

# **Persistence of irregular paradigms in verb morphology: parallel forms in Italian third conjugation. A diachronic corpus-based study.**

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Italian third conjugation verbs exhibit a unique inflectional behaviour, diverging from the paradigmatic models observed in other inflectional classes. Two distinct paradigmatic models are observed: IIIA, in which the root of the verb is followed by inflectional endings (Root+Ending), and IIIB, characterised by the presence of the -sc- formative between the thematic vowel and the inflectional ending (Root+ThV+Formative+Ending) (Da Tos 2013). Such case of overabundance (Thornton 2011) is known as the ‘morphemic N-pattern’, a label used in Romance linguistics to denote “an alternation, recurrent across Romance, such that present tense 1/2/3 SG + 3 PL, and 2 SG imperative, share a root distinct from the rest of the paradigm” (Maiden 2009). The evolution of the -sc-formative has proceeded in the direction of forming a double inflectional paradigm within the third verb conjugation. Apart from verbs belonging to one of the two inflectional paradigms (IIIA or IIIB), there exists a group of verbs which allow (or allowed in the past) for both IIIA and IIIB inflectional paradigms (Rohlfs 1968, Tekavčić 1975, Rudes 1980). The adherence to one or another model has been changing in the course of time. Furthermore, it appears to be highly unpredictable and resistant to standardisation. Consequently, it is challenging to identify any codified norms or norms of usage.

The aim of this study is to obtain data that will help to offer an in-depth diachronic analysis of the verbs characterised by the double inflectional paradigm, attempting to frame their standard(s) over the centuries. The first section of the paper presents the results of an empirical study based on a corpus of over 50 Italian grammar books published between the 15th and 18th centuries. In the second part of the article, the data will be correlated with those obtained from another piece of research conducted on corpora of written Italian texts from the same period of time. This will demonstrate the correlation between the prescribed norm (grammatical rules) and the effective use of these verbs in the language.

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