



23 luglio
2019

Parliamo Italiano!

Il Quaderno di Sandrino



ITALIAN VERBS ARE AWESOME!

BY SANDRO CUCCIA

As my grammar-savvy students are painfully aware of, people learning Italian – or any foreign language – rightfully tend to look for grammatical patterns. It turns out that studying Italian verbs in a logical fashion is an efficient use of time, and Italian verbs are classified in a variety of ways.

When studying Italian verbs, I have found that students naturally tend to make absolute comparisons to English. Guess what! This should be avoided! However, I understand that many of these students are grammar-gurus in their own right. Although there are many similarities between the two languages, I have come to learn that there are also just as many fundamental differences. As we've seen many times in class however, **there are always exceptions to the rule**. So while taking an organized approach to Italian verbs is indeed an outstanding way to improve your Italian, think of it like ordering a meal at an Italian restaurant; be prepared to order a different *primo piatto* if your favorite dish isn't available.

THE 'HOLY TRINITY' OF VERBS

To state the obvious, verbs are fundamental to any language. As we have often discussed in class, there are three primary groups of Italian verbs, classified according to the endings of their infinitives:

1. Verbs in the **First-Conjugation** (verbs ending in **-are**) [*mangiare*]
2. Verbs in the **Second-Conjugation** (verbs ending in **-ere**) [*bere*]
3. Verbs in the **Third-Conjugation** (verbs ending in **-ire** verbs) [*dormire*]

Most Italian verbs belong to the first-conjugation group and follow a highly consistent pattern. You should be thrilled to discover that when you learn how to conjugate one *-are* verb, you've essentially learned hundreds of them! *Woo-Hoo!!*

Of course, we now have to consider those Italian verbs that do not end in *-are*. Second-conjugation (*-ere*) verbs account for approximately 25% of all Italian verbs. As expected, many of these have some sort of irregular structure, however there are many regular *-ere* verbs as well. The final group of Italian verbs is those that end in *-ire* which also bring a number of irregular structures.

ARE YOU FEELING A BIT TENSE RIGHT NOW? HOW'S YOUR MOOD, ANYWAY?

Feeling **tense** studying Italian verbs? Or perhaps this is putting you in a questionable **mood**. There is a difference you know, but let's apply all this to Italian grammar.

Mood (*modo*) refers to the attitude of the speaker toward what s(he) is saying.

There are four **Finite Moods** (*modi finiti*) in Italian:

1. **Indicative** (*indicativo*), used to indicate facts
2. **Subjunctive** (*congiuntivo*), used to express an attitude or feeling toward an event
3. **Conditional** (*condizionale*), used to express what would happen in a hypothetical situation
4. **Imperative** (*imperativo*), used to give commands



Continua...



Additionally, there are three **Indefinite Moods** (*modi indefiniti*) in Italian, so-called because the forms do not indicate the person (i.e.; first, second, third).

These are:

1. **Infinitive** (*infinito*)
2. **Participle** (*participio*)
3. **Gerund** (*gerundio*)

Moods are divided into one or more tenses that refer to *when* the action takes place (present, past, or future).

Study the handy chart below. It lists the mood and tenses of Italian verbs in English and Italian.

ITALIAN VERBS: MOOD AND TENSE

INDICATIVE	INDICATIVO	SUBJUNCTIVE	CONGIUNTIVO
Present	<i>Presente</i>	Present	<i>Presente</i>
Present perfect	<i>Passato prossimo</i>	Past	<i>Passato</i>
Imperfect	<i>Imperfetto</i>	Imperfect	<i>Imperfetto</i>
Past perfect	<i>Trapassato prossimo</i>	Past perfect	<i>Trapassato</i>
Absolute past	<i>Passato remoto</i>	CONDITIONAL	CONDIZIONALE
Preterite perfect	<i>Trapassato remoto</i>	Present	<i>Presente</i>
Future	<i>Futuro semplice</i>	Past	<i>Passato</i>
Future perfect	<i>Futuro anteriore</i>	INFINITIVE	INFINITIVO
IMPERATIVE	IMPERATIVO	Present	<i>Presente</i>
Present	<i>Presente</i>	Past	<i>Passato</i>
PARTICIPLE	PARTICIPIO	GERUND	GERUNDIO
Present	<i>Presente</i>	Present	<i>Presente</i>
Past	<i>Passato</i>	Past	<i>Passato</i>

SINGULAR	PLURAL
First Person	First Person
Second Person	Second Person
Third Person	Third Person



Continua...



