Uninflectedness in Italian nouns and adjectives

Anna M. Thornton & Paolo D'Achille

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DELL'AQUILA

ROMA TRE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI

smg

In our previous work on uninflectedness in Italian we addressed only Nouns

(Dressler & Thornton 1996, D'Achille & Thornton 2003, D'Achille 2005, D'Achille & Thornton 2008)

For today's talk:
- we have extended our research to Adjectives
- We have expanded our analysis of Nouns
  - by looking at corpus data that were not available 20 years ago
  - and in the light of recent thought-provoking contributions:
    Fedden 2019 on «predictors of sporadic agreement»
    Spencer 2020 on «constructional uninflectedness»

There is a handout for quick reference to background information

Inflectional signature of Italian Nouns and Adjectives

- **NUMBER**: SINGULAR, PLURAL
- **GENDER**: MASCULINE, FEMININE

> Gender and number agreement
> on determiners and adjectives within NPs,
> and on some predicates

Gender assignment system is mixed: sex-based core and residue, mostly morphologically and phonologically based; some semantically based 'crazy rules' (Enger 2009)

FEMININE:

madre 'mother'

ragazza 'girl'

mano 'hand'

casa 'house'

mela 'apple'

…

MASCULINE :

padre 'father'

ragazzo 'boy'

piede 'foot'

palazzo 'building, palace'

kiwi 'id.'

…

Inflectional signature of Italian Nouns and Adj

Question: Nouns denoting Humans (and some higher animals) have

(a)   a four-cell paradigm   or   (b) a two-cell paradigm?

	SINGULAR	PLURAL	GLOSS
MASCULINE	zio	zii	'uncle'
FEMININE	zia	zie	'aunt'

SINGULAR	PLURAL	GLOSS
zio	zii	'uncle'

SINGULAR	PLURAL	GLOSS
zia	zie	'aunt'

Existing counts and definitions of inflectional classes are based on option (b)

See Matthews 1991, Bonami & Boyé 2019 for discussion

Inflectional classes of Italian Nouns (D'Achille & Thornton 2003)

Classes 1, 2 and 4 align with a gender value

Nouns' endings		Class	Gender
SG	PL		
-o	-i	1	M with a couple of exceptions
-a	-e	2	F
-e	-i	3	M & F
-a	-i	4	M with a couple of exceptions
-o	-a	5 (inquorate)	SG M, PL F
stressed V	stressed V	6	M & F
C	C	'invariable'	
-i	-i		
...	...		
-o	-ora	7 (extinct)	SG M, PL F

Gender of nouns in classes 3 and 6 (types in BDVDB, about 4500 Nouns)

	M	F
class 3 (SG *-e*, PL *-i*)	50.7 %	49.3 %
class 6 (invariable)	48.6 %	51.4 %

BDVDB = Thornton, Iacobini & Burani 1997

Previous findings
(Dressler & Thornton 1996, D'Achille & Thornton 2003)

- Only classes 1 and 2 are fully productive
- Class 3 is receding and losing members to class 6
- Class 4 is losing members to class 6

  (only some derivational suffixes like *-ista* '-ist' keep feeding it)
- Class 6 is gaining members from various sources:

  loanwords, clippings, deanthroponymic nouns...
- [Class 5 has long been dead]

	13th century	end of 20th century
tokens	2.4%	8.6%
lexemes	2.7%	9.5%

Increase in uninflected nouns In Italian

Previous findings
(Dressler & Thornton 1996, D'Achille & Thornton 2003)

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
MASCULINE	*-o*	*-i*
FEMININE	*-a*	*-e*
	back V	front V

- This is the only productive inflecting pattern
- Everything else is treated as uninflectable if it enters the language now, and tends to become uninflected even if it was previously inflected in classes 3 or 4
- A singular noun ending in *-e*, or a mismatch between gender and ending, disrupts this pattern and yields uninflectedness

Inflectional classes of Italian adjectives
(Iacobini & Thornton 2016, with additions)

Adjectives' endings		Gender	Class	Corresponding class for nouns
SG	PL			
-o	-i	M	1	1
-a	-e	F		2
-e	-i	M=F	2	3
-a	-i	M	3	4
-a	-e	F		2
-e	-i	M	4	3
-a	-e	F		2
stressed V C -i ...	stressed V C -i	M=F	5 invariable	6
-o	-a	M	6 (extinct)	5
-a	-e	F		2
-e	-i	M	7 (extinct)	3
-e	-e	F		6

