Italian verb to noun conversion:
the case of nouns in –a deriving from verbs of the 2nd and 3rd conjugation[1]

Daniela Marzo

daniela.marzo@ling.uni-stuttgart.de

University of Stuttgart (Germany)

ABSTRACT. The formation and structure of the following Italian deverbal nouns is an open question in Italian word-formation research: (1a) *cammino*, (1b) *ritegno*, (1c) *riparto*, (2a) *sosta*, (2b) *classifica*, (3a) *tema*, (3b) *basta*, (3c) *perquisa*. While instances such as in (1) and (2) have, depending on the theoretical background, been analysed either as *root conversion* (cf. (1)) and *conversion of the infinitival stem* (cf. (2)) or as *suffixation* (cf. (1) and (2)), the spectrum of accounts for the instances in (3) includes, in addition, *root conversion with analogical gender assignment* (cf. (3a) and (3b)) as well as *analogical backformation* (cf. (3c)).

In the present contribution it is shown that the current conversion approaches as well as the suffixation approach are insufficient to explain the formation and structure of the nouns in (1) to (3). While the suffixation account is ruled out mainly for semantic and distributional reasons, it is shown thatthe existing conversionaccounts are, in principle, more plausible to account for the nouns in (1) and (2). However, as for the analogy-based conversion approaches, it is shown that only (3c) is a proper analogy-driven formation. In contrast, type (3b) will be shown to be an instance of root conversion remodelled by blocking.Moreover, in order to explain the formation and structure of the noun type instantiated by (3a), an additionaltype of conversion has to be distinguished: (3a) is shown – by the help of data from Old Italian– to be a synchronic remnant of an Old Italian conversion type: conversion of stem 2 of the Italian verbal stem space (terminology from Giraudo, Montermini&Pirrelli 2009), i.e. the stem on which also some Italian inflectional forms, as e.g. some of the present subjunctive forms are constructed.

KEY-WORDS. Conversion, suffixation, verbal stem space, blocking, analogic word-formation, networks.

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1.　　Introduction

The formation and structure of Italian deverbal nouns such as in (1) to (3) is an open and controversial question in Italian word-formation research.

(1)　a.　*cammino* (N) 'path, walking'　－　*camminare* (V) 'to walk'
　　　b.　*ritegno* (N) 'reservation'　　－　*ritenere* (V) 'to retain'
　　　c.　*riparto* (N) 'partitioning'　　－　*ripartire* (V) 'to divide, to portion'

(2)　a.　*sosta* (N) 'stop, rest, stopping'　－　*sostare* (V) 'to rest, to stop'
　　　b.　*classifica* (N) 'classification'　　－　*classificare* (V) 'to classify'

(3)　a.　*tema* (N) 'fear, fearing'　　　－　*temere* (V) 'to fear'
　　　b.　*basta* (N) 'stitch, stitching'　　－　*bastire* (V) 'to stitch'
　　　c.　*perquisa* (N) 'search, searching'　－　*perquisire* (V) 'to search'

While instances such as in (1) and (2) have, depending on the theoretical background, mainly been analysed either as *root conversion* and *conversion of the infinitival stem* (cf. Thornton 2004: 516-520 for (1) and (2a) respectively) or as *suffixation* (for *overt* suffixation cf. Scalise 1994: 271-275; for zero suffixation cf. Dardano 1988: 56), the spectrum of accounts for the instances in (3) includes, in addition, *root conversion with analogical gender assignment* (cf. Thornton 2004: 518 for (3a) and (3b)) as well as *analogical backformation* (cf. Thornton 2004: 520 for (3c)).

In the present contribution two important conversion and suffixation accounts will be compared with respect to their explanatory power of the formal and the semantic aspects of nouns such as in (1) to (3) as well as with regard to their relation to the respective verbs (cf. section 2.). While the suffixation account is ruled out mainly for semantic and distributional reasons, it is shown that the existing conversion accounts are, in principle, more plausible to account for the nouns in (1) and (2). However, in order to explain the formation and structure of all instances in (3), different subgroups of conversion have to be distinguished (cf. section 3.) Type (3a) will be analysed as a synchronic remnant of an Old Italian conversion type (cf. 3.1), i.e. conversion of stem 2 of the Italian verbal stem space (terminology from Giraudo, Montermini & Pirrelli 2009), a stem on which also the Italian 1st to

3rd singular present subjunctive and the 1st and 3rd plural present indicative forms are constructed. In contrast, type (3b) will be shown to be an instance of root conversion remodelled by blocking (cf. 3.2). Type (3c) will be discussed as a product of analogy to existing word-family and network relations such as *classifica* (N) 'classification' – *classificare* (V) 'classify' – *classificazione* (N) 'classification' (cf. 3.3). Section 4 will summarize the findings of this paper and give a brief outlook on open questions and further research.

