

Italian pronominalized motion verbs

Irene Amato <irene.amato@unive.it>

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Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici
e Culturali Comparati



Pronominal motion verbs (PMVs)

(1) a. *Me voy*
REFL.1SG go.PRS.1SG
'I go away'

Spanish

b. *Me ne vado*
REFL.1SG NE go.PRS.1SG
'I go away'

Italian

- Several previous analyses for Spanish (Sánchez López 2002; Cuervo 2014; García Fernández 2015; MacDonald 2017; Jiménez-Fernández & Tubino 2019; Pineda 2021 a.o.)
- No analysis of Italian PMVs except for Pineda (2021)

In a nutshell

- SI is a syntactic argument in the specifier of a high applicative head that introduces a direct experiencer Theta-role.
- A low applicative head introduces NE.
- Extension of Martin & Arunachalam's (2022) approach to other pronominal verbs.
- This analysis also sheds light on the complementation patterns of semi-functional verbs (*andare* vs. PMV *andarsene* 'go')

Italian pronominal motion verbs

PMVs in Italian

- PMVs possible with virtually all motion verbs, including path verbs, manner verbs of motion, and locative/stative verbs (Masini 2015: 98)

- (2)
- a. *Maria se ne esce di casa.*
 Maria REFL.3SG NE go.out.PRS.3SG of house
 ‘Maria leaves home.’ (path V)
- b. *Maria se ne corre a casa.*
 Maria REFL.3SG NE run.PRS.3SG to house
 ‘Maria runs home.’ (manner-of-motion V)
- c. *Maria se ne resta a casa.*
 Maria REFL.3SG NE stay.PRS.3SG at house
 ‘Maria stays at home.’ (stative V)

- Optionality
- Presence of NE

General facts from previous literature

- PMVs tend to focus the resultant state as permanence in the reached location, or a source-related meaning (Pineda 2021: 268,276).
⇒ does not fully hold for Italian
- PMVs exhibit an “emphatic” meaning, depicting the subject as affected and engaged in the motion event (Masini 2015, Pineda 2021: 273).
⇒ true for Italian

Characteristics of Italian PMVs

	MVs	PMVs
(a) animacy restrictions	✗	✓
(b) unergative features	✗	✓
(c) subject engagement	✗	✓
(d) telicity	✓	✓
(e) resultativity	✓	✓

A caveat

- The patterns discussed here should be understood as robust tendencies rather than strict grammaticality contrasts.
- Counterexamples can be constructed and do occur.
- This variability likely reflects the free alternation between PMVs and MVs: their general interchangeability may give rise to marginal uses in contexts where only one of the two versions should be possible.

(a) Animacy restrictions

- PMVs tend to require an animate subject

- (3) a. *Il fumo va / ???se ne va nella stanza.*
 the smoke goes / REFL.3SG NE goes in.the room
 ‘The smoke goes into the room.’
- b. *L’odore esce / ???se ne esce dalla finestra.*
 the smell goes.out / REFL.3SG NE goes.out from.the window
 ‘The smell goes out of the window.’
- c. *La macchina corre / ???se ne corre lungo la costa.*
 the car runs / REFL.3SG NE runs along the coast
 ‘The car runs along the coast.’

- Inanimate subjects receive an animate reading
- Query (on 26/02/2025) on ItTenTen for *rotolar-sene* ‘roll’, which is non-agentive and tends to have inanimate subjects: 5 occurrences, of which 4 animate or personified, and 1 in emphatic context

(4) *è il mio cuore in fiamme, che se ne rotola giù da*
 is the my heart in flames that REFL.3SG NE rolls down from
un dirupo
 a cliff
 ‘it’s my heart on fire, rolling down a cliff’ (ItTenTen)

- Other cases where inanimate subjects are acceptable: nuance of mirativity, unpredictability, deviation from the natural course (i.e., water leaking from a broken pipe)

(b) Unergative features

- Subjects of PMVs are atypical unaccusative subjects
- No postverbal bare subjects (Cuervo 2014; García Fernández 2015):

(5) *Dalla scuola escono* / **se ne escono*
 from.the school go.out.PRS.3PL REFL.3PL NE go.out.PRS.3PL
studenti.
 students
 ‘Students come out of the school.’