Partially uninflecting? Syncretism of gender in both SG and PL

In all other classes, **F.PL** is either in *-e* (like nouns of class 2) or invariable

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Type frequency of inflectional classes

Nouns

Class	percentage of types in BDVDB (Italian Basic Vocabulary) N = 4583	percentage of types in CoLFIS (from DeGNI) (corpus of press and books 1992-1994, 3,8M tokens) N = 23619
1	37.7%	31%
2	34.4%	23%
3	20.8%	20%
4	1.3%	1%
5	0.3%	??
6	5.4%	21%

Adjectives

Class	percentage of types in BDVDB (Italian Basic Vocabulary) N = 1128
1	65.2%
2	31.7%
3	0.9%
4	0.01%
5	2.0%

BDVDB = Thornton et al. 1997; CoLFIS = Bertinetto et al. 2005; DeGNI = De Martino et al. 2019

Our corpus: 5500 tokens of Ns and 5500 tokens of Adjs

D'Achille & Thornton 2003:

- 10 time periods, from 1211 to 2000
- 5 texts for each time period
- 100 tokens of Nouns for each text, 500 for each time period

For today's presentation:

we used the same texts for periods 1-10, enlarged to include

- 100 tokens of Adjectives for each text, 500 for each time period
- we added Period 11: 2001-2022 and computed both Ns and Adjs

Time period	Dates
I	1211-1300
II	1301-1375
III	1376-1525
IV	1526-1612
V	1613-1691
VI	1692-1800
VII	1801-1900
VIII	1901-1945
IX	1946-1968
X	1969-2000
XI	2001-2022

Token frequency of invariable Ns and Adjs over time
(D'Achille & Thornton 2003 and current work)

Percentage of invariable nouns and adjectives over time
(**tokens / 5500**)
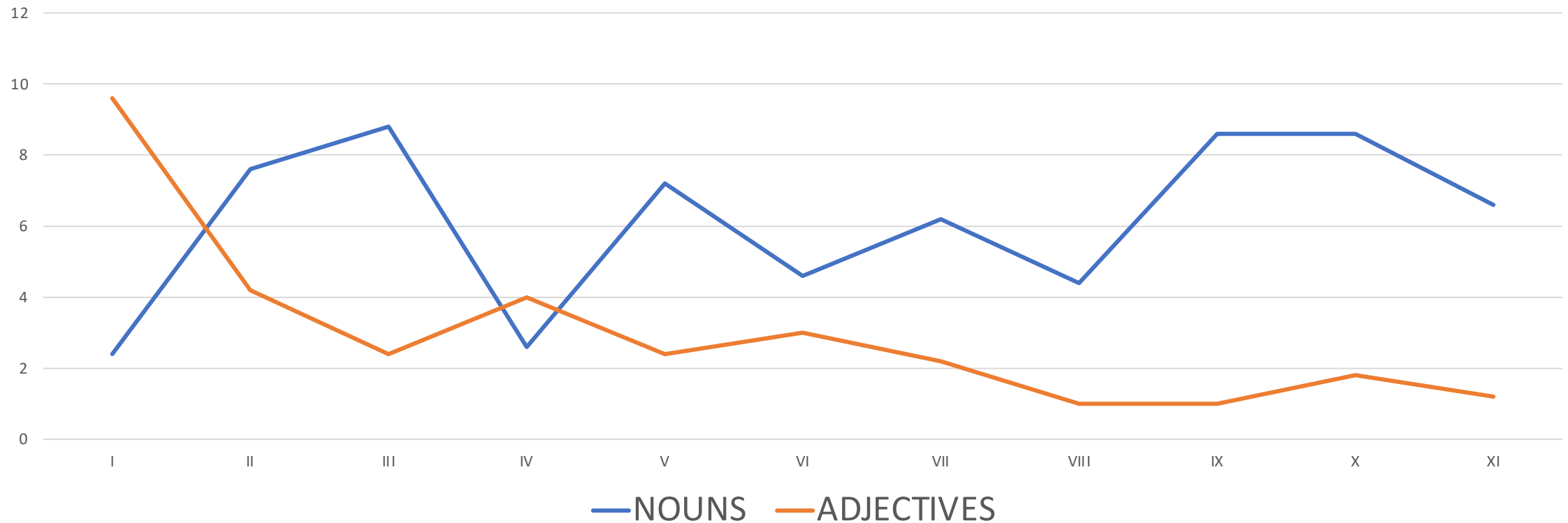
Order of appearance of various kinds of invariable Nouns in the corpus

Time period / Kind of Noun	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
stressed final V	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
M in -e		✓								✓	
F in -e			✓	✓							
F in -i					✓			✓		✓	✓
M in -i					✓					✓	
F in -ie						✓	✓		✓		✓
final C	?							✓	✓	✓	✓
M in -a									✓		
F in -o									✓	✓	
M in -o											...