2.   The data groups and existing accounts
2.1. Some background information on the data groups

The deverbal nouns in (1) to (3) belong to two different declensional classes, marked by either (prototypically feminine) *–a* (cf. (2) and (3)) or (prototypically masculine) *–o* (cf. (1)) in the singular and *–e* and *–i* in the respective plural forms, whereas their verbal counterparts belong to three different conjugational classes that are traditionally distinguished mainly by the theme vowel of their infinitival forms (*–a–*, *–e–* and *–i–* respectively; cf. (1a) and (2) in contrast to (1b) and (3a) as well as (1c), (3b) and (3c)).

As for the semantics of the nouns, it can be observed that independently of the declensional class they belong to, they usually are event nominals and often display, in addition, readings obtained by semantic shifts, such as locative readings (cf. (1a) *cammino*) or e.g. resultant state readings (cf. (3a) *tema*). On a more general level, this means that their readings are connected to the readings of the respective verbs either by a relation of conceptual identity or one of conceptual contiguity (cf. Koch 2001, Blank 1998). In sum, the semantic patterns are quite similar to those of overt deverbal nominalizations (for an overview of the observed semantic patterns cf. Thornton 2004: 516-520; Tollemache 1954: 17).

By far, the biggest subgroup of the nouns in (1) to (3) is, according to Thornton (2004: 516), type (1) (nominal *–o* + infinitival theme vowel *–a–/–e–/–i–*), that has approximately 800 members. Group (2) and (3) (nominal *–a* + infinitival *–a–/–e–/–i–*) are, in contrast, much smaller (together not even 300 instances). Type (2) has, in addition, to be split up into two subgroups (Thornton 2004: 517-520): (i) proper deverbal nouns such as (2a) *sosta* (based on the counts in Thornton, about 60% of the deverbal nouns in *–a*) and (ii) nouns that are in a direct relation to their verbs only from a

synchronic point of view, but that are denominal backformations from a diachronic perspective[2], such as (2b) *classifica* (about 40% of the instances) that is a backformation from *classificazione* 'classification'.[3] Subgroup (3) (nominal –*a* + infinitival –*e*–/–*i*–) is by far the smallest group and concerns only a handful of nouns as Thornton (2004: 518) puts it (some more instances can be found in Tollemache 1954: 157-164 and Rohlfs 1969: 473).

Though there seem to be some neologisms in the 20th century, the noun patterns under inspection are not very productive nowadays (less than 30 neologisms for type (1a); cf. Thornton 2004: 517; only 2 for type (2) and 1 for type (3), i.e. (3d); cf. Thornton 2004: 518, 520).

2.2. Type (1) to (3): Conversion or suffixation?

In what follows, two important existing accounts for the instances in (1) to (3), more precisely *root conversion* and *conversion of the infinitival stem* on the one (cf. 2.2.1) and *suffixation* (cf. 2.2.2) on the other hand will be presented and compared with respect to their benefits and shortcomings in explaining the data. As for (3a) to (3c), alternative hypotheses will be introduced in section 3.

2.2.1. Conversion

According to Thornton (2004: 516-520) the types instantiated by (1) to (3) are all instances of conversion (cf. also Tollemache 1954). More precisely, she analyses type (1), characterized by nominal –*o* and verbal –*a*–/–*e*–/–*i*–, such as (1a) *cammino – camminare* as *root conversion*. Her argumentation goes as follows: The verbal root *cammin*– (V) is converted into a nominal element *cammin*– (N). In order for *cammin*– (N) to be employed as a prototypical Italian noun, it has (i) to get a vocalic ending, (ii) to receive grammatical gender and (iii) to be integrated into a noun class. In the absence of a vowel ending that could be reinterpreted as gender and noun class marker, and the default gender for Italian converted nouns being masculine (cf. e.g. Thornton 2003), *cammin*– (V) is assigned the most

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[2] According to Thornton (2004: 518-519) denominal backformation is, in these cases, more plausible than deverbal conversion because the suffixed noun can be found in text corpora much earlier than the short noun and because they are usually perfectly homonymous; however, cf. section 2.2.1 and footnote 5.

