Syntax and Semantics
of Subordinate Clauses in Italian
A Preliminary Investigation

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0.1. Introduction

0.2 EUROTRA Background

The kind of problems involved in this report has already been introduced in EUROTRA in two research tenders, the one on Mood, Tense and Aspect\textsuperscript{1} and the one on Formal Semantics\textsuperscript{2}. The first of these reports deals with the modal uses of Mood, Tense and Aspect and proposes voluntativity vs. nonvoluntativity, realis vs. irrealis, and referential scope as the factors affecting modal phenomena, and furthermore it analyzes the semantics of Mood, Tense and Aspect in non-finite clauses and gives some suggestions for tense and aspect calculus in this kind of clauses based on the factors of volition, factivity, physical perception and epistemic modality and on Aktionsart.

The report on Formal Semantics explains the reasons for having temporal and aspactual values for non-finite clauses, and suggests semantic criteria for assignment of these values to object and subject clauses and sentential modifiers. In particular, temporal relationships between complement clauses and main clauses are analyzed as depending on the 'attitude type' of the main verb: volitive attitude implies prospectivity, saying, belief and knowledge imply simultaneity with simple infinitive and anteriority with perfect infinitive, physical perception implies simultaneity.

Both reports, as well as the EUROTRA R.M\textsuperscript{3} sections on Tense and Aspect and on Mood and Modality, encourage further research as for the relationships between subordinate clauses and main predicate semantics, especially with respect to:

- mood selection dependency
- temporal dependency
- aspactual dependency

The aim of this research is therefore to provide an analysis of the Italian complementation system such that it can provide an input for a following contrastive research.

\textsuperscript{1}See Ramirez & Vidal 1990.
\textsuperscript{2}See Ambar & Marrafa 1990.
We also want to point out that mood selection in the Italian generation module is already based on semantic principles, by means of the semantic classification adopted in lexicon coding (the DIMA-EUROTTRA Semantic Features System\(^4\)) and of feature and filter rules applied at the Interface Structure level, which insure the generation of the mood required by the main verb. The present work will therefore take into account the already existing implementation.

0.2. Relationships between main and subordinate predicate approaches

In literature, some criteria for analyzing the semantic relationships between main and subordinate clauses are described. For example, Noonan 1985, in the framework of a contrastive approach to sentential complementation, proposes a set of semantic parameters affecting the 'semantic potential' of complement clauses:

- inherent modality (i.e. mood distinctions)
- degree of reduction (i.e. possibility of infinitive)
- choice of complementizer
- method of syntactic relation to the matrix clause (subordination vs. parataxis)
- grammatical status of the notional predicate

Furthermore, it gives the following classification of the possible dependencies between the matrix and the subordinate predicate:

- Time reference dependency
- Truth-value dependency
- Discourse dependency

A complement is dependent as for time reference if its time reference is a necessary consequence of the meaning of the predicate. E.g. the predicate 'to order' allow only for sentential complements referring to a future world-state with respect to the predicate itself. On the other hand, a complement has independent time reference if it can refer to a world-state anterior, simultaneous or posterior with respect to the main predicate. As for dependent time reference, Noonan distinguishes between simultaneous and posterior reference of the subordinate clause. We will also take into account the possibility of having both simultaneous and posterior reference allowed by a main predicate,

\(^4\)See Oitana 1989.
according in most cases to the Aktionsart of the subordinate. Noonan also mentions two particular cases with respect to temporal relationships: contrafactuals, which situate the subordinate complement in a world different from the real one (e.g. to pretend), and usually have independent time reference, and generics, which refer to all possible occurrences of the subordinate predicate (e.g. to like) and therefore have simultaneous dependent time reference. Independent time reference leads to the problem of consecutio temporum, typical of reported speech and of propositional attitudes. Two types of tense sequences are usually recognized for subordinate clauses⁵: absolute and relative. Italian allows only for the second one, i.e. the tense of main clause depends on its temporal relationships with the event in the main clause and not with the moment of speech.

