

A manner of evaluating: Italian deverbal evaluative motion verbs

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the interaction between the semantic-functional domain of evaluation and that of manner as encoded in Italian deverbal evaluative verbs (hereinafter DEVs), that is, verbs derived from other verbs by means of evaluative suffixes, focusing in particular on motion verbs (e.g. *saltellare* ‘to hop’ < *saltare* ‘to jump’).

Against the backdrop of the relevant literature on evaluation (Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Grandi 2002, 2017; Grandi & Körtvélyessy 2015) and manner (Slobin 2004, 2005, 2006; Stosic 2020), we propose that the overlap between the two domains produces a semantic area in which manner corresponds to a specific evaluative nuance through which the speaker refers to a non-uniform movement that an agent performs in a disengaged way and/or in a scattered space. In other words, the speaker represents the motion event as being executed in a non-standard or non-prototypical manner.

This view is consistent with the idea, which has gained ground in recent decades, that evaluation plays a central role in categorisation. According to Grandi (2002: 29), an evaluative construction encodes a subjective judgement about the conformity or deviation of an entity or event with respect to a culturally shared standard. The morphological encoding of evaluation entrusts the expression of the standard to the base (e.g. *salt-*) and that of deviation to the evaluative affix (e.g. *-ellare*). In this way, the speaker signals that the meaning of the base is realised in an atypical or *inexact* way (Grandi 2017: 147-148). We will describe this inaccuracy in terms of *approximation* (see Masini et al. 2023 and, in particular, Brucale & Mocciaro 2023) meaning the degree of distance that separates a certain entity from the prototypical realisation of the category to which it belongs (see also Stosic & Amiot 2011: 425).

As regards verbs, the deviation expressed by evaluative affixation has been described in works focusing on different languages, such as French (Amiot & Stosic 2011; Moline & Stosic 2016; Stosic & Amiot 2011, 2019), Italian (Bertinetto 2004; Grandi 2008; Tovenà 2011, 2015), Italian and Spanish (Artusi 2019), and Serbian (Stosic 2013). These studies highlighted the role played by the actional properties of bases (mainly, atelic verbs expressing durative activities such as ‘to read’) in the construction of evaluative meaning (Section 2), which, in the case of motion verbs, translates into a preference for bases containing a manner component rather than a path component (e.g. ‘to run’ vs ‘to leave’; see Section 3).

However, evaluation in the verb is still a largely unexplored area, and many questions remain unanswered. The work presented here aims to help bridge this gap by addressing the following research questions:

1. How and through which properties is the notion of manner specified in the case of motion DEVs, and how does it interact with evaluation?
2. What role does the context in which the DEV occurs play in determining the specific evaluative nuance?

To answer these questions, we extracted from the ItWac wordlist the verbs derived with the most productive evaluative suffixes in Italian (Grandi 2008), that is, *-Vcchiare* (93 verbs), *-ellare* (7 verbs), *-er-ellare* (7 verbs), and *-ottare* (7 verbs). We then classified both the DEVs and their bases based on (an adaptation of) the lexical categories of the WordNet ontology, as reported in Table 1.

Table 1. WordNet-based lexical categories used in the classification

WordNet lexical category	Examples
Bodily functions and care	‘sweat’, ‘wash’
Change	<i>-ize</i> and <i>-ify</i> verbs
Communication	‘lisp’
Consumption	‘drink’
Contact	‘grasp’, ‘squeeze’
Cognition	‘infer’
Creation	‘sew’
Motion	‘travel’, ‘swim’
Emotion and psychological states	‘fear’
Stative	‘surround’
Perception	‘see’
Possession	‘have’
Social interaction and competition	‘play’
Weather	‘rain’

Manner is a key component in the WordNet ontology and works as a hyponymic semantic relation, called “troponymy”, crossing all the lexical classes and based on which “To V_1 is to V_2 in some particular manner” (Fellbaum 1990: 285), e.g. ‘limping’ is a manner of ‘walking’, which is a manner of ‘moving’. This approach proved extremely useful for our analysis, because it revealed which lexical classes are more sensitive to a manner reading (see Brucalè, Corona & Mocciaro forthcoming), as we will show in Section 4. However, its rigorously non-decompositional nature proves inefficient when it comes to understanding what the DEVs most prone to manner interpretation have in common. As the data analysis suggests, in fact, the manner interpretation of DEVs does not depend on the overall semantics of verbs but on certain more specific semantic properties, such as agentivity and telicity. In many cases, these properties seem to be metonymically activated (or not) by the context in which DEVs occur. Verifying this hypothesis requires narrowing the focus to a smaller group of DEVs from the 114 extracted in order to give more space to the analysis of their context of use. For this reason, we have decided to limit the analysis, at this stage, to motion verbs only, which constitute the most frequent lexical type (see Section 4.1). Based on this qualitative analysis, we will draw some conclusions and propose hypotheses for further investigation (Section 5).