[3] According to Thornton (2004: 518-520) this pattern was productive in Italian bureaucratic language of the 18th and the 19th centuries. Scalise (1994: 41), too, confines cases like these to special and sectorial languages.

productive masculine inflectional class (cf. Dressler/Thornton 1996), i.e. –o
(SG)/–i (PL) (cf. (4)).

(4) *cammin–* (V) → *cammin–* (N) + [–o (MASC.SG)/–i (MASC.PL)]

In contrast to type (1), type (2) is, in Thornton's analysis (2004: 518),
an instance of conversion of the stem of the infinitive, such as *sosta–* (V)
(cf. (2a)). As, in contrast to the above-mentioned *cammin–* (V), *sosta–* (V)
already has a vocalic ending, it can, in principle, be used as a prototypical
Italian noun without its form being altered. As –a prototypically represents
feminine gender[4] the most economic solution is chosen and the vocalic
ending of the stem is reinterpreted as feminine gender and assigned to the
inflectional class –a (SG)/–e (PL), (cf. (5)).

(5) *sosta* (V) → *sosta* (N.FEM.SG) / *soste* (N.FEM.PL)

As pointed out in section 2.1, type (2) is, from a diachronic perspective,
to be split up into two subtypes (cf. Thornton 2004: 517-520). From this
perspective the analysis in (5) can be applied to (2b) only from a synchronic
perspective.[5] From the diachronic point of view, (2b) *classifica* is an instance
of backformation from *classificazione*. The suffix –*zione* is cancelled and
the final –*a* of the remaining short form is reinterpreted as feminine singular
(cf. (6)).

(6) *classificazione* (N.FEM.SG) → *classifica̶z̶i̶o̶n̶e̶* (N.FEM.SG) / *classifiche*
     (N.FEM.PL)

The instances in (3) that are characterized by nominal –*a* and verbal
–*e*–/–*i*– such as (3a) *tema – temere*, are, in turn, according to Thornton
(2004: 518), just like type (1) cases of root conversion that have, in contrast
to type (1), been integrated into the –*a*/–*e* noun class by analogy with
type (2). Though this is certainly a plausible scenario from a descriptive
perspective, Thornton leaves open the important question of why type (3)
has been assigned feminine gender and been integrated into the –*a* (SG)/–*e*

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[4] It also can be assigned masculine gender, but only under specific circumstances (see Thornton 2003).
[5] This is also perfectly justified from the naïve native speaker's point of view, cf. Marzo (2013: 47); Thornton
(2004: 519) for the treatment of these cases in synchronic lexicography; Umbreit (2011) for motivational networks;
Gaeta (2010) for synchronic collision of diachronically different word formation patterns.

(PL) class in analogy to type (2), if the most productive noun class is the prototypically masculine one marked by –*o*(SG)/–*i*(PL) (cf. section 2.1).

2.2.2. Suffixation

In contrast to Thornton, Scalise (1994: 274-275) views all instances in (1) to (3) as suffixation. In his stem-based word-formation theory, all morphologically constructed words are constructed on stems, more precisely on a root plus theme vowel combination. The theme vowel is always the one of the infinitival form, i.e. –*a*–/–*e*–/–*i*–. In order to account for the noun types exemplified by (1) to (3) he posits that the theme vowels of the stems are cancelled by a phonological vowel cancellation rule when the suffixes –*a* or –*o* are added, cf. (7):

(7) a. *cammina* (V) + –*o* (N) ➔ *cammino* (N)   cf. type (1)
      b. *sosta* (V)   + –*a* (N) ➔ *sosta* (N)   cf. type (2)
      c. *tema* (V)   + –*a* (N) ➔ *tema* (N)   cf. type (3)

As for type (2), Scalise (1994: 275) is aware of the fact that a stem conversion analysis is, in principle, also possible, but for reasons of analogy he deliberately opts for the suffixation solution. While this choice certainly makes sense from within his framework, Scalise does not offer any description of the semantics and the distribution of the supposed suffixes. Such a description would, however, be necessary, to corroborate the status of –*a* and –*o* as suffixes, though it is certainly not an easy task in view of the coinciding semantic structures of the words in question (cf. section 2.1, but also Scalise 1994: 275).