Phonological factors?

Time period	Dates
I	1211-1300
II	1301-1375
III	1376-1525
IV	1526-1612
V	1613-1691
VI	1692-1800
VII	1801-1900
VIII	1901-1945
IX	1946-1968
X	1969-2000
XI	2001-2022

- Stressed final V: *dì, re, città, virtù, falpalà, caffè, venerdì...*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

- Final /i/: F *ipotesi, estasi, crisi*...; M *mestieri, baby, floppy*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
				✓			✓		✓	✓

- Final C: *lastex, rayon, sport, tweed, élites, toilettes, claque, refrain, soubrette, round, goal, supporter, assist, vermouth, Nord, Internet, computer, hardware, software, hard disk, mouse, monitor, modem, scanner, mail, domopak, hashish, babysitter, performance, governance, input*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
?							✓	✓	✓	✓

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- Stressed final V: *dì, re, città, virtù, falpalà, caffè, venerdì...*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

This type of nouns has existed throughout the history of the Italian language.

They have come about at first from Latin nouns, in various ways:

- **Inherited**:   REX > *re* 'king'
- **Apocope of final unstressed syllables**:   CIVITATE(M) > *cittade* > *città* 'city'
                                             VIRTUTE(M) > *virtude / virtute* > *virtù* 'virtue'
- **Deletion of a final unstressed /e/, reanalyzed as epithetic**: DIE(M) > *die* > *dì* 'day'

Later the type has grown through loanwords: *falpalà, caffè*...

-     No attempt at integrating these nouns in one of the inflecting classes
-     These are the nouns most truly invariable for phonological reasons

- Final /i/: F *ipotesi* 'hypothesis', *estasi* 'ecstasy', *crisi* 'crisis'…; M *mestieri* 'need', *baby, floppy*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
				✓			✓		✓	✓

Time period	Dates
V	1613-1691
VI	1692-1800
VII	1801-1900
VIII	1901-1945
IX	1946-1968
X	1969-2000
XI	2001-2022

This type of nouns at first included only feminine nouns of Greek origin: *ipotesi, estasi, crisi*…

Later, the type has grown through loanwords, most often assigned masculine gender: *baby, floppy (< floppy disk)*

Some backformations from loanwords in /i/ perceived as M.PL forms:

cachi < Jap. *kaki* 'Diospyros kaki'

'a kaki' →

invariable		inflected	
un cachi	106	*un caco*	203
un kaki	30	*un kako*	7

Feminine nouns in /i/ have no way of inflecting; masculine ones occasionally become class 1 through backformation.

- Final C: *lastex, rayon, sport, tweed, élites, toilettes, claque, refrain, soubrette, round, goal, supporter, assist, vermouth, Nord, Internet, computer, hardware, software, hard disk, mouse, monitor, modem, scanner, mail, domopak, hashish, babysitter, performance, governance, input*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
?							✓	✓	✓	✓

Time period	Dates
VIII	1901-1945
IX	1946-1968
X	1969-2000
XI	2001-2022

- This type of nouns appears only in the 20th century!

- Previously, loan nouns ending in a C were adapted, appending a final unstressed vowel after gender assignment, with /a/ for feminine nouns and /o/ for masculine nouns; only rarely, a final -*e* was supplied, either epenthetically or because the loanword was analyzed as containing a suffix ending in -*e*

Adaptation of borrowed nouns ending in a C (pre-20th c.)

Arabic loanwords:

- nouns denoting human males: *suḷtān*   >   *sultano*   class 1
                                  xalīfah   >   *califfo*
                                  šayk   >   *sceicco*

- Nouns denoting inanimates: *xaršuf*   >   *carciofo*   class 1
                                  līmūn   >   *limone*   class 3
                                               (pseudo-suffix -*one*)

English loanwords:

- Nouns denoting Humans: *quaker*   >   *quacchero*   M.   class 1
                                              quacchera   F.   class 2
- Nouns denoting inanimates: *beef-steak*   >   *bistecca*   F.   class 2
                                 yard   >   *iarda*   F.   class 2

Nouns ending in a Consonant

In the 20th century, adaptation and morphological integration stopped.

