

Intransitive and unaccusative verbs.

A linguistic study on English, Italian and Sardinian.

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1. The Sardinian language

1.1. A socio-linguistic overview

The Sardinian language can be defined as a group of dialects spoken in the whole island of Sardinia, except in Calasetta and Carloforte (Ligurian), in Alghero (Catalan), in the region of Gallura and the North-Coast (Corsican), while in Sassari we find a dialect developed from the contacts of local people with Genoese and Pisan in the XII century¹.

Logudorese and Nuorese, spoken in the Centre-North of island, and Campidanese² in the Centre-South, have had the same phonetic, grammatical, syntactic and lexical phenomena, which determined homogeneity between the varieties.

During the centuries, Sardinian varieties have become so different from one another in phonology, morphology and lexicon that now Campidanese people can hardly understand Nuorese speakers from the region of Barbagia. Syntactically, the varieties have kept their homogeneity.

However, present Sardinian (or, better, every local variety of it) is the language used in informal communicative events. This is in part due to the differences among Sardinian varieties just mentioned above, and to the prestige of standard Italian. In fact, Sardinian has benefited of official recognition only since 1999, when it was recognised as a minority language.

In this situation of *diglossia* people are now used to speaking Sardinian only in their private life, with families or friends, while Italian is used in public occasions.

Bolognesi (2002) affirmed that after the recognition of Sardinian as a *minority language*³, people have appeared more determined to use their language in social contexts, as for example on radio and TV programs.

In the last five years, a number of courses or linguistic research on Sardinian have been activated especially by the universities of Cagliari and Sassari.

¹ Wagner, M.L (1951): p. 394

² Logudorese and Campidanese are two main groups of Sardinian varieties as you can see in the map at page 20.

³ There are not any linguistic differences between a *language* and *dialect*. Simone (1973) defines a dialect as a language in all respects, with only one difference: in a country, only a limited number of people can use the dialect.

My study focuses on the variety spoken in Baunei and Santa Maria Navarrese, on the East Coast of the island.

In the following map, you can see how the different dialect varieties are shared in Sardinian and you can also localise the little town of Baunei, in the region of Ogliastra.



Main Sardinian varieties

For my investigation, I selected a precise group of four speakers, two of forty-five years old, who have been living in S. M. Navarrese for forty years, and two, who are seventies and lived for fifty years in Baunei, and are now living in Santa Maria Navarrese. Sometimes I needed to ask some other people for judgements when my informers were uncertain.

I compared their grammatical judgements and mine in order to understand how Italian can influence the knowledge of Sardinian (as the most part of young people, as I am, speak Italian as L1 and Sardinian as L2).

Nowadays, all Sardinian speakers, included interviewed people, speak Italian more or less fluently and reciprocal interferences are inevitable. Even people who do not speak Sardinian develop an Italian regional variety containing Sardinian features.

1.2. *Some features of Baunese*

1.2.1. *Spelling and pronunciation*

Sardinian has not a system of graphic conventions, but recently an official orthography has been proposed by the ‘Assessorato della Pubblica Istruzione’. Sardinian does not exist as a standard language; writers use their own type of spelling, usually based on the variety which they speak. Some writers adopt a phonetic approach, others base their spelling on the etymology of words, and some others use a more abstract, phonologic way.

In this chapter, I will adopt a phonologic spelling and in order to show the main characteristics of Baunese and to explain how Baunese examples in my work can be read, I will present some features in the section below.

(i) A consonant at the end of word is not allowed before a pause, so an *epenthetic* vowel is inserted.

- (1) a. *Us ammìgus tuus* [us_ammìguš_tuus]
 ‘the friend(m.pl.) your’
- b. *Us ammìgus* [us_ammìgusu]
 ‘the friend(m.pl)’
- (2) *Pàppat* [pappada]
 ‘eat(3rdsng)’
- (3) *Timet* [tìmedε]
 ‘fear(3rdsng)’
- (4) *Ø Fùit* [fuidi]
 ‘run (3rdsng)’

Since epenthesis is predictable from the phonologic context, it will be never transcript in the spelling.

(ii) rhotacism: “s > r” before voiced consonants or [s], [z]:

- (5) *Us ammìgus tùus* [us_ammìguš_tuus]
 ‘the friend(m.pl) your(m.pl)’
- (6) *Us ammìgus mìus* [us_ammìgur_mìus]
 ‘the friends(m.pl) my(m.pl)’
- (7) *Us nonnóis* [ur_nonnouisi]
 ‘the grandparents’

(iii) assimilation:

- (8) a. (\emptyset) *At bidiu* [a_bbidi]

‘has seen’

b. (\emptyset) *At allegàu* [ađ_allɛgau]

‘has spoken’
- (9) a. (\emptyset) *Bidiu at?* [bidiu adɛ]

‘seen has?’

b. (\emptyset) *Allegàu at?* [allɛgau adɛ]

‘spoken has?’

(iv) occlusive consonants become less strong in intervocalic position (*lenition*):

$p > \beta$, $t > d$, $k > ɣ$.

- (10) *Su pane* [su_βane]

‘the bread’
- (11) *Sa catèna* [sa_ɣaɛna]

‘the chain’

1.2.2. Morphology

(i) Definite articles are: singular *su* (m), *sa* (f); plural *us* (m), *as* (f); (note the different forms of masculine plurals: *-os/ -us/ -es*).

- (12) a. *Su picciòccu* [su_βiççiɔkku]

‘the boy’

b. *Us picciòccos* [uʃ_piççiɔkɔs]

‘the boy (m.pl.)’
- (13) a. *Su pippìu* [su_βippiu]

‘the child’

b. *Us pippìus* [uʃ_pippius]

‘the child(m.pl.)’
- (14) a. *Su mònte* [su mɔntɛ]

‘the mountain’

- b. *Us mòntes* [ur_mòntɛsɛ]
 ‘the mountains’
- (15) a. *S’ ammìga* [s_ammìga]
 ‘the friend (f)’
- b. *As ammìgas* [as_ammìgasa]
 ‘the friend (f.pl.)’

(ii) Possessives are in post-nominal position:

- (16) a. *babbu suu*
 ‘father his’
- b. **suu babbu*
- c. *sa macchina sua*
 ‘the car his’
- d. **sa sua macchina*
- e. *unu ammigu suu*
 ‘one friend his’
- f. **unu suu ammigu*

(iii) Indefinite quantifiers can occupy a pre-nominal or post-nominal position without change in meaning:

- (17) *mèdas pippìus⁴ = pippìus mèdas*
 ‘many child(m.pl)’

(iv) The universal quantifier *tottu* occupies only the pre-nominal position and it is not in agreement with the NP:

- (18) a. *tottu us pippìus*
 ‘all the child(m.pl)’
- b. **us pippìus tottu*
 ‘the child(m.pl) all’

⁴ Probably the right position of indefinite determiners is the post-nominal one used especially by speakers who have Sardinian as L1, but they tend to accept also the pre-nominal position.

