0. Introduction

In this paper we analyse the class of Italian Pronominal Verbs (PRVs), i.e. those verbs that:
1) show at the surface the presence of the pronominal marker *si* (formal criterion);
2) show a lexicalised pronominal form (lexical criterion). Morphological constructions such as pronominal impersonals and passives are not taken into consideration here, even if, as we will see from the examples, the boundary between lexicalised and morphological uses is rather frayed at the edges.

We prefer to talk about ‘pronominal marker’ rather than ‘reflexive marker’, because, according to our criteria, we regard the term ‘reflexive’ as too restrictive and therefore misleading. Examples of PRVs are: *guardarsi allo specchio* “to look at oneself in the mirror”, *asciugarsi le mani* “to dry one’s hands”, *prepararsi la cena* “to get dinner ready”, *sedersi in prima fila* “to sit down in the front row” etc.

PRVs are interesting both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. From a quantitative perspective, they constitute a large lexical class. From a qualitative perspective, even though they share the same morphology, their nature is considerably different. Depending on the specific case, the *si* assumes different values, so that we can say that various functions correspond to one form. But even though there seems to be general agreement at all levels of the literature (lexicographic, descriptive and theoretical) regarding the multifunctional status of the pronominal marker, there is no agreement at all about the extension and internal structure of its functional domain and about which is/are the parameter(s) that are relevant to the distribution of its different functions. Indeed, the main difficulty one is confronted with when looking at the various classifications is the lack of a consistent terminology; this, in our opin-
ion, reflects the still unclear theoretical status of the notions involved.

The current lexicographic classification, for example, both monolingual and bilingual, distinguishes generally among 'reflexives', 'intransitive pronominal' (or 'middle') and 'reciprocal verbs'. But this classification is often not consistent, even within the same dictionary. 'Reciprocal' or 'intransitive pronominal' uses, for example, are often wrongly classified as 'reflexive' ones. Even Palazzi & Folenzzi (1995), that seems to be the monolingual dictionary with the richest terminology regarding the si-verbs (see the labels 'indirect reflexive', 'intensifier reflexive', 'pronominal transitive' etc.) shows irregularities and frequently assigns similar uses to different classes.

At a theoretical level, most researchers put forward their own syntactic or semantic definition. This results in a proliferation of labels defining similar structures: see for example the use of terms like 'derived intransitive', 'ergative', 'unaccusative', 'anticausative' to refer to similar phenomena.2

1. Definition of the problem

One of the main problems we are interested in regards the description of the intransitive pronominal use of transitive verbs. Consider (1b), (2b) and (3b) below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRV</th>
<th>PRV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1a) il fumo ha riempito la stanza</td>
<td>(1b) la stanza si è riempita di fumo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;the smoke filled the room&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;the room filled with smoke&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2a) Qualcuno ha incendiato il bosco</td>
<td>(2b) il bosco si è incendiato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;somebody set the wood on fire&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;the wood caught fire&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3a) Giani ha aperto la porta all'improvviso</td>
<td>(3b) La porta si è aperta all'improvviso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;G. opened the door suddenly&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;the door opened all of a sudden&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Excerpt from Dizionario Italiano Sabatini Coletti (1997), which employs a single label ("reflexive") for all uses.

2 For these labels, see Halliday (1985), Buzzollo (1986), Perlmutter (1978), Siewierska (1984) respectively.

Verbs showing this alternation have often been called 'ergatives' or 'causative pairs' in the literature (see among others Levin & Rappaport 1995), because of the possibility of deriving the transitive from the intransitive use adding the element [Cause] to their semantic representation. The intransitive use normally describes changes in the physical shape of appearance of some entity, and can be associated with the lexical template: [y become STATE].5