2. Deverbal evaluative verbs: What has been said

To date, still a few studies are dedicated to evaluative verbs in Romance languages. In general terms, evaluative suffixation in verbs does not produce a transcategorisation (Bertinetto 2004: 465) but modifies the semantics of the event, blending in its intensity, uniformity or manner of execution. For instance, Tovenà (2011: 43) describes the action of *mangiucchiare* ‘to nibble’ “as being performed with a kind of reduced engagement by the agent, that shows in smaller bites and lack of continuity”. Bertinetto (2004: 470) talked about a constellation of frequently overlapping meanings, including events occurring: a) without real commitment and with an attenuated result; b) with exaggerated insistence and/or with a worse-than-normal result; c) with great intensity and/or not precisely spatially directed; d) repeatedly or iteratively. Grandi (2008, 2009) identified four semantic nuclei: superficiality (e.g. *studiacchiare* ‘to study halfheartedly’), attenuation (e.g. *vivacchiare* ‘to get by, to subsist’), (re)iteration (e.g. *saltellare* ‘to hop’), and rapidity (e.g. *becchettare* ‘to peck’). Reiteration can be further specified as event-internal pluractionality (Amiot & Stosic 2011; Tovenà 2011, 2015; see also Cusic 1981; Mattioli 2019), whereby a single event is fragmented in a series of smaller and repeated subevents. In terms of *Aktionsart*, the evaluative process favours activity (‘to read’) or active accomplishment (‘to read a book’) bases, which are durative, dynamic and atelic (or non-inherently telic), as are their derivatives; accomplishments are less represented; statives and achievements are insignificant (Bertinetto 2004; Grandi 2008; Tovenà 2015). In Italian, most activities and active accomplishments exhibit unergative morphosyntax involving the perfective auxiliary ‘to have’ (vs ‘to be’ for unaccusatives) (Grandi 2015: 1476).

3. Manner and motion

In the panorama of approaches to the notion of manner, we take as our reference point the studies by Slobin (2004, 2006) within the framework of motion events lexical typology (Talmy 2000). Unlike other authors who consider it a semantic primitive (Jackendoff 1983: 48-56; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2013 inter al.), Slobin (2004: 255) defines Manner as “an ill-defined set of dimensions that modulate motion”. This set of dimensions remains, however, largely undefined (Corona 2025: 195), and several studies have recently highlighted the need to focus on the complex set of linguistic means and strategies used to encode this notion (Corona & Pietrandrea 2021; Minoccheri & Stosic 2022). In fact, manner can be encoded at different levels. The most studied level is syntax, in particular the use of various circumstantial modifiers (adverbs, phrases, subordinate clauses, gerunds). By contrast, morphological and suprasegmental encodings remain still less explored (see Amiot & Stosic 2011; Brucale, Corona & Mocciaro forthcoming; Stosic 2013). The relationship between different levels of encoding, for example the intertwining of morphological and syntactic markers, also remains unexplored. On the other hand, on a semantic level, the intricate network of connections with a series of related notions, including attenuation, approximation and pluractionality, remains to be thoroughly investigated.

4. Data analysis

4.1 General overview

As mentioned in Section 1, we extracted from ItWac all the DEVs in *-Vcchiare*, *-ellare*, *-er-ellare*, and *-ottare*, i.e., the most productive suffixes, which form first conjugation verbs in *-are* (Bertinetto 2004: 467; Grandi 2008). Of the 114 DEVs obtained (from 103 verb bases), 81.58% are in *-Vcchiare* (93), 6.14% in *-er-ellare*, in *-ottare* and in *-ellare* (7 verbs each).