(v) The auxiliary verbs used to form compound verb tenses followed by the past participle of the lexical verb are *àre* (have) and *èssere* (be); I give here the Present Simple of the two auxiliary verbs:

(19)

<u>àre</u>			<u>èssere</u>		
<i>geo</i>	<i>àppo</i>		<i>geo</i>	<i>sòe</i>	[sòe]
<i>tui</i>	<i>as</i>	[ase]	<i>tui</i>	<i>sès</i>	[sèze]
<i>issu</i>	<i>at</i>	[aɖe]	<i>issu</i>	<i>iste/èste</i>	[iste]/[èste]
<i>noso</i>	<i>àmus</i>	[amusu]	<i>noso</i>	<i>sémus</i>	[sémus]
<i>bosàttro</i>	<i>àis</i>	[aizi]	<i>bosàttro</i>	<i>séis</i>	[séizi]
<i>issus</i>	<i>ant / ante</i>		<i>issus</i>	<i>fùntis</i>	[funtis]

(vi) Auxiliary “ESSERE” (to be): there are two basic forms of 3rd singular person: *iste* / *èste*. If a clitic precedes it, only the form *èste* is allowed.

- (20) a. *Cùssu pippìu iste erribbàu erisèro*
‘that child is arrived yesterday’
b. *Cùssu pippìu s’ èste abbruttàu*
‘that child SI is dirtied’

(vii) before a word beginning with a consonant the suffix “-te” falls and we have rhotacism:

- (21) *Cùssu pippìu is’ béllu* [ir_bèllu]
‘that child is nice’
(22) *Issu s’ ès drommìu* [s’ɛr_drommìu]
‘he SI is fallen asleep’

I will speak about the auxiliary selection in English, Italian and Sardinian and study it in depth in Ch. 2, where I am going to speak about the behaviour of unaccusative verbs. For the moment, it is possible to assume that *àre* is used as non-marked auxiliary, because *èssere* is used with unaccusative verbs and with verbs which have a clitic reflexive pronoun.

1.2.3. *Some syntactic features of Baunese*

(i) Word order in Baunese, like in other Sardinian varieties, is **SVO** (Subject-Verb-Object) both in main and embedded declaratives:

- (23) a. *Giuànni ligget unu libbru*
‘John reads a book’
S V O
- b. *Giuànni drómmit*
‘John sleeps’
S V
- c. *Giuànni erribbat*
‘John arrives’
S V

(ii) Declarative sentences introduced by the conjunction *ca* or *ki* are frequent in Sardinian and in Baunese.

- (24) *Mariu at naràu a Laura ca erribbat crasa*
‘Mario has told (to) Laura that arrive(3rdsng) tomorrow’

The conjunction *ca* / *ki* sometimes is used in clauses instead of *poitte* (why) :

- (25) *Soe cuntènta ca / poitte ses bénniu*
‘am happy(f.sng) that / why are(2ndsng) come(m.sng)’

Sometimes we can find the conjunction *ca* and the interrogative adverb together as answer to a question:

- (26) Q.: *Eppoitte⁵ ti ses cumportàu angàsi?*
‘why te are(2ndsng) behaved(m.sng) that way’

⁵ There are different types of pieces of information required which depend on interrogative adverbs or pronouns introducing a question, such as *eccàle* (which one), *eccàndo* (when), *eccàntu* (how many / much), *eccomènte* (how), *eitte* (what), *ecchine* (who), *eppoitte* (why), *enùe* (where).

A.: *Poïtte-ca as fattu a malu.*
 ‘why-that have(2ndsng) behaved badly

(iii) There are two kinds of direct interrogative sentences: *yes/no* questions and *Wh*-questions. The first type of questions expects as answer a confirmation or a negation of what is asked; the second type requires a specific piece of information and the questions are introduced by interrogative adverbs or interrogative pronouns.

- (27) a. *Trabballàu at Mariu òe?*
 ‘worked has Mario today?’
 b. *Eccàndo at trabballàu Mariu?*
 ‘when has worked Mario?’
 c. *Cunténtu sès?*
 ‘happy are(2ndsng)?’
 d. *Eppoïtte sès cunténtu?*
 ‘why are(2ndsng) happy(m.sng)?’

The examples in (27a-c) are *yes/no* questions. Both the past participle of the lexical verb *trabballàre* and the predicative adjective *cunténtu* raise to [*spec, CP*] position. In (27b-d), which are *Wh*-questions, the interrogative elements seem to block verb movement: they are found in [*spec, CP*] position and block the lexical verb in its original position.

(iv) *Subject-verb agreement:*

Agreement is a relationship between words or phrases that share one or more grammatical features. For examples, in the NP *le bambine* the article *le* shares gender (feminine) and number (plural) features with the head N°. The finite verbal forms agree in person and number with the syntactic subject and Baunese has the same behaviour as Italian.

Consider these examples:

- number and person agreement:

- (28) a. *Gianni stùdiat mèda*
 ‘John study(3rdsng) a lot’
 b. *Us dottòres erribbànt cràsa*
 ‘the doctor(m.pl) arrive(3rd pl) tomorrow’

- c. *Cràsa errìbbant us figgius de Paule*
 ‘tomorrow arrive(3rdpl) the son(m.pl) of Paul’

- gender agreement:

- (29) a. *Laura iste stràcca*
 ‘Laura is tired (f.pl.)’
 b. *Mariu iste stràccu*
 ‘Mario is tired (m.sng)’
 c. *Laura e Mariu fùntis stràccus*
 ‘Laura and Mario are(3rdpl) tired (pl)’
 d. *Laura e Anna fùntis stràccas*
 ‘Laura and Ann are(3rdpl) tired (pl)’

Past participles must agree (in number and gender) with the object if the auxiliary is *èssere* (30):

- (30) a. *Is partìa sa figgia de Màriu*
 ‘is left(+f.) the daughter of Mario’
 (SNG) (SNG) (SNG)
 b. *Fùntis partius us figgius de Mariu*
 ‘are(3rdpl) left(m) the son(m.pl) of Mario’
 (PL) (PL) (M. PL)
 c. *Fùntis partias as figgias de Mariu*
 ‘are(3rdpl) left(f) the daughter(f) of Mario’
 (PL) (PL) (F. PL)

(v) *Impersonal and passive si*:

Some examples in Italian with passive *si* are:

- (31) a. A Pasqua si mangiano sempre (i) ravioli
 ‘at Easter SI eat(3rdpl) always the ravioli’
 b. A Pasqua si sono sempre mangiati (i) ravioli
 ‘at Easter SI are(3rdpl) always eaten(m.pl) the ravioli’
 (32) a. A Pasqua si mangia sempre (l’) agnello
 ‘at Easter SI eat(3rdsng) always the lamb’

