance in the auxiliary use

	Catalan	
	lexical	auxiliary
<b>1sg</b>	vaig	vaig ~ vàreig
<b>2sg</b>	vas	vas ~ vares
<b>3sg</b>	vai	vai
<b>1pl</b>	anem	vam ~ vem ~ vàrem
<b>2pl</b>	aneu	vau ~ veu ~ vàreu
<b>3pl</b>	van	van ~ vàren

# Examples of internal and external splits

Guardiolo, like Catalan and earlier Occitan, shows an external split between main verb and auxiliary use and note N-morphome despite different etymologies.

	Guardiolo		Calabrese
	lexical	auxiliary	lexical
1sg	vau	vau	vaju
2sg	vas	vas	va
3sg	vai	vai	va
1pl	anèm	vam	jamo
2pl	anatz	vatz	jati
3pl	van	van	vannu



# 1PL ≠ 2PL

	Cairo Montenotte (Mair Parry)	Castelvecchio di Rocca Barbena (Fiorenzo Toso)	Portuguese
<b>1SG</b>	vag	vagu	vou
<b>2SG</b>	vòi	vai	vais
<b>3SG</b>	va	va	vai
<b>1PL</b>	induma	vamu	vamos/imos
<b>2PL</b>	vèi	ai	ides
<b>3PL</b>	van	van	vão

# Morphomes and the concept of paradigm

How to represent a paradigm. Three options:

- a set of cells defined in terms of intersective morphosemantic features (Paradigm Function Morphology)
- a list of forms with shared properties (Andersen and Copenhagen functionalism) – e.g. passives, futures, etc
- simply deny its existence! (Distributed Morphology, Nanosyntax)

“Morphological generalizations are accounted for in terms of syntactic operations and principles. There is no morphological component in Universal Grammar (UG), nor are there post-syntactic morphological operations.” [Collins & Kayne 2023:2]

# (Trans)derivationality and the morphome

- Derivational models like Distributed Morphology (DM) do not easily accommodate transderivational effects of the kind evidenced by morphomic patterning.
- Suppletion respects morphomic patterns and consequently is more naturally modelled by a non-derivational, paradigm-based approach.

# The case of *gire* and *andare*

- Rohlfs (2021:544-5) distinguishes *vado:andiamo* and *vado:imo* systems, thereby implying two diachronic trajectories, one starting with Latin *ire* and the other with *ambulare/additare*
- but at the time of Dante the verbs co-exist and seem synonymous (or overabundant??):

*Parte **sen giva**, e io retro li **andava**,*

*lo duca*

[Inf XXIX: 16-17]

“Meanwhile my guide had moved ahead; I went behind him”

*ne la prima dico la cagione per che non mi tengo di **gire**  
presso di questa donna; ne la seconda dico quello che mi  
diviene per **andare** presso di lei* [Vita nuova XV,7]

“in the first I explain why I do not keep myself from seeking this lady's company; in the second I tell what happens to me when I go near her”

# French *savoir*

- different stems: *sai-*, *sav-*, *sach-*, *su-*
- doesn't follow the N-morphome; instead sing vs plur:  
*sais, sais, sait, savons, savez, savent*
- and one stem that crosses the finite non-finite boundary:
  - subjunctive: *sache, sachions*, etc
  - imperative: *sache, sachons, sachez*
  - gerund: *sachant*
- on one account these are all non-finite
- Michael Starke's nanosyntactic account covers the finite forms but has no explanation for the gerund  
[[https://michal.starke.ch/talks/2020-11\\_nels/nels\\_starke.mp4](https://michal.starke.ch/talks/2020-11_nels/nels_starke.mp4)]

# Morphemes in Sardinian

1sg	2sg	3sg	1pl	2pl	3pl	
bèenzo	bénis	bénit	benímos	benídes	bénin	<b>pres ind</b>
bèenza	bèenzas	bèenzat	benzémus	benzèdas	bèenzan	<b>pres subj</b>
bándu	bándas	bándada	andáus	andáis	bandanta	<b>pres ind</b>

L- and N-morphemes for Logudorese *benner* ‘come’ and Campidanese *andái* ‘go’ [Loporcaro 2013 (simplified!)]

# Lollovese (Pisano 2021)

	Logudorese	Lollovese
1 SING	ando	bajo
2 SING	andas	bas
3 SING	andat	ba
1 PLUR	andamus	bamus
2 PLUR	andades	badzes
3 PLUR	andant	ban
INFINITO	andai	aḡḡáre
GERUNDIO	andando	aḡḡáḡḡe
PART PASSATO	andau	aḡḡáu

# Lollovese (Pisano 2021)

	pres ind	pres subj	imper	impf ind
1 SING	bajo	bèjepo		baíapo
2 SING	bas	bèjes	bae	baías
3 SING	ba	bèjet		baíat
1 PLUR	bámus	bèjemus	bámus	baíamus
2 PLUR	badzes	bèjedzis	badze	baíadzis
3 PLUR	ban	bèjen		baían
INFINITIVE	aηháre			
GERUNDIO	aηháηηe			
PAST PART.	aηháu			



# (non-)finiteness

- Is there a generalization that accommodates the Lollovese split?
- Traditional definitions in terms of p/n marking but cf inflected infinitives, gerunds and participles

- Alternative view:

“Prototypical finite verbs are the heads of prototypically finite clauses; prototypically finite clauses are nondependent, nonmodal, nonnegative, assertive.”