Is final C re-analyzed as a phonological factor preventing inflection or is the reason for uninflectedness «etymological», as Fedden 2019 claims for Italian adjectives ending in a C?

What criteria would allow us to decide between these two explanations?

Feminine Nouns in -*e* and in -*ie*

Time period	Dates
I	1211-1300
II	1301-1375
III	1376-1525
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V	1613-1691
VI	1692-1800
VII	1801-1900
VIII	1901-1945
IX	1946-1968
X	1969-2000
XI	2001-2022

- Feminine nouns in -*e:*

III *le meretrice, cagione, carne;* IV *lode*

- Feminine nouns in -*ie* /je/:

VI *barbarie;* VII, XI *serie;* IX *specie*

Time period / Kind of Noun	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
F in -*e*			✓	✓							
F in -*ie*						✓	✓		✓		✓

Feminine Nouns in -*ie:* phonotactic problem

VI *barbarie;* VII, XI *serie;* IX *specie*

/ˈsɛrje/ 'series'   */ ˈsɛrji/ is phonotactically illegal:

«La combinazione ii = [ij, ji] si riduce ad [i], la combinazione ii = [jj] a [j]»
(Camilli 1965: 93, §64)

*/ˈsɛri/ is phonotactically legal, and would parallel other plurals of nouns displaying a pre-desinential /j/ in the singular form, such as

/opeˈrajo/ 'worker' /opeˈrai/ 'workers', not */operaji/,

BUT this repairment doesn't occur

Nouns in -*e*

- Masculine loanwords:

- Feminine loanwords:

- Compounds:

There are more examples in each category, these are just illustrative

	invariable		**inflected**	
kamikaze	*i kamikaze*	2036	*i kamikazi*	3

	invariable		**inflected**	
stele	*le stele*	1164	*le steli*	324

fuoriclasse 'ace, champion'	M	*i fuoriclasse*	1331	*fuoriclassi* (M)	4
	F	*le fuoriclasse*	44	*fuoriclassi (F)*	1

→ Clear tendency to uninflectedness

Gender / ending mismatch

Two kinds of mismatches:

M in -*a* (Migliorini [1934[1]] 1957) and **F in -*o*** (D'Achille & Thornton 2008)

SG ending	% M	% F	% M & F	Total number of types
-*a*	5,1%	86,8%	7,9%	24126
-*o*	99%	0,4%	0,4%	25614
-*e*	50,9%	40,6%	8,5%	16540
-*i*	35,2%	54%	10,6%	1566
-*u*	83,1%	5,3%	11,6%	95
Stressed V, C	51,6%	43,7%	4,7%	5703
totale	52,4%	42,2%	5,3%	

The overwhelming majority of Nouns in -*o* are masculine, the majority of Nouns in -*a* are feminine

Data from Sgroi (2008: 109) with further elaboration

The origin of uninflected masculines in -*a*

Migliorini 1957 [1934[1]]

Latin and above all Greek words: *scriba* 'scribe', *papa* 'pope', *duca* 'duke', *collega* 'colleague' an many more – inflect in class 4: *papa / papi*

«Exotic» loans: *lama* 'llama; Buddhist spiritual leader' , *karma* 'id.'

 and lots of nouns denoting **exotic animals** borrowed at the end of the 19th century:

alpaca, boa, cacatoa, cobra, gorilla, lama, puma, anaconda, panda

These are assigned masculine gender because of their gender in French, and become invariable because of gender / ending mismatch.

Note that these nouns do not betray their foreign origin through spelling or phonological / phonotactic oddness!

More uninflected masculines in –*a* (Migliorini 1957 [1934[1]])

Nouns denoting Humans originating from:

- Metonymies   *boia* 'executioner, hangsman, headsman'
                       < Lat. *boia(m)* 'leather collar, thong'
- Anthroponyms   *sosia* 'look-alike' < *Sosia* in Plautus' and Molière's plays
                       balilla '8-14-year old boy in Fascist youth organization'
                       < nickname of Giovan Battista Perasso
- Compounds   *portabandiera* 'standard bearer' lit. carry flag
- Deverbal nicknames *tartaglia* 'stutterer' < stem of the verb *tartagliare* 'stutter'

Nouns denoting inanimates originating from:

- Ellipsis of M head   *avana* 'Havana cigar'
- «Nomi cartellino»   *vaglia* 'money order' < let it be worth
                       proclama 'edict, decree' < proclaims

Already Migliorini (1957: 106) attributes uninflectedness of masculine nouns in *-a* to a gender / ending mismatch

He lists the following forms that appeared in print:

gli scriba, i fratricida, i due omicida, i regicida, i Belga, gli analfabeta, i despota, i monarca, i comma, i dogma, i panorama, i prisma...

and observes that this type of deviation is far more frequent than typos.