We classified both the bases and DEVs based on WordNet lexical classes. As Graphs 1 and 2 show, the most frequent lexical class in terms of type is, in both cases, motion (see Stosic 2019), followed by communication and social interaction (respectively, 16, 14, and 12 bases; 21, 18 and 13 DEVs); the less frequent are creation, weather and emotion/psychological states, while some fluctuation is observable in the middle of both hierarchies.

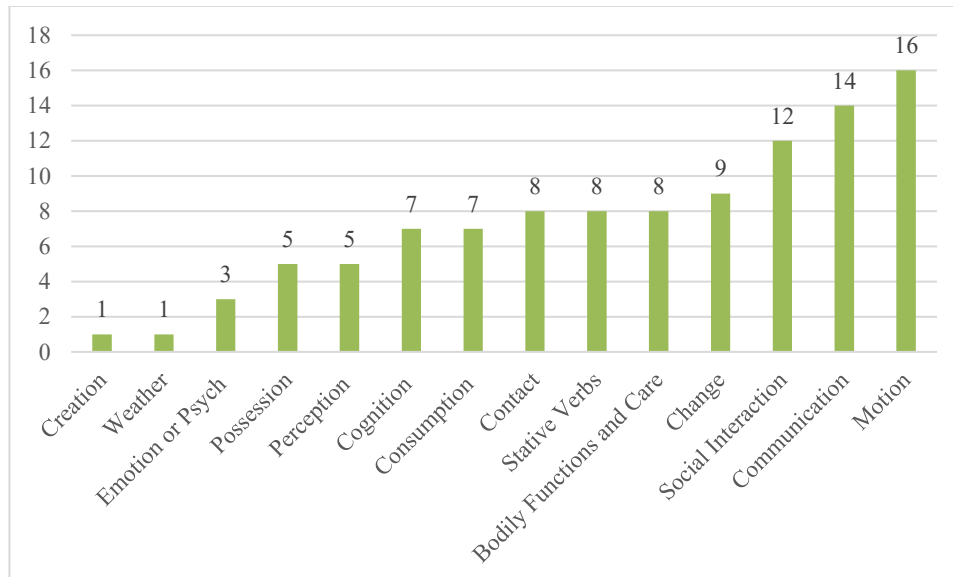


Figure 1. Types of verbal bases in ItWaC according to the WordNet Ontology

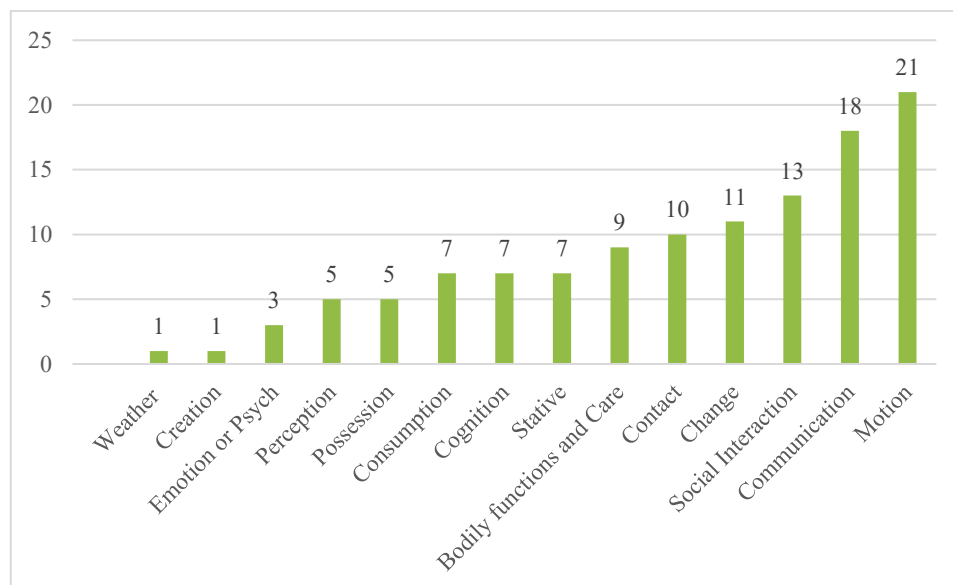


Figure 2. Types of DEVs in ItWaC according to the WordNet Ontology

To obtain more detailed information, we also extracted DEV token frequency. Graph 3 shows that motion drops to second place after communication, while maintaining a still significant frequency (3375).