Truth-value dependent complements are those whose predicate expresses a propositional attitude towards the truth of the complement, e.g. 'to think' or 'to believe'. Languages usually distinguish between positive propositional attitudes on one side and negative or dubitative on the other, often grouping the first kind with assertions and reports as for their constraints on mood selection, but this is not the case for Italian, which selects indicative for assertions and subjunctive for positive and negative propositional attitudes.

The third relevant factor, discourse dependency, is related to the fact that the proposition contained in the subclause can belong to the common background of the discourse, i.e. to be presupposed, as in the case of complements to commentative predicates, and is therefore assumed to be true. Discourse dependency is usually referred to in literature as factivity⁶. Semifactivity (or different degrees of factivity) has been introduced in order to account for complements of knowledge predicates, which do not necessarily belong to background but are assumed to be true. Semifactivity is usually related to mood shift induced by negation.

Reduction is defined by Noonan as a linguistic device for avoiding repetition of given information, such as subject reference and temporal reference, in the subordinate clause. Since in Italian independent time reference allow for infinitive alternations, reduction depends on control. For referring to lexically induced control phenomena we will use the traditional terminology ⁷adopted in EUROTRA, and we will distinguish four possible patterns: subject control, direct object control, indirect object control, arbitrary control.

⁷Cfr. Bresnan 1982
Noonan also distinguishes between realis and irrealis modality, by grouping within the first category reports, factive, background and positive propositional attitudes, and within the second negative propositional attitudes, desires, intentions and manipulative in general.

Summing up, some semantic factors, which we will take into account only informally and provisionally in this first report, come out to be commonly recognized as relevant for subordination, since are related to factivity, time dependence, etc.:

- modality
- communication (information transfer)
- propositional attitude
- knowledge and logical inference
- mental or psychological state or activity
- physical perception
- aspectual meaning
- performativity and illocutionary force

1. Italian complementation system

1.1. General Description

The Italian complementation system share the features of other Romance languages and is widely described in literature.

Mood in Italian is a clearly morphological category. Three moods can occur in subordinate clauses: indicative, subjunctive and infinitive. Furthermore, conditional is traditionally considered a mood, since it is tensed, and it can occur in subordinate clauses according to consecutio temporum rules (see 1.3.3 and 1.4.3). Syntactic structures of subordinate complements are described in details by Elia, Martinelli&D'Agostino 1981 and Elia 1984 from the point of view of lexicon-grammar, by taking into account, among others, parameters such as complementizer compatibility, finiteness vs. non-finiteness of the subordinate and its grammatical role, as well as transformational and distributional tests. Syntax and semantics of causatives and perception are analyzed in Burzio 1986 in the framework of his G&B approach to ergativity, un accusativitv and related surface phenomena. Rizzi 1982 takes into account infinitive clauses in Italian from a G&B point of view, and points out some peculiarities of auxiliary selection and violation of syntactic constraints. Skytte 1983 gives a detailed description of infinitive clauses in Italian, discussing in particular their syntactic status and providing discriminating criteria according to negation and clitics distribution and raising. In fact, a debate exists in literature about
the syntactic status of infinitive complements (clauses vs. verb-phrases, which doesn't concern us here since in EUROTRA IS they are represented as s-bars for symmetry with respect to other subordinate complements. Mood selection is lexically determined, and traditional grammars provide classification of verb according to mood of their complements Elia 1984, while pointing out the difficulties of a consistent semantic classification, reports the following semantic grouping of verbs according to mood selection in subordinate clauses, derived from a comparison of different treatments available in literature:

Indicative
- assertion
- sensory impression
- perception
- knowledge
- inference
- promise

Subjunctive
- volition
- opinion
- desire
- hope
- doubt
- order
- exhortation
- concession
- pray
- fearing
- hypothesis
- tension to a goal
- feeling
- internal disposition
- uncertainty
- wish
- surprise, astonishment, regret, pleasure
- uncertain assertion
- judgement
- psychological state
- sensory imagination

Some computational approaches to Italian also take into account phenomena related to subordination and provide classifications. To give just an example, Delmonte 1990 in the framework of a
semantic parser for Italian proposes for coding of verbs the followings sets of features:

- verbal class: transitive, inaccusative, inergative, reflexive, copulative, inherent reflexive, impersonal, psychological

- syntactic-aspectual features: raising, perception, imperativity

- semantic classes: extensional, subjective/intensional, hyperintensional, quantity/modality, factive, emotional/affective, properties, mental activities, inchoatives, measure.

