# Templates, Phonological Government and Stem Allomorphy in Italian Verbs

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It is generally assumed that Italian roots are syllabified sequences of phonological segments with no limitations on the number of consonants or vowels (phonological constraints aside). These sequences are linearized and impenetrable, e.g. may not be infixed. In other words, Italian roots do not require a fixed template in order to be spelled out.[1] In this paper, I claim that Italian verb roots do display a template. The existence of such an item is visible through the behavior of a particular group of verbs. These belong to either the second or the third conjugation[2] and are characterized by the insertion of /k/ between the root and the inflectional marker (1sg, 3sg of the pres., 1-3sg and 3pl of the subj., Rohlfs 1968, vol. 2: 258ff.):

**(1)**      1sg pres.    2sg pres.    3sg pres.    1sg subj.    1sg imperf.    Infinitive
   a.   *teng-o*   *tjen-i*   *ten-jamo*   *teng-a*   *ten-ev-o*   *ten-ere*   'to hold'
   b.   *mank-o*   *mank-i*   *mank-jamo*   *mank-i*   *mank-av-o*   *mank-are*   'to miss'

In (1b), the root displays only one form: √MANK. Conversely, in (1a), the root displays three alternating forms: √TENG, √TJEN and √TEN. The allomorph √TENG implies the insertion of a velar consonant. This happens when the root is followed by a suffix beginning with either [o] or [a] (cf. the shaded cells in 1a). The allomorph √TJEN, in turn, is selected only at the 2sg of the present indicative. Finally, the allomorph √TEN corresponds to the elsewhere option. Roots such as that in (1b) contain the velar in all its occurrences.

Burzio (2003) claims that stress plays a central role in the selection of the right allomorph of the root. Each verb is associated to two or more underlying root forms. The winning candidate is the one satisfying a stress constraint within an OT approach. Pirrelli & Battista (2000), in turn, propose that the paradigmatic pressure is responsible for alternations such as that shown in (1). Similarly to Burzio, Pirrelli & Battista postulate the presence of more than one underlying form of the root. The right form is selected according to a conformity principle to the paradigm. In other words, Pirrelli & Battista's approach implies the existence of an inflected set of verbal forms that are used as models for all those verbs behaving in that specific manner.

In this paper, I argue for a different view of this problem. More precisely, I argue for the existence of a unique underlying form of the root. I propose that verbs like that in (1a) are characterized by a fixed template, made of a strict alternation of C and V positions (Lowestanmm 1996). The Element I (in the sense of Kaye *et al*. 1985) is associated to these roots and represents the exponent of the theme vowel. In other words, theme corresponds to conjugation: the Element A is associated to the first conjugation (cf. *mank-are* 'to miss' in 1b), whereas the Element I marks both the second and the third conjugation.[3]

The representations of 1sg, 2sg and infinitive of the data in (1a) are shown in what follows:

**(2)**   a. I (theme)                      b. I (theme)                      c.      I
   I > U (harmony)                     (harmony is not triggered)
   U > w > k (strong position)
   t e n  | o                          t e n  i                          t e n  A r e
   | | |    |                          | |  \ \  |                        | | |  / / /
   CVCVⁱCVʲ  [tengo]                    CVCVCV  [tjeni]                    CVCVCV  [tenere]

The template consists of two CV units. The inflectional markers, in turn, do not bear any

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template. In the representation of *tenere* 'to hold' three positions remain empty, cf. the underlined positions in (2). The distribution of empty Cs and Vs depends on government relations between the positions (Kaye *et al*. 1990). I argue that the alternation of the root depends on the need to license the empty positions in the template.

The presence of a [+back] vowel, -o, activates harmony. The Element I is turned into U. Note that $V^i$ is properly governed only when the inflectional marker -o is inserted. As a consequence, U can only be associated to the C position between $V^i$ and $V^j$ (the Elements U and I can be associated to either Cs or Vs). According to Ségéral & Scheer (2001), the C position following a governed empty nucleus is a strong position. Thus, the glide /w/ undergoes fortition and turns into a back consonant (harmony is blocked when I is not adjacent to -o, cf. the imperfective: *ten-ev-o*).

In (2b), harmony is not triggered. The suffix begins with -i. In this case, though, a diphthong is created: the Element I is inserted on the stressed V position (bold in 2). Finally, in (2c), the Element I merges to the Element A. The latter belongs to the infinitive marker /Are/. In the approach that I propose, the infinitive marker has a unique underlying form in all three conjugations:

**(3)** Infinitive: /Are/

Note that the Element I triggers the appearance of the velar at the 1sg of the subjunctive, too. This happens because of the presence of -a, which is marked as a [+back] vowel (cf. 1a).

By contrast, first conjugation verbs do not display any stem alternation. In fact, in the representation of the root of *mankare* 'to miss' the only possibly ungoverned position (underlined in 4) turns into a governed one since the insertion of the inflectional markers:

**(4)**   a. A (theme)                 b. A (theme)                 c.        A (theme)

     m a n   k      o                 m a n   k        i                 m a n   k A r e
     | | |   |   ╱                 | | |   |   ╱                 | | |   | ╱  | |
     CVC<u>V</u>CV   [manko]                 CVC<u>V</u>CV   [manki]                 CVC<u>V</u>CV+CV [mankare]
Roots behaving as √MANK have no phonological reason to alternate.

To conclude, verb roots belonging to the group (1a) include a template containing ungoverned C and V positions. This fact, in addition with the presence of the Element I, is responsible for the allomorphic behavior of such roots. In contrast, verbs such as that shown in (1b), do not display any prosodic alternation precisely because their template conform to the principles of Phonological Government.

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