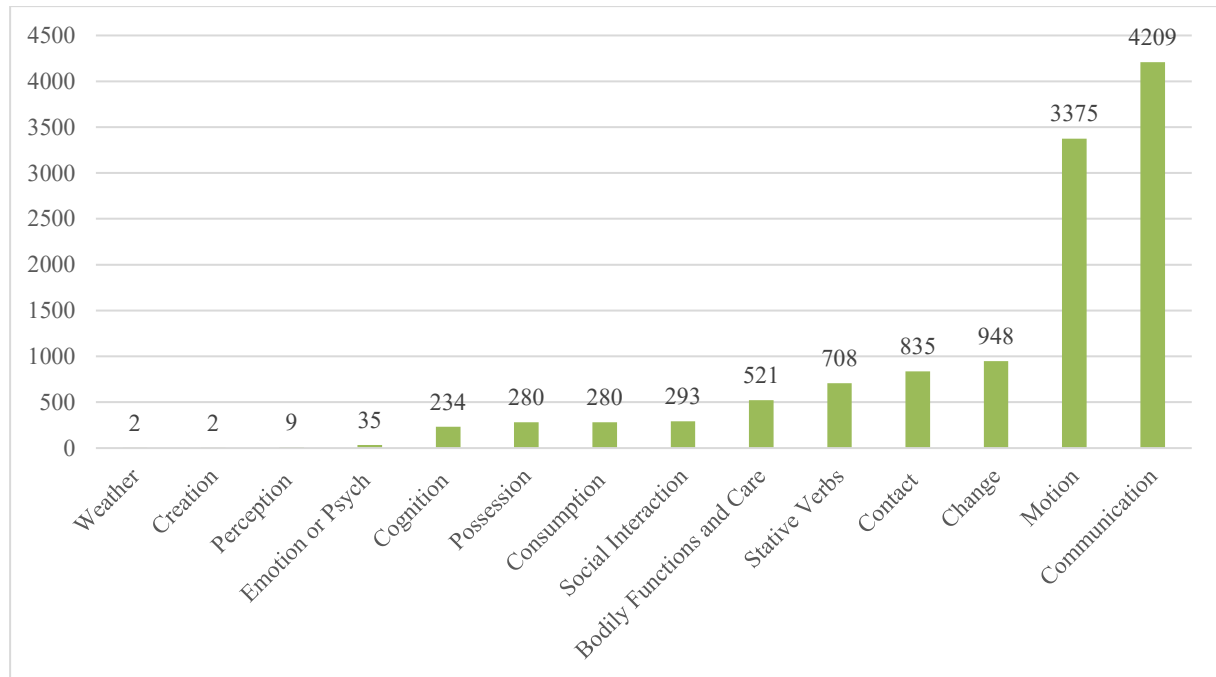


Figure 3. Tokens in ItWaC according to the WordNet Ontology

In what follows, we will propose a quantitative and qualitative description of motion DEVs and the discourse context in which they occur.

4.2. Motion Deverbal Evaluative verbs

4.2.1 Motion verbs as bases

Graph 4 shows a marked imbalance between a small number of high-frequency motion verbs and a long tail of low-frequency verbs. Three verbs cover 94.74% of occurrences, i.e., *saltellare* (2645 occurrences, i.e., 78.37%), *trotterellare* (389 occurrences, i.e., 11.52%) and *girellare* (164 occurrences, i.e., 4.85%). The remaining verbs have values close to zero.