In EUROTRA implementation, generation of subordinate clauses have turned out to be possible with the following classes of verbs (according to the DIMA Semantic Features system)\(^8\):

modep (epistemic modality)  
modasp (aspirative modality)  
aspettuale (aspectual)  
processo (internal process)  
azione (action)  
funzionamento (exercising of operative capacities)  
moto (movement)  
osservazione (active or dynamic use of knowledge)  
conoscenza (feeling or fantasy)  
giudizio (confirm, doubt, deny)  
calcolo (elaboration of knowledge)  
fruizione (feeling, experience, perception)  
manifestazione (communication)  
causazione (causation)  
passività (undergoing)  
rappporto (relation)

Mood choice is performed for object subordinate clauses on the basis of epistemic modality and of the feature 'risultato' which describes the the final situation consequent to the predicates corresponding to actions and processes.

Complementizer selection is not particularly problematic. The complementizer "che" is by large the more used. In some cases it can be replaced by the introducing expression "il fatto che" ('the fact that'), which is considered by some authors as a complementizer\(^9\). Interrogative subclauses can be introduced by

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\(^8\) See Oitana 1989.  
"se", "come", and wh-pronouns. Infinitive clauses are usually introduced by strongly bound prepositions: "di" for direct object clauses and "a" for indirect object clauses. Bare infinitives are possible with some classes of verbs.

Subordinate clauses have relative tense, and subjunctive can express temporal anteriority or simultaneity/posteriority.

Aspectual relations in indicative subclauses are the same of main clauses, subjunctive subclauses can have perfect aspect, while infinitive neutralizes all aspectual distinctions, which are in some cases recoverable by means of the Aktionsart of both the main and the subordinate verb\(^\text{10}\).

1.2 Italian Syntactic Structures in Complement Clauses

The following syntactic structures for non-subject subordinate clauses will be taken into account for Italian:\(^\text{11}\)

- finite clauses as object:
  - indicative che-clause
    e.g. Giovanni sa che Maria è arrivata
  - subjunctive che-clause
    e.g. Giovanni esige che Maria parta
  - indicative interrogative se-clause
    e.g. Giovanni chiede se Maria è partita
  - subjunctive interrogative se-clause
    e.g. Giovanni ignora se Maria sia partita

- infinitive clause introduced by prepositions
  - subject control
    e.g. Giovanni promette di partire
  - unlike person/arbitrary control
    e.g. ciò conduce a credere a Giovanni
  - object control
    e.g. Giovanni prega Mario di telefonargli
  - indirect object control
    e.g. Giovanni chiede a Mario di telefonargli

- bare infinitive
  - bare infinitive with modal verbs
    e.g. Giovanni puo' partire
  - object + infinitive with perception verbs
    e.g. Giovanni vede Maria partire

\(^\text{10}\)Cfr. Skytte 1983.
\(^\text{11}\)Cfr. Antona&Calzolari 1988
- causative structures:
  bare infinitive (subject unspecified)
  e.g. Giovanni fa' ridere
  object + infinitive (subject coreferent)
  e.g. Giovanni fa' ridere Maria
  infinitive + da-pp (trans. with expressed object)
  e.g. Giovanni fa' lavare la macchina da Maria
  infinitive + dative (trans. with expressed object)
  e.g. Giovanni fa' lavare la macchina a Maria

  The following alternations of patterns are possible among the considered types of subordinates:

  - che-clause/p + infinitive (subject control)
    e.g. Giovanni promette che partira'
         Giovanni promette di partire

  - che-clause/p + infinitive (indirect object control)
    e.g. Giovanni ha detto a Mario che parta
         Giovanni ha detto a Mario di partire