The analysis of the argument alternation between transitive verbs and their pronominal variant has led to the identification of two different patterns of verbal behaviour, shown in (4) and (5) below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRV</th>
<th>INV</th>
<th>PRV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) Gianci rompe il bicchiere</td>
<td>il bicchiere rompe</td>
<td>il bicchiere si rompe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. break-3SG the glass</td>
<td>the glass break-3SG</td>
<td>the glass PRM break-3SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;G. breaks the glass&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;the glass breaks&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;the glass breaks&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Gianci brucia la carne</td>
<td>la carne brucia</td>
<td>la carne si brucia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. burn-3SG the meat</td>
<td>the meat burn-3SG</td>
<td>the meat PRM burn-3SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;G. burns the meat&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;the meat burns&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;the meat burns up&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason why some transitive verbs allow both an INV [+PR] and an INV [+PR] alternation as in (5), while other transitive verbs allow only the INV [+PR] use, as in (4), is not clear. In particular, it is not evident:

a) according to which criterion the pronominal element is present or absent (in the surface structure);

b) what is the function and semantic value of the si in the various cases (argument, morpheme, lexical idiosyncrasy?).

2. The aim of the analysis

The aim of the analysis is to answer the issues in a) and b) above. To do so, we will proceed in the following way:

1. we will first show how a purely syntactic approach fails to account consistently for pronominal intransitive uses such as those in (1)-(5) above (Section 4) (cf. Jezek 1997). Because of the presence of two types of intransitivity ([-PR] and [-PR]) in (5), it is evident that the intransitive si-can

4 The direction of the process of derivation (intransitive → transitive versus transitive → intransitive) is still a very controversial point. See for details Levin & Rappaport (1995).

5 Cf. Levin & Rappaport (1993). In this respect, notice that change of state verbs can be further subdivided into two classes. The first class contains verbs that necessarily entail the achievement of an end state (different from the initial one) by the entity that undergoes the change (see formarsi "to stop", chinarsi "to close"). The second class contains verbs that can entail the achievement of an end state or just a change in a particular direction (see raffreddarsi "to get cold", allargarsi "to become wide", "to widen out" etc.). We will refer to the latter subclass as the class containing the feature [+transformational].
not be a simple de-transitivizer, i.e. a marker of valency reduction, as suggested by Salvi (1988) among others.

2. we will then argue that only a multifactorial semantic approach, based on notions such as ‘thematic relations’, ‘aktionsart’, ‘aspect’ and ‘time’ will allow us to interpret the function of the si properly (Section 4 and 5);

3. in particular, we will put forth the hypothesis that the distribution of the si in intransitive predications is determined by the interplay among these features, with lexical and grammatical Aspect triggering it off (Section 6).
   We presume that in the presence of two types of intransitivity, i.e. [-PR] and [+PR] (see again (5) above), the difference can be explained in terms of an aspatial opposition;

4. on the basis of these assumptions, we will then analyse a selection of PRVs in order to verify whether the attempt to explain the behaviour of si in (4) and (5) from an aspatial point of view is a reasonable one to be followed (Section 7). In this respect, it will become increasingly clear that the si-marker assigns a [+eventive] aspatial function at the sentence level.

In this perspective, we believe that PRVs may serve to verify a number of theoretical assumptions regarding the nature and typology of “states of affairs” (cf. Dik 1989:89) and their relevance to the definition of the possible thematic structures.

3. The syntactic perspective of the Unaccusativity Hypothesis

We begin from a syntactic perspective. In this respect the Unaccusative Hypothesis is relevant to our study because it deals with types of intransitivity. As is widely known, this hypothesis was first formulated by Perlmutter within the context of Relational Grammar (Perlmutter 1978, 1989) and later adopted by Burzio within the Government-Binding framework (Burzio 1986). It is a syntactic hypothesis which argues that there are two kinds of intransitive verbs, the ‘unaccusative’ verbs and the ‘unergative’ verbs, each associated with a different underlying syntactic configuration as follows:

a) Unergative verbs NP [VP V] lavorare “to work”

b) Unaccusative verbs [VP V NP] arrivare “to arrive”

From a Government-Binding perspective, ‘unergative’ verbs take an underlying subject and no object, whereas ‘unaccusative’ verbs take an underlying object and no subject. In argument structure terms, ‘unergative’ verbs have an external argument but no direct internal argument, whereas ‘unaccusative’ verbs have a direct internal argument but no external argument.