- No reduced relatives:

- (6) *La bambina andata / *andatasene a scuola da sola*
 the child go.PRTC go.PRTC.REFL.3SG.NE at school by alone
ha gli occhi blu.
 have.PRS.3SG the eyes blue
 ‘The girl who went to school alone has blue eyes.’

- No participial clauses:

(7) (*Una volta*) *andata* / **andatasene* *a scuola Maria*,
 once go.PRTC go.PRTC.REFL.3SG.NE at school Maria
Giovanni uscì *di casa*.
 Giovanni go.out.PST.3SG of house
 ‘Once Maria went to school, Giovanni left the house.’

- But perhaps some problems with the string *se-ne* (e.g., *vantatasene* ‘brag’)

- Other tests for unaccusativity not possible
 - 1 auxiliary selection: reflexive clitics force BE,
 - 2 ne-cliticization: the presence of NE blocks it,
 - 3 formation of deverbal agent nouns: the same root is involved

(c) Enriched agency

- Subject is directly involved in the action (work in progress with Anna Pineda)
- Also noted for Spanish non-consumption verbs when pronominalized (MacDonald 2004; Martin & Arunachalam 2022)
- With a continuation like ‘his mother took him there’, no PMV

(8) *Marco è andato / ???se ne è andato*
 Marco be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC REFL.3SG NE be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC
a casa. Ce l'ha portato sua madre.
 at house there 3SG.M.ACC.have.PRS.3SG bring.PRTC his mother
 ‘Marco went home. His mother took him there.’

- If the subject cannot be the initiator of the motion event, no PMV

- (9) a. *Il paziente è andato / *se ne*
 the patient be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC REFL.3SG NE
è andato all'ospedale in barella.
 be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC to.the hospital in stretcher
 'The patient was taken to the hospital on a stretcher.'
- b. *Il bebè appena nato è uscito / *se*
 the baby just born be.PRS.3SG go.out.PRTC REFL.3SG
ne è uscito dalla camera in braccio a
 NE be.PRS.3SG go.out.PRTC from.the room in arm to
sua madre.
 his mother
 'The newborn baby was carried out of the room in his mother's arms.'

(d) Telicity

- Both MVs and PMVs are telic
- Adverbial *in x-time* ok with both variants

(10) *Gianni è andato / se ne è*
 Gianni be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC REFL.3SG NE be.PRS.3SG
andato a casa in 5 minuti
 go.PRTC at house in 5 minutes
 ‘Gianni went home in 5 minutes.’

- With non-telic manner-of-motion, no telicity

(11) *Gianni cammina / se ne cammina tranquillo*
 Gianni walk.PRS.3SG REFL.3SG NE walk.PRS.3SG calm
*nel parco (*in 5 minuti)*
 in.the park in 5 minutes
 ‘Gianni walks calmly in the park (*in 5 minutes).’

- But: if a verb does not obligatory select for a PathP (directed manner-of-motion), it must do so when it is pronominalized:

MV: directional/accomplishment $\sim$ locative/activity

- (12) *Corro* *in camera.*
 run.PRS.1SG in room
 ‘I’m running into/in the room.’

PMV: directional/accomplishment, *locative/*activity

- (13) *Me* *ne corro* *in camera.*
 REFL.1SG NE run.PRS.1SG in room
 ‘I’m running into the room.’

(e) Resultant state

- MVs and PMVs behave in the same way
- (i) *for*-modification of the post-event state ok with both variants
- (14) *Gianni è andato / se ne è*
 Gianni be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC REFL.3SG NE be.PRS.3SG
 andato in camera per 15 minuti.
 go.PRTC in room for 15 minutes
 ‘Gianni went to the room (and stayed there) for 15 minutes.’

(ii) Restitutive reading is ok in both variants

- Context: I carried Teresa into the room in my arms.

