

LUISA TRONCONE

University of Salerno/University of Lille

ltroncone@unisa.it

FLAVIO PISCIOTTA

University of Salerno

fpisciotta@unisa.it

INTRODUCTION

- ✱ In Italian, the most prototypical affixal intensification strategy is the elative suffix *-issimo* (Cacchiani 2011; Napoli & Ravetto 2017), typically used with adjectives (Merlini Barbaresi 2004), but also exploited with nouns (Grandi 2002), and adverbs (Gaeta 2011). For verbs, research only concentrated on its use with past participles in adjectival function (Merlini Barbaresi 2004; Napoli 2013). However, usage data show that the suffix also occurs in other verbal forms, especially in playful/informal contexts such as social media posts. These uses of *-issimo* are particularly interesting since evaluative suffixation in the verbal domain in Italian is rather infrequent.
- ✱ The aim of our study is twofold: on one hand, offering a description of the use and distribution of *-issimo* with verbal bases in Italian, by investigating occurrences found on X (formerly Twitter) posts; on the other hand, understanding what is intensified in such verbs, and if the intensifying sub-meaning depends on the verbal bases' semantic features.

METHODS AND DATA

- ✱ Extraction of verbs from the fundamental vocabulary of Italian (De Mauro 2003) and ranking them by their frequency in the VoLIP corpus (Voghera et al. 2014).
- ✱ First 300 verbs, search the Italian section of X for specific verbal forms (Grandi 2008).
- ✱ Annotation of the verbs by *Aktionsart* (ACTIVITY, RESULTATIVE, ATELIC PUNCTUAL, ACHIEVEMENT, STATIVE), and semantic class (Wordnet, Roventini et al. 2006).
- ✱ Annotation of the verbs based on the intensified feature in the occurrences.

INTENSIFIED FEATURE ANNOTATION

Our annotation schema (partly based on previous works about evaluation in the verbal domain, Portero Muñoz 1997; Fleischhauer 2016; Napoli & Ravetto 2017; Audring et al. 2021) featured:

- ✱ INTENSITY,
- ✱ DURATION,
- ✱ COMPLETION,
- ✱ ARGUMENT QUANTITY,
- ✱ REITERATION,
- ✱ MANNER,
- ✱ ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE (IF).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Formally, the suffix *-issimo* follows the last consonant of the verb form, may the truncated vowel be morphemic or not (1).

- (1) *Non ho visto mezzo minuto dell' Atalanta ma sto godend-issimo*
 NEG AUX.PRS.IND.1SG watch.PTCP.PST.M.SG half.M.SG
 minute.SG of.DET.M.SG Atalanta but
 AUX.PRS.IND.1SG enjoy.PROG-ELAT
 'I didn't even watch half a minute of Atalanta BC's match but I'm enjoying [the result] a lot'

As a consequence, overt person marking is often missing, and is to be inferred from the context. However, sometimes it can be marked either before (2) or after (3) the suffix, but this last strategy is quite rare.

- (2) *Lo s-o-issimo che tu lo sai*
 PRON know.PRS-1SG-ELAT COMP 2SG.NOM PRON know.2SG
 'I know very well you know'
- (3) *La lontananza aiuta. Aiut-issim-a.*
 DET distance help.PRS.3SG help.PRS-ELAT-3SG
 'Distance helps. It helps a lot'

Participles of unaccusative verbs keep gender marking (4).

- (4) *La ship ormai è partit-issim-a.*
 DET (relation)ship already AUX.PRS.IND.3SG
 start.PTCP-ELAT-F give.IMP.2PL-1SG.DAT joy.PL
 'The (relation)ship has already powerfully started. Give me joy'

Many occurrences of the infinitive showed the intensification applying to the preceding modal or the whole sentence (*dobbiamo andarissimo* 'we must absolutely/immediately go'), so these cases were not included in our semantic annotation.

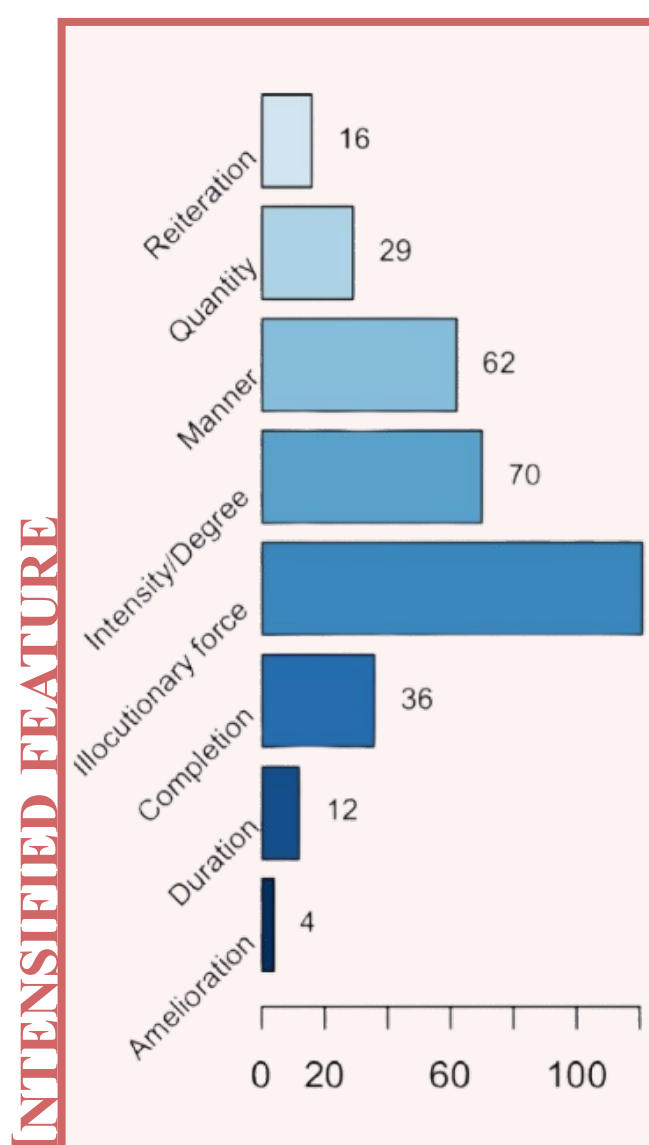
TENSE

AKTIONSART

SEMANTIC CLASS

Achievement	61
Activity	46
Puntual atelic	27
Resultative	31
Stative	36

change	26
communication	39
mental	87
motion	56
obj_related	24
physical	28
possession	27
social	31
stative	32



INTENSIFIED FEATURE/AKTIONSART

	Achievement	Activity	Puntual atelic	Resultative	State
Amelioration	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17
Completion	3.58	-2.39	0.8	1.6	-1.33
Duration	-2.29	6.18	-1.33	-1.33	-1.73
Illocutionary Force	2.72	-5.15	2.83	-2.06	1.84
Intensity/Degree	-1.99	3.04	-2.79	-2.12	3.17
Manner	1.0	1.55	2.74	-2.85	1.75
Quantity	-2.38	0.17	-1.58	4.61	0.17
Reiteration	0.17	0.17	3.01	-1.61	-1.33

The strongest correlation ($V = 0.34$) was found between Aktionsart and the intensified feature (see Appendix).

- ✱ Notably, the most frequent intensified feature is ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE. It is predominantly associated with the present tense, likely due to its inherently pragmatic meaning (5).

- (5) [...] *Ci sta! Ci staissimo!*
 '[...] I agree. I totally agree!'

- ✱ This is true for all actional classes, except for **Activity** verbs.

- It was previously observed (Grandi & Iacobini 2008; Napoli & Ravetto 2017) that evaluation mainly applies to Activity verbs. Consequently, from the addressee's perspective, IF may be the least intuitive feature to apply when interpreting intensification in this verb class.

- ✱ On the other hand, it was also pointed out that non-durative verbs cannot be evaluated through affixes (Grandi & Iacobini 2008).

- ✱ In our results, however, *-issimo* is found with all actional classes.

- ✱ **Puntual atelic** verbs seem to display REITERATION (9), while resisting Intensity/Degree.

- (9) *mizzica lo usissimo anche quando parlo [...]*
 'I use mizzica a lot also when I speak [...]

- ✱ **Resultative** verbs are intensified by QUANTITY (10). However, this is also driven by the correlation between resultative verbs and the wordnet class of **object-related**, since the intensified quantity regards the quantity of the object the verb is related to.

- (10) *Ho tagliatissimo i capelli [...]*
 'I cut a lot of hair [...]

- ✱ **State** verbs are mostly intensified by INTENSITY/DEGREE (11), and negatively correlate with MANNER. This is also probably linked to the wordnet class of **mental**, to whom many state verbs belong.

- (11) *Se succedesse, e io sperissimo di no, ci sarà da piangere e da mandare giù parecchi rospi*
 'If that happens, and I wholeheartedly hope it doesn't, we'll have to cry and swallow the bitter pill'

- ✱ With regard to other classes of intensified features, MANNER remains underspecified. It was applied in cases where the intensified verb could plausibly be paraphrased by a verb modified with an adverbial (12). The nature of MANNER intensification explains why it is most commonly associated with **motion verbs** and never with **states**.

- (12) *quindi in realtà ho vinto? se è soft rock/indie rock ho vintissimo*
 'so actually I won? if it's rock/indie rock I totally won'

- ✱ The AMELIORATION class was attested in a few cases (13). This raises the question of whether a corresponding Pejoration class might exist. Such a class was not found in our dataset (likely due to the semantics of the suffix under investigation).

- (13) [...] *sanno suonarissimo.*
 '[...] they can play very well'

- ✱ A further issue concerns the necessity of maintaining a separate AMELIORATION/PEJORATION class, as such evaluative nuances might instead be accounted for as context-specific instances of MANNER modification.

Despite the tendencies found, intensified features are mostly unpredictable based on the verb class, and the meaning of *-issimo* stays underspecified if out of context, remaining a creative and expressive mean to convey pragmatic meanings.

We attempted to propose a classification of verbal features intensification, which could contribute to a more detailed mapping of the evaluative meanings in the verbal domain, which remains understudied.

In fact, classifying evaluation for verbs constitutes a non-trivial task, since BIG-SMALL and GOOD-BAD are not transparent labels for the verbal domain.

REFERENCES & APPENDIX

