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Continuity and variation in Italian  
deadjectival verb formation:  
A diachronic corpus-based analysis

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# Introduction

Ø Corpus based analysis of Italian verbs formed from the highest-frequency adjectives

Ø Wide diachronic perspective, covering the whole history of the language (12<sup>th</sup> c. - first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> c.)

Development of deadjectival verb formation (coining and obsolescence)

Ø Focus on the encoding of the distinction between telic and atelic values

Ø Adoption of a verb-centred perspective, which enables us to reflect on the contribution of the different derivational patterns (suffixation, conversion, parasynthesis) to the purpose of coining verbs and on the relationship of the derivational patterns to the existing lexicon, ultimately adopting the speaker's perspective, who has to make a choice among a number of options, both when coining and diffusing a verb in usage

# Introduction

- Ø Overlap of the actional values expressed by deadjectival verbs formed by different derivational patterns: **telic** verbs can be formed by the suffixes *-izzare* and *-ificare*, by parasynthesis and by conversion; **atelic** verbs can be formed with the suffix *-eggiare* or by conversion.
- Ø Abundance of verbs formed from a same adjective in prior stages of the language, which decreases over time; nonetheless: availability to date of the various verbalizing patterns, i.e., no derivational pattern has exhausted its productivity.

# Introduction

Ø Malkiel, Yakov. 1941. Atristar-entristecer: adjectival verbs in Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan

Ø Aronoff, Mark. 2016. Competition and the lexicon

Ø Aronoff, Mark. 2019. Competitors and alternants in linguistic morphology

Ø Biological and evolutionary studies by Charles Darwin and Georgy Frantsevitch Gause

Ø Girard, Gabriel. 1718. La justesse de la langue françoise ou les différentes significations des mots qui passent pour synonymes

Ø

Ø “Blocking” Aronoff (1976), Rainer (1988, 2012)

Synonymy and same distribution across contexts are the key factors determining competition among derivational patterns in the linguistic ecosystem

# Introduction

∅ **Blocking** is the morphological phenomenon in which a possible form for a word cannot surface because it is "blocked" by another form whose features are the most appropriate to the surface form's environment.

"non-occurrence of one form due to the simple existence of another"

Inflection: plural marker in English s or es (e.g. dog and dogs or wish and wishes). This plural marker is not, however, acceptable on the word child (as in \*childs), because it is "blocked" by the presence of the competing form children, which in this case inherits features from an older morphological process.

Blocking may also prevent the formation of words with existing synonyms, particularly if the blocked form is morphologically complex and the existing synonym is morphologically simple, e.g. \*stealer which is blocked by the existing simple form thief.

Paradigmatic point of view: semantic and syntactic features create slots or cells in which items can appear. Blocking happens when one cell is engaged by one

# Introduction

## **Bergson, Henri. 1907. *L'évolution créatrice***

- ∅ overcomes the opposition between mechanism and finalism delineating the perspective of non-teleological creation
- ∅ elaborates a conception of duration and consciousness of time that allows us to conceive change as a collective dimension resulting from individual human behavior
- ∅ highlights the notion of consciousness as both an individual and a social outcome related to the ideas of persistence and change
- ∅ Language is the historical result of a collective action that starts from individual behavior with consequences for the system without an awareness on the part of individuals of the complex dynamics of the whole linguistic system

# Outline

Ø Overview of the different derivational patterns employed in deadjectival verb formation in Italian

Ø Data collection

Ø Analysis

Ø Summary

Deadjectival verbs in Italian:  
derivational and semantic patterns



# Suffixed verbs

∅ The verbalising suffixes that have been productively employed throughout all history of the language:

§ **-izzare**, e.g., *criminale* 'criminal' → *criminalizzare* 'criminalise'

§ **-eggiare**, e.g., *scarso* 'scarce' → *scarseggiare* 'be scarce'

§ **-ificare**: e.g., *beato* 'blessed' → *beatificare* 'beatify';

∅ Suffixes *-izzare* and *-eggiare* go back to the same Greek etymon: *-ιζειν*.

The form *-izzare* comes to the Romance languages through learned borrowings from Latin, while the suffix *-eggiare* goes back to the vernacular Latin form *-idiare*, manifesting clear Romance phonetics.

∅ The suffix *-ificare* results from Latin compound verbs like *certificare* (*certum facere*) and from other verbs derived either from nouns ending in *-fex* or from adjectives ending in *-ficus*.

# Converted verbs

∅ Conversion can be defined as “[...] a word-formation process where the form of the converted item does not change, while its inflectional potential, its syntactic function and its meaning do, such that the item displays inflectional, syntactic and semantic properties of a new word class.” (Valera 2015: 322)

∅

§ *fermo* ‘still’ → *fermare* ‘to stop’ (-are class: default class)

§ *svelto* ‘quick’ → *sveltire* ‘make quicker’ (-ire class: currently unproductive class)

# Parasynthetic verbs

∅ Simultaneous application of two derivational means, which results in the coinage of prefixed verbs directly derived from adjectives, e.g.,

§ *dolce* 'sweet' → *addolcire* 'to sweeten'

§ *grasso* 'fat' → *ingrassare* intr. 'to gain weight', tr. 'to fatten'

§ *bianco* 'white' → *sbiancare* tr. 'to whiten, bleach' intr. 'to turn white'

-

∅

∅ productivity of the prefixes (*ad-*, *in-*, *s-*) limited to this pattern

∅ specialisation of these prefixes to only express a change of state

∅ possibility to also form verbs belonging to the non-default, *-ire* inflectional class.