These are all nouns of Latin or Greek origin which normatively inflect according to class 4 (SG *-a* / PL *-i*)

The list is growing: we observed

i sisma (2017) 'the earthquakes' normatively class 4, *i sismi*

Masculine nouns in -*a*

[+ Human] or [+ animate] nouns

sherpa 'id.'	*gli sherpa*	620	*gli sherpi*	0
lama 'llama; Buddhist spiritual leader'	*i lama*	1084	*i lami*	0

[- animate] [+ count] nouns

burqa 'id.'	*i burqa* *i burka*	77 45	*i burqi, i burqas* *i burki, i burkas*	0 0
chakra 'id.'	*i chakra*	4352	*i chakri*	0
parka 'id.'	*i parka*	287	*i parki* *i parkas*	0 1
mascara 'id.'	*i mascara*	1004	*i mascari*	2

Nouns in order of decreasing foreign elements in the spelling

→ Clear tendency to uninflectedness

Feminine nouns in -*o*

These are also uninflectable

except *mano / mani* 'hand' which is in class 1

Not discussed for lack of time

Thoroughly discussed by D'Achille & Thornton 2008

The catastrophe:
invariable M in -*o* and F in -*a*

Mostly constructional, but tendency to uninflectability is observable in loanwords which would have no phonological impediment to enter an inflecting class

Feminine nouns in -*a*

[+ Human] or [+ animate] nouns: preferably inflected in class 2, variation

geisha 'id.'	*le geisha*	285	*le geishe*	366
iguana 'id.'	*le iguana*	73	*le iguane*	692

[- animate] [+ count] nouns: preferably uninflected, some variation

keffiah 'id.'	*le keffiah* *le chefia*	4 0	*le keffie* *le chefie*	1 1
casbah 'id.'	*le casbah* *le casba*	32 1	*le casbe*	1
siesta 'id.'	*le siesta* *le siestas*	0 1	*le sieste*	31

Nouns in order of decreasing foreign elements in the spelling

Lexeme-specific factors; spelling

Masculine nouns in *-o*

The mother of all invariable masculine nouns in -*o*:
euro!

dollaro / dollari 'dollar'

marco / marchi 'Deutsche Mark'

fiorino / fiorini 'forint'

BUT *euro/ euro*

euri is a low variant, used jocularly or by uneducated speakers or in certain local varieties, mainly Tuscany and Rome

Masculine nouns in -*o*

[+ Human] nouns: inflected in class 1

bonzo 'bonze'	*i bonzo*	0	*i bonzi*	352
torero 'bullfighter'	*i torero*	1 (typo?)	*i toreri* *i toreros*	250 14

[- animate] [+ count] nouns: preferably uninflected, variation

kimono 'id.'	*i kimono*	374	*i kimoni* *i kimonos*	33 0
eskimo 'hooded coat'	*gli eskimo*	17	*gli eskimi* *gli eskimos*	5 0
poncho 'id.'	*i poncho*	115	*i ponchi* *i ponchos* *i ponci*	17 30 1
gazebo 'id'	*i gazebo*	4132	*i gazebi* *i gazebos*	703 3
avocado 'id.'	*gli avocado*	751	*gli avocadi* *gli avocados*	73 36

Nouns in order of decreasing foreign elements in the spelling

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Names of the months (all M)

Tendency to uninflectedness stronger in nouns ending in -*e* (class 3) than in nouns ending in -*o* (class 1)

gennaio	i gennaio	✓ 5	i gennai	✓ 4
febbraio	i febbraio	✓ 7	i febbrai	✓ 2
marzo	i marzo	✓ 1	i marzi	✓ 3
maggio	i maggio		i maggi	✓ 4
giugno	i giugno	✓ 4	i giugni	✓ 3
luglio	i luglio	✓ 2	i lugli	✓ 6
agosto	gli agosto	✓ 5	gli agosti	✓ 10
in -o	uninflected	24 <	inflected	32
aprile	gli aprile	✓ 3	gli aprili	✓ 6
settembre	i settembre	✓ 13	i settembri	✓ 3
ottobre	gli ottobre	✓ 6	gli ottobri	✓ 6
novembre	i novembre	✓ 4	i novembri	✓ 2
dicembre	i dicembre	✓ 3	i dicembri	✓ 2
in -e	uninflected	29 >	inflected	19

