# A case of theme vowel allomorphy in Italian third conjugation verbs:
## A DM account of the augment *-isc-*

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The aim of my presentation is to propose a new analysis of the Italian verbal augment *-isc-* within the framework of Distributed Morphology (DM) (for an overview cf. Bobaljik 2017). From a synchronic perspective, the augment is a semantically empty element restricted to (the majority of) third conjugation verbs with infinitives ending in *-ire* (e.g. present tense indicative forms of *finire* 'to finish': 1sg *fin*-[isk]-*o*, 2sg *fin*-[iʃʃ]-*i*, 3sg *fin*-[iʃʃ]-*e*, 1pl *fin*-[ja]-*mo*, 2pl *fin*-[i]-*te*, 3pl *fin*-[isk]-*o-no*). As for its inner-paradigmatic distribution, it appears only in the present indicative and subjunctive forms – except for the 1pl and the 2pl – as well as the 2sg imperative.

Rather than accounting for its presence as a means to maintain "accentual stability" (Burzio & DiFabio 1993) or as an exponent of the morphomic N-pattern (cf. Da Tos 2013, for the notion of N-pattern cf. Maiden 2018), it will be argued that the augment is, in fact, an alternative phonological realisation of the theme vowel (TV) *-i-*. It therefore assumes the position of the TV in the verbal structure as it encodes conjugation class information that is otherwise lacking in all other conjugations. For example, in the present tense, its presence is the only way to distinguish verbs belonging to the third conjugation from those belonging to other conjugations (e.g. 1sg of I conj. *cant*-∅-*o* 'I sing'; IIa conj. *prend*-∅-*o* 'I take'; IIb conj. *tem*-∅-*o* 'I fear'; IIIa conj. *sent*-∅-*o* 'I feel'; III conj. *fin-isc-o* 'I finish').

I account for the theme vowel allomorphy in terms of Fusion (cf. Halle & Marantz 1993). In the present tense indicative forms of all Italian verbs, the Tense ($T^0$) and Agreement ($\varphi$) nodes fuse, which means that only one Vocabulary Item (VI) can be inserted into the position, i.e. the present tense encodes a semantically unmarked Tense feature and is therefore morphophonologically never realised (cf. Oltra-Massuet 1999 for Catalan, Arregi 2000 and Pomino 2008 for Spanish, Calabrese 2015 for Italian, Pomino & Remberger (in print), inter alia, for Italian). Due to Fusion, the $\varphi$-features are more local to the root than before and, being in the sister node of $v^0$, may have an impact on all elements contained in $v^0$. Following Pomino (2008), it will be assumed that in the present subjunctive forms the feature value [+subj] is merely a secondary property of $T^0$ that is taken on by $T^0$ through the operation AGREE. In all other tenses, Fusion does not occur which, consequently, prevents the $\varphi$ node from impinging on $v^0$, i.e. the insertion of the VI *-isc-* is not triggered as the only VI available in these tenses is *-i-*.

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