- b. A Pasqua si é sempre mangiato l' agnello
 'at Easter SI is always eaten the lamb'

In (33) we have an example using the “medio-impersonal” *si*:

- (33) Se si parte presto non si trova traffico
 'if SI leaves early not SI find traffic'

The Sardinian speakers whom I interviewed tend to accept the *si*, but they also consider the sentences as interference, except in case of a real impersonal *si*, as in (38)-(39). The examples in (31) and (32) can be contrasted with (34-37):

- (34) a. *A Pàsca pappàmus sèmpre (us) culurgìones*
 'at Easter eat(1stpl) always the ravioli'
 b. **A Pàsca si pàppant sèmpre *(us) culurgìones*
 'at Easter SI eat(3rdpl) always the ravioli'
 c. **A Pàsca si pàppat sèmpre (us) culurgìones*
 'at Easter SI eat(3rdsng) always the ravioli'
- (35) a. *A Pàsca amus sèmpre pappàu (us) culurgìones*
 'at Easter have(1stpl) always eaten the ravioli'
 b. % *A Pàsca si fùntis sèmpre pappàu *(us) culurgìones*
 'at Easter SI are(3rdp) always eaten the ravioli'
 c. **A Pàsca s'es sèmpre pappàu (us) culurgìones*
 'at Easter SI is always eaten the ravioli'
- (36) a. *A Pàsca pappàmus sèmpre *(s') angìone*
 'at Easter eat(1rdpl) always the lamb'
 b. **A Pàsca si pàppat sèmpre (s') angìone*
 'at Easter SI eat(3rdsng) always the lamb'
- (37) a. *A Pàsca amus sèmpre pappàu (s') angìone*
 'at Easter have(1stpl) always eaten the lamb'
 b. % *A Pàsca s'es sèmpre pappau (s') angìone*
 'at Easter SI is always eaten the lamb'

Note that the examples (34b-c) and (35b) can be grammatical in case that the clitic is considered as a reflexive element. In this case, for example (34b) means that “someone eats always ravioli at Easter” because in Sardinian the *pappàre* is a reflexive verb, when it is followed by an object. The examples in (38) and (39) contain the impersonal *si* and in this case is accepted by the speakers.

- (38) *Ki si bat tróppu in prèsses si riskiat sa multa*
 ‘if SI go(3rdsng) too much fast SI risk(3rdsng) the fine’
- (39) *Ki si bat in Cina si riskiat de ciappàre sa maladia*
 ‘if SI go(3rdsng) in China SI risk(3rdsng) to get the illness’

(vi) *Object-verb agreement:*

In Italian, agreement between the verb past participle and the object is possible if the object is a 3rd person clitic (40)-(41). In Sardinian there is the same behaviour (42)-(43):

- (40) a. *Ha stirato le camice lui oggi*
 ‘has ironed the shirts he today’
 (-AGR) (F.PL)
- b. *Le ha stirate lui oggi*
 ‘them has ironed he today’
 (F.PL) (+AGR)
- (41) a. *Ha stirato la camicia male*
 ‘has ironed the shirt badly’
 (-AGR) (F.SNG)
- b. *L(a) ha stirata male*
 ‘it has ironed badly’
 (F.SNG) (+AGR)
- (42) a. *At stirau as camisas issu òe*
 (-AGR) (F.PL)
- b. *Ddas at stiradas issu òe*
 (F.PL) (+AGR)
- (43) a. *At istirau sa camisa male*
 (-AGR) (F.SNG.)
- b. *Dd(a) at stirada male*

(F.SNG) (+AGR)

(vii) In Italian we find the extraction of the clitic *ne* from indefinite direct objects of transitive verbs and from indefinite post-verbal subjects of unaccusative verbs. The example in (44a) shows the transitive verb *comprare* in present tense followed by an indefinite QP. Extraction of the clitic is possible as in (44b). When the verb is in a compound tense (45a), the past participle agrees with *ne* (45b):

- (44) a. Laura compra due/tante penne
 ‘Laura buys two/many(f.pl) pen(f.pl)’
 b. Laura *ne_x* compra due/tante [_{tx}]
 ‘Laura NE buys two/many(f.pl) _’
- (45) a. Laura ha comprato due/tante penne
 ‘Laura has bought two/many(f.pl) pen(f.pl)’
 b. Laura *ne_x* ha comprato/e due/tante [_{tx}]
 ‘Laura NE has bought/(f.pl) two/many(f.pl) _’

Ne extraction is allowed in Sardinian, where the clitic is *inde* (46b)-(47b). The phenomenon is different from Italian because there is no agreement between the past participle and the NP, and for this reason (47c) is ungrammatical

- (46) a. *Laura pigat duas/mèdas pinnas*
 ‘Laura buys two/many(f.pl) pen(f.pl)’
 b. *Laura inde pigat duas/mèdas* [_{tx}]
 ‘Laura NE buys two/many(f.pl) _’
- (47) a. *Laura at pigàu duas/mèdas pinnas*
 ‘Laura has bought two/many(f.pl) pen(f.pl)’
 b. *Laura inde at pigàu duas/mèdas* [_{tx}]
 ‘Laura NE has bought/(f.pl) two/many(f.pl) _’
 c. **Laura inde at pigadas⁶ duas/medas* [_{tx}]

⁶ Note the sentence:

- (i) a. *Ddas at pigàdas*
 them (f.pl.) has bought
 b. *Indeddas at pigàdas (appissu)*
 NE+them(f.pl) has brought (up above)

'Laura NE has bought/(f.pl) two/many(f.pl) _'

2. The unaccusative hypothesis

2.1. The existential construction

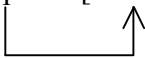
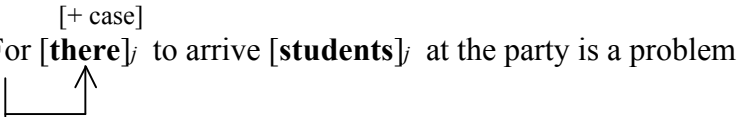
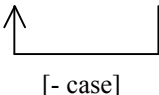
2.1.1. English

Consider the contrast between (48) and (49). Both contain one-argument verbs:

- (48) a. There arrived three men at the hospital
 b. Three men arrived at the hospital
- (49) a. * There phoned three men
 b. Three men phoned

The existential construction is a syntactic phenomenon where the subject of an unaccusative verb, but not the subject of an intransitive verb, can be in a post-verbal position and is in agreement with the verb. The first position [*spec, IP*] is a case-position usually associated to the nominative case assignment. It is occupied by the expletive element *there* (48). The existential construction is not allowed with intransitive verbs in English (49).