Table 1 below shows to what extent the unaccusativity parameter is relevant to PRVs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>TR</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>Formal properties</th>
<th>Aux IN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rompere</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>unaccusative ergative</td>
<td>essere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brucare</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>unaccusative ergative</td>
<td>essere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comminciare</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>unaccusative ergative</td>
<td>essere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sedere</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>unaccusative not ergative</td>
<td>essere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>penetraus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>unaccusative not ergative</td>
<td>essere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cadere</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>unaccusative not ergative</td>
<td>essere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>telefonare</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>unergative</td>
<td>avere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Argument alternations and the unaccusativity parameter

The syntactic parameter of split intransitivity does indeed seem to be relevant to PRVs. All PRVs fall within the unaccusative class. But the following issues arise:

1) what makes all PRVs fall into the unaccusative and not the unergative class (see field Formal properties);
2) which criterion determines the different behaviour of the si towards unaccusativity (see field PR)?

4. The semantic perspective of Thematic Roles

The reason why the Unaccusative Hypothesis is not by itself able to answer these issues is that unaccusativity is syntactically represented but semantically determined (for this claim, see among others Levin & Rappaport 1992, Van Valin 1987). In order to answer the issues raised in 1) and 2) above, we therefore turn to the analysis of the semantics of PRVs. We start with the investigation in which an argument bearing the thematic role Theme is assigned grammatical primacy and chosen as the surface subject of the sentence (see again (1)-(5) above). Notice that in such constructions the surface subject does not have control over the ‘State of Affairs’ (SoA) expressed by the predication.

As regards the status of the si, research has often considered it a sort of ‘trace’ of a deleted Causor or Agent (cf. Cennamo 1993:22-23). This claim is supported by the observation that all PRVs found in the causative VTR/IN alternation would actually imply the underlying presence of an external Cause. This led many researchers to the conclusion that the si could represent a ‘trace’ of this external Causor that has been deleted. But even though the evidence from

6 Auxiliary selected in the intransitive use.
7 ‘Unaccusative ergative’ verbs show a TR/IN alternation, in which the subject of the IN use corresponds to the object of the TR one. ‘Unaccusative not ergative’ verbs do not show this alternation.
this specific subclass of PRVs supports this hypothesis, other subclasses of PRVs do not. See examples (6)-(9) below:

6. 

(6) la lava si è riversata sulle pendici del vulcano

"the lava flowed along the slopes of the volcano"

7. 

(7) il cielo si è coperto

"the sky became overcast"

8. 

(8) pregiudizi che si sono radicati nel tempo

"prejudices that have taken root over time"

9. 

(9) il tempo si è ristabilito

"the weather (has) cleared up"

Here in our opinion, the grammatical primacy assigned to the surface subject does not necessarily imply a backgrounded or defocused external Causer.

We therefore believe that the hypothesis that the pronominal marker is an argument or a semi-argument capable of bearing a thematic role should be abandoned, because of the difficulty in assigning a referent or a thematic role of any kind to it. In our opinion, the si can be better interpreted as due to a sort of ‘passive-like’ or ‘middle’ morphology, i.e. a morphology associated with a specific encoding of the lexical argument(s) of a predicate, in which the emphasis is placed on the action itself. The si-morphology is in contrast with the active morphology, whose emphasis is on the ‘actor’, and with the passive one, whose emphasis is on the ‘undergoer’, and where the ‘actor’ can be omitted. In the presence of this ‘middle’ morphology, the verbal meaning is to be interpreted with reference to the subject, which has no control over the SoA expressed by the verb. The hypothesis that the si-constructions represent a third voice, alongside the active and the passive ones, has recently been repropose by Wehr (1995).

However, this hypothesis still does not solve the problem regarding the presence of two types of intransitivity ([+]PR/[-PR]) pointed out in (5).

5. The aspectual perspective

The solution to this problem may lie in the lexical semantics of the predicates on the one hand and in the hypothesis that the si has an aspectual function on the other hand.

As a number of recent studies have pointed out (see among others Levin & Rappaport 1992, 1995, Van Valin 1987, Chierchia 1992), there is a strict correlation between the thematic and argument structure of verbs and their lexical semantics. The quantity of arguments a predicate selects and the type of thematic role it assigns to them is deeply influenced by its Aktionsart.