2.2.3. Summary: Conversion or suffixation?

While Thornton's analysis (root conversion, conversion of the infinitival stem, analogy) cannot convincingly explain all examples in (3), Scalise's approach would in principle also account for the instances in (3), if the semantics and distribution of the suffixes could be described more properly, which is far from being a self-evident task (cf. e.g. Scalise 1994: 275). Interestingly, Scalise himself does not seem to bother about words of type

(3) at all, as he states that the posited suffixes only apply to verbs of the 1st conjugation (Scalise 1994: 275).

In view of these completely different approaches and in comparison to the situation in other Romance languages, where the proposed analyses of the (roughly) corresponding noun types either clearly speak in favour of conversion (for French Meinschaefer 2005: 212-219; but especially Tribout 2010 and 2012; for Portuguese Rodrigues 2009) or in favour of suffixation (for Spanish e.g. Meinschaefer 2005: 212-219 and Rainer 1993: 382-383; 457-458; 620-622), the formation and structure of the Italian nouns in (1) to (3) still lack a satisfying explanation.

3.   Three subtypes of Italian verb to noun conversion: *tema*, *basta* and *perquisa*

3.1   *Tema*: A synchronic remnant of an Old Italian conversion type

In what follows I will argue that in Old Italian there existed, in addition to the conversion types proposed by Thornton (cf. 2.2.1 on *root conversion* and *conversion of the infinitival stem*), another type of stem conversion forming feminine nouns in –*a*: conversion of the verbal stem 2 (numbering taken from Giraudo et al. 2009: 3), i.e. the same stem on which in inflectional morphology the 1st person singular and 3rd person plural present indicative forms as well as the 1st to 3rd singular and 3rd plural present subjunctive forms are constructed (for examples see table 1 below).

While the potential role of the totality of the verbal stem space for word formation has been extensively studied for some languages (cf. for French Bonami, Boyé & Kerleroux 2009, Fradin 2009, Tribout 2010, 2012, Villoing 2010; for German Nolda 2012),[6] studies of the Italian verbal stem space have so far been concentrating on inflectional phenomena (cf. Pirrelli & Battista 2000, Maiden 2003, Giraudo et al. 2009; for French inflection see Boyé & Bonami 2002 and 2003, Bonami, Boyé, Giraudo & Voga 2008). However, there is reason to assume that in Italian, too, other verbal stems than just the infinitival stem (= stem 12 in the terminology of Giraudo et al. 2009: 3) are relevant for word-formation.

Several reasons speak in favour of stem 2 being an input form to Italian

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[6] For French, e.g., it has even been shown that in the verbal stem space there can be stems that are hidden to inflection and only visible to word-formation processes (cf. e.g. Tribout 2010, 2012 for conversion and Bonami et al. 2009 for derivation).

verb to noun conversion[7]: (i) from a synchronic perspective stem 2 and Italian nouns of the type exemplified by (1a) *tema* as well as the stem of the above mentioned inflectional forms are perfectly homonymous (cf. examples in table 1).

Table 1 – Homonymy of type (3a) nouns with stem 2 and present subjunctive forms[8]

Modern Noun Form (FEM.SG)	1st Occurrence (Zingarelli Online)	Modern Verbal Stem 2*	Present Subjunctive (1st to 3rd singular)	Infinitive
beva 'drink, taste of wine'	1625	*beva*	*beva*	*bere* 'to drink'
cerna 'selection'	1321	*cerna*	*cerna*	*cernere* 'to select'
doglia 'pain'	1249	*dolga*	*dolga* and *doglia*	*dolere* 'to hurt'
piova 'rain'	1266	*piova*	*piova*	*piovere* 'to rain'
possa 'power'	1306	*possa*	*possa*	*potere* 'to be able to'
tema 'fear'	1294	*tema*	*tema*	*temere* 'to fear'
stringa 'string, lace'	1437	*stringa*	*stringa*	*stringere* 'to string'
vaglia 'worth, value'	1350	*valga*	*valga*, but †*vaglia*	*valere* 'to be worth'
voglia 'longing, want'	1250	*voglia*	*voglia*	*volere* 'to want'

*According to Giraudo et al. (2009: 3), but cf. footnote 10.