# Semantic features

∅ The vast majority of deadjectival verbs refers to a telic situation, i.e., a situation that is goal-oriented (denotes a change of state)

∅ Fewer verbs refer to an atelic situation, denoting states or activities.

The subject designates an entity that manifests/possesses, to varying degrees and/or at intervals in time, the property in question

∅ The bases are mainly adjectives referring to human attitudes or colours, e.g.,

§ *curioso* 'curious' → *curiosare* 'browse, snoop around'

§ *verde* 'green' → *verdeggiare* 'be/become green'

# Semantic features

- - **change-of-state verbs**
    - causative
      - ‘make become (more) Adj’
      - 
      - *velocizzare* ‘speed (sth.) up’
      - *fluidificare* ‘fluidify (sth.)’
      - 
      - *stancare* ‘tire’
    - converted
      - *scurire* ‘darken (sth.)’
      - 
      - *allargare* ‘broaden (sth.)’
    - parasyntet
      - inchoative
        - ‘become (more) Adj’
        - 
        - *velocizzarsi* ‘speed up’
        - *fluidificarsi* ‘fluidify’
        - 
        - *stancarsi*
        - ‘get tired’, *tire o.s. out*
        - *scurirsi*
        - ‘darken’
        - 
        - *allargarsi* ‘broaden’
        - *impazzire* ‘go crazy’
      - **state or activity verbs**
        - 
        - ‘be [appear, tend to, etc.] more or less [a little, little, quite, rather, often, etc.] Adj’
        - 
        - *folleggiare*
        - ‘frolic, goof around’
        - 
        - *pazientare*
        - ‘be patient’, ‘wait patiently’
        - *curiosare*
        - ‘browse, snoop around’
        - 
        - †*inristare*
        - ‘be sad’

# Data collection

# The corpus

Ø 710 Italian verbs derived from a sample of the 845 highest-frequency adjectives

Ø

Ø The lexicographic sources:

§ *Basic Vocabulary of the Italian language* (De Mauro 1980)

§ *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* Historical Dictionary (Battaglia 1961–2009)

# The corpus

Verbs were provided with information about:

∅ date of first attestation

∅ etymology: verbs of Italian formation, those of direct or indirect Latin inheritance, and calques and borrowings from other languages

∅ derivational patterns: suffixes, inflectional classes, combination of prefixes and inflectional classes within parasynthetic patterns

∅ usage labels, as reported by the GRADIT dictionary, distinguishing in particular between obsolete and current usage



# Chronological subdivision for verb classification

- 1) From the beginning of the 13th century to 1375**
- 2) From 1376 to 1532**
- 3) From 1533 to 1691**
- 4) From 1692 to 1840**
- 5) From 1841 to 1947**
- 6) From 1948 to 2010**

# Chronological subdivision for verb classification

**1) From the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century to 1375:** from the beginning of literature (and, more generally, of vernacular writing) in Tuscany until the year of Boccaccio's death and the appointment of Coluccio Salutati as Chancellor of Florence; the same end date delimits the OVI - TLIO text collection.

1)

**2) From 1376 to 1532:** this period includes Humanism and the Renaissance, between the development of *fiorentino "argenteo"* ("silver" Florentine) and the choice of *fiorentino "aureo"* ("golden" Florentine) as the literary standard, as theorized by Pietro Bembo in *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525). This period ends in the year in which the third edition of *Orlando Furioso* was published, the actualization of Bembo's theorizing in poetry.

**3) From 1533 to 1691:** late Renaissance/ Mannerism and Baroque. This period ends in the year in which the third edition of *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* was published (1691), one year after the foundation of the *Arcadia* (1690).

# Chronological subdivision for verb classification

**4) From 1692 to 1840:** this period includes the Arcadia, the Enlightenment and Romanticism. This is the age in which Modern Italian was born. This period ends with the final edition of *I promessi sposi*, which is based, as is well known, on spoken Florentine. This book acted, in many respects, as a linguistic model in post-unification Italy.