There, as pleonastic element, does not give any semantic contribution to the sentences; it cannot occupy a case-less position (50):

- (50) a. I expect [**there**]_j to arrive [**three students**]_j

- b. For [**there**]_j to arrive [**students**]_j at the party is a problem

- c. * [**There**]_j to arrive [**students**]_j at the party is a problem


There cannot receive a thematic role. The post-verbal indefinite subject is co-indexed (*j*) with the expletive in the canonical subject position making the **chain** [*expletive, post-verbal subject*]. The

Inde in (b) is a locative element.

expletive is assigned nominative case by Inflection. The post-verbal NP is in a chain with the expletive and so it receives the same case as the expletive.

Therefore (48a) is the base form of the sentence. In (48b) the NP moves covertly from its original position to the canonical subject position and **replaces** the expletive at **Logical Form**, the level that is relevant for the interpretation. Here the expletive is eliminated and replaced by its associate NP.

(51) [Three men]_i arrived [t_i] at the hospital

Considering the sentence with a compound tense it is possible to note that the auxiliary selected in both cases is *have*.

(52) a. There have arrived three men at the hospital
 b. Three men have arrived at the hospital

(53) a. *There have telephoned three men
 b. Three men have telephoned

2.1.2. German and French

German displays subject inversion when the verb is unaccusative and the first position of a sentence (called *Vorfeld*) is occupied by the expletive *es*. With intransitive verbs German has the same behaviour as Italian⁷.

(54) a. Es⁸ kommen drei Leute gerade an
 ‘there come(3rd pl) three people straight AN’
 b. [Drei Leute]_i kommen [t_i] gerade an
 ‘three people come(3rd pl) _ straight AN’

French allows the existential construction with unaccusative verbs (55), while intransitive verbs do not allow it because the post-verbal subject position is not allowed with verbs like *téléphoner* (56). The verb is singular but the post-verbal subject is plural.

⁷ A. Cardinaletti & G. Giusti (1996): «I contesti in cui appare “ES” sono gli stessi che ammettono la mancanza di “ES” nel Mittelfeld, le frasi contenenti il passivo impersonale, il passivo (“personale”) o l’inaccusativo»

⁸ A German informer judges the following sentences grammatical:

(i) Es rufen drei Leute an
 ‘there phone (3rd pl.) three people AN’

- (55) a. Il est arrivé trois personnes
 ‘there is arrived three people’
 b. Trois personnes_i sont arrivées [t_i]
 ‘three people are arrived(+f.pl) _’
- (56) a. *Il a téléphoné trois personnes
 ‘there has telephoned three people’
 b. Trois personnes ont téléphoné
 ‘three people have telephoned’

French displays *ne/en*. The sentence (55) can become (57). As the existential construction is not possible with intransitive verbs, (58) shows that *en* extraction is not possible.

- (57) Il_x en est arrivé trois [t_x]
 ‘there NE is arrived three _’
- (58) a. *Il_x en a téléphoné trois [t_x]
 ‘there NE has phoned three _’
 b. *Il en ont telefoné [t_x]
 ‘there NE have phoned _’

From (55)-(57) we can obtain the following generalisation:

- the unaccusative verb *arriver* keeps the auxiliary *être* in the existential construction, which does not agree with the post-verbal subject, but with the pleonastic element *il* (3rdsng.). The past participle does not agree either.
- the intransitive verb *téléphoner* selects the *avoir* auxiliary but as the existential construction is not allowed in French with intransitive verbs (56a), it is not possible even the *en*-extraction (58a-b).

2.1.3. Italian: verbs and *ne*-extraction

Italian does not allow *ne*-extraction from intransitive verbs:

- (59) a. Arrivano tanti turisti
 ‘arrive(3rdpl) many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl)’
 b. Nex arrivano tanti [t_x]

- (60) a. Sono arrivati tanti turisti
 ‘are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl)’
 b. Ne sono arrivati tanti [tx]
 (NE are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many(m.pl) _)

- (61) a. Telefonano tanti turisti
 ‘phone(3rdpl) many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl)’
 b. *Ne telefonano tanti [tx]
 ‘NE phone(3rdpl) many(m.pl) _’

- (62) a. Hanno telefonato tanti turisti
 ‘have (3rdpl) phoned many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl)’
 b. *Ne hanno telefonato tanti [tx]
 ‘NE have (3rdpl) phoned many(m.pl) _’

2.2. Unaccusative and intransitive verbs in Baunese

In Sardinian, and more specifically in the Baunese variety, intransitive verbs display a peculiar behaviour as they seem to share some features with unaccusative verbs.

2.2.1. The existential construction

Sardinian, like other languages, allows the so-called existential construction, though it also displays some differences in comparison with English, German, French. Consider the following examples in Sardinian about the existential construction. In (63) there is an example corresponding to the Italian form of *c’è/ ci sono*. The examples (64) and (65) contain the unaccusative verb, *errìbbàre*, while (66) and (67) contain the intransitive verb *teleffonàre*.

- (63) a. %Jè/ ince fùntis mèdas Turistas in s’ istàde
 ‘there are(3rd pl) many tourist(m.pl) in the Summer’
 b. J’inc’ at mèdas Turistas in s’ istàde
 ‘there has (3rd sng) many tourist(m.pl) in the Summer’
 (64) a. % Errìbbant mèdas turistas tedèscos dognànnu
 ‘arrive(3rdpl) many tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) every year’
 b. Errìbbat mèdas turistas tedèscos dognànnu
 ‘arrive(3rd sng) many tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) every year’
 (65) a. % Mèdas turistas tedèscos errìbbant dognànnu

- ‘many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) arrive(3rdpl) every year’
 b. *Mèdas turistas tedèscos erribbat dognànnu*
 ‘many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) arrive(3rdsng) every year’
 (66) a. % *Telèffonant mèdas dottòres Dógnadiè*
 ‘phone (3rdpl) many doctor (m.pl) every day’
 b. *Telèffonat mèdas dottòres Dógnadiè*
 ‘phone (3rdsng) many doctor (m.pl) every day’
 (67) a. % *Mèdas dottòres telèffonant dógnadiè*
 ‘many(m.pl) doctor (m.pl) phone(3rdpl) every day’
 b. *Mèdas dottòres Telèffonat dógnadiè*
 ‘many(m.pl) doctor (m.pl) phone(3rdsng) every day’

In the examples above, we see that in Sardinian (both in Baunese and in the other varieties), the existential construction is possible both with unaccusative and with intransitive verbs. In (63) the elements at the beginning of the sentence, *jè / ince*, are two elements which have a pleonastic function like the English *there*. Sentences in (63a), (64a)-(65a), (66a)-(67a), where the finite verbs agree in number with the plural subjects, are considered the result of interference with Italian but they are grammatical. On the contrary, Sardinians who have Italian as their first language and Sardinian as their second language frequently use them. This can be considered as a syntactic change due to interference with Italian and not generic mistakes due to less linguistic competence in Sardinian for new generations of speakers.