(ii), if there is no homonymy between the modern noun and the verbal stem on which modern standard subjunctive forms are constructed, there is homonymy between the modern noun and an ancient one (cf. *vaglia* in table 1; cf. e.g. Rohlfs 1968: 297 for the Old Italian subjunctive form) or a modern alternative verbal stem form (cf. *doglia* in table 1; for the alternative

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[7] Verb plus noun compounds instead, that are another controversial issue in Italian word-formation research (for an overview of the competing approaches see e.g. Bisetto 2004), seems to be fed by stem 3 of the Italian verbal stem space (for the numbering see Giraudo et al. 2009: 3; for an analysis of French composition see Villoing 2010), which is the same stem on which e.g. the Italian imperative (2nd person singular) is construed: cf. *lanciafiamme* 'flame-thrower'(1st conjugation), *rompicapo* 'problem' (2nd conjugation) and *apriscatole* 'tin-opener' (3rd conjugation). This analysis is in line with propositions according to which the verbal element only has the form, but not the meaning of an imperative (e.g. Rainer 2001: 389).

[8] All words in this table apart from *doglia*, *vaglia* and *voglia* are also listed in Thornton (2004: 518), Rohlfs (1969: 473) and Tollemache (1954: 163).

verbal inflectional forms, cf. e.g. Zingarelli Online, *dolere*).[9]

TABLE 2 – Homonymy of Old Italian nouns with stem 2 and present subjunctive forms

Old Italian Noun	Modern Italian Noun	Modern Standard Verbal Stem 2	Present Subjunctive Form (1st to 3rd singular)	Infinitive
†*buglia* 'tumult, confusion' (cf. Tollemache 1954: 163)	*subbuglio*	*bolla*	*bolla*, †*buglia* (cf. e.g. (8))	*bollire* 'to boil' †*bullire*
†*convegna* 'gathering, meeting' (cf. Tollemache 1954: 163)	*convegno*	*convenga*	*convenga*, †*convegna* (cf. Rohlfs 1968: 297 on *venire* and OVI)	*convenire* 'to get together'
†*dorma* 'sleeping, sleep' (cf. Tollemache 1954: 163)	*sonno*	*dorma*	*dorma*	*dormire*
†*fugga* 'escape, flight' (cf. Zingarelli Online *fuga*)	*fuga*	*fugga*	*fugga*	*fuggire* 'to flee'
†*ritegna* 'reservation'	*ritegno*	*ritenga*	*ritenga*, †*ritegna* (cf. Rohlfs 1968: 297 on *tenere* and OVI)	*ritenere* 'to retain'
†*sieda* 'chair' (cf. Zingarelli Online *sedia*)	*sedia*	*sieda*	*sieda*	*sedere* 'to sit'

(iii), nouns such as (3a) *tema* were formed in very old stages of the Italian language (cf. table 1). In those stages, there were other nouns of the same type that have since undergone important changes, such as †*fugga* and †*sieda* (cf. table 2) or that have since been replaced by other words, such as †*buglia* (cf. table 2), but all of them correspond, in their ancient form,

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[9] In their description and definition of the Italian verbal stem space Pirrelli & Battista (2000) also account for doublets in Italian standard inflection, as e.g. for the *devo/debbo* (1ST SG.IND.PRES.; 'I must') alternation (cf. e.g. 2000: 328-329) by establishing two stem spaces for the same verb. However, in their "overall distribution schema" (2000: 337) these parallel stems are no longer included, neither are they in Giraudo et al. (2009: 3), whose stem numbering is used throughout this paper. Moreover, neither Pirrelli & Battista (2000) nor Giraudo et al. (2009) take into account stems on which Old Italian and modern Italian dialectal forms are constructed. Consequently, as there is no complete description of the verbal stem spaces of other varieties than standard Italian available at the moment, and as even the above-mentioned stem numbering system abstracts away from parallel (and potentially differently organized) standard stem spaces, the numbering I use here might turn out to be incompatible with data from Old Italian and modern dialects once their stem spaces are fully described.

either to the still existing stem 2 and subjunctive form (*fugga*, *sieda*) or to an ancient subjunctive form, such as *buglia* that can be found in the OVI corpus (= *Corpus OVI dell'italiano antico*), as in (8):

(8) Hit number 4 in OVI for: form = *buglia* (*Ricette mediche bolognesi* 14th cent.)