In the last 30 years, one of the main concerns of lexical semanticists dealing with verbs has been to produce a semantic typology of predications that could account for the correlation between lexical aspect, thematic structure and argument configurations (see the classifications of Vendler 1967, Borgato 1976, Mourelatos 1978, Dowty 1979, Van Valin 1987, Dik 1989, Bertinetto 1986). Vendler’s classification (‘state’ verbs, ‘activity’ verbs, ‘accomplishment’ verbs, ‘achievement’ verbs), like many other classifications of Aktionsart, is based on a set of more abstract semantic (binary) oppositions. In fact, verbs can be grouped into classes according to features such as: [+dynamic], [+durative], [Transformative], [Irriative], [-Irritative], etc.

In our view, these features are crucial not only because they determine the argument behaviour but also because in combination with grammatical forms (morphemes, periphrastic structures and morphological tenses) they take part in the definition of the aspectual features a predication acquires in a specific context. In this respect, following the compositional approach of Verkuyl (1972), we believe that the predication is assigned its final aspectual functions only at the sentence level, where all pieces of information, coming from Aktionsart, Time, Aspect and the lexicalisation of the internal argument selected by the predicate, merge. In order to identify the specific aspectual function covered by the si in intransitive predications, it is therefore essential to analyse the way Aktionsart, Aspect and Time interact. Aktionsart refers to the lexical Aspect. Aspect refers to the features assigned to the predication by grammatical forms (imperfective, perfective, inchoative etc.). The temporal information refers to the placement of the predication in the past, present or future.

In Section 6 below we state our aspectual hypothesis and define the notion of Aspect within the theoretical framework we are going to adopt. In Section 7 we apply the above compositional approach to the analysis of a selection of PRVs.

6. The aspectual hypothesis

We assume that the morpheme si has an aspectual value. At the Phonetic Form level, we assume it to be the lexical output of the sentential aspectual function [preventive], which is present at the Logical Form level and is dominated by the superior sentential node ASPECT.
6.1 Aspect in Lo Cascio's theory

Aspectuality, according to Lo Cascio (1995), is the expression of a relation of inclusion between two time intervals: the time interval E, expressing the SoA in question, and the time interval L, which functions as localizer and which has the task to anchor the SoA E to a time axis. The time axis to which the E is anchored is indicated by the tense marking the SoA, and is controlled (dominated) by the time interval which functions as antecedent (called `time binder') for the tense in question. This antecedent, or `time binder', may be the speech point (in Lo Cascio's theory called Given Primary Time, GPT) or another time interval mentioned in the text.

In a sentence such as yesterday he was ill the temporal adverb yesterday delivers the localizer of the SoA to be ill which is placed in the past with respect to the moment of enunciation (GPT). The relation of inclusion between the L (yesterday) and the E (to be ill) in this case is such that E includes (is equal to or bigger than) L. The relation L\textless;E expresses imperfectivity.

On the contrary, in a sentence as yesterday he danced with Mary, the L includes (and is bigger than) the E (he danced). E is a subpart of the time interval defined by yesterday. The relation L\textgreater;E expresses perfectivity.

According to Lo Cascio's theory, a SoA presented as imperfective cannot be quantified, while a SoA interpreted as perfective can be measured and quantified (cf. he danced with her for two hours). The SoA he was ill cannot be quantified because it is a time interval bigger than the localizer yesterday (cf. he was ill for two hours). The SoA he danced, on the contrary, is shorter than its localizer and therefore can be measured or quantified.

At the level of Aktionsart (lexical Aspect), achievement predicates cannot be quantified, since they are [-durative]. Achievement predicates therefore behave as imperfective SoA do.

Achievement SoA marked by a [+perfective] morpheme, or which must be interpreted as [+perfective], cannot be quantified either, since they still remain [-durative]. To sum up, SoA can only be quantified on condition that they are [+durative] and [+perfective].

9 In languages whose morphology does not provide for aspectual marking at the Phonetic Form level, there is always need to have an aspectual interpretation at the discourse level in order to carry a story forward. Therefore, the presence of aspectual information at the level of the Logical Form (deep level) must be postulated. Accordingly, in Lo Cascio's theory, a L must always be postulated at the Logical Form level even if there is no lexicalization at the Phonetic Form level.