Counts from ItTenTen 20

Days of the week

- *Lunedì, martedì, mercoledì, giovedì, venerdì*: M in final stressed V

'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday'

- *Sabato*: M in -*o*   'Saturday'

- *Domenica*: F in -*a*   'Sunday'

Tutti i sabat*, *tutte le domenic** 'every Saturday', 'every Sunday':

 on the first 20 random contexts:

	invariable		**inflected**	
'every Saturday'	*tutti i sabato*	4	*tutti i sabati*	16
'every Sunday'	*tutte le domenica*	0	*tutte le domeniche*	20

Counts from ItTenTen 20

Decrease in inflectability of Nouns in classes 1, 2, 3, 4

class 4 dead (fed only by some derivational suffixes)
- no new M in -*a* are assigned to this class
- old M in -*a* move to class 6

class 3 losing inflectability more than classes 1 & 2
- months in -*e* > months in -*o*   > = more often invariable than
- within loanwords in -*e*, M > F
- constructional uninflectedness in second members of compounds

class 1 losing inflectability more than class 2
- *tutti i sabato* > ?*tutte le domenica*

Inanimate Nouns losing inflectability more than Human and Animate Nouns

F in -*a*:	Inanimate	1.1 : 1	ratio invariable : inflected
	Animate, Human	0.1 – 0.7: 1	
M in -*o*:	Inanimate	6 : 1	
	Human	inflected according to class 1	

Adjectives

We counted adjectives that are «inflectable in the syntax»
(Andrew Spencer, today's talk)
i.e, that can occurr with both SG and PL controllers

The harvest was meagre

Invariable Adjectives in the corpus:
14 types, 141 tokens (among which 6 hapaxes)

Type \ Time period	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
loro '3PL.POSS'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
più 'greater; several'		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
che 'what a'		✓	✓								
assai 'a lot of, many'			✓								
dabene 'honest'			✓								
altrui 'someone else's'						✓	✓				
pari 'equal, even'							✓		✓	✓	
grigio ferro 'iron gray'								✓			
pro-capite 'per capita'										✓	
qualsiasi 'ordinary'										✓	
così 'such, like this'										✓	
standard 'id.'										✓	✓
granata 'garnet red'										✓	
blu 'blue'											✓

Appearance of various (kinds of) invariable Adjectives in the corpus

Time period / Type	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
loro '3PL.POSS'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
stressed final V		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
final /i/			✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
PN construction			✓						✓		
modified color								✓			
final C									✓		✓
converted color A										✓	

Italian possessive adjectives

Inflectional signature:

PERSON and **NUMBER** of the possessor, **GENDER** and **NUMBER** of the possessed item

possessed ╲ possessor	M.SG	F.SG	M.PL	F.PL	class
1SG	mio	mia	miei	mie	1
2SG	tuo	tua	tuoi	tue	1
3SG	suo	sua	suoi	sue	1
1PL	nostro	nostra	nostri	nostre	1
2PL	vostro	vostra	vostri	vostre	1
3PL	loro				5

*******	loro	lora	lori	lore
*******	altruo	altrua	altrui	altrue

loro < (IL)LORU(M)
'DIST.DEM.M&N.PL.GEN'

altrui
'someone else's'

Adjectives in final C, in /i/, in stressed V in our corpus:

Stressed final vowel: 4 types (PIÙ, COSÌ, CHE, BLU)

II1 *più cardinali* 'several cardinals', IV, V2 *più volte* 'several times'

IV3 *più valore* 'greater worth'

II3 *che novità* 'what a piece of news', III5 *in che modo* 'in which way'

X3 *un livido così* 'a bruise this big'

Final /i/: 4 types (ASSAI, ALTRUI, PARI, QUALSIASI)

III3 *tempo assai* 'a lot of time', *assai robe* 'many clothes', *asai disagi* 'many hardships'

VI1 *cognizione dell'animo altrui* 'knowledge of someone else's soul', *le fortune altrui* 'other people's fortunes'

VII3 *pari ardore* 'equal ardour', *insistenza pari* 'equal insistence'

X3 *altri acidi qualsiasi* 'other acids of whatever kind'