  - che-clause/object + infinitive (object control)
    e.g. Giovanni persuade Mario che deve partire
         Giovanni persuade Mario a partire

  - che-clause/se-clause
    e.g. cio' indica che Mario aveva ragione
         cio' indica se Mario aveva ragione

  - che-clause/bare infinitive (perception verbs)
    e.g. Giovanni vede che Maria parte
         Giovanni vede Maria partire

  Subject subordinate clauses are not analyzed in details since they basically allow only two forms:

  - subjunctive che-clause
    e.g. mi dispiace che Mario sia partito

  - bare infinitive
    e.g. mi piace andare andare al mare

  In order to provide data for our investigating, sentential complement taking verbs included into the Italian Interface Structure lexicon have been listed, their definitions have been extracted from monolingual dictionaries, relevant readings have
been selected and examples have been provided. Collected data have been analyzed with respect to the following criteria:

- **argument structure** of the verb
- **selected mood/moods** of the sub. clause and selected
- **complementizers/prepositions** have been listed according to the above mentioned list of cases
- **negation** and constraints on mood caused by negation
- **alternations** with se-clauses and infinitives
- **temporal relationships** implied by the main verb with respect to the subordinate clause
- **control patterns**
- A preliminary rough investigation of **semantic factors** affecting subordinate clauses, mainly based on traditional distinctions.

In fact however a complete semantic classification has not been performed yet since it is foreseen for in a later stage of the contrastive research, after the bilingual comparison of phenomena. The results of this investigation are reported and commented below.

### 1.3 Indicative complement clauses

#### 1.3.1. Verbs taking indicative complements

Indicative che-clauses are usually combined in Italian with **declarative** verbs, e.g. "affermare" ('to claim'), "confermare" ('to confirm'), "dire" ('to say'), with verbs expressing **knowledge** and knowledge acquisition and transmission, e.g. "capire" ('to understand'), "imparare" ('to learn'), "ricordare" ('to remember'), logical implication, e.g. "comportare" ('to entail'), "implicare" ('to imply'), and **perception**, e.g. "sentire" ('to hear'), "vedere" ('to see').

E.g. Giovanni afferma che Mario e' partito
John claims that Mario left (ind.)

Giovanni ha visto che Mario e' partito
John saw that Mario left (ind.)

All these cases could be roughly semantically characterized as a kind of **information transfer** occurring not only by means of communication, but also by means of learning, perceiving, applying logical rules, etc., and in which the subordinate proposition is normally understood as being true. The complementizer "se" and wh pronouns are used in the interrogative form:
Giovanni sa se Mario e' partito
John knows if/whether Mario left

Giovanni sa che cosa Mario ha fatto
John knows what Mario did

With se-clauses, what is questioned in fact is the truth-value of the subordinate predicate. Some indicative complements taking verbs allow only for interrogative clauses, e.g. "chiedere" ('to ask'):

Giovanni ha chiesto se*/che Mario e' partito
John asked whether Mario left

1.3.2 Alternations with Subjunctive and Infinitive

A consistent number of verbs usually taking indicative complements when negated can allow or even require subjunctive, e.g. "dimostrare" ('to demonstrate'), "significare" ('to mean'), and others.

E.g. Cio' dimostra che Giovanni ha ragione
this demonstrates that John is (ind.) right

Cio' non dimostra che Giovanni abbia ragione
this doesn't demonstrate that John is (subj.) right

The same can happen, in a restricted number of cases, with se-clauses, i.e. interrogative clauses alternating with che-clauses, e.g. "notare", "sapere", and others.

So che Giovanni e' partito
I know that John left (ind.)

Sai se Giovanni sia partito?
Do you know whether John left (subj.)?

Indicative complement taking verbs usually allow for infinitive alternation with lexically induced subject control, e.g. "affermare" ('to claim'), "promettere" ('to promise'), and many others:

e.g. Giovanni ha promesso che partirà
Giovanni ha promesso di partire
(inf.)