[...] *One   cosa   **buglia**   in lo   vino   dolce   e*
     every   thing   boils   in the   wine   sweet   and
     (3RD PERS.SG.PRES.SUBJ.)

façasse   l'impiastro [...]
makes.itself   the ointment
(3RD PERS.SG.PRES.SUBJ.)

'everything has to boil in sweet wine and the ointment has to emulsify'

The data presented in tables 1 and 2 clearly speak in favour of the stem 2 conversion analysis. Even if from a synchronic point of view the group (3a) *tema* consists only of very few members (cf. table 1), it is quite safe to assume that there are, at least in Old Italian, more nouns of type (3a) *tema* (cf. table 2) than commonly cited (e.g. by Thornton 2004: 518, Rohlfs 1969: 473 and Tollemache 1954: 163). In order to fully evaluate the degree of productivity of the stem 2 conversion pattern in Old Italian, it will, however, be necessary to complement the thorough description of the verbal stem space of modern standard Italian presented in Pirrelli & Battista (2000) and Giraudo et al. (2009) by the description of the verbal stem spaces of Old Italian varieties. In addition, an extensive and systematic corpus search in an Old Italian corpus (e.g. *OVI*) should be realized in order to increase the data group of type (1a). Only these steps would allow us to ultimately verify the stem 2 conversion hypothesis presented in this section.

3.2. *Basta*: Root conversion remodelled by blocking?
    In contrast to (3a) *tema*, (3b) *basta* cannot be analysed as conversion of stem 2, as stem 2 of the verbal stem space of *bastire* is *bastisca* (and consequently, the noun should be **bastisca* (FEM.SG), which does not exist). It cannot be an instance of conversion of the infinitival stem (= stem 12)

either, because in this case we should expect the hypothetical nominal form
*basti (FEM.SG) (cf. Thornton's analysis of (2a) sosta in section 2.2.1). Nor
can (3b) basta be a simple instance of root conversion as, in this case, it
should display a masculine default –o (cf. Thornton's analysis of type (1a)
cammino). A plausible hypothesis is, instead, that (3b) basta is an instance of
root conversion that does not have the default ending –o because the ending
was blocked by an older homonym ending in –o. An observation that pleads
in favour of this analysis is that at the time of the formation of words such
as (1b) basta there were already corresponding forms in –o in the Italian
lexicon (cf. table 3, basta, falla, scherma).

TABLE 3 – Blocking of nouns in –o by older homonyms?

Root conversion + integration into –a class	Verb	Modern Italian Stem 2	1st Noun Occurrence (Zingarelli Online)	Root conversion + integration into –o class	1st Occurrence (Zingarelli Online)
basta 'stitch, hem'	bastire 'to stitch'	bastisca	1612	basto 'burden, weight'	1305
falla 'leak'	fallire 'to fail, to make an error' fallare 'to make an error, to fail'	fallisca	1612	fallo 'failure, error'	1294
scherma 'fencing'	schermire 'to fence'	schermisca	1601	schermo 'shield'	1266
scherna 'mock, mockery'	schernire 'to mock, to deride'	schernisca	1348	scherno 'mock, mockery'	1336

As the concepts designated by the newer words are not identical (and in
some cases not even related) to those designated by the older words ending
in –o, the difference in meaning might have been signalled by a difference
in form. An economic way to realize this conceptual non-correspondence
linguistically is to integrate the new noun into a different noun class, in

the case of (1b) *basta* the prototypically feminine –a class instead of the prototypically masculine –o class (for the role of gender alternation in Italian word formation see e.g. Koch 2001).

This could, in principle, be a plausible explanation for the examples in table 2 not ending in the expected default –o, although the data do not allow, for the time being, for sound generalisations: on the one hand, the size of the (3b) group is simply too small and has to be complemented by more data; on the other hand, the case of *falla* in table 3 might be even more complicated because of the concurring base verbs that appeared at about the same time in Old Italian (cf. Zingarelli Online *fallare* and *fallire*). Moreover, if more cases like *scherna* were found, they might falsify the hypothesis altogether: in this case, not only the masculine and the feminine word appeared at about the same time in written texts (cf. Zingarelli Online), but they are even synonymous.[10] Besides, even if it was totally sure that the integration into the –o noun class of type (1b) *basta* has been blocked by existing older homonyms, we would have to explain why root conversion has, in the first place, been preferred to conversion of stem 2 (*bastisca*). There are several plausible explanations: (i) at the time of the formation of type (3b) words (probably in the 16th/17th century, cf. the first occurrences in table 3), conversion of stem 2 was no longer a productive pattern in Italian; (ii), as existing forms attract the formation of formally similar lexical neighbours (cf. e.g. Rainer 1997) even if they are not semantically related, the already existing –o words might have facilitated the formation of root converts with subsequent integration into the –a class because of the above-mentioned need of differentiation; (iii) there might have been a need to avoid suffixes containing /sk/ (present in the respective stem 2 endings in table 3) that is usually associated with certain diminutive forms (cf. e.g. *pulviscolo* 'fine dust'; cf. e.g. Merlini Barbaresi 2004) because of a certain risk of ambiguity.