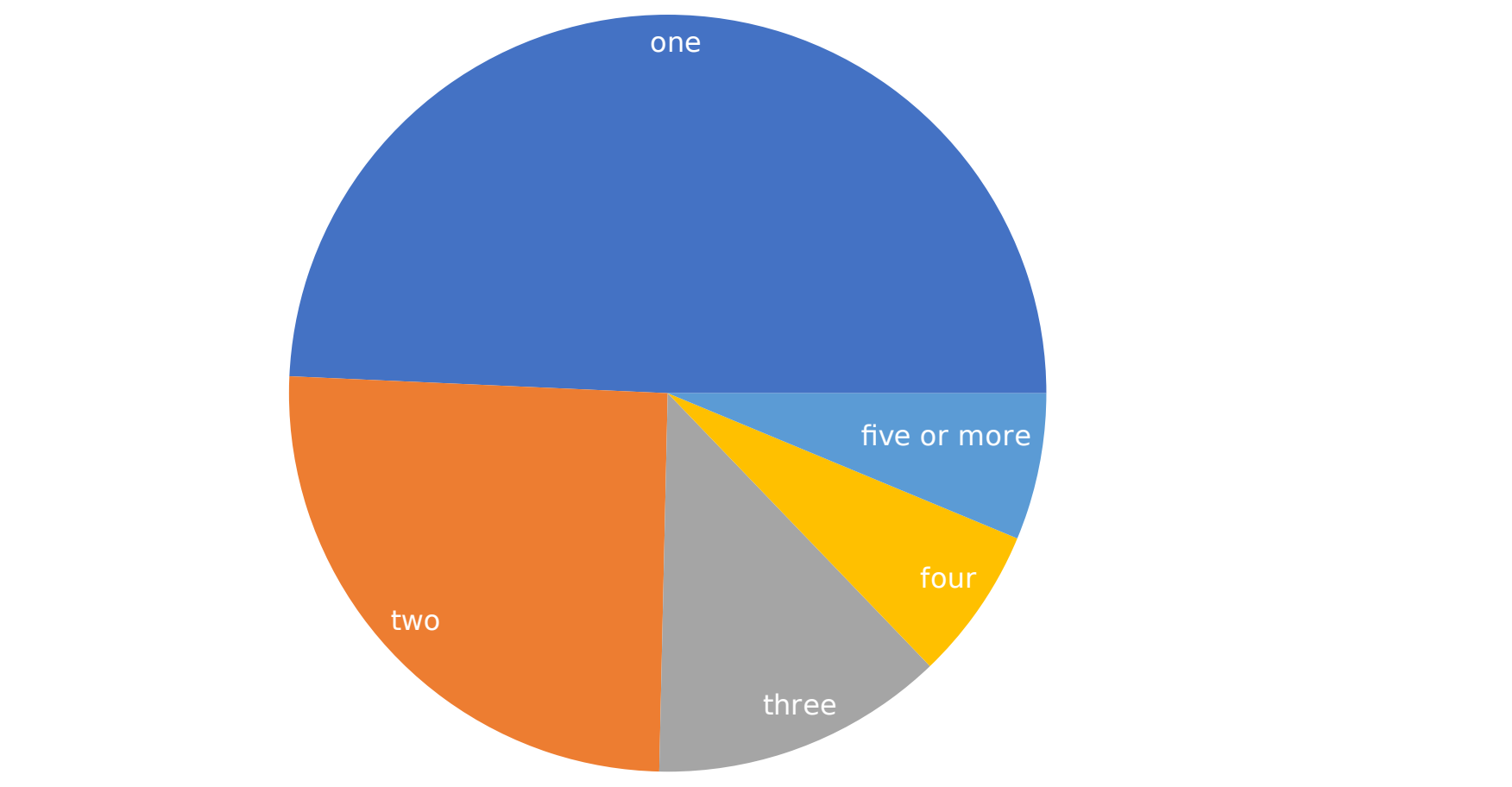
**5) From 1841 to 1947:** This is the period of the Risorgimento, of Italian unification and of the two world wars, up until the advent of the Italian Republic and the proclamation of the Constitution.

**6) From 1948 to 2010:** the Republican period, characterised by massive public schooling, the spread of media, the spread in spoken use of the Italian language that has surpassed that of dialects.

# Analysis

# Verbal derivatives per adjective

∅



# Adjectives as bases for multiple verbs

∅ **rosso** 'red'

→ *rosseggiare*

→ *rossare* (obs) – inc.

→ *arrossare* – caus.

→ *arrossire* – inc.

→ *inrossare* (obs) – caus.

→ *inrossire* (obs) – inc.

∅ **doppio** 'double'