I'm sure you'll agree that learning six forms for every verb would be an endless task, yes? Here's some good news for a change: Most Italian verbs are regular verbs, meaning they are conjugated following a regular pattern. And, get this... there are only three irregular first conjugation verbs! *Viva la pappa col pomodoro!!* Here's the thing, once you memorize the regular verb endings, you can apply the pattern to other verbs of the same group. Otherwise, they are irregular, and do not follow a regular pattern.

Although numerous, even the irregular second and third conjugation verbs fall into a few groups that make it easier to memorize. 🍷

ESSERE AND AVERE: DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT THEM!

This is important: *you cannot speak Italian without the use of the verbs **ESSERE** (to be) and **AVERE** (to have).* These are called **Auxiliary Verbs** (*verbi ausiliari*). These two essential verbs are used in compound verb formations, idiomatic expressions, and many other grammatical constructions.

Become the *maestro* of these two verbs; you will have taken a giant step towards learning Italian!

YOU CAN SEE THE WORD 'TRANSIT' IN TRANSITIVE

Let's look at **Transitive Verbs** (*verbi transitivi*). First, a transitive verb is an action verb; expressing a doable activity like *suonare, scrivere, mangiare, pulire*, etc. Second, it must have a **direct object** (*complemento oggetto*); something or someone who receives the action of the verb.

Erica suona la chitarra. Cosa suona Erica? **La chitarra.**
Giovanni legge un libro. Cosa legge Giovanni? **Un libro.**

These verbs can also be used in the absolute sense; that is, with an **implicit direct object**:

Erica suona. (Erica plays. i.e.; the guitar, the piano, the tuba, etc.)

Intransitive Verbs (*verbi intransitivi*) on the other hand, are those that never take a direct object:

Fabrizio corre. (Fabrizio runs.)

Some verbs can be classified as either transitive or intransitive, depending on the context of the sentence.

VERBS WITH VOICE

Italian verbs have two **voices**. A verb is in the **active voice** (*voce or forma attiva*) when the subject carries out or performs the action of the verb:

Marco ha fatto le valigie. (Marco packed the suitcases.)

A verb is in the **passive voice** (*voce or forma passiva*) when the subject is acted on by the verb:

La scena è stata filmata da un bravo regista. (The scene was filmed by a great director.)

Only transitive verbs with an explicit direct object can be transformed from the active voice to the passive voice.



Continua...



REFLECTING A BIT...

You wake up (*svegliarsi*), you get up (*alzarsi*), take a shower (*farsi la doccia*), brush your teeth (*pulirsi i denti*), comb your hair (*pettinarsi*), get dressed (*vestirsi*), and drink a nice caffè (*bersi*).

You couldn't start your day without **Reflexive Verbs** (*verbi riflessivi*). These are transitive verbs; those whose subject and object always refer to the same person or thing. The object is always a **Reflexive Pronoun**. In the following example, see how the action reverts to the subject:

Mi lavo. (I wash myself); **Mi vesto.** (I clothe myself).

In Italian, reflexive pronouns (*i pronomi riflessivi*; **mi, ti, si, ci, vi**) are required when conjugating reflexive verbs.

COULDA... WOULD... SHOULD...

There are three important Italian verbs known as **Verbi Modali** (modal verbs), sometimes also called **Verbi Servili**. These verbs are: **potere** (to be able to, can), **volere** (to want), and **dovere** (to have to, must). They can stand alone, taking on their given meaning. They can also follow the infinitive of other verbs, functioning to modify the meaning of those verbs.

VERBS THAT END IN -LA, -CI, -SI, -NE, -SELA, -CELA, -SENE, -CENE

This category falls under **Pronominal Verbs** (*verbi pronominali*) and includes a large number of verbs which are conjugated along with one or more pronouns. Strictly speaking, reflexive verbs are 'pronoun verbs', too. Verbs such as *piantarla, andarci, prendersi, andarne, cercarsela, farcela, andarsene*, and *volercene* are pronominal verbs. Additionally, they are still classified as either first-conjugation (**-are** verbs), second-conjugation (**-ere** verbs), or third-conjugation (**-ire** verbs) according to the ending of their infinitives. (**Andarci** = *andare*, **Avercela** = *avere*, **Sentirci** = *sentire*). Many other pronominal verbs are used idiomatically.

SHADOWED BY A PREPOSITION

Certain Italian verbs (as well as expressions) are followed by specific prepositions such as **a, di, per,** and **su**. To the consternation of many of my students of any level, there are no hard-and-fast set rules governing this grammatical usage. This is one instance in which students of Italian must familiarize themselves with tables that include verbs and expressions followed by specific prepositions as well as verbs followed directly by the infinitive.

Isn't Italian fun and wonderful?!



IN BOCCA AL LUPO
CON IL TUO
STUDIO DI ITALIANO!