3.3 *Perquisa*: A product of analogy to existing word-family network relations

According to Thornton (2004: 518) (3c) *perquisa* is an instance of back-formation from *perquisizione* created in analogy to instances such as

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[10] A closer look for other gender doublets and at their semantics and distribution is left for future research, cf. section 4.

revoca (2b), that has been coined in administrative language (cf. sections 2.1 and 2.2.1). Her main argument is that the word (3c) *perquisa* originated in prisoner slang in which the administrative language is well-known and frequent (Thornton 2004: 520). However, from a synchronic cognitive perspective there is no difference between *sosta* (2a) and *classifica* (2b): both are directly related to the verb (Marzo 2013: 47; Umbreit 2011; cf. 2.1 and 2.2.1). Moreover, native speakers do not necessarily know ancient word-formation rules of their language that have, in addition, produced only very few words (cf. 2.1 for the group size). It is thus highly questionable that (3c) *perquisa* really has been formed by analogy to type (2b) *classifica*. However, *perquisa* (3c) might still be an analogy-driven formation, but the analogy is more likely to have been drawn to synchronic word-family and network relations than to a diachronic word formation process.

FIGURE 1 – An empty slot X in a network for type (1c) *perquisa*
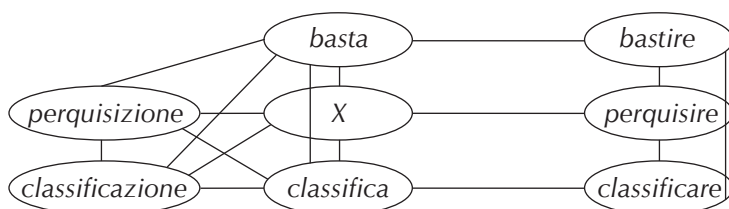
As both the series *basta* – *bastire* and *classificazione* – *classifica* – *classificare* exist in the speaker's mind and are connected by paradigmatic relations, the formation of *perquisa* might have been possible thanks to – so to speak – an empty slot X in a network, such as in figure 1.

Interestingly, *perquisa* is not the only instance of type (3c) neither from a diachronic, nor from a synchronic perspective. Italian *dorma* 'sleeping, sleep' that is in disuse today according to Tollemache (1954: 163) and *dormizione* that has, according to Zingarelli Online, in addition to a religious meaning also the archaic meaning 'sleeping, sleep' are related by exactly the same relations to their infinitive *dormire* 'to sleep' as (3c) *perquisa* and *perquisizione* are – the only difference being that *dorma* can

be analysed as an instance of stem 2 conversion such as type (3a) *tema*, while *perquisa* cannot. From a synchronic point of view, too, *perquisa* is not alone, as an explorative search on google for short forms of nouns in *–izione* having an infinitive in *–ire* has shown (cf. table 4). An open question for further research is thus whether the increased (and increasing?) amount of exemplars of nouns of type (1c) *perquisa* that are characterized by nominal *–a*, infinitival *–i–* and the existence of a synonymous noun in *–izione* is leading or already has led to a new schema in the sense of Bybee (2010) or Langacker (1987, 1991).