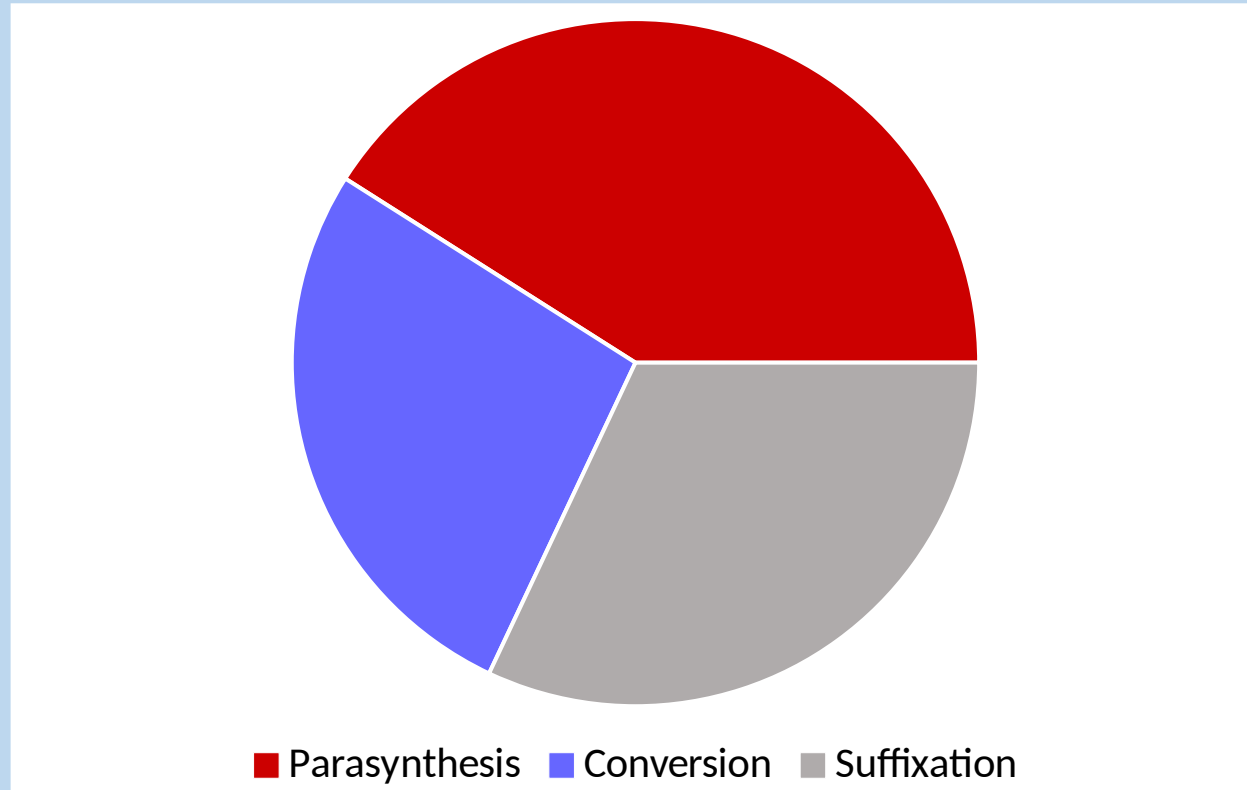
→ *doppieggiare*

→ *doppiare* (com, term)

→ *indoppiare* (obs)

# Composition of the corpus

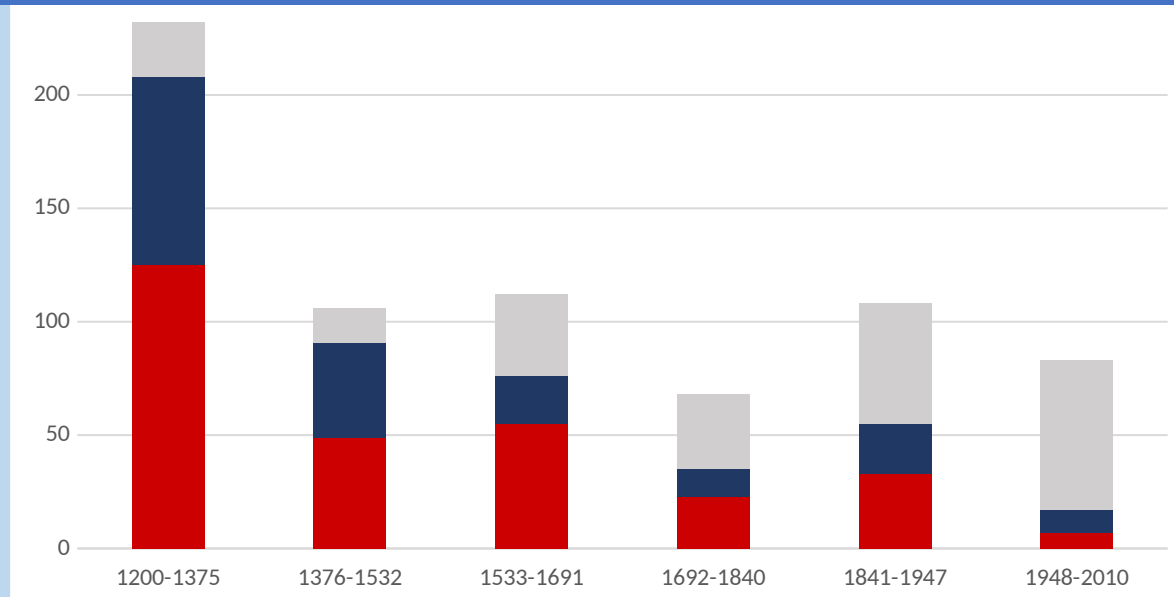
∅



# Distribution over time of deadjectival verbs

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• Period	• 1200-1375	• 1376-1532	• 1533-1691	• 1692-1840	• 1841-1947	• 1948-2010	• Overall
• Deriv. Pattern							
• Suffixed	• 10%	• 14%	• 46%	• <b>49%</b>	• <b>49%</b>	• <b>80%</b>	• 32%
• Converted	• 36%	• 40%	• 19%	• 18%	• 20%	• 12%	• 27%
• Parasyntetic	• <b>54%</b>	• <b>46%</b>	• <b>50%</b>	• 34%	• 30%	• 8%	• 41%
• Total	• 33%	• 15%	• 16%	• 10%	• 15%	• 12%	• 100%