6.2 The case of Italian

As is widely known, Italian has a tense morphology which lexicalizes both temporal and aspectual information at the same time. For example, the 'Impe-

fetto' (Simple Past Imperfective) indicates [+past + coincidence with the moment of enunciation + the fact that the SoA includes its reference time]. Therefore both semantic categories, Time and Aspect, must be taken into account in our analysis. Furthermore Italian is very strict with respect to the congruency of information between Aktionsart and Aspect. This is why, according to a `congruency principle', for reasons of coherence an Italian perfective form (which indicates a closed time interval) in the past cannot combine with a progressive form (which indicates an open time interval), as the ungrammaticality of (10) shows:10

(10) *la biblioteca stava chiudendo
the library be-SPP.SG closing

In order to explain the behaviour of `aspectual xi-constructions', we will therefore take into account the tense combination, and consequently the congruency between the aspectual and temporal information carried by the tenses and the sentential aspectual value introduced by the xi-marker. We will therefore distinguish among the present morpheme, the past morphemes (`Passato remoto', 'Impe-
fetto' and Present perfect) and the future morpheme.11

The Present form in Italian carries two types of information: temporal information and aspectual information, as shown in Table 2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present: a.</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Aspect at VP level</th>
<th>Aspect at sentence level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. [+]coincidence [+]perfective [+]dynamic</td>
<td>⇒ [+]situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. [+]coincidence [+]perfective [+]dynamic</td>
<td>⇒ [+]habitual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. [+]coincidence [+]perfective [+]dynamic</td>
<td>⇒ [+]progressive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. [+]future</td>
<td>-???-</td>
<td>⇒ [+]eventive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. [+]atemporality</td>
<td>-???-</td>
<td>⇒ [+]characteristic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: `Present Tense'

[+Coincidence] [+perfective] can thus have three types of reading: [+perfective] [+dynamic] which indicates a situation, or [+perfective] [+dynamic], which indicates a habit or an activity in progress.

Italian simple past distinguishes between two forms:

10 This rule does not apply to other languages such as Spanish where (10) would be acceptable.

11 The semantic reading of the Spanish progressive form would be different from the Italian one.

12 Notice that the future morphemes are neutral with respect to the aspectual information, although a [+perfective] reading is more plausible.

13 Coincidence with the moment of enunciation.
7. The analysis

Let us now apply the three schemata shown in the tables in Section 6.2 to the analysis of a selection of ‘si-constructions’, in order to see which aspectual role is covered by the morpheme *si* and to explain the differences in behaviour between verbs allowing the ‘aspectual si-marker’ and those refusing it.

7.1 The [-durative] verbs and the ‘aspectual si-construction’

Let us first consider the verbs *chiudere*, *rompere*, *fermare*. These three verbs carry the semantic feature [-durative]. This explains why (11), (12), (13):

(11) *la biblioteca sta chiudendo*  
the library is closing

(12) *il treno si sta fermando*  
the train is stopping

(13) *il bicicletta sta rompendo*  
the glass is breaking

are semantically equal to (11a), (12a) and (13a) below respectively:

(11a) *la biblioteca sta per chiudere*  
the library is about to close

(12a) *il treno si sta per fermare? sta per fermare*  
the train is about to stop

(13a) *il bicicletta sta per rompere? sta per rompere*  
the glass is about to break

However, only *chiudere* and *rompere* also carry the semantic feature [+resultative]. This means that the past participles of *rompere* and *chiudere* can indicate a situation, while the past participle of *fermare* cannot. In order to indicate the situation originating from the event “to stop” we need to employ the adjective *fermo*. So if we have the structure shown in Table 5 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>[-durative]</th>
<th>[+resultative]</th>
<th>[+habitual/iterative]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Chiudere</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rompere</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fermare</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: The [-durative] Verbs

In the presence of the Present marker combined with a [-durative] feature, the combination according to the ‘congruency principle’ should assign a [+eventive] reading, lexicalise a ‘future’ time and consequently require the ‘aspectual si-marker’ in order to confirm the [+eventive] reading.  