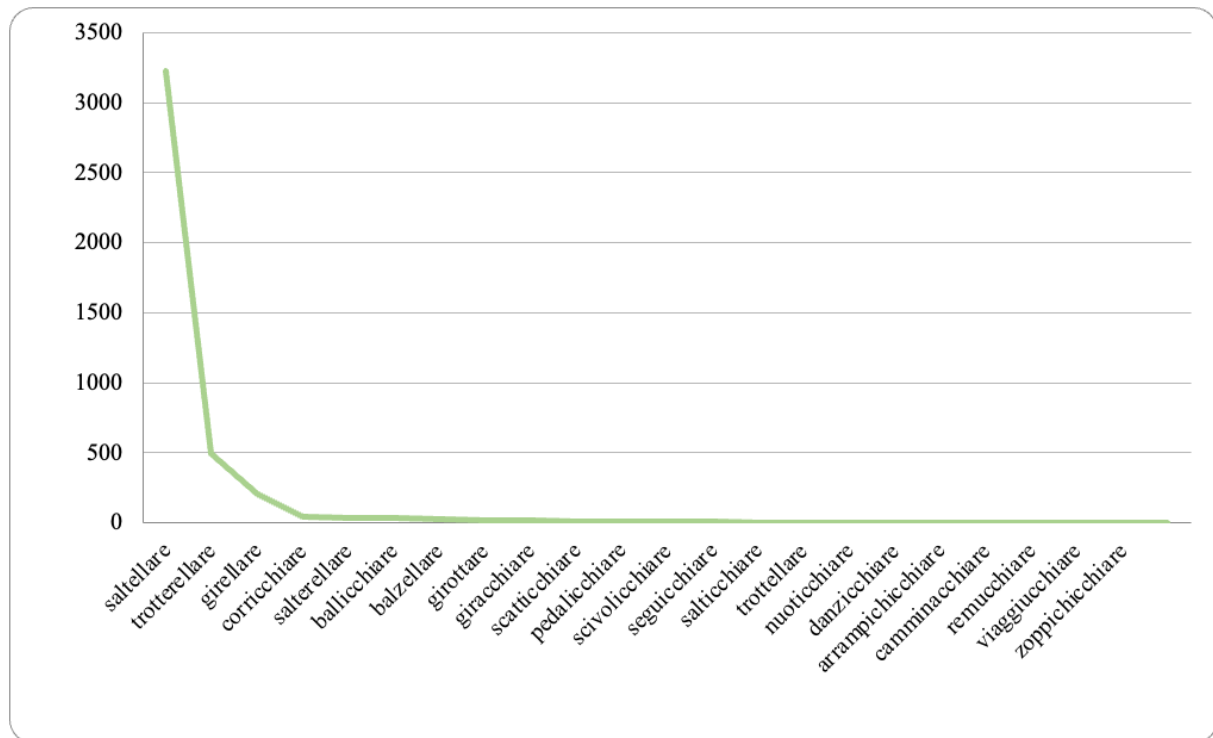


Figure 4. Motion verbs

As Table 2 shows, 12 out of 16 bases are manner of motion verbs, two encode the path (*girare* ‘to turn’, *seguire* ‘to follow’), one both path and manner (*arrampicare* ‘to climb’; cf. Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2013), while the last is neutral (*viaggiare*), i.e., it does not encode deixis, manner or path (cf. Verkerk 2014: 47, 52).

Table 2. The bases of evaluative motion verbs.

MANNER	PATH	PATH+MANNER	NEUTRAL
<i>ballare</i> ‘to dance’	<i>girare</i> ‘to go around’	<i>arrampicare</i> ‘to climb’	<i>viaggiare</i> ‘to travel’
<i>balzare</i> ‘to leap’	<i>seguire</i> ‘to follow’		
<i>camminare</i> ‘to walk’			
<i>correre</i> ‘to run’			
<i>danzare</i> ‘to dance’			
<i>nuotare</i> ‘to swim’			
<i>pedalare</i> ‘to pedal’			
<i>saltare</i> ‘to jump’			
<i>scattare</i> ‘to burst forth’			
<i>scivolare</i> ‘to slide’			
<i>trottare</i> ‘to trot’			
<i>zoppicare</i> ‘to limp’			

The distribution in Table 2 is consistent with the previously observed preference of DEVs for atelic, dynamic and durative bases (Bertinetto 2004; Grandi 2008; Stosic 2019; Tovenà 2011). The qualitative analysis of the context provides further information on (i) what semantic contribution suffixes make to bases that already denote manner; (ii) whether and how a manner reading can emerge from DEVs derived from bases expressing path; (iii) the possible use of DEVs in telicity contexts; iv) agentivity as a central property for manner interpretation.

4.2.2 Manner of motion bases

Two distinct classes of manner evaluative verbs can be identified.

The first class includes:

- (i) low-manner bases, i.e., “everyday verbs like run and walk” (Slobin 2004: 74), e.g., *corricchiare*, *camminicchiare*;
- (ii) highly lexicalised verbs, with high frequency and early attestations (between 15th and 19th century), e.g. *saltellare*, *salterellare*, *balzellare*, and *trotterellare*.