(15) *Dopo 5 minuti, è uscita / se ne*
 after 5 minutes be.PRS.3SG go.out.PRTC REFL.3SG NE
è uscita di nuovo dalla stanza.
 be.PRS.3SG go.out.PRTC again from.the room
 ‘After 5 minutes, she left the room again.’

→ restitutive: Teresa was already out of the room before I brought her back inside (e.g., Marco carried her out of the room in his arms)

(iii) Result can be negated in both versions

- (16) *Gianni è andato / se ne è*
 Gianni be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC REFL.3SG NE be.PRS.3SG
andato a casa, ma non è lì.
 go.PRTC to home but not be.PRS.3SG there
 ‘Gianni went home, but he’s not there.’

(iv) Permanence in the goal location is also not a requirement in PMVs

- (17) *Gianni è andato / se ne è*
 Gianni be.PRS.3SG go.PRTC REFL.3SG NE be.PRS.3SG
andato in camera, ma non c'è rimasto.
 go.PRTC in room but not there be.PRS.3SG remain.PRTC
 'Gianni went to the room, but he didn't remain there.'

Summary

Italian PMVs

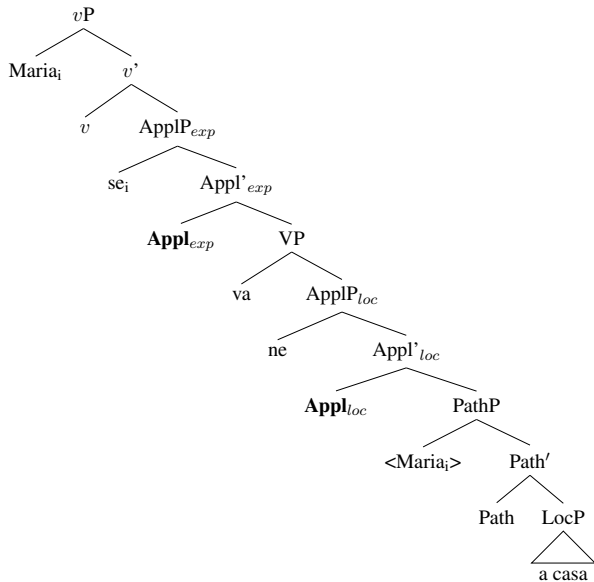
- No distinction between MVs and PMVs in terms of telicity, resultativity, or causativity.
 - **Path-requirement:** if a verb can be constructed with or without a goal (a PathP), it needs to have it to be pronominalized.
- ⇒ PMVs require a goal: the structure must contain a PathP.
- **Subject engagement:** more agentive interpretation.
- ⇒ The subject of PMVs is not just an undergoer of dislocation: experiencer.

Italian PMVs: proposal

Proposal

- Extension of Martin & Arunachalam's (2022) analysis of optional SI.
- Two different applicative heads:
 - (A) Low applicative Appl_{loc} with consumption verbs (e.g., *ber-si un caffè* 'drink a coffee'): the verbal event causes the resultant state, which is a possessive relation between the reflexive clitic and the theme DP (Campanini & Schäfer 2011).
 - (B) High applicative Appl_{exp} with other verbs (e.g., *lavar-si le scarpe* 'wash the shoes'): it introduces a 'direct' experiencer of the event (i.e., experiencing the verbal event first hand).
- I suggest that PMVs require both applicative heads.

(18)



Appl_{exp}P

- Appl_{exp} introduces the direct experiencer role; assigned to SI
- Hence, this argument must be animate
⇒ **animacy restriction follows**
- The subject is a theme (unaccusative) + being a direct experiencer means to be directly involved in the event: it is interpreted “more as an agent”
⇒ **inferred enriched agency follows**

Appl_{loc}P

- PathP already contains a resultant state.
- Appl_{loc} introduces NE, a locative argument anaphoric to the goal location
 ⇒ **telicity (=PathP requirement) follows**
- Relation of locative inclusion of DP (locatum) within the argument introduced by the applicative (container)
 ⇒ **emphasis on the source / permanence in the location / away-semantics follows**

An end location is necessary for *ne* to appear (establishing the salience of the resultant state), and for *si* to take the experiencer Theta-role (experiencing the salient resultant state).