Examples (63b), (64b)-(65b) and (66b)-(67b) are however definitely more correct. Here we have the plural indefinite plural subjects, which can be in pre- or post- verbal position, while the finite verbs are in 3rd singular. Considering the examples above with compound verb tense, we can notice the difference of auxiliary selection.

- (68) a. % *Fùntis erribbàus mèdas turistas Tedèscos*
 ‘are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl)’
 b. *At erribbàu mèdas turistas tedèscos*
 ‘has(3rdsng) arrived(m.sng) many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl)’
 (69) a. % *Ante teleffonàu mèdas dottòres*
 ‘have (3rdpl) phoned (m.pl) many(m.pl) doctor (m.pl)’
 b. *At teleffonàu mèdas dottòres*
 ‘has(3rdsng) phoned (m.sng) many(m.pl) doctor (m.pl)’

The auxiliary for unaccusative verbs is *essere* and usually it allows subject-verb agreement. In this case, we can see that the auxiliary changes to *àre* and does not agree. This peculiar behaviour admits, both in Baunese and in the other Sardinian varieties, in the island the *ne*-clitic extraction even with intransitive verbs.

The existential construction is connected with indefiniteness of the NP subject: when the NP subject is definite, the existential form is ungrammatical. See the following examples:

- with an unaccusative verb:

- (70) a. % *Errìbbant us turistas tedèscos dognànnu*
 ‘arrive(3rdpl) the tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) every year’
 b. **Errìbbat us turistas tedèscos dognànnu*
 ‘arrive(3rdsng) the tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) every year’
- (71) a. *Us* *turistas tedèscos errìbbant dognànnu*
 ‘the(m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) arrive(3rdpl) every year’
 b. **Us turistas tedèscos errìbbat dognànnu*
 ‘the (m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl) arrive(3rdsng) every year’
- (72) a. % *Fùntis errìbbàus mèdas turistas tedèscos*
 ‘are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl)’
 b. *At errìbbàu mèdas turistas tedèscos*
 ‘has(3rdsng) arrived(m.sng) many(m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl)’
- (73) a. % *Fùntis errìbbàus us turistas tedèscos*
 ‘are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) the (m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl)’
 b. **At errìbbàu us turistas tedèscos*
 ‘has(3rdsng) arrived(m.sng) the (m.pl) tourist(m.pl) German(m.pl)’

- with an intransitive verb:

- (74) a. *Telèffonant us dottòres dógnadiè*
 ‘phone (3rdpl) the doctor (m.pl) every day’
 b. **Telèffonat us dottòres dógnadiè*
 ‘phone (3rdsng) the doctor (m.pl) every day’
- (75) a. % *Ante teleffonàu mèdas dottòres*
 ‘have (3rdpl) phoned (m.pl) many(m.pl) doctor (m.pl)’

- b. *At teleffonàu mèdas dottòres*
 ‘has(3rdsng) phoned (m.sng) many(m.pl) doctor (m.pl)’
- (76) a. % *Ante teleffonàu us dottòres*
 ‘have (3rdpl) phoned (m.pl) the (m.pl) doctor (m.pl)’
- b. **At teleffonàu us dottòres*
 ‘has(3rdsng) phoned (m.sng) the (m.pl) doctor (m.pl)’

2.2.2. Micro-variations

These properties are shared by all Sardinian varieties, not only by Baunese. See some examples considering the map on p. 20.

(i) *Central Campidanese (Trexenta):*

- (77) a. *At illómpiu mèdas turistas*
 ‘has arrived many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. % *At zerriàu mèdas turistas*
 ‘has phoned many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’

Not all the speakers accept the example in (77b) and the “%” sign indicate this.

(ii) *Logudorese:*

- (78) a. *Bi at lómpiu medas turistas*
 ‘there has arrived many(pl) tourist (m.pl)’
- b. *At telefonadu medas turistas¹⁴*
 ‘has phoned many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’

According to Jones (1993), in the Nuorese variety the sentences with pre-verbal subject are judged better than those with post-verbal subjects in personal construction of unaccusative verbs.

(iii) *Nuorese:*

- (79) a. *Très pitzinnas (bi) sun vénnitas*
 ‘three child(f.pl) there are(3rd pl) come(f.pl)’
- b. % *(Bi) sun vénnitas très pitzinnas*
 ‘there are(3rd pl) come(f.pl) three child(f.pl)’
- c. *Bi at vénnitu très pitzinnas*

- ‘there has come(f.pl) three child(f.pl)’
 d. *B’ *ant vénnitù trèss pitzìnnas*
 ‘there have(3rd pl) come three child(f.pl)’

The “%” in (79b) shows that speakers prefer the existential construction when the subject occupies a post-verbal position (79c). Baunese has not the same choice.

- (80) a. % *Très pippìas funtis bénnias*
 ‘three child(f.pl) are(3rd pl) come(f.pl)’
 b. (*Ince*) *Funtis bénnias trèss pippìas*
 ‘there are(3rd pl) come(f.pl) three child(f.pl)’
 c. (*Ince*) *At bénniu trèss pippìas*
 ‘there has come(f.pl) three child(f.pl)’
 d. **Ant bénniu trèss pippìas*
 ‘have(3rd pl) come(sng) three child(f.pl)’

The sentence in (80a) sounds strange and more marked to speakers, as if *tres pippìas* were topicalised. Italian influences (80b). (80c) is an existential construction with the auxiliary in singular and the subject in plural and is the best one.

The pleonastic elements *bi* in Nuorese and *ince*⁹ in Baunese usually have a locative meaning but, in these examples, they seem to be necessary in order to assign the subject function to the NP, which has the internal role. In Nuorese *bi* is obligatory, if the auxiliary is *àre* and optional with the auxiliary *be*. In Baunese *ince* is optional with both auxiliaries (80b-c). We assume that *bi* and *ince* are **existential operators** and, added to the indefiniteness of the NP complement, they allow the latter to become the subject of the sentence. If we compare the existential construction in French and Sardinian, we note some correspondences. Consider the examples in (55)-(56), repeated here in (81)-(82):

- (81) a. Il est arrivé trois personnes
 ‘there is arrived three people’
 b. Trois personnes_i sont arrivées [t_i]

⁹ There are two elements in Baunese corresponding to Nuorese *bi*: *ince* and *jè*, but the second is less used than the first one. In this work, I will use the element *ince*, which, as the English *there*, is an element which can have both a locative and an existential meaning.

- (82) a. ‘three people are arrived(+f.pl) _’
 *Il a téléphoné trois personnes
 ‘there has telephoned three people’
 b. Trois personnes ont téléphoné
 ‘three people have telephoned’

French is like Sardinian but there are two important differences:

- a. French selects *be* as auxiliary, while Sardinian selects *have* with unaccusative verbs;
 b. Sardinian allows the existential construction with intransitive verbs; French does not.