These DEVs may co-occur with contextual elements reinforcing the specific manner of carrying out the activity, e.g. *a testa bassa* in (1) and *come cuccioli allegri e irrefrenabili* in (2):

- (1) *I giallorossi hanno corricchiato a testa bassa, scambiandosi poche parole*
‘The giallorossi barely ran, heads down, exchanging a few words.’
- (2) *Senza paura di farsi vedere sui prati o sulle strade asfaltate mentre saltellano come cuccioli allegri e irrefrenabili*
‘Without fear of being seen on the fields or the paved streets while they hop around like happy and uncontrollable puppies.’

Contexts are most typically atelic, including for DEVs deriving from bases allowing for an “aspectual reclassification” (Cennamo & Lenci 2019: 381), i.e., showing both atelic (*ho corso nel parco* ‘I ran in the park’; *ha saltato su e giù per due ore* ‘he jumped up and down for two hours’) and telic patterns (*sono corsa in casa* ‘I ran home’; *è saltato dal quarto piano* ‘he jumped off the fourth floor’). This alternation is reflected in a different perfective auxiliary selection (*avere* in the first case, *essere* ‘to be’ in the second). The characteristics of atelicity or telicity can be reinforced or even entirely entrusted to the context. *Corricchiare* (39 tokens) has only atelic usages, possibly locally reinforced by prepositional phrases, such as the extended ground *per il campo* ‘throughout the field’ in (3), or adverbials expressing spatial distribution/pluractionality, e.g. *di qua e di là* ‘here and there’ in (4):

- (3) *I daltonici corricchiavano per il campo cercando d’evitare il pallone*
‘The color-blind players were running around the field, trying to avoid the ball.’
- (4) *io non vado a corricchiare di qua e di là per tentare di conservare il mio posto*
‘I’m not running here and there just to try and hold onto my place.’

On the other hand, DEVs based on *saltare* (*saltellare*, 2,644 tokens; *salterellare*, 30 tokens; *salticchiare*, 3 tokens) may sometimes occur in telic contexts (218 out of 2,677 examples, i.e., less than 8% of the tokens). Telicity is entirely given by locative particles, as in *saltellare giù* in (5) (cf. Iacobini & Masini 2006), or prepositional phrases encoding the goal of motion, as *fino alla sua sedia* in (6):

- (5) *Saltelliamo giù, senza mai guardare in basso*
‘We jump down, never looking down.’
- (6) *Il ranocchio entrò e, sempre dietro a lei, saltellò fino alla sua sedia*
‘The frog came in and, still following her, hopped all the way to her chair.’

The second class includes verbs based on high manner of motion verbs, i.e., “more expressive verbs such as crawl, stomp, roll” (Slobin 2006: 74), which are less frequent in the corpus and not attested in the main Italian lexicographic resources, e.g. *ballicchiare* < *ballare* ‘to dance’ (7), *pedalicchiare* < *pedalare* ‘to pedal’, *scivolicchiare* < *scivolare* ‘to slip’, *nuoticchiare* < *nuotare* ‘to swim’, *danzicchiare* < *danzare* ‘to dance’, and *zoppichicchiare* < *zoppicare* ‘to limp’. In these cases, the manner component is only encoded in the base, while the suffix specifies that the meaning of the base is only attenuated; this may be contextually reinforced, e.g. through the paucal quantifier *un po’* ‘a little’ in (8):

- (7) *Debutta il nuovo spettacolo di Dado dal titolo " Suono, canto, recito... e ballicchio!"*
 ‘The new show by Dado makes its debut, titled ‘Sound, Song, Acting... and Little Dancing!’
- (8) *Adesso si vedono anche le prime biciclette elettriche: si pedalicchia un po' per aiutare il motorino, vanno piano e hanno poca carica, ma sono antisudore.*
 ‘Now we’re also seeing the first electric bikes: you pedal a bit to help the motor, they go slow, and the battery doesn’t last long, but they’re sweat-proof.’

4.2.3 Low-agentive manner of motion bases

Among the high-manner verbs discussed in 4.2.2, we also find a few low-agentive DEVs. *Scivolicchiare* < *scivolare* ‘to slip’ has 2 occurrences in ItWaC, while *zoppichicchiare* < *zoppicare* ‘to limp’ is attested only once. However, this hapax, reported in (9), is used (just like its co-occurring base) metaphorically to encode a purely “fictive motion” (Talmy 2000) that actually describes the *instability*, that is, unreliability of examples of certain types of vandalism. To compensate for this lack of information, we conducted a targeted Google search for contexts in which the verb encodes physical movement involving animate agents; these are reported in (10)-(11).