Appl_{exp} & Appl_{loc}

- Two applicative heads = the two distinct morphemes and the two semantic readings (subject engagement + focus on location).
- Attributing the contrast between MVs and PMVs to functional heads like v_{cause} (Cuervo 2014; Pineda 2021) does not seem correct (at least for Italian), because these verbs do not show any clear causative/resultative distinction between the two variants.
- Appl_{exp} & Appl_{loc} result in:
 - emphasis on the verb meaning (source / permanence in the location / away-semantics),
 - inference of enriched agency,
 - animacy restrictions.

A note on manner

- With verbs that do not select a PathP, depictives tend to be obligatory
- Query (on 26/02/2026) on ItTenTen for *camminare* ‘walk’: 17 occurrences, all with depictives (100%):

(19) *se* *ne cammina* *tranquilla*
 REFL.3SG NE walk.PRS.3SG calm
 ‘She walks calmly.’ (itTenTen)

- This shows that PMVs require a state (as the LocP in PathP),
- and not necessarily a state brought about by the verb.

State-requirement

- either a PathP with verbs that allow it,
- or a PredP (depictive) with manner verbs

- (20)
- | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------|------------|------------------|-----|
| a. | <i>correre</i> | $[_{PathP}$ | <i>Maria</i> | $Path$ | $[_{LocP}$ | <i>in camera</i> | $]$ |
| | run | | Maria | | | in room | |
-
- | | | | | | | | |
|----|------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|------------|-------------------|-----|
| b. | <i>camminare</i> | $[_{PredP}$ | <i>Maria</i> | $Pred$ | $[_{AdjP}$ | <i>tranquilla</i> | $]$ |
| | walk | | Maria | | | calm | |

This is required for NE to appear (establishing salience of state), and for SI to introduce the experiencer (experiencing the state).

Further evidence: semi-functional uses

Restructuring or biclausal complement?

- As *andare* ‘go’ (21-a), *andarsene* can be followed by a non-finite clause introduced by *a* (21-b).

- (21) a. *Va a prendere il pane*
 go.PRS.3SG to fetch.INF the bread
- b. *Se ne va a prendere il pane*
 REFL.3SG NE go.PRS.3SG to fetch.INF the bread
 ‘S/he goes to fetch the bread.’

- Interestingly, clitic arguments are degraded:

(22) a. *??Se=ne=va* *a prender=lo*
REFL.3SG=NE=go.PRS.3SG to fetch.INF=3sg.m.acc
b. **Se=ne=lo=va* *a prendere*
REFL.3SG=NE=3sg.m.acc=go.PRS.3SG to fetch.INF
'S/he goes to fetch it.'

- If restructuring or biclausal structure, the clitic should be placed on the lexical verb as in (22-a).
- The association of two Theta-roles to the subject also explains the complementation patterns of PMVs.

Clause union

- I propose that this is a case of **clause union** (CU), as with perception verbs (Renzi, Salvi & Cardinaletti 1995; Casalicchio & Sheehan 2025)
- In CU, there are two events with two Theta-roles.
- With PMVs, the same argument bears the two Theta-roles
- Cf. reflexive use of perception verbs, e.g. *mi sono sentito arrivare* ‘I heard myself arriving’

- Clitic climbing is obligatory in CU → this explains the puzzling data in (23), otherwise unclear under a restructuring or biclausal account.

(23) ??*Se=ne=va* *a prender=lo*
REFL.3SG=NE=go.PRS.3SG to fetch.INF=3sg.m.acc
'S/he goes to fetch it.'

- (24) is out because the cluster *se ne lo* is illicit (Cardinaletti 2008).

(24) **Se=ne=lo=va* *a prendere*
REFL.3SG=NE=3sg.m.acc=go.PRS.3SG to fetch.INF
'S/he goes to fetch it.'