[Lowe 2019: 311]

- This definition implies:
  - that finite verb forms share a core property
  - by contrast non-finite forms do not constitute a natural class

# Spanish 'Perfecto y tiempos afines' – PYTA

	pres ind	preterite	past subj	impf ind
1 SING	voy	fui	fue-ra/se	iba
2 SING	vas	fuiste	fue-ras/ses	ibas
3 SING	va	fue	fue-ra/se	iba
1 PLUR	vamos	fuimos	fue-ramos/semos	ibamus
2 PLUR	vais	fuisteis	fue-raís/seis	ibais
3 PLUR	van	fueron	fue-ran/sen	iban
INFINITIVE	ir			
GERUNDIO	yendo			
PAST PART.	ido			

“One might think that the ‘affinity’ resides in some meaning common and unique to those four tense-forms. In fact, the preterite expresses exclusively past time, indicative mood and perfective aspect, while the subjunctives are, by definition, not indicative and not exclusively ‘past’ ... While perfective aspect is inherent in the preterite, the subjunctives are aspectually ‘neutral’ ... There appears, in fact, to be no special functional affinity between ‘perfecto’ and alleged ‘tiempos afines’.”

[Maiden 2001: 441]

# PYTA: a derivational account

- |       |                                 |                                     |
|-------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| /ba-/ | → v-<motion>, <in direction of> | / _ T / $\phi$ -[present]           |
| /fw-/ | → Aux/v                         | / _ T / $\phi$ -[past perfect]      |
|       |                                 | / _ T / $\phi$ -[past imperf, subj] |
| /i-/  | → v-<motion>, <in direction of> | (elsewhere)                         |

‘We assume that a decomposition of the tense features makes it possible to specify a common feature (e.g. [R\_S] reference time lies before speech time).’

[Pomino & Remberger 2019: 493, n.55]

# The place of the subjunctive

- The case of the PYTA also raises the question of where the subjunctive fits in the broader finiteness picture.
- On the one hand it has person, number and tense options like traditional finite forms.
- On the other it is restricted to embedded and hence non-prototypical contexts (imperatives aside).
- In this respect it shares properties with inflected infinitives, gerunds and participles.

# Pseudo-coordination

Four patterns attested in southern Italian dialects with the meanings ‘I go to call, I will call’:

- *vado a chiamare* (with *a* < lat. AD ‘a’)
- *vado chiamo*
- *vado e chiamo*
- *vado a chiamo* (with *a* < lat. AC ‘e’)

[Ledgeway 2021]

An instance of finite becoming non-finite and part of a monoclausal complex predicate but still respecting paradigm-based patterns of morphomicity and defectivity.

# Pseudo-coordination (Cruschina 2022)

	<i>jiri + pigliari</i> Mussomeli, Sicily	<i>jiri + perdere</i> Lecce	<i>sta + perdere</i> Lecce
1 sg	‘vajʊ a p’pijʊ	va p’perdu	sta p’perdu
2sg	‘va a p’pijɪ	va p’perdi	sta p’perdi
3sg	‘va a p’pijja	va p’perde	sta p’perde
1pl	*‘jamʊ a ppij’jamʊ	ʃa pper’dimu	sta pper’dimu
2pl	*‘jɪɪ a ppij’jati	ʃa pper’diti	sta pper’diti
3pl	vannʊ a p’pijjanʊ	va p’perɖenu	sta p’perɖenu

# Pseudo-coordination in the Aeolian islands

ballare.FUT			
1sg	vaju	a	bballu
2sg	va	a	bballi
3sg	vace	a	bballa
1pl	jamu	a	*bballamu
2pl	ite	a	*bballate
3pl	vannu	a	bballanu

N-morphome and defective in the first and second person plural. The construction is only used in the present tense; other tenses require *andare a* INF (Cardullo 2022).



# Autonomous non-finite forms: historic infinitives

Qui	mori	timore	nisi	ego
who	die.INF	fear.ABL	unless	I.NOM

‘Who was dying from fear except me?’ (Petronius *Satyricon* 62)

Et Jalibert de répliquer par un vulgaire – ‘Sans blague?’

‘And Jalibert replied with a crude “No kidding?”’

Y todos nosotros a reirnos

‘And we all laughed’

[Examples from Vincent 2024]

# Autonomous non-finite forms: Sardinian gerunds

Et ego deivili 1 bacca de mortu a boluntate de pare  
**indulgendemi** s'ateru

‘And I gave him a slaughtered cow, by mutual agreement, and  
he forgave me the rest (of the debt)’

[Condaghe di San Nicola di Trulli, 111 (12<sup>th</sup> cent)]

Is nimigus atachendi e nosu arresistendi

‘The enemy attacked and we resisted’ [Lepori 2001: 123]

Ero distrutto e mia zia attaccandomi un bottone e io morendo  
di sonno: non ce la facevo più!

‘I was knackered and my aunt rattling on and me dying to sleep’  
[Sardinian regional Italian (spontaneous speech)]

[Examples courtesy of Roberta Caddeo; see Caddeo 2025]

# Conclusions

- finiteness is scalar rather than a binary split
- changes may move in both directions
- outcomes of changes often show transderivational patterns and hence challenge derivational models of morphosyntax
- as always, Romance data are significant for the broader typological and theoretical picture

If you have been ...  
**thanks for listening!**

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