2.2.3. The *ne/inde*-extraction

We said that Italian allows *ne*-extraction from the indefinite objects of transitive verbs (83), and from indefinite post-verbal subjects of unaccusative verbs (84): both NPs (different in S-Structure) are **internal arguments** of verbs in D-Structure. It is not allowed with intransitive verbs (85).

- (83) a. Ho letto tanti libri
 ‘have(1stsng) read many(m.pl) book(m.pl)’
 b. *Ne_i* ho letto/i tanti [*t_i*]
 ‘NE have(1stsng) read(m.pl) many(m.pl) _’
 (84) a. Sono arrivati tanti turisti
 ‘are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many tourist(m.pl)’
 b. *Ne_i* sono arrivati tanti [*t_i*]
 ‘NE are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many _’
 (85) a. Hanno telefonato tante donne
 ‘have(3rdpl) telephoned many(f.pl) woman(f.pl)’
 b. **Ne_i* hanno telefonato molte [*t_i*]
 ‘NE have(3rdpl) telephoned many(f.pl) _’

Inde-extraction in Sardinian, where the clitic is *inde*, is possible also from indefinite post-verbal subjects of intransitive verbs.

- transitive verb:

- (86) a. *Lìggio mèdas libbrus*

- ‘read(1stsng) many(m.pl) book(m.pl)’
- b. *Inde liggio mèdas [ti]*
 ‘NE read (1stsng) many(pl) _’
- (87) a. *Appo liggio mèdas libbrus*
 ‘have(1stsng) read many(m.pl) book(m.pl)’
- b. *Inde appo liggio mèdas [ti]*
 ‘NE have(1stsng) read many(pl) _’
- unaccusative verb:
- (88) a. % *Erribbant mèdas turistas*
 ‘arrive(3rdpl) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. **Inde_x erribbant mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE arrive(3rdpl) many(pl) _’
- (89) a. *Erribbat mèdas turistas*
 ‘arrive(3rdsng) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. *Inde_x erribbat mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE arrive(3rdsng) many(pl) _’
- (90) a. % *Fùntis erribbàus mèdas turistas*
 ‘are (3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. %**Inde_fùntis erribbàus mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE are(3rdpl) arrived(m.pl) many(pl) _’
- (91) a. *At erribbàu mèdas turistas*
 ‘has arrived(m.sng) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. *Inde at erribbàu mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE has arrived(m.sng) many(pl) _’

- intransitive verb:

- (92) a. % *Telèffonant mèdas turistas*
 ‘phone(3rdpl) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. **Inde telèffonant mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE phone(3rdpl) many(pl) _’
- (93) a. *Telèffonat mèdas turistas*

- ‘phone(3rdsng) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. *Inde telèffonat mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE phone(3rdsng) many(pl) _’
- (94) a. % *Ant teleffonàu mèdas turistas*
 ‘have(3rdpl) phoned(m.sng) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. **Inde ant teleffonàu mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE have (3rdpl) phone many(pl) _’
- (95) a. *At teleffonàu mèdas turistas*
 ‘has phoned(m.sng) many(pl) tourist(m.pl)’
- b. *Inde at teleffonàu mèdas [tx]*
 ‘NE has(3rdsng) phoned(m.sng) many(pl) _’

From the examples above, we can make the following generalisation about *inde* extraction from intransitive verbs: *inde* extraction is allowed only with the existential construction (89)-(91), (93)-(95). Although the sentences (88)-(90) and (92)-(94) are not correct (though not ungrammatical and so speakers accept them), *inde* extraction is not admitted. The internal or external argument, which become the subject of the sentence, is not only a NP, but a QP, whose head is an Indefinite Quantifier.

In the following syntactic trees, we will see the process of the *inde*-cl extraction. I will assume that the surface position is in the complex head I*, which is the position of object clitics too. As we said before, in Baunese the existential operator *ince* is optional. The lexical verb moves from its lower position to the higher because an adverb as *sèmpre* usually precedes the QP.

The Sardinian-L1 speakers judge grammatical both sentences with a phonetically realised pleonastic element, and sentences with an empty *pro*. Although both versions are correct, they usually prefer the second one.

The lexical verb moves from its lower position to a higher position because an adverb as *sèmpere* usually precedes the QP internal complement.

After every tree, I will explain the INDE-extraction in the different cases. A problem will be solved later: the case assignment to the QP complement of the unaccusative and intransitive verbs. I will try to give some hypothesis at the end of my work.