Conclusion

- Italian pronominal motion verbs have received relatively little attention
- Important differences with the Spanish counterpart $\Rightarrow$ new analysis
- Two applicative heads: a low Appl_{loc} selecting a PathP, and a high Appl_{exp} introducing a direct experiencer Theta-role.
- Two main properties of PMVs: the requirement for a path projection and the subject's involvement in the event.
- The analysis also sheds light on the complementation pattern of PMVs, explaining both the semi-lexical status of these verbs and the (otherwise puzzling) behavior of clitic arguments.

Thank you!

Irene Amato
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
irene.amato@unive.it
www.unive.it/synfumir

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Differences with Spanish

- permanence in location in PMVs (Pineda 2021)

(25) Juan se entró en su casa #pero no se quedó (Jiménez-Fernández and Tubino 2014, 18)

- MVs only name culmination point, while PMVs entail a resultant state (Cuervo 2014)

(26) a. Bajaron otra vez los bonos hoy.

1. Repetitive reading: the bonds dropped yesterday, and they dropped again today.

b. Subimos al omnibus, pero nos bajamos otra vez.

1. Repetitive reading: we got off the bus once, then we got on, and we got off again.

2. Restitutive: we were off the bus, we got on, and then were off the bus again.

- Animacy restrictions (García Fernández 2015)

(27) Si abres el grifo, se sale el agua.

- Bounded events: PMVs (Jiménez-Fernández & Tubino 2019)

- (28) a. (Me) voy siempre a París por San Sebastián
 b. *(Me) voy de aquí.

- Either the differences between Spanish and Italian are not there,
- or they need to be fully understood:
 - probably not due to the overt presence of *ne*,
 - but more to the wide-spread *se*-pronominalization in Spanish,
 - and to the flexibility in manner-of-motion in Italian more than in Spanish (Zubizarreta & Oh 2007)?

Direct experiencer

- Experiencer and Agent are different Theta-roles
- Agentivity also differ from unergativity
- The subject of *andare* passes agentivity diagnostics
 - agent-oriented adverbs
 - comitatives
 - purpose clauses
 - adjunct control
- MV: agentive (=dynamic, telic, volitional) unaccusatives (=no ext. arg.)
- PMV: same as MV + experiencer → enriched agency follows from the presence of an additional Theta-role assigned to them
- Scale of agentivity:

camminare	<	andarsene	<	andare	<	morire
‘walk’		‘gOPMV’		‘go’		‘die’
Spec,Voice	<	Spec,Path+Spec,Appl	<	Spec,Path	<	Compl,V
agent	<	agentive theme+experiencer	<	agentive theme	<	theme

Complementation

The PathP selected by the motion verb is realized by a VP (see Zubizarreta & Oh 2007: 150 for the construction *go see a movie*).

- (29) a. *Mario se ne va [a incontrare Giulio in Spagna]*
 Mario REFL.3SG NE goes to meet Giulio in Spain
 'Mario leaves to meet Giulio in Spain' CU
- b. **Mario se ne va [a incontrar-lo in Spagna]*
 Mario REFL.3SG NE goes to meet-him in Spain
 'M. leaves to meet him in S.' CU: no low position for clitic
- c. **Mario se ne lo va [a incontrare in Spagna]*
 Mario REFL.3SG NE him goes to meet in Spain
 'Mario leaves to meet him in Spain' CU: illicit clitic cluster
- d. *Mario se ne va in Spagna [a incontrar=lo]*
 Mario REFL.3SG NE goes in Spain to meet=him
 'Mario leaves to Spain to meet him' No CU; adjunct clause

NE

- NE is canonically source-related:

(30) *Dall'ufficio? ne esco alle 3.*
 from.the office NE go.out.PRS.1SG at.the 3
 From the office? I leave at 3 o'clock.'

- oblique form of *ci* 'there' (Cresti 2003)
- it introduces a source boundary, inducing event delimitation
 ⇒ inchoative flavor:

(31) *prende e se ne va*
 take.PRS.3SG and REFL.3SG NE go.PRS.3SG
 'S/he suddenly leaves'