TABLE 4 – Neologisms of type (1c)

Neologisms	Google hits	Infinitives	Suffixed Nouns
acquisa 'acquisition'	3 (04/23/13)	*acquisire* 'to acquire'	*acquisizione* 'acquisition'
inquisa 'inquisition'	7 (04/23/13)	*inquisire* 'to inquire'	*inquisizione* 'inquisition'
disquisa 'too detailed and long discussion'	36 (04/23/13)	*disquisire* 'to discuss in detail'	*disquisizione* 'too detailed and long discussion'

Results of a search for *la* (DET.ART.) + X~~izione~~

4. Conclusion and outlook

This paper focused on a special Italian noun type characterized by nominal *–a* and infinitival *–e–/–i–* as in (3a) *tema*, (3b) *basta* and (3c) *perquisa*, a noun type that is traditionally considered as marginal (cf. the few examples in e.g. Tollemache 1954, Rohlfs 1969, Thornton 2004) with respect to its counterparts in (1) and (2) (nominal *–o* plus infinitival *–a–/–e–/–i–* and nominal *–a* plus infinitival *–a–* respectively). In section 2 it was shown that traditional accounts (conversion of the infinitival stem, root conversion and suffixation) all fail in explaining the totality of the data types in (1) to (3) convincingly. Especially the analyses of and comments on type (3) turned out to be deceiving. An alternative analysis was then proposed in section 3: Type (3) was divided into three subgroups. Type (3a) (cf. section 3.1) was shown to be a remnant of an Old Italian conversion type, more precisely conversion of stem 2 of the Italian verbal stem space. The instances in group (3b) (cf. section 3.2) were hypothesized to be cases of root conversion that

have been integrated into the –*a* (SG)/–*e* (PL) noun class because of blocking of the –*o* (SG)/–*i* (PL) class by older homonyms. As for (3c) (cf. section 3.3), Thornton's (2004) analogy-driven back-formation analysis was questioned and a network-based (but still analogy-driven) alternative was presented. All in all, it has been shown that the noun type (3) is not that marginal if we take into account data from other Italian varieties than just modern standard data.

While in this paper the main focus was on the verbal stem space of modern standard and Old Italian data, future research concerned with the role of the verbal stem space for Italian word-formation in general and verb to noun conversion in particular could additionally take into account modern dialectal data, because the homonymy of nouns with alternative verbal stems suggests (cf. *doglia* in table 1, section 3.1) that other synchronic varieties might hide conversion bases. In addition, formal irregularities of type (1) such as the stem alternation in (1b) *ritegno* 'reservation' – *ritenere* 'to retain' ([ɲ] – [n]) (cf. Thornton 2004: 516) that seem inexplicable from the perspective of the modern standard Italian verbal stem space, might be better understood when systematically compared against the modern dialectal verbal stem space that contains [ɲ] as well as [n], as e.g. in (9a). Interestingly, the same phenomenon can, again, be observed in Old Italian dialects, cf. (9b). More precisely, [ɲ] seems to appear systematically in those inflectional forms that are constructed – again – on the verbal stem 2 (1st to 3rd sing. subj. ind. and 1st sg. and 3rd pl. pres. ind.).

(9)   a. Sicilian, Yahoogroup *Linguasiciliana*, message n° 4311, 23.04.13:
        Ritegnu   *ca nn'avemu nu prubbrema quannu nu pòpulu nun*
        think (1ST.SG.PRES.IND.)   that we have a problem if a people not
        si   po   lèggiri   la   so   littiratura.
        itself   can   read   the   its   literature.
        'I think we have a problem if a people cannot read its own literature'

        b. Old Tuscan: Hit number 2 in OVI for form = *ritegna* (*Legg. G. di Procida*, 13th cent.)
        miseri scacciati de regno di Cicilia e di Puglia che non
        poor chased away from kingdom of Sicily and of Apulia who not

> *truovano albergo che li **ritegna**,* [...]
> find   inn   that   them keeps (3RD SG.PRES.SUBJ.)
> 'the poor guys chased away from the kingdom of Sicily and Apulia who don't find an inn that allows them to stay'

All in all, the following remaining questions will best be tackled by a systematic and extensive corpus research of different Italian varieties: first, the exact impact of the verbal stem space of Old Italian and modern Italian dialects (more data are needed) on verb to noun conversion and other word-formation phenomena (cf. section 3.1); second, the blocking hypothesis for type (3b) *basta* (cf. section 3.2); third, the distribution of –*o* and –*a* and therefore also of gender doublets in Old Italian, where, in addition to gender doublets for type (3b) *basta* (cf. *basto*) doublets can be found across the borders of other noun types, such as e.g. (1b) *ritegno* and (3a) *ritegna* (cf. table 2); last but not least, the existence of such noun pairs raises serious doubts about whether Thornton's root conversion hypothesis can be held up for type (1) in general.

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