Direct object control is attested with perception verbs and with the verb "convincere" ('to persuade').
Indirect object control is attested with the verb "ricordare" in the reading corresponding to "remind":

Giovanni ricorda a Mario di prendere le chiavi
John reminds Mario to take (inf.) the keys

Some verbs, show obligatory control, i.e. obligatory infinitive mood in case of subject coreference between main and subordinate clause, e.g. "accettare" ('admit', 'recognize'), "mostrare" ('show'), etc. With other verbs on the contrary infinitive alternation is impossible, e.g. "prevedere", ('to foresee'), "indicare" ('to indicate').

1.3.3. Tense and Aspect in Indicative Complements

Indicative complement clauses usually show independent time reference, i.e. the event they predicate can be anterior, simultaneous or posterior to the event of the main clause:

So che Giovanni e' partito anterior
I know that John left

So che Giovanni parte simultaneous
I know that John is leaving

So che Giovanni partira' posterior
I know that John will leave

Some cases of dependent time reference are predicates expressing knowledge about the future, e.g. "anticipare" ('to anticipate'), and predicates expressing intentions and taking indicative complements, e.g. "promettere" ('to promise') which imply posteriority of the subordinated event

* Giovanni ha promesso che e' partito anterior
John promised that (he ) left

? Giovanni ha promesso che parte simultaneous
John promised that (he) leaves

Giovanni ha promesso che partira' posterior
John promised that (he) will leave
and perception verbs which imply simultaneity of the subordinated event:

Giovanni ha visto che Mario correva simultaenous
John saw that Mario was running

Consecutio temporum obviously depends on several factors: independent vs. dependent time reference first of all, type of dependent time reference (simultaneous, posterior), tense of the main verb, and under certain circumstances Aktionsart of both the main and the subordinate predicate. Lepschy & Lepschy 1977 distinguish between a 'present' and a 'past' sequence of tenses for Italian, according to the tense of the main clause: in fact, almost all combinations are possible, but some restrictions can be found, due to the fact that in Italian, indirect speech follows relative tense, i.e. the tense of main clause depends on its temporal relationships with the event in the main clause and not with the moment of speech. As a consequence, past tense in the main clause is incompatible with present and future tense in the subordinate, since simultaneity is given by the imperfective past in the subordinate, anteriority by perfect past and posteriority by the perfect conditional. Present perfect in the main clause behaves both like a simultaneous perfect and as an anterior perfective, and allow all possible combinations:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{afferma} & \quad \text{vedeva} & \quad \text{simul.} \\
\text{Giovanni} & \quad \text{aveva} & \quad \text{affermato} & \quad \text{che} & \quad \text{aveva} & \quad \text{visto} & \quad \text{Maria} & \quad \text{ant.} \\
\text{ha} & \quad \text{affermato} & \quad \text{avrebbe} & \quad \text{visto} & \quad \text{post.}
\end{align*}
\]

John claimed(imp.)/claimed(perf.)/has claimed that he saw/had seen/would see Mery.

On the contrary, present and future tenses behave in subordinate clauses as in main clauses:

Giovanni afferma che vede Maria simul.
John claims he sees (pres.) Mary

Giovanni afferma vedra' Maria post.
John claims he will see (fut.) Mary

With dependent time reference tenses not compatible with the meaning of the main verb are simply agrammatical:
*Giovanni promette che e' partito
John promises that he has left

No general restriction seems to exist for aspect with indicative sub. clauses, i.e. all combinations are acceptable from an aspectual point of view. However, in our opinion interpretation can depend on Aktionsart in some cases. E.g. imperfective past can express not only simultaneity with a past main event, but anteriority as well in case the subordinate clause represents a state or a process:

Giovanni ha affermato la settimana scorsa che Mario due anni fa' era malato
John claimed last week that Mario was ill two years ago

Giovanni ha affermato che Mario due ore prima dormiva
John claimed that Mario was sleeping two hours before

A special case is represented by perception verbs, which not only force the event in the subordinate clause to be viewed as simultaneous to the perception of it, but also to be viewed as 'in progress', i.e. imperfectively. As a consequence, the use of a perfective aspect in the subordinate clause is excluded, as attested by the agrammaticality of the 'passato remoto', which is the only unambiguously perfective form of the Italian tense system, although progressively disappearing:

*Giovanni vide che Mario partì'
John saw that Mario left(perf.)