- Suffixed
- Converted
- Parasyntetic



# Deadjectival vs denominal verb formation

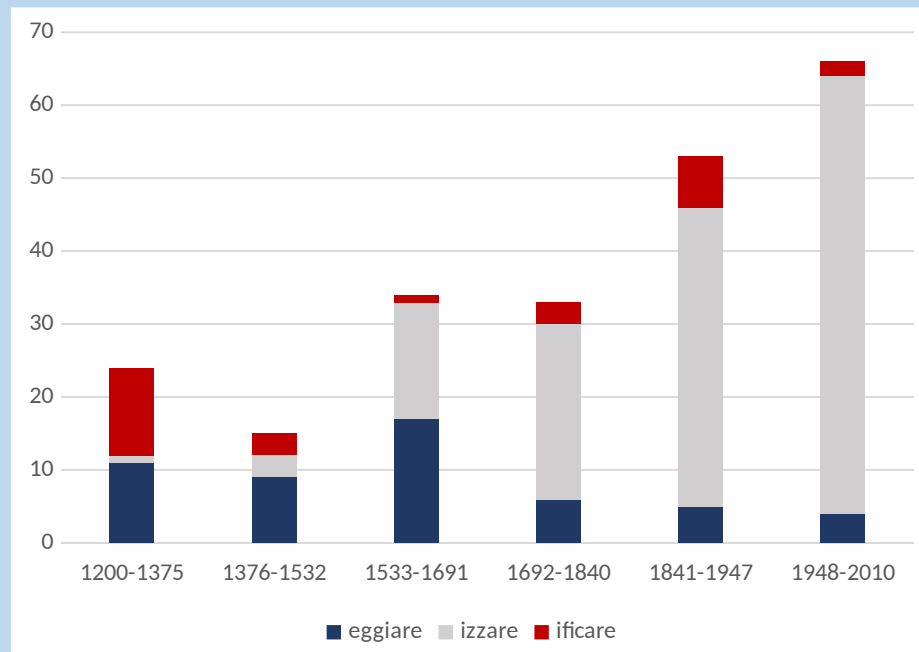
• Pattern	• Period	• 1200-1375	• 1376-1532	• 1533-1691	• 1692-1840	• 1841-1947	• 1948-2010	• Overall
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• Converted	• 36%	• 40%	• 19%	• 18%	• 20%	• 12%	• 27%	
• Parasynthetic	• <b>54%</b>	• <b>46%</b>	• <b>50%</b>	• 34%	• 30%	• 8%	• 41%	
• Total	• 33%	• 15%	• 16%	• 10%	• 15%	• 12%	• 100%	<b>Deadjectivals</b>

• Pattern	• Period	• 1200-1375	• 1376-1532	• 1533-1691	• 1692-1840	• 1841-1947	• 1948-2010	• Overall
• Suffixed	• 11%	• 15%	• 23%	• 19%	• 33%	• 32%	• 19%	
• Converted	• <b>53%</b>	• 38%	• 25%	• 32%	• 26%	• <b>40%</b>	• 40%	
• Parasynthetic	• 36%	• <b>47%</b>	• <b>52%</b>	• <b>49%</b>	• <b>41%</b>	• 28%	• 41%	
• Total	• 43%	• 9%	• 18%	• 11%	• 13%	• 6%	• 100%	<b>Denominals</b>

# Suffixed verbs

∅

• Deriv. Pattern	• Period 1200-1375	• 1376-1532	• 1533-1691	• 1692-1840	• 1841-1947	• 1948-2010	• Overall
• <i>-eggi(are)</i>	• <b>46%</b>	• <b>60%</b>	• <b>47%</b>	• 18%	• 9%	• 6%	• 23%
• <i>-izz(are)</i>	• 4%	• 20%	• 43%	• <b>73%</b>	• <b>78%</b>	• <b>91%</b>	• 64%
• <i>-ific(are)</i>	• <b>50%</b>	• 20%	• 20%	• 9%	• 13%	• 3%	• 13%
• Tot	• 11%	• 7%	• 15%	• 15%	• 23%	• 29%	• 100%



∅ Verbs fallen out of use:

*-eggiare* verbs: 75%

*-ificare* verbs: 30%

*-izzare* verbs 62%

# Suffixed verbs: co-occurrence and competition

∅ When co-radical verbs formed by *-eggiare* and *-izzare* express the same meaning, they most often coincide in the expression of an atelic value:

§ *latino* 'latin' → *latineggiare* / *latinizzare* 'to make use of Latinisms'

The very few verbs in *-izzare* which currently express an atelic value do not have an *-eggiare* counterpart

§ *solidale* 'supportive, sympathetic' → *solidarizzare* 'to sympathise [with sb]'

§ *sottile* 'subtle' → *sottilizzare* 'argue or examine an issue with subtle, precise, but often overly pedantic distinctions'

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# Suffixed verbs: co-occurrence and competition

∅ In the fewer cases of pairs of co-radicals where the *-eggiare* verb has expressed a telic value, this has fallen out of use, with the rival in *-izzare* prevailing

§ *ridicolo* 'ridicule' → \**ridicoleggiare* (obs) / *ridicolizzare* 'to ridicule'

∅ Very rare pairs of verbs in *-eggiare* and *-ificare*

§ *chiaro* 'light, clear' → \**chiareggiare* (obs) / *chiarificare* 'clarify'