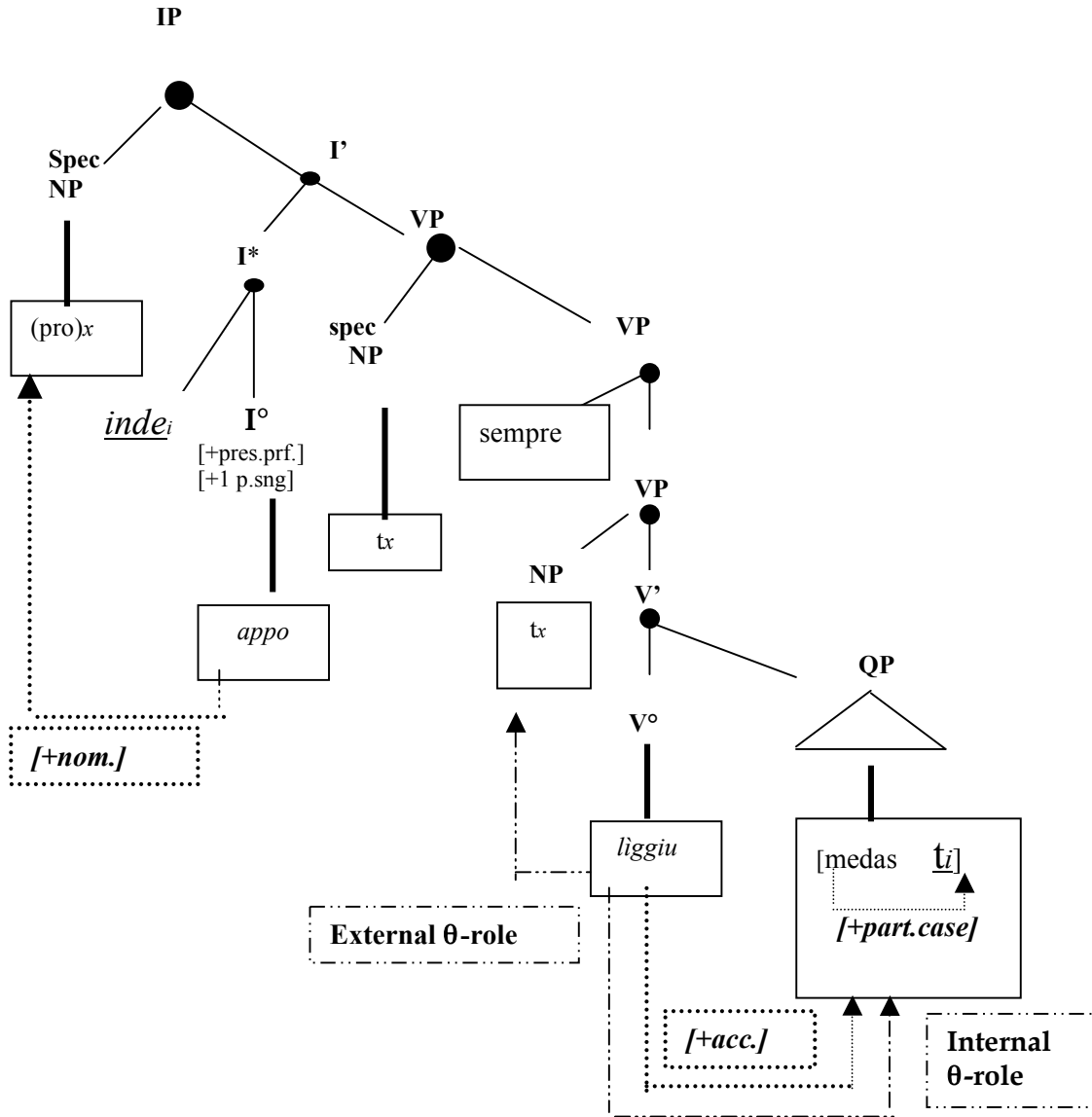
2.2.4. Syntactic trees

The following syntactic trees will serve to explain the *inde*-extraction in Sardinian. We assume that the surface position of the clitic is in the complex haed I*.

(96) Transitive verb:

Appo liggiu sèmpre mèdas libbrus

Inde_i appo liggiu sèmpre medas [t_i]

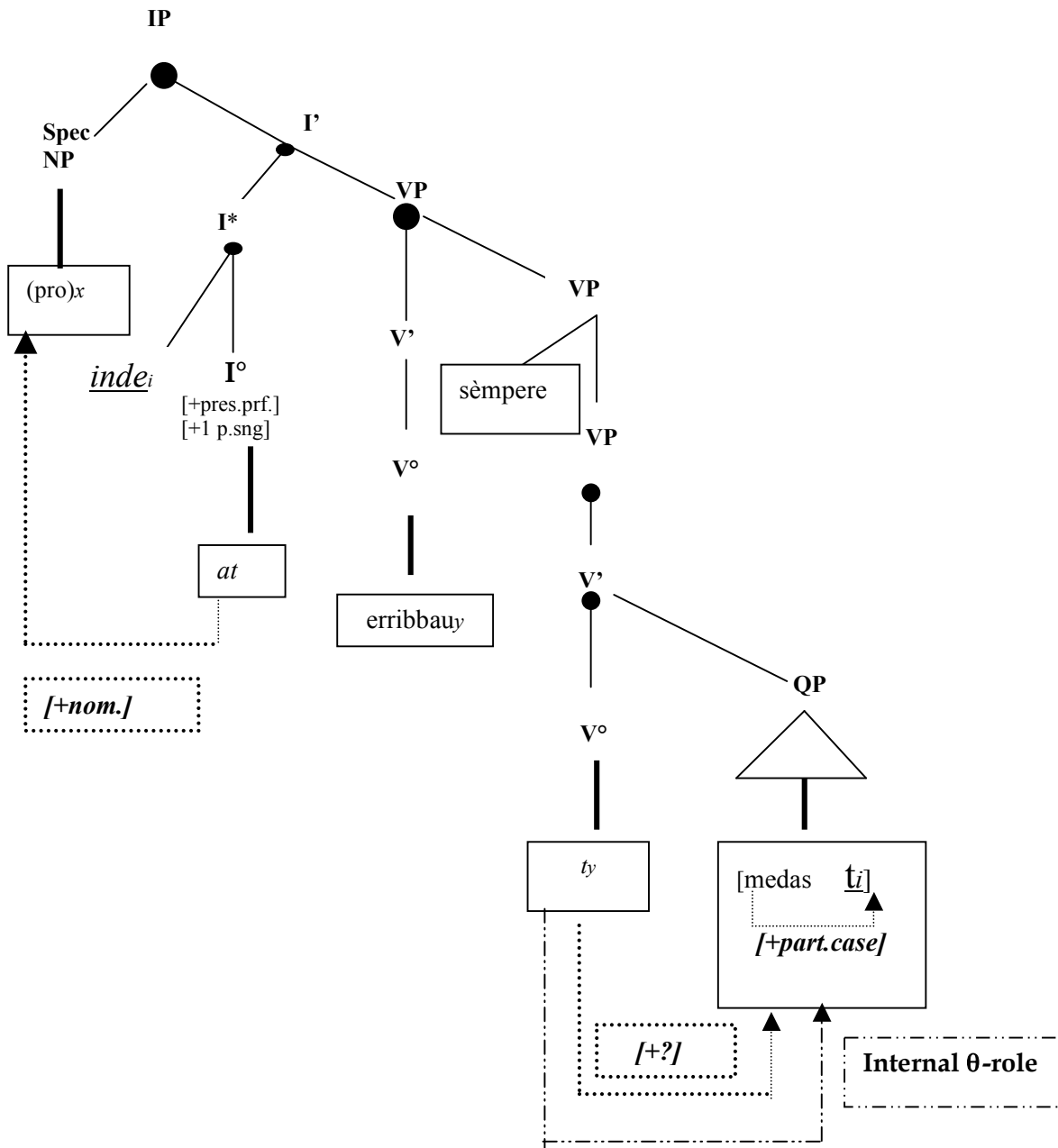


The verb *liggeru* selects two arguments, the external and the internal one. The object NP is an indefinite QP. The clitic is extracted from the complement of the QP and raises to the complex head I*. There it incorporates with the auxiliary *àre*. The QP receives accusative case as the direct object.