As a matter of fact, the absence of the si-marker gives a [+eventive]+ [+habitual] reading to the verbal phrase. So we have:

(14a) *[-habitual]  
La porta si chiude male  
the door closes badly

(14b) *[-eventive]  
La porta si chiude male  
the door closes badly

Notice that the Present tense has a tense marked by a [-perfective] marker or by a [-perfective]+ [+progressive] markers combination. Therefore, since verbs such as *chiudere* or *fermare* are [-durative], when combined with a present morpheme they can take on the meaning of [-perfective]+ [+progressive]; in that case, however, the action would focus on the situation leading to the moment of closing or stopping, and the predication would get a [+eventive] reading.

---

Table 4: ‘Present perfect’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Aspect at VP level</th>
<th>Aspect at sentence level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[+past]</td>
<td>[+perfective]+ [+dynamic] ⇒ [+eventive]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+past]</td>
<td>[+perfective]+ [+dynamic] ⇒ [+habitual]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[+past]</td>
<td>[+perfective]+ [+dynamic] ⇒ [+progressive]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rompere has a [-habitual] reading. The SoA is marked by a [+unicity] semantic feature. Rompere therefore refuses the [+characteristic] or [+progressive] or [+habitual], and is only [+eventive]. In our view this explains why only a si-construction is allowed, and why rompere does not allow a non-si construction. The other two verbs, chiudere and fermare, allow a [-habitual] reading. Therefore they can show up in a construction with a [-eventive] reading, which is the counterpart of the si-construction. In order to acquire a [-eventive] reading they need the si-marker, which changes the aspectual value of the Present from [-perfective] into [+perfective].

The [+eventive] function of the aspectual si-construction will become clearer with the past tense morphemes, since Italian disposes of morphemes which lexicalise the opposition perfectivity [+eventive] imperfectivity [-eventive]. See (16) to (19) below:

\[16a\] La porta è chiusa
the door is close-PP,3SG
"the door is closed"

\[16b\] La porta chiudeva
the door close-IMP,3SG
"the door was closing"

\[17a\] La porta si chiuse
the door close-PRES,3SG
"the door closed"

\[17b\] La porta si chiudeva
the door close-IMP,3SG
"the door was closing"

\[18a\] Il bicchiere è rotto
the glass break-PP,3SG
"the glass is broken"

\[18b\] Il bicchiere si rotte
the glass break-PRES,3SG
"the glass broke"

\[19a\] Il bicchiere rompeva
the glass break-IMP,3SG
"the glass was breaking"

\[19b\] Il bicchiere si rompeva
the glass break-PRES,3SG
"the glass broke"

(16a), (18a) and (19a) are not acceptable since the absence of the si-marker would allow the [-perfective] reading (and thus [-eventive] reading), while the use of the ‘Passato remoto’ requires the presence of [+perfective] value. The fact that rompere is only [+eventive] and [-habitual] also explains the ungrammaticality of (19a) and the reason why it cannot be assigned a structure [+eventive] [+habitual], as in the case of the si. Sentences (16b) and (18b) are [+eventive]. This is confirmed by the use of the si-marker. Consider further:

\[20a\] Il treno ferma
the train stop-PRES,3SG
"the train stops"

\[20b\] Il treno si ferma
the train stop-PRES,3SG
"the train is stopping"

\[21a\] Il treno ferma
the train stop-IMP,3SG
"the train used to stop"

\[21b\] Il treno si ferma
the train stop-IMP,3SG
"the train stopped"

In our view, in the b sentences there is a preference for a [+eventive] reading. The ‘Passato remoto’ again indicates perfectivity and therefore presents an event. The fact that the verb fermare requires the presence of the si-marker in combination with the ‘Passato remoto’ is explained by the fact that the construction without si would get a [-perfective] reading which would contradict the information of the ‘Passato remoto’. Let us now take the Present perfect:

\[22a\] La porta è chiusa
the door is close-PP,3SG
"the door is closed"

\[22b\] La porta si è chiusa
the door close-PP,3SG
"the door has been closed"

\[23a\] Il bicchiere è rotto
the glass break-PP,3SG
"the glass is broken"

\[23b\] Il bicchiere si è rotto
the glass break-PP,3SG
"the glass has been broken"

\[24a\] Il treno è fermato
the train stop-PRES,3SG
"the train has stopped"

\[24b\] Il treno si è fermato
the train stop-PRES,3SG
"the train has come to a stop"

Notice that again the b sentences show a [+eventive] reading. The a sentences indicate situations and therefore have a [+coincidence] [+resultative] reading. (24a) is not grammatical since fermare is a verb which does not lexicalise the situation produced by the event fermare. Therefore the [-resultative] character of fermare explains the ungrammaticality of (24a). An adjective like fermo will do the job.