Final consonant: 1 type (STANDARD)

X4 *protocolli standard* 'standard protocols', XI3 *consumi standard* 'standard consumption'

Adjectives in final C, in /i/, in stressed V from dictionaries

There are overall **very few** adjectives with these shapes:

- in final C:

snob, chic, standard, naïf, kitsch, folk, punk, halal, zen, mignon, pop, super, kasher, senior, junior, diesis, gratis…

- in /i/:

assai, ogni, altrui

cachi / kaki, pari, impari, dispari, cremisi, mini, maxi

gay, baby, sexy…

- in stressed V

blu, agé, blasé, démodé, osé, retrò, rococò, tabù…

Low borrowability of Adjectives
(Tadmor, Haspelmath & Taylor 2010, Table 1, with further elaboration)

Semantic word class	All words	Loanwords	Loanwords as % of total	% Loanwords in each class
Nouns	34,355	10,712	31.2%	79.7%
Verbs	13,808	1,932	14.0%	14.4%
Adjectives and adverbs	5,284	803	15.2%	5.9%
All content words	53,446	13,446	25.2%	100%

From the *Loanword Typology (LWT)* Project

Adjectives in final C: Phonological or etymological reasons?

Fedden (2019: 308, 316) on Italian adjectives ending in a consonant, e.g. *chic* 'chic':

«Their phonology does not prevent them from agreeing […]. These adjectives are non-agreeing because they are loanwords»

«In Italian, adjectives ending in a stressed vowel or in /i/ do not agree. Consonant-final adjectives, such as *chic* 'chic' and *super* 'super', do not meet this phonological description. They do not agree because they are loans»

- C-final adjectives could be treated as roots, and receive a full set of inflectional endings from one of the classes 1-4, but they don't

  A few examples, however, exist from older stages of the language:

  e.g. *snello* < Frankish **snel* (reported by Repetti 2012: 179)

- Stressed-V final adjectives could be treated as roots, and receive a full set of inflectional endings from class 1, but they don't :

  If *tu-o* /ˈtu.o/, *su-o* /ˈsu.o/ ➔ why not **blu-o*?

- The same could happen to /i/ final adjectives, and it does occasionally happen, through backformation from a form perceived as M.PL:

  choosy /tʃusi/   >   *ciuso* /tʃuso/ M.SG (jocular)

  newbie /njubbi/   >   *niubbo / niubba / niubbi /niubbe*

                                     M.SG   / F.SG   / M.PL   / F.PL

Cf. Corbett's «sporadic» inflection

Causes of uninflectability in Italian adjectives

- C-final and stressed-V-final adjectives pattern together, resisting inflection;
- /i/ final adjectives are less strongly uninflectable than the other two types, they can become inflectable through backformation

→ A final V /i/ is phonologically less «inflection preventing» than a stressed V or a C

Fedden 2019	
Phonological	/i/#
	Stressed V#
Etymological (loanwords)	C#

Thornton & D'Achille	
(marginally inflectable)	/i/#
Phonological? Etymological?	Stressed V#
	C#

Color adjectives

Unmotivated color adjectives: e.g. *rosso* 'red'

*vestito **rosso***	*gonna **rossa***	*pantaloni **rossi***	*scarpe **rosse***
'red dress'	'red skirt'	'red pants'	'red shoes'

Converted color adjectives : e.g. *rosa* 'pink' < *rosa* 'rose'

*vestito **rosa***	*gonna **rosa***	*pantaloni **rosa***	*scarpe **rosa***
'pink dress'	'pink skirt'	'pink pants'	'pink shoes'

Compound A-N color adjectives: e.g. rosso sangue 'blood red', lit. red blood

*vestito **rosso sangue***	*gonna **rosso sangue***	*pantaloni **rosso sangue***	*scarpe **rosso sangue***
'blood-red dress'	'blood-red skirt'	'blood-red pants'	'blood-red shoes'

Grossmann & D'Achille (2019:77): «A-N constructions are invariable. [...] rare instances of agreement on the head adjective [...] are definitely non-standard in modern Italian»