- (9) *gli esempi zoppicano sempre e non portano a nulla se vogliamo fare paragoni prendiamo il vandalo della Pietà e quelli del Biancone, chi allaga un liceo o chi da fuoco a un teatro (anche questo zoppichicchia un po')*
 ‘The examples always limp and lead nowhere; if we want to make comparisons, we should look at the vandal of the *Pietà* and those of the *Biancone*, or at those who flood a high school or set a theatre on fire (this example, too, limps a bit)’
- (10) *Ieri sera Viola (4 anni meno 3 mesi...) e' caduta dall'altalena... (...) stamattina quando lo poggia dice che le fa "Solo un po' male, ma non tanto..." e "zoppichicchia". E' andata all'asilo, mi ha detto "sto bene e zoppico solo un po'"...*
 ‘Last night Viola (four years old minus three months...) fell off the swing. (...) This morning, when she puts her foot down, she says it “only hurts a little, not much,” and that she’s “limping a bit.” She went to kindergarten and told me, “I’m fine, I just limp a little.’
- (11) *zoppica, o meglio, zoppichicchia quando stanca, dalla zampa diametralmente opposta a quella della ipotetica (...) displasia.*
 ‘It limped, or rather, it still limps when tired, from the paw directly opposite to the one affected by the hypothetical dysplasia.’

While *zoppicare* and *zoppicchiare* involve low control by an animate subject, the roll-verb *scivolicchiare* may refer, like its base, to both animate, as in (12), and inanimate entities with no control over the movement involving them (Levin 1993: 265), as in (13):

- (12) *quando cammini per casa a piedi scalzi scivolicchi sulle pozze di sudore da te in continuazione secreto*
 ‘When you walk around the house barefoot, you slip on the puddles of sweat you constantly secrete.’
- (13) *In discoteca non sarebbe più appropriata una scarpa normale che possa scivolicchiare ma che sia dal look più elegante?*
 ‘Wouldn’t a regular shoe that can slip a bit but has a more elegant look be more appropriate for the club?’

In all cases, low or no agentivity inhibits manner interpretation, while DEVs are used to approximate the meaning of the base by mitigating the prototypical values of the process. This can be reinforced contextually by the use of *un po’* ‘a little’ already in the fictive motion example in (9) as well as in (10), where the paucal quantifier + verb base replicates the DEV used by the speaker immediately before. In (11), a similar effect is achieved by using the base verb *zoppicare* ‘to limp’ as contrast device (see Corona & Russo 2023: 108).

4.2.4 Path and path/manner bases

DEVs derived from path bases are *girellare* (164 tokens), *giracchiare* (13 tokens) and *girottare* (9 tokens) < *girare* ‘to go around’, and *seguicchiare* (3 tokens) < *seguire* ‘to follow’; *arrampicchiare* (1 token) derive from *arrimpicare* ‘to climb’, classified as path/manner verb since it describes an upward movement carried out with the assistance of hands and feet on a vertical or inclined surface (see Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2013).

The base of the most frequent DEVs of this group, *girare* (< Late Latin *gyrare* < *gyrus* ‘circle’), originally encodes a subcomponent of path defined “vector” by Talmy (2000) (see also Grinevald’s 2011 notion of “spatial orientation”): it indicates the action of making a circular movement or, by extension, a movement along a multilinear trajectory with no endpoint, with an implication of aimlessness and lack of commitment (‘I roamed the streets for hours’). (*Girare* also means ‘to turn’, as in *ho girato pagina* ‘I turned the page’, but this telic meaning does not produce any DEV.) DEVs from *girare* preserve the atelic sense of the base.¹ In 44 out of 186 occurrences, they indicate repetitiveness and disengagement, as well as pluractionality (iteration/spatial distribution) (14):

- (14) *ci consente di girellare, guardare, entrare nei negozi, fotografare, senza alcun problema*
 ‘We can stroll around, browse, pop into stores, take photos, no problem at all.’

¹ As pointed out by major Italian lexicographic sources, these DEVs are described as conveying nuances of manner (e.g. aimlessness or idleness) and pluractional meanings, both spatially distributive and iterative, which are often encoded by the same devices cross-linguistically (cf. Mattioli 2019: 52). For instance, De Mauro glosses the verb as ‘andare qua e là senza meta’ (‘to go here and there aimlessly’); Treccani as ‘andare qua e là per passatempo o per ozio’ (‘to go here and there for leisure or out of idleness’); and Tommaseo-Bellini as ‘andare qua e là oziosamente, non per grandi spazi’ (‘to wander here and there idly, within a limited area’).