7.2 The [+durative] verbs and the ‘aspectual si-construction’

Let us now consider the verbs bruciare and inghiottire. The Aktionsart of these verbs is shown in Table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>[+durative]</th>
<th>[+transformativ]</th>
<th>[+dynamic]</th>
<th>[+resultative]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bruciare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inghiottire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: The [+durative] Verbs

These verbs belong to a class that allows both constructions with and without the aspectual si-marker (see also fondere, ghiacciare etc.). Let us consider some examples in the present and the past:
Consider further the following examples:

(39a) il bosco è bruciato
the wood is burn-PP.3SG
"the wood is burning"

(39b) il bosco si è bruciato
the wood PRM is burn-PP.3SG
"the wood has gone burning"

[+eventive]/[+situational]

(40a) il bosco è tutto bruciato
the wood is all burn-PP.3SG
"the wood is burned all"

[+situational]/[+resultative]

(+eventive)

(41a) il bosco ha bruciato per due ore
the wood has burned for two hours

"the wood has burned for two hours"

[+progressive]

ACTIVITY

but (42) il bosco si è bruciato in due ore
the wood is burned for two hours

"the wood got burned up in two hours"

[+eventive]

ACHIEVEMENT

The interpretation of (29a), (40b), (41a) and (41b) would be the following (where QE means quantifiable E):

(29a) burn

\[ \ldots \quad E \quad \text{GPT} \]

that day

\[ L \quad \text{GPT} \]

(40b) burn

\[ \ldots \quad E \quad \text{GPT} \]

that day

\[ L \quad \text{GPT} \]

(41a) burn

\[ \ldots \quad E \quad \text{GPT} \]

that day

\[ L \quad \text{GPT} \]

\[ L \supseteq E \quad \text{QE} = \text{due ore} \quad \text{"two hours"} \]

\[ L \supseteq E \quad \text{QE} = \text{due ore} \quad \text{"two hours"} \]

14 A sentence such as quel giorno il bosco è bruciato "that day the wood burned" would of course only get the [+eventive] reading as in sentence (39a), since the localizer disambiguates the sequence. But in that case (40b) would maybe be preferred.

15 Notice that it is not clear whether bruciare allows the auxiliary avere. Italian dictionaries only mention the auxiliary essere. Nevertheless, many native speakers also accept avere.
It is clear that the si-construction prefers to assign a [+eventive] reading, while
the absence of the si-marker assigns a [-eventive] reading, which can be both
 [+situational] or [+progressive].

8. Problems

The construction marked by aspeclual si can also carry the [-eventive]+
[-habitual] reading. This only happens in combination with the Present
morphe as (42) and (42b) show:

(42a) La porta si chiude [-eventive] the door PRM close-PRES.3SG
(42b) Questa porta si chiude facilmente [-eventive] this door PRM close-PRES.3SG easily
“the door closes” “this door closes easily”

This must probably be explained by the special [-eventive] character of the
present morphe.

9. Conclusions

We have shown that:

a) the pronominal marker si, in its intransitive use, assigns an aspeclual func-
tion of the type [+eventive];

b) this function is assigned at the sentence level, as a result of the interaction
of three main parameters, namely Time, grammatical Aspect and Aktions-
sart.

From a theoretical perspective, it follows that, at the Logical Form level,
semantic congruity between a higher sentential aspeclual and a phrasal
aspeclual node is required. Lexical information will indicate the constraints of
the possible combinations and the optional or compulsory presence of the ‘as-
peclual si-marker’. In this respect, we have shown that semantic features such as
[adurative] or [dynamic] or [resulative] have a relevant function.

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