Berlin & Kay's hierarchy and inflection of Italian color adjectives
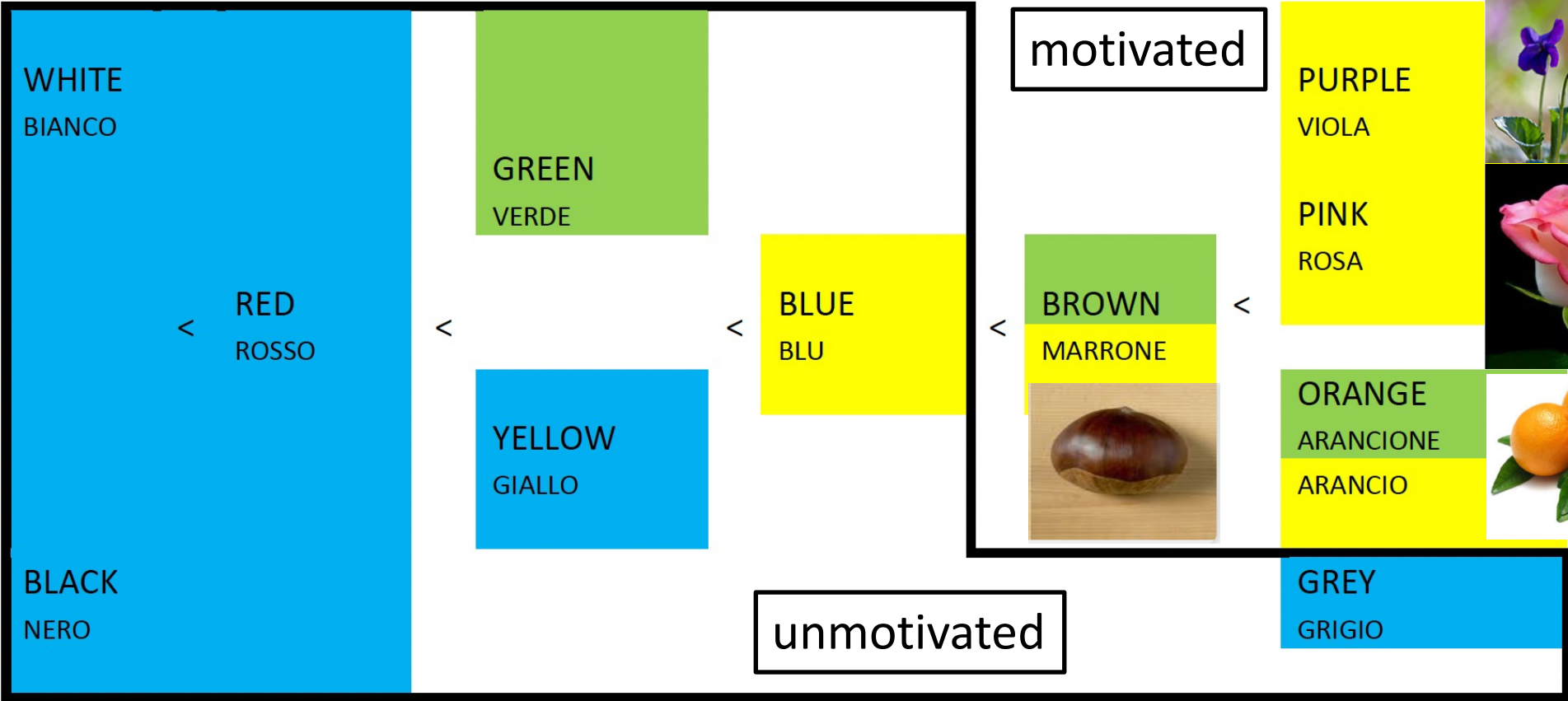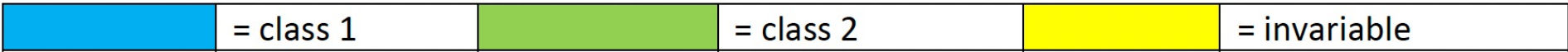
Conclusions

- In Italian there are much fewer uninflected Adjectives than Nouns
  - Because Adjectives are less fed by loanwords?
  - Because contextual inflection needs to be overtly expressed more than inherent inflection?

- Even lexemes whose phonology fits the most productive inflection classes can be uninflected:
  - In cases of **constructional** uninflectedness (compounds...)
  - For **etymological** reasons, particularly if the **spelling** reveals a foreign origin or there is encyclopedic knowledge of a foreign origin, or when speakers are aware that a noun is created by **metonymy**, **clipping**, **antonomasia** and other such processes

→ Reviving research on **lexical strata** (Saciuk 1969) is a desideratum

It appears that speakers use a lot more information than just the signifier of a lexeme when deciding whether to inflect it or not

Cf. Gaszewski's «foreign feel»

Thank you!
Grazie!
Danke!

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