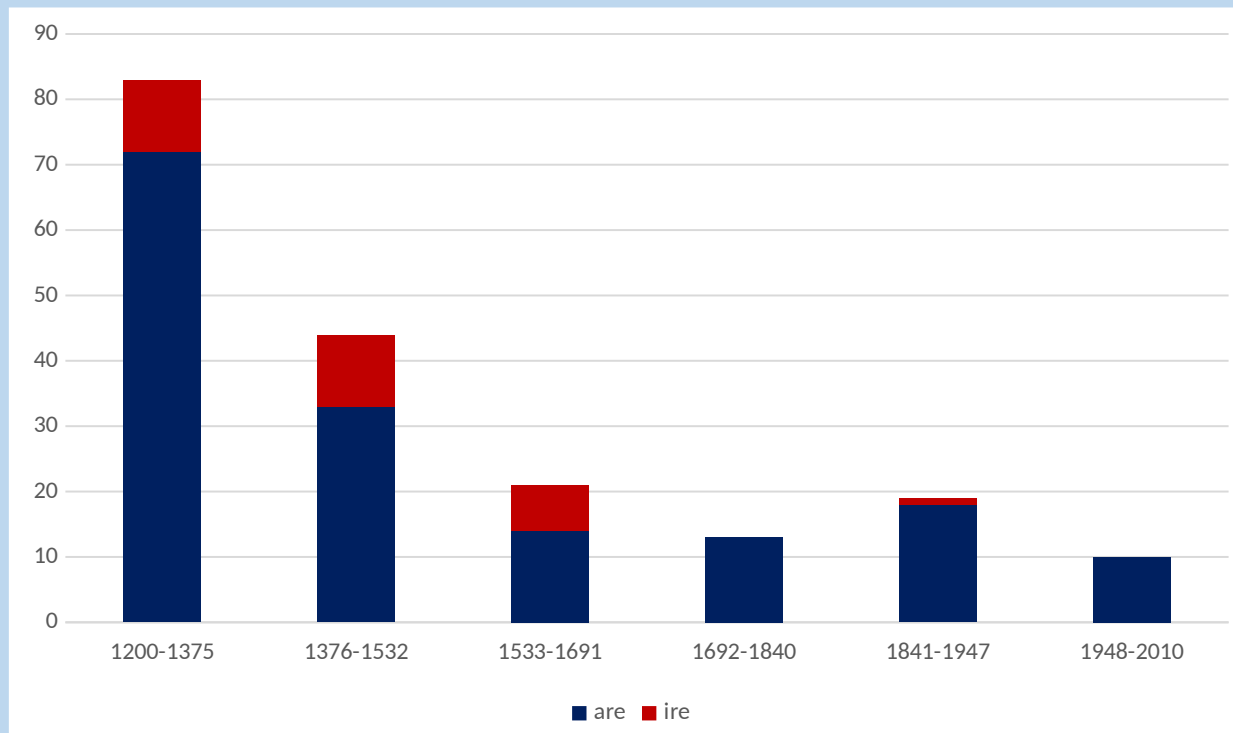
∅ Co-radical verbs in *-ificare* and *-izzare* are sometimes synonymous, but more often differ with respect to usage distribution.

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# Converted verbs

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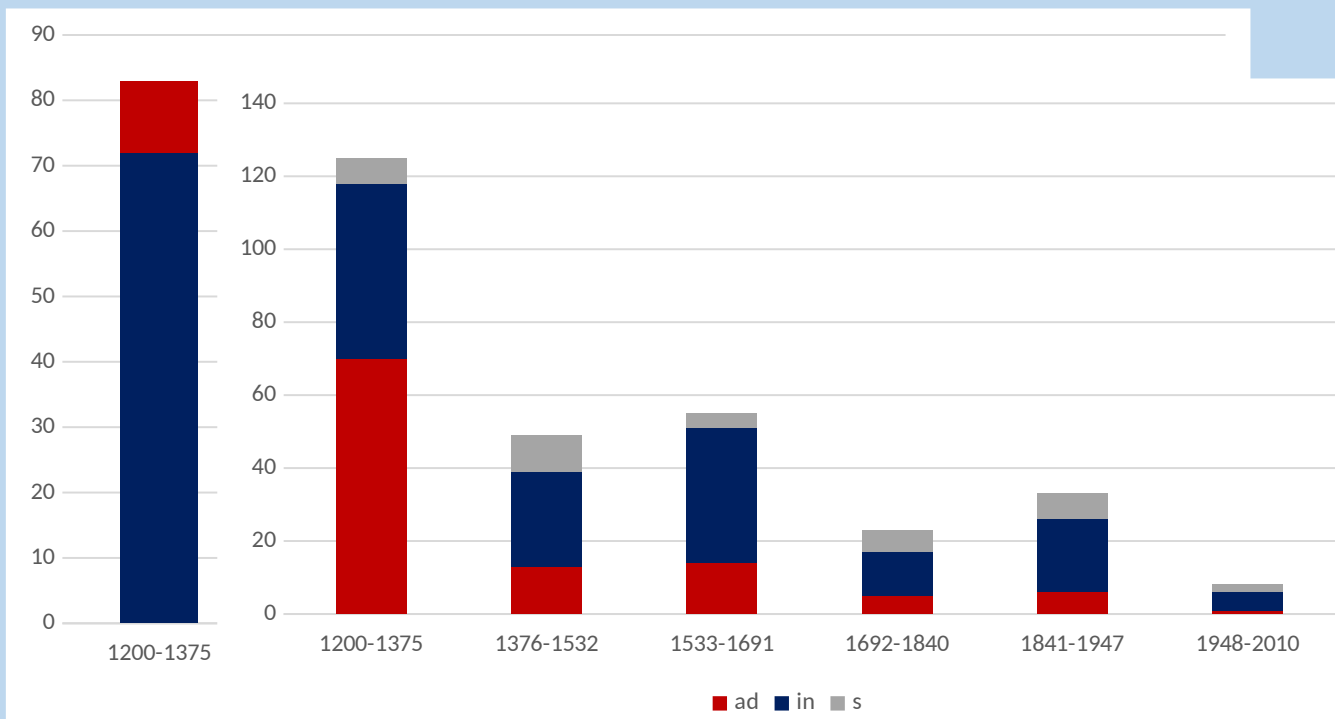
• Deriv. Pattern	• Period • 1200-1375	• 1376-1532	• 1533-1691	• 1692-1840	• 1841-1947	• 1948-2010	• Overall
• <i>-are</i>	• <b>87%</b>	• <b>75%</b>	• <b>67%</b>	• <b>100%</b>	• <b>95%</b>	• <b>100%</b>	• 83%
• <i>-ire</i>	• 13%	• 25%	• 33%	• 0%	• 5%	• 0%	• 17%
• Tot	• 44%	• 23%	• 11%	• 7%	• 10%	• 5%	• 100%



# Parasynthetic verbs

∅

• Deriv. Pattern	• 1200-1375	• 1376-1532	• 1533-1691	• 1692-1840	• 1841-1947	• 1948-2010	• Overall
• <i>Ad-</i>	• <b>56%</b>	• 27%	• 25%	• 22%	• 18%	• 13%	• 37%
• <i>In-</i>	• 38%	• <b>53%</b>	• <b>68%</b>	• <b>52%</b>	• <b>61%</b>	• <b>62%</b>	• 51%
• <i>S-</i>	• 6%	• 20%	• 7%	• 26%	• 21%	• 25%	• 12%
• Tot	• 43%	• 17%	• 19%	• 8%	• 11%	• 3%	• 100%



# Parasynthetic patterns

∅

• Period	• 1200-1375	• 1376-1532	• 1533-1691	• 1692-1840	• 1841-1947	• 1948-2010	• Overall
• Deriv. Pattern							
• <i>Ad-A-are</i>	• <b>67%</b>	• 23%	• <b>48%</b>	• 27%	• 13%	• 33%	• <b>47%</b>
• <i>In-A-are</i>	• 26%	• <b>54%</b>	• <b>48%</b>	• <b>45%</b>	• <b>67%</b>	• 33%	• 40%
• <i>S-A-are</i>	• 9%	• 23%	• 4%	• 27%	• 20%	• 33%	• 13%
• Tot	• 50%	• 17%	• 11%	• 7%	• 10%	• 7%	• 100%
• Period							
• Deriv. Pattern							
• <i>Ad-A-ire</i>	• 41%	• 30%	• 12%	• 17%	• 22%	• 0	• 26%
• <i>In-A-ire</i>	• <b>57%</b>	• <b>52%</b>	• <b>80%</b>	• <b>59%</b>	• <b>56%</b>	• <b>80%</b>	• <b>63%</b>
• <i>S-A-ire</i>	• 2%	• 17%	• 9%	• 25%	• 22%	• 20%	• 11%
• Tot	• 35%	• 16%	• 24%	• 9%	• 13%	• 3%	• 100%

# Parasynthetic verbs formed from a same adjective

Can differ with respect to:

∅ inflectional class

§ *caro* 'expensive, pricey' → *incarare* / *incarire* 'become more expensive'

§ *piatto* 'flat' → *appiattare* / *appiattire* 'flatten'

∅ prefix

§ *largo* 'broad, large' → *allargare* / *slargare* 'enlarge, widen'

§ *robusto* 'robust' → *arrobustire* / *irrobustusire* 'make more robust, strengthen'

∅ derivational pattern as a whole (in rare cases):

• *ruvido* 'rough' → *arruvidare* / *irruvidire* 'roughen'