In a further 44 tokens, DEVs' sense is reinforced by contextual elements, such as the spatial adverbials in (15) and reduplication in (16), which evoke an event distributed through space, or the similitive construction (cf. Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998; Treis & Vanhove 2017; for Italian, Corona 2025) in (17), which specifies the specific manner of *girellare*:

- (15) *girellando qua e là, capitò per caso in una vigna, piena di grappoli bruni e dorati*
'Wandering here and there, they happened to stumble upon a vineyard full of golden and brown bunches of grapes.'
- (16) *girellando girellando, trovò parole più adatte delle proprie*
'Wandering and wandering, they eventually found words better than their own.'
- (17) *Una gazzella dei Carabinieri girellava come uno scarafaggio insonnolito*
'A police car was slowly circling like a drowsy cockroach.'

The sense of disengagement may also result from a strategy of attenuation operating in the context, such as the selection of the vague paucal quantifier *un po'* 'a little' (cf. examples 9-10), which undergoes a quantity > quality > manner reinterpretation (see Russo 2023; Voghera 2017: 392-393). A clear case is in (18), where *un po'* contributes to describe the activity of *girellare* as carried out in a relaxed and undemanding manner:

- (18) *mi volevo regalare il viaggio dei miei sogni... così ho girellato un po' su internet e nelle agenzie viaggi e vi volgio [sic!] rendere partecipi dei risultati della mia ricerca.*
'I wanted to treat myself to the trip of my dreams... so I poked around a bit online and in some travel agencies, and now I want to share what I found with you all.'

In the remaining 98 occurrences, the space through which the entity moves is specified in context by means of locative adverbials denoting an extended but bounded area, characterised by non-linearity or discontinuity, as *tra le strade* in (19):

- (19) *è bello girellare tra le strade e vedere quanto i bielorussi siano diversi da noi*
'It's nice just going around the streets and seeing how different Belarusians are from us.'

Arrampicchiare suggests similar observations. In (20), it occurs in the gerund (which is, more in general, typically used to express manner) and is accompanied by the spatial distributive *qua e là* 'here and there', encoding non-uniformity in space. This non-standard way to perform the activity is reinforced by other contextual evaluative expressions such as *orrendo stile* 'dreadful style' and the similitive *con la solita agilità da felini pensionati* 'with the usual agility of retired felines':

- (20) *Arrampicchiando qua e là, con orrido stile e con la solita agilità da felini pensionati, arriviamo al meandrino da vedere indicatoci da Poppi*
'Clambering here and there, with dreadful style but the usual agility of retired felines, we reach the small meander to see pointed out by Poppi.'

In contrast with the DEVs based on *girare*, *seguicchiare* is never used in a literal spatial sense, but only in its figurative sense of 'to keep up with someone regularly; to follow; to support'. The suffix adds a sense of intermittence and inconsistency, which is ultimately a non-prototypical manner, as in (21):

- (21) *la marvel odierna (...) la segugiochio (fra un periodo di astinenza ed un altro) per affezione verso i personaggi ma è raro che condivida le scelte editoriali*
 ‘I still kind of follow modern Marvel (on and off) out of affection for the characters, but it’s rare that I actually agree with their editorial choices.’

A targeted Google search revealed that, even in web occurrences outside the ItWaC corpus, *segugiochiare* is used exclusively in a figurative sense, denoting an inconsistent and/or intermittent way of being a fan, a supporter or a follower (22), of following someone on social media (23), or of engaging in activities that would require regular commitment (e.g. *segugiochiare* a diet, a school, see 24-25).

- (22) *è arrivato un periodo in cui ho cominciato a segugiochiare anche qualche altro sport. Tipo il ciclismo*
 ‘A period came along when I started kind of following a few other sports as well, like cycling’
- (23) *vedo che anche se c’è qualcuno che mi segugiochia il profilo nessuno recensisce...*
 ‘I see that even though some people sort of follow me, nobody leaves any reviews...’
- (24) *sta settimana sto segugiochiando la dieta senza contare le calorie*
 ‘