SOME ASPECTS
OF SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENTATION
IN ITALIAN

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We briefly describe thereof the possible types of sentential complements in Italian when used as subjects and modifiers and when used with nominal, adjectival or prepositional heads.

Our aim is to provide some useful material for the treatment of sentential complementation phenomena within the Eurotra framework.

A surface level detailed typology is given, which can be considered as independent from the Eurotra linguistic theory. Nevertheless it can constitute a base for comparing data belonging to different languages and elaborating an analysis of sentential complementation at an Interface Structure level (basically a relational grammar) capable to handle the behaviour of different languages, since a homogeneous treatment can be found only taking into account similarities and differences between the European languages with respect to the given phenomenon.

The following factors have been considered as relevant for the description of the sentential complementation:

- type of the head (part of speech and in some cases semantic class)
- grammatical functions and roles
- mood and tense
- possible (wh- and non wh-) complementizers
We omitted the data concerning object complements of verbs, since they are already widely described in Eurotra literature (see Eurotra Reference Manual 5.0). This means that we considered subject complements and modifiers of verbs, and any kind of sentential complements of other heads like nouns etc. We also did not take into account the problem of the possible alternations of sentential complements for a single head, since it would require a wider investigation on the syntactical and semantic properties of the types of head and on the control phenomena.
1. SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS WITH SUBJECT FUNCTION

Both finite and non-finite clauses can have subject function in Italian. Finite clauses can have subjunctive or indicative mood and are usually introduced by the complementizers "che" (that) or "se" (with interrogative or dubitative value, if, whether).

Ex.:

-1a *E' importante che la Commissione approvi la proposta*
   It is important that the Commission approve the proposal

-1b *E' successo che la Commissione ha approvato la proposta*
   It happened that the Commission approved the proposal

-1c *Che la proposta sia approvata interessa la Commissione*
   It interests the Commission the proposal to be approved

-1d *Se la proposta sarà approvata riguarda la Commissione*
   It depends on the Commission whether the proposal will be approved

-1e *Si chiede che la proposta sia approvata*
   The proposal is required to be approved
Also wh-clauses can take subject function:

-1f *Che cosa sarà approvato dipende dalla Commissione*

   What will be approved depends on the Commission

Finite clauses with subject function are used with impersonal verbs like "accadere", "succedere" (to happen, ex. 1b); with the impersonal form of transitive verbs (the so-called impersonal "si") "si dice che." "si chiede che.", etc. (ex. 1e); with the third person of many verbs like "dipendere" (to depend), "implicare" (to entail), "condurre" (to lead), "diventare" (to become), "interessare" (to interest), "riguardare" (to concern) etc. which also take direct or indirect objects or predicative expressions (ex. 1c, 1d); with adjective + copula and noun + copula expressions (ex. 1a) and finally with the so-called raising verbs "sembrare", "parere" (to seem), that also allow a particular construction without complementizer:

Ex.:

-1g *Sembra che sia stata approvata la proposta*

   It seems that the proposal has been approved

-1h *Sembra sia stata approvata la proposta*

   The proposal seems to have been approved

All subject sentences can precede or follow their head. Che-clauses take generally subjunctive mood, and they can take the indicative one only if they follow their head.
Infinitive clauses can be subject of many verbs and copula + adjective and noun + copula expressions as well:

Ex.:

-2a *Studiare produce buoni risultati*
   
   Studying produces good results

-2b *Approvare la proposta incoraggia la soluzione del problema*
   
   To approve the proposal encourages the solution of the problem

-2c *Approvare la proposta incoraggia la Commissione*
   
   To approve the proposal encourages the Commission

-2d *E' importante approvare la proposta*
   
   It is important to approve the proposal

-2e *E' compito della Commissione approvare la proposta*
   
   It is Commission task to approve the proposal

Infinitives can precede or follow the head. With few verbs they can be introduced by the preposition "di" if they are in postponed position:

-2f *Sorprende di sapere che il problema è risolto*
   
   It is surprising to know that the problem is solved
In most cases the subject of an infinitive clause is undetermined (ex 2a, 2b), otherwise it can be controlled by the direct or indirect object of the main sentence (ex. 2c).