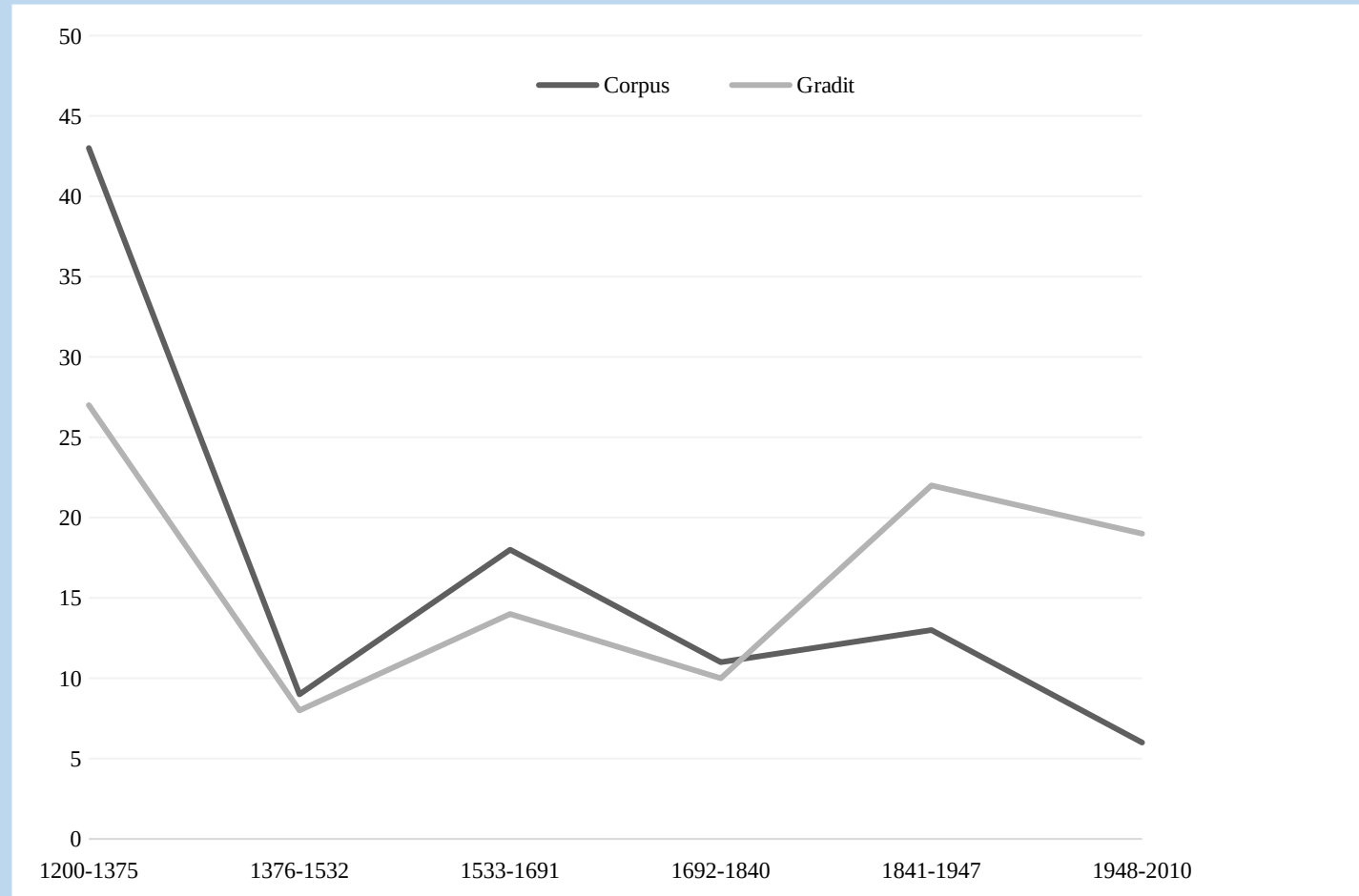
# Atelic parasynthetic verbs

Present-day: Italian parasynthetic verbs express exclusively change-of-state  
Prior stages: also atelic - usually state - verbs have been formed (currently fallen out of use), e.g.,

§ *triste* 'sad' → *intristare* 'look sad'

§ *vario* 'varied, diverse' → *svariare* 'appear in shades of variegated colours'

# Diachronic distribution of the verbs present in the Gradi dictionary and in our dataset



Concluding remarks

# Concluding remarks

With this work we have provided some insight into the formation of deadjectival verbs in Italian, concerning in particular:

- the proportion of adjectives that serve as base for one or multiple verbs;
- the number of co-radical verbs for each adjective;
- the contribution of suffixation, conversion and parasynthesis to deadjectival verb formation.

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# Concluding remarks

## Main findings:

Ø Suffixation is the most frequently employed pattern in the cases where an adjective has yielded only one verbal derivative

Ø When an adjective has formed two verbs, they are most often a converted and a parasynthetic verb. The competition, for the expression of telicity, is mostly resolved in favour of the parasynthetic rival, with the converted verb falling out of use:

§ *giallo* 'yellow' → *giallire* (obs) / *ingiallire* (com) 'become yellow'

§ *morbido* 'soft' → *morbidire* (obs) / *ammorbidire* (com) 'soften'

Ø Opposite cases also occur, though rarely:

§ *lucido* 'shiny, bright' → *lucidare* (com) / *allucidare* (obs) 'polish'

# Concluding remarks

Ø In cases where multiple co-radical verbs are attested, the diachronic trend is toward the resolution of competition through a reduction of the number of verbs:

§ *forte* 'strong' → *fortificare* (com) 'strengthen, fortify'

*fortire* (obs)

*infortare* (obs), inc

*infortire* (obs), inc

# Concluding remarks

∅

∅

∅ The survival of more than one verb is in most cases due to the fact that the verbs are not synonyms, but differ with respect to their semantic / actional values:

§ *caldo* 'warm, hot' → *caldeggiare* (com) 'sympathise for sb'

*accaldare* (obs) caus

*scaldare* (com) caus 'make warm'

§ *estremo* 'extreme' → *estremare* (obs)

*estremizzare* (com) 'bring to the extreme'

•

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∅ prevalence of one derivational pattern (-izzare verbs) over the others

∅ Disappearance over time of a large number of verbs due to rivalry with competing forms

Thank you for your attention