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Word classes in Italian L2

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Discussion of some data of Italian as a SL
from the perspective of

the organization of lexical units in
word classes or parts-of-speech,
with special reference to the word
class of the verb.

Theoretical premises

- “Basic Variety” approach (Klein/Perdue 1997)
 - development of finiteness in first and second language acquisition (Klein 1998; Dimroth *et alii* 2003, Gretsch / Perdue 2007).
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morphological-finiteness is ‘the overt form
that finiteness takes’

semantic-finiteness is ‘the invisible function
that finiteness serves’

(Lasser 1977: 77, quoted in Gretsch/Perdue
2007: 433).

Research questions:

- do data of Italian as a SL sustain the model just outlined? that is, are word classes already differentiated, although with significant limitations, in the Basic Variety in Italian L2?
 - does semantic finiteness precedes its morphological expression? Is semantic finiteness marked earlier than its morphological expression, and if this is the case, by what means?
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Data

three recordings of an untutored young learner of Italian called
CHU

CHU: Chinese young man, aged 16 when he came to Italy

L1: Wu Chinese

contact with speakers of Italian on a daily basis

beginning of data collection: eleven months after Chu's arrival in
Italy

data from the Pavia Data Base: collected longitudinally over a
sixteen-month period

analysis restricted to the first three recordings of CH: learner moving
from the Basic Variety to the initial Post-Basic Variety;

recorded data: free conversations with an interviewer and
narratives.

First two recordings:

CH masters neither verbal nor nominal morphology

(1) CH: *(loro) fano un + un + un + eh un*

(they) do-3PL a

gioc/ giochi

game-PL

‘They played a game’

(CH02, 11 months: 26 days)

Third recording session:
development of tense/aspect verbal
morphology

(2) [picture description]

\IT\ *prova a vedere cosa succede*
try and see what's happening

\CH\ *ale sei davanti Fiàt porta c'è monti uomini*
at-the six in front of Fiat door there.is many men

lolo lavoro Fiàt
they work-1SG Fiat

\IT\ *e questa persona qua?*
and this man here?

\CH\ *un signore lavoro* Fiàt
a man work-1SG Fiat
lui c'è un molie un filio e un filia
he there.is a wife a son and a daughter

\IT\ *benissimo ++ poi alle due?*
very well; then, at two o'clock?

\CH\ *are due signore lavoro* Fiàt
at-the two man work-PP Fiat

‘at six o’clock there are a lot of people in front of the Fiat gates, they work for Fiat; a man works for Fiat; at two o’clock the man has finished working for Fiat’

first two recordings: majority of utterances endowed with a lexical unit which belongs to the TL word class of the verb.

cf. following examples with full verbs (ex. 3), copula (ex. 4-8) and unanalyzed *c'è* (ex. 9)

3) *io ha(i) vinto poco;*
I has/have(-2SG) win-PP a little
'I won a little'

io no ab/ + io no a/ abito no qua (CH02,11mm:26 dd)
I no live-1SG no here
'I don't live there (in Beijing)'

4) *macchina è rosso;* (CH01, 11 months:4 days)
car is red

Pechino è eh eh più bela (CH02,11mm:26 dd)
Beijing is more beautiful

(5) cinese vin(o) (è) sono

Chinese wine(-SG) is be.1SG/3PL

eh l/l/ liquer liquore

liqueur

‘Chinese wine is a liqueur [= very alcoholic]’

(6) quest(a) è Pechi/ eh Pechino eh

this-(FEM.SG) is Beijing

eh grande piazza

big square

‘this is a/the big square in Beijing’

(7) \IT\ dove hai abitato i primi giorni?

where did you live the first days?

\CH\ primi giorni sono eh a casa di mio m/ m/

first day-PL be.1SG/PL at home of my-MASC.SG

mia zio

my-FEM.SG uncle

'the first days I lived with my uncle'

(8) cinese c/ c'è + eh u/ uguale c'è u/ + un festa + di

Chinese there.is identical there.is a party of

grand(i)

big(MASC.PL)

'Chinese (New Year's Day) is the same (as in Italy): there is a big party'

Only few utterances not equipped with verbs:

(9) a. *questo* *un la/ lago*

this-MASC.SG a lake

b. *plim(a) eh + eh un eh + un vi/ un v(e)ideo*

(prize) a videorecorder

'the prize was a videorecorder'

(10)\IT\ *e poi? a Pechino ti sei fermato?*

And then? Did you stay in Beijing?

\CH\ + *poi eh + dempo Beghino*

then time Beijing

The copula cooccurs with words that are full verbs in the TL

(11) \IT\ e + che cosa avete fatto?

and what did you do?

\CH\ fatto eh + eh + prima eh + eh ++ sono lac/ (eh) listolande
do-PP first be.1SG/3PL restaurant

man/ mangia

eat-3SG

\IT\ mhm

\CH\ *sono mangiato*

be.1SG/3PL eat-PP

poi + fa un festa di + eh +++

then do.3SG a party of

'first we ate in a restaurant, we have eaten, then we had a party'

(13) [talking of the former Chinese New Year's Day]

\IT\ mh che bello + ascolta eh: di sera o di giorno?

that's nice; listen, at night or during the day?

\CH\ eh di giorno

on day

eh di sera ah + sera *sono* io in eh +++

at night night be.1SG/3PL I in

aele+o ah va vai a c/ italiano

plane goes go-2SG to Italian

'(I was there) on the daytime; at night I flew to Italy'

(11) \IT\ e + che cosa avete fatto?

and what did you do?

\CH\ fatto eh + eh + prima eh + eh ++ sono lac/ (eh) listolande
do-PP first be.1SG/3PL restaurant

man/ mangia
eat-3SG

\IT\ mhm

\CH\ sono mangiato
be.1SG/3PL eat-PP

poi + fa un festa di + eh +++
then do.3SG a party of

'first we ate in a restaurant, we have eaten, then we had a party'

(12) \CH\ eh + sono eh + eh +++ mi + a/ abito eh + eh Zhejiang

be.1SG/3PL me live.1SG Zhejiang

'I used to live in Zhejiang'

(15)

\CH\ poi eh + que/ ah ++ eh / lunedì se/ sera + fa
then Monday night does
un + eh un + palale
a a dance-INF

\IT\ un?

a?

\CH\ *uno + *discodance* de palale*
a discodance de dance-INF

‘then on Monday night we danced, we danced
discomusic’ (CH02, 11months:26 days)

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in the Basic Variety in Italian L2, as regards the word class of the verb, lexical units seem to be already differentiated, although with significant limitations, as examples (9) and (10) without verbs and example (14) with the verb *ballare* used in a NP show.

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the cooccurrence of the copula with full verbs demonstrate that the copula is used as a marker of assertion before verbal morphology starts developing.

Use of the copula as a marker of finiteness investigated in an Eritrean learner of Italian as a SL (Bernini 2003)

16) MK: non non ha f:/ siamo non ha fatto
not not has we-are not has done
'we did not do (our show)'

17) MK: era si chiama Giorgio no?
was REFL calls Giorgio no
'he was called Giorgio'

(Bernini 2003: 174)

The use of the copula by CHU represents the immediately previous stage to that described by Bernini (2003).

Thank you!

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