Ex. 2b and 2c show that this distinction can't be easily captured.

Infinitive clauses can also appear in subject role preceded by the definite article "il", but in these cases the whole subject is more likely to be a nominal than a sentential phrase.

-2h L'approvare la proposta è utile al progetto
   The approval of the proposal is useful to the project

2. SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS WITH MODIFIER

Many types of finite and infinitive clauses can be used as different modifier types: finite clauses introduced by the complementizer "che" preceeded by a preposition; finite clauses introduced by various complementizers like "perché", "poiché", "affinché", "quando", etc.; infinitive clauses introduced by prepositions; participial and gerundive clauses.
Ex.:

-3a La Commissione lavora a che il progetto riesca  
   The Commission works for the project to succeed

-3b Il progetto continua perché la Commissione lo ha approvato  
   The project goes on because the Commission approved it

-3c La Commissione lavora affinché il progetto riesca  
   The Commission works for the project to succeed

-3d Il progetto sarà discusso quando avrà luogo il prossimo incontro  
   The project will be discussed when the next meeting will take place

-3e La Commissione lavora per approvare il progetto  
   The Commission works to approve the project

-3f Il progetto proposto dall'industria nel 1983 è stato approvato  
   The project proposed by the industry in 1983 has been approved

-3g Avendo esaminato la proposta, la Commissione ha approvato il progetto  
   Having the proposal been examined, the Commission approved the project
Sentential modifiers can express cause, goal, time, comparison and others, depending on the meaning of the head, on the chosen complementizer and so on. Complementizers like "perché" or "affinché" uniquely characterize the type of modifier they introduce ('cause' the first one, 'goal' the second), as well as some prepositions ("prima", "dopo", etc., see the following paragraph on sentential complementation of prepositions, also for the problem of the control of the infinitive clause subject). On the contrary infinitive clauses introduced by the preposition "a" (and maybe also "di") present the same pattern of a possible infinitival object and they have to be classified according to their head frame.

-3h L'industria rinuncia a continuare il progetto
The industry gave up continuing the project

-3i Gianni è venuto a finire il lavoro
Gianni came to finish the work

Participial clauses can modify nouns (see ex. 3f). In fact in Italian present participle is considered to be an adjective, since past participle can be used in some non adjectival expressions, for example what is called absolute participial clause:

-3l Dato che la proposta è stata approvata, il progetto deve cominciare.
Given that the proposal has been approved, the project must begin
Finally, gerundive clauses usually express time modification, either they are subjectless or present an explicit subject.

-3m Avendo l'industria presentato la proposta, la Commissione la ha approvata
Having the industry presented the proposal, the Commission approved it

3. SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENTATION OF PREPOSITIONS

Some prepositions can introduce finite and infinitive clauses with modifier function, generally representing 'cause', 'goal' or 'time'. See examples 3a, 3e and 3i of the previous paragraph. Also prepositions like "prima" (before), "dopo" (after), "senza" (without) can introduce finite and infinitive clauses:

Ex.:
-4a Il lavoro sarà terminato prima che scada il termine
The work will be finished before the deadline will expire
-4b *Dopo che la proposta fu esaminata, la Commissione la approvò*
   After the proposal had been examined, the Commission approved it

-4c *La Commissione ha approvato la proposta senza perdere tempo*
   The Commission approved the proposal without wasting time

-4d *Dopo aver esaminato la proposta, la Commissione l'ha approvata*
   After having examined the proposal, the Commission approved it

As we can see from the given examples, finite clauses always present the complementizer "che". Infinitives in some cases require the so-called compound prepositions, ex "prima di".

-4e *Prima di approvare la proposta la Commissione l'ha esaminata*
   Before approving the proposal, the Commission examined it

There are several possibilities of control of the omitted subject of the infinitive clause, which more or less correspond to the possibilities we have in case of infinitive object: control can be triggered by the subject, the direct object or the indirect object of the head. The subject of the infinitive can also be undetermined.
Some cases present an interesting kind of structural ambiguity:

-4f Gianni ha chiesto a Mario di interrompere il lavoro prima di avere finito

Gianni asked Mario to stop the work before having finished

where the omitted subject can be coindexed with the subject or with indirect object of the main clause.

We have also to notice that prepositions in the described clauses play a role very similar to subordinating conjunctions, and can be considered as such.

4. SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS OF NOUNS

Deverbal, deadjectival and simple nouns allow sentential complements with argument and modifier role. The most frequent case of sentential complementation of nouns is the use of finite and infinitive clauses as object role with factive, psychological, modal nouns, etc. indicating thought, statement, doubt, emotion, question, attempt, promise, hope and so on.

Ex.:

-5a Ha dato assicurazione che lo farà

He gave his assurance he is going to do it
-5b Ha dato assicurazione di farlo  
He gave his assurance he is going to do it

-5c Ha fatto l'affermazione che è innocente  
He claims that he is innocent

-5d Ha fatto l'affermazione di essere innocente  
He claims to be innocent

-5e Gli ho dato il consiglio che insista  
I suggested that he insist

-5f Gli ho dato il consiglio di insistere  
I suggested that he insist

-5g Ha fatto un tentativo di aiutarlo  
He made an attempt to help him

-5h Ha preso la decisione di andarsene  
He made the decision to leave

-5i La sua rinuncia a partire mi è sembrata strana  
The fact that he made up leaving seemed strange to me

As we can see, both che-clauses and infinitive clauses introduced by prepositions are possible. Some nouns do not accept the first kind of dependent clause, but accept the second one (ex. 5g). The control of the
omitted subject in infinitive clauses seems to follow the same criteria than for objects of verbs, and is closely related to the frame of the governing noun. Control seems also to interact with possessives occurring in the mother NP (ex. 51). Se-clauses can appear with nouns like "domanda", "interrogativo", etc.:

-5m *Gli ha posto la domanda se vuole partecipare all'incontro*
  He asked him whether he wanted to attend the meeting

Wh-clauses can appear if preceded by a preposition:

-5n *Sorge il problema di che cosa fare*
  The problem arises about what to do

Subject sentential complements can also be found, usually infinitive:

-5o *L'importanza di approvare la proposta*
  The importance to approve the proposal

The more relevant kind of sentential modification of nouns is the adjectival use of participles, as we noticed in the paragraph about sentential modifiers (see ex. 3f). Past participle agrees in number and gender with the governing noun, exactly like adjectives do. Participial clauses in this use are equivalent to relative clauses. For instance ex. 3f can be considered equivalent to:
5p Il progetto che è stato proposto dall'industria nel 1983 è stato approvato

The project which has been proposed by the industry in 1983 has been approved.

The other kinds of sentential modifiers we described in paragraph 2 can be used as noun modifiers as well.

5q Il lavoro da fare è troppo

The work to be done is too much.

5. SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENTS OF ADJECTIVES

Che-clauses, infinitive clauses and so on can have subject function in copula + adjective expressions with a wide range of adjectives (see paragraph on sentential subjects):

6a E' interessante lavorare al progetto

It is interesting working on the project.

6b E' utile che il progetto continui

It is useful that the project goes on.
A more restricted class of adjectives allows sentential objects when the adjective is in predicative position (after the governor it modifies or in a NP + copula + adjective expression).

Ex.:

-6c *E' un ragazzo desideroso di imparare*
  He is a boy willing to learn

-6d *Non è disposto a rinunciare*
  He is not inclined to give up

-6e *Trova qualcuno capace di farlo*
  Find someone able to do it

-6f *E’ sicuro di avere ragione*
  He is sure he is right

  Sentential modification is also possible:

-6g *E' contento di partire*
  He is happy to leave

-6h *Il compito è difficile da eseguire*
  The task is hard to be performed
REFERENCES