(97) Unaccusative verb:

(ince) *At erribbau sèmpre mèdas turistas*

Ø *Indei* at erribbàu sèmpre medas [t_i]

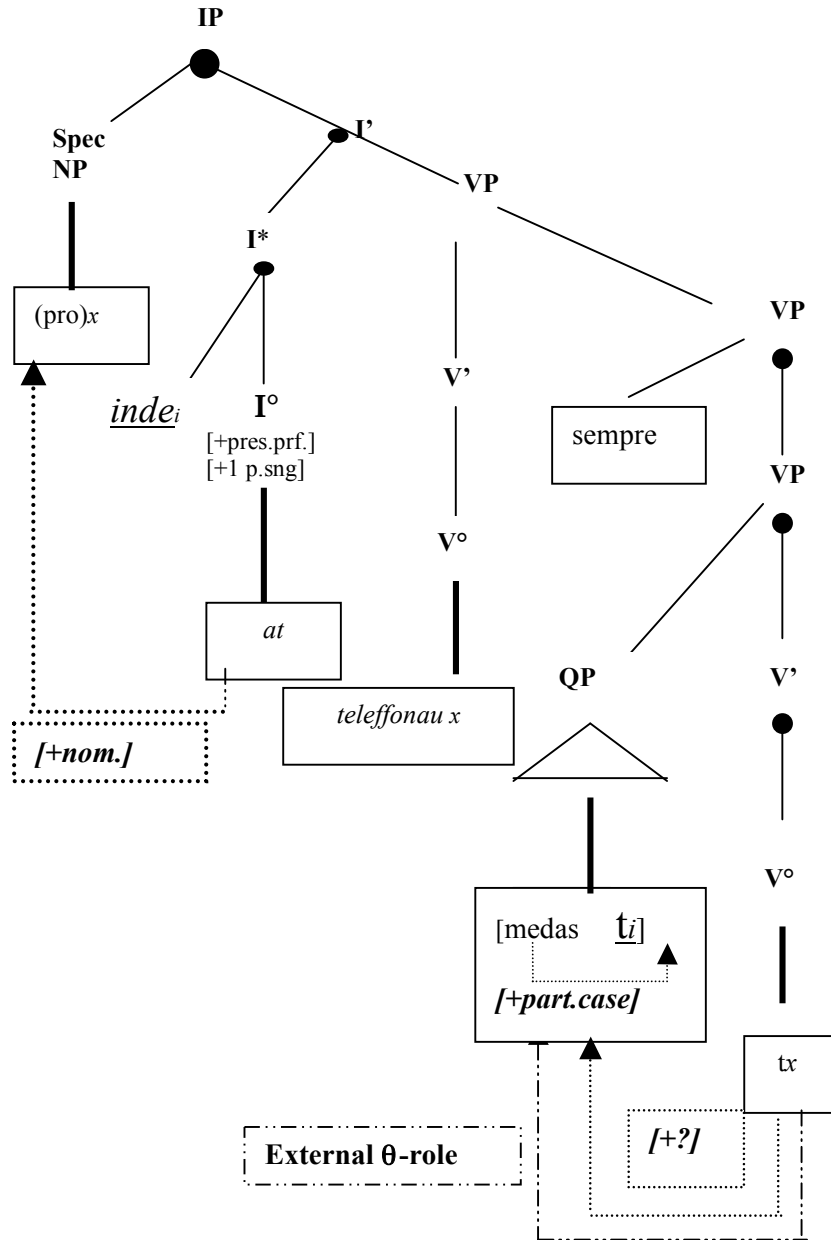


Unaccusative verbs select only the internal argument but they are not able to assign to it the accusative case. In order to receive case they usually move to a case-position, [spec, IP].

(98) Intransitive verb:

(ince) *At teleffonàu sèmpre mèdas turistas*

Ø *Indei* at teleffonàu sèmpre medas [ti]



The intransitive verb *teleffonàre* selects the external argument, which is an indefinite QP. The indefinite Quantifier is supposed to assign partitive case to the NP complement, but which case does this QP have?

2.3. The case of the QP arguments of intransitive and unaccusative verbs

Many theories have been proposed on what kind of case is assigned to QP arguments of the verbs above analysed. One of these, already mentioned, is that the expletive forms a **chain** with

the NP complement and, as the first one is assigned nominative case by Inflection, it can transmit the same case to the second one.

Belletti (1988: 18) does not agree with this hypothesis. She affirms that “no process of case transmission in chains should be allowed”, but at the same time she does not agree with the ‘Unaccusative Hypothesis’ elaborated by Burzio (1986): with this hypothesis, Burzio claims that unaccusative verbs are not able to assign case to their selected D-Structure object.

In her article, Belletti argues about Finnish and notes that partitive case, visible in Finnish because partitive case is morphologically realised (99)-(100), is assigned to the **indefinite** NP argument of an unaccusative verb (101):

- (99) Hän pani *kirjat* pöydälle
 ‘he put books(**acc**, pl) on the table’
- (100) Hän pani *kirjoja* pöydälle
 ‘he put books(**part**, pl) on the table’
- (101) Helsingistä tulee kirjeitä
 ‘from Helsinki comes letters(**part**, pl)

Note in (101) the verb in 3rd singular person.

In the same work, Belletti (1988: 13) formulates the hypothesis on case assignment for all three kinds of verbs; she analyses some of the West Flemish examples, here reported in (102):

- (102) a. dat er niemend gegoan is
 ‘that there no one gone is’
- b. dat er niemend gewerkt eet
 ‘that there no one worked has’
- c. dat er niemend eentwa gekocht eet
 ‘that there no one something bought has’

Belletti maintains that the only possible case admitted for these indefinite QPs is partitive. She observes that:

- (i) nominative case is not available because it is assigned to the pleonastic element “*er*” (102a-b-c);
- (ii) accusative case is not available because it is assigned to the object “*eetwa*” in the transitive example (102c);

(iii) “hence, the only remaining Case is partitive” (Belletti 1988: 14)

Generalising this observation for the post-verbal subject of unaccusative and intransitive verbs in Italian she affirms that “partitive case is the only available case for this position” (Belletti 1988: 19). Cardinaletti and Giusti (2003) agree about the partitive case assignment to the QP, although they propose a different theory according to which the head of the QP assigns partitive case to its NP complement.

- (103) a. (I ragazzi) *li* / **ne* conoscono tutti
 b. (Di ragazzi) *ne* / * *li* conoscono molti

In (103a) *tutti* is a universal quantifier, which receives accusative case assigned by the transitive verb. The universal quantifier transmits the case to all the NP, which is realised by a clitic pronoun, *li*. In (103b), *molti* is an existential quantifier, which receives accusative case by the verb, but it does not transmit it to the NP. The quantifier blocks this feature transmission and assigns quantified genitive case, realised by the pronoun *ne*, to all the noun-phrase. The case is realised with a left dislocation and then a clitic.

2.4. Conclusions

In this work, some data are presented, taken from Sardinian language, taking into consideration the behaviour of unaccusative and intransitive verbs. These verbs have been compared to those of other languages such as English, Italian, French, German, Finnish and West Flemish in order to give prominence to the special features of intransitive verbs in Sardinian, which seem to share some properties with unaccusatives. In fact, in this language, both intransitive and unaccusative verbs can appear in the existential construction in which the verb agrees with a phonetically null element in [*spec,IP*] (i.e. the verb is in the 3rd p.sg.) while the post-verbal subject is plural and is introduced by a quantifier Q. Moreover, both with intransitive and unaccusative verbs, the post-verbal subject can be replaced by a clitic pronoun *inde* corresponding to Italian *ne* as the quantifier assigns partitive case to its NP complement. It must also be noticed that, when the verb is in a compound tense, the auxiliary, which is usually *be*, must change into *have*.

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