Giovanni vide che Mario partiva
John saw that Mario left(imperf.)

On the other hand, the interpretation of perfect aspect is constrained as referring to the state consequent to an event:

Giovanni vede che Mario e' partito
John sees that Mario has left

means that John sees Mario's absence.

Infinitive in Italian has two forms, a simple and a perfect one, which in subordinate clauses alternating with indicative correspond respectively to simultaneous and anterior temporal reference with respect to the main event:

Giovanni afferma di essere perseguitato
John claims to be persecuted
Giovanni afferma di essere stato perseguitato
John claims to have been persecuted

The perfect form shows both perfective and perfect aspect.

1.4. Subjunctive Complement Clauses

1.4.1. Verbs taking subjunctive complements

Subjunctive mood is used in subordinate clauses in Italian with verbs indicating positive and negative propositional attitude, e.g. "credere" ('to believe'), "pensare" ('to think'), etc., comments, e.g. "amare" ('to love'), "sopportare" ('to bear'), fearing, e.g. "preoccuparsi" ('to be worry'), order, e.g. "imporre" ('to impose'), request, e.g. "chiedere" ('to ask'), "richiedere" ('to request'), permission, e.g. "lasciare" ('to let'), "permettere" ('to allow'), volition, e.g. "desiderare" ('to wish'), "volere" ('to want').

E.g. Giovanni pensa che Mario sia partito
John thinks that Mario left(subj.)

In case of these classes of verbs, a common semantic characterization seems hard to find: some of them define the truth-value of their subordinate clause, as e.g. propositional attitude, while others refer to possible events in the future (request, order, permission), to generics, e.g. "amare", or even to contrafactive, e.g. "evitare", "impedire". Comments typically presuppose their complement predicates, while doubts or denying typically express an attitude.

1.4.2. Alternations with Indicative and Infinitive

Alternations with indicative mood are possible in many cases: interestingly enough, for example, propositional attitudes take indicative complement clauses in the future tense, e.g. "credere" ('to believe'), "pensare" ('to think'):

Giovanni pensa che Mario partira' 
John thinks that Mario will leave(ind.)

Negation doesn't cause mood changes, but negation raising is possible with some propositional attitudes such as 'to believe' or 'to think':
Giovanni pensa che Mario non sia partito
John thinks that Mario did not leave

Giovanni non pensa che Mario sia partito
John doesn't think that Mario left

Subjunctive can alternate with subject control infinitive clauses, and usually with these verbs infinitive is obligatory in case of coreference.

E.g. Giovanni crede che Mario abbia ragione
John believes that Mario is right

* Giovanni1 crede che (t1) abbia ragione
John believes that (he) is right

Giovanni crede di avere ragione
John believes to be right

Indirect object control is rather frequent with subjunctive complement taking verbs, e.g. "augurare" ('to wish'), "permettere" ('to allow') and "raccomandare" ('to recommend'):

Giovanni chiede a Mario che parta
John asks Mario that he leaves

Giovanni chiede a Mario di partire
John asks Mario to leave

Direct object control is attested with "pregare":

Giovanni prega Mario di partire
John begs Mario to leave

Arbitrary control is allowed as well, e.g. "giudicare" ('to judge' in its predicative reading),:

Giovanni giudica opportuno partire
John considers leaving convenient
1.4.3. Tense and Aspect in Subjunctive Complements

As for temporal relationships between the main and the subordinate clause, subjunctive complement taking verbs show a variety of cases: propositional attitudes, with the relevant exceptions of "aspettare" and "attendere" (both meaning 'to wait'), have independent time reference:

Giovanni pensa che Mario parta } simul/post.
   sia partito } ant.

while predicates of fearing, order, request etc. have dependent time reference usually posterior to the one of the main predicate:

Giovanni ordina che Mario parta/*sia partito

Some cases, e.g. "controllare" ('to check') , allow for both simultaneous and posterior reference. More complex cases are constituted by predicates denying the proposition of the subordinate, such as "evitare" ('to avoid') and "impedire" ('to prevent'), or predicates referring to generics, i.e. to all possible occurrences of the subordinate predicate, such as e.g. "amare" ('to like'), where in fact no temporal location of the event in the subordinate is possible:

   e.g. *Giovanni ama che i suoi amici vadano a trovarlo domani
      John likes that his friends go to see him tomorrow

Consecutio temporum for subjunctive is simpler than for indicative: only four forms exist, subjunctive present and past simple and perfect: In the case of independent time reference, simple and perfect past express respectively simultaneity and anteriority:

Giovanni pensava/have pensato/aveva pensato che Mario dormisse
John thought/has thought/had tought that Mario slept(subj.)

Giovanni pensava/have pensato/aveva pensato che Mario avesse dormito
John thought/has thought/had tought that Mario had slept(subj.)

Posteriority is expressed by the perfect conditional:
Giovanni pensava/ha pensato/aveva pensato che Mario avrebbe dormito
John thought/has thought/had tought that Mario would have slept (cond.)

With present and future main clauses, anteriority is expresses by both the simple and the perfect past:

Giovanni pensa/pensera' che Mario dormisse
John thinks/will think that Mario was sleeping (subj.)

Giovanni pensa/pensera' che Mario avesse dormito
John thinks/will think that Mario had slept (subj.)

and by the perfect present, which also has a simultaneous retrospective value:

Giovanni pensa/pensera' che Mario abbia dormito
John thinks/will think that Mario slept/has slept (subj.)

Simultaneity and posteriority are expressed by the simple present:

Giovanni pensa/pensera' che mario dorma
John thinks/will think that Mario is sleeping

Unambiguous posteriority is rendered by shifting to indicative:

Giovanni pensa che Mario dormira'
John thinks that Mario will sleep (ind.)

With posterior dependent time reference, only simple subjunctive present and simple infinitive are allowed:

Giovanni ordina a Mario che parta/*che sia partito
John orders to Mario that (he) leaves

Giovanni ordina a Mario dipartire/*di essere partito
John orders Mario to leave

Aktionsart is relevant in this case as well. For example, events, and especially the so-called achievements, show a tendency to exclude a simultaneous interpretation of the simple present and to prefer a posterior one:

Giovanni pensa che Mario parta
John thinks that Mario will leave
would normally be interpreted as referring to a future leaving of Mario, unless some modifier explicits simultaneity:

Giovanni pensa che Mario parta in questo momento
John thinks that Mario is leaving in this very moment

1.5. Infinitive Complement clauses

1.5.1 Infinitive in alternation with other moods

Alternations of infinitive with with indicative and subjunctive have been described respectively in 1.3.2. and 1.4.2. Here we will only some up control patterns. As already pointed out, infinitive mood is in some cases obligatory with coreference, while in other cases it depends on stylistic factors.

E.g. Giovanni ordina a Mario che parta
John orders to Mario that (he) leaves

Giovanni ordina a Mario di partire
John orders Mario to leave

Some regularities can be observed among the argument structure of the verb and the control pattern: two-place predicates having a sentential arg2 usually show subject control, three-place predicates allowing for an optional human indirect object can have either subject or indirect object control and usually the indirect object induces control when it is explicitly expressed, finally three-place predicates allowing for a non-sentential and a sentential argument (e.g. "prenare"), have direct object control.

1.5.2. Predicates allowing only infinitive complements

Some predicates, however, allow only for infinitive complements. Among these are epistemic and deontic modals "potere" and "dovere" (respectively 'can' and 'must'), aspectual/phrasal predicates "cominciare" ('to start'), "finire" ('to finish'), "continuare" ('to continue'), and many predicates whose subordinate complement expresses a goal, such as e.g. "arrivare" ('to arrive'), "condurre" ('to lead'), "dedicarsi" ('to devote oneself'), etc.:

E.g. Giovanni deve partire
John must leave
Giovanni ha cominciato a scrivere
John started writing

Giovanni si è dedicato a studiare
John devoted himself to studying

The first two types have subject control, while the third can have subject or direct object control according to their argument structure.

1.5.3. Bare infinitives

Modals, causatives and perception verbs allow bare infinitive complements.
As for modals they only accept infinitive object complements, while impersonal modals such as "essere necessario" ('to be necessary'), "essere possibile" ('to be possible'), etc. allow both infinitive and subjunctive subject clauses, the first with arbitrary reference of the subject.

E' necessario partire
It is necessary to leave

E' necessario che Mario parta
It's necessary for Mario to leave

Causatives show 4 different structures according to the argument structure of the subordinate predicate and the reference of its subject: arbitrary reference is allowed when the whole expression refers to a propriety of the subject:

Giovanni fa' ridere
John makes laughing -> Jhon is ridiculous

Other possible patterns are:

Giovanni fa' piangere Mario
John makes Mario crying

Giovanni fa' lavare la macchina a Mario
John makes Mario to wash the car

Giovanni fa' lavare la macchina da Mario
John makes Mario to wash the car
Finally perception verbs allow both infinitive and indicative complements. Infinitives have object control:

Giovanni vede che Mario ride
John sees that Mario is laughing

Giovanni vede Mario ridere
John sees Mario laughing

1.5.4. Tense and Aspect in Infinitive Clauses

Temporal relationships in infinitive clauses alternating with indicative and subjunctive have already been described. As for particular classes such as modals, aspectual, causatives, and perception, they all show dependent time reference, except than epistemic modals which can refer to events already happened or in progress.

Giovanni deve essere partito
John must have left

Aspectuals and perception verbs always have simultaneous time reference, and imply an imperfective view of the subordinate predicate. Deontic modals have simultaneous/posterior reference. As for aspectual distinctions with infinitive mood, they are not related to verb forms. As a consequence, it will be necessary to compute them on the basis of Aktionsart and eventually temporal modifiers.

1.6. Conclusions

Mood selection in Italian present rather peculiar characteristics with respect to other languages:

- it does not rely on temporal dependency: temporal independent clauses can have either indicative or subjunctive according to other factors, temporal dependent clauses usually have subjunctive or infinitive, but cases are attested where the meaning of the main verb requires both temporal dependency and indicative mood, e.g. "prevedere" ('to foresee')

- it does not strictly rely on the truth-value of the subordinate, since both positive and negative propositional attitudes have subjunctive
it does not strictly rely on discourse dependency, since commentative predicates presupposing the proposition of their complements have subjunctive.

The only factor affecting indicative/subjunctive selection has turned out to be what we have called 'information transfer' in a broadest sense: not only voluntary communication with or without illocutionary force, but also exchange of knowledge by whatever mean (experience, perception, logical inference), and knowledge collocation as a mental state.

In some cases however the truth of the subordinate proposition seems to play a role: for example, in cases where it is questioned by the negation of the main verb, as for example with some semafactives, or directly by the interrogative form. It is interesting to notice in fact that normally with assertion and reports whose negation does not necessarily affect the truth value of the subordinate, subjunctive is not required. Furthermore, generics, contrafactives and irrealis in general have subjunctive. As for infinitive, it alternates with both indicative and subjunctive sometimes freely and sometimes obligatorily according to lexically induced control patterns. Therefore, syntactic factors seem to neutralize the alternation between infinitive and other moods in some cases. Where the alternation exists, however, it appears to us as dependent on stylistic rather than on semantic criteria: in our opinion, for example, semantic factors described in literature as for the distinction between finite and non-finite in English and related to genericness vs. specific temporal reference of the subclause cannot be applied to Italian.

As for consecution temporum, Italian obligatory has relative time reference an therefore tense copying. Temporal and aspeclural relations are fully expressed in indicative subclauses, and slightly simplified in subjunctive subclauses where simultaneous and posterior are not distinguished and the imperfective/perfective opposition is not relevant. As in main clauses, perfect forms assume both a perfect and a perfective value. With infinitive mood in particular, perfect expresses a temporal rather than an aspeclural meaning.

\[\text{12Cfr. Dirven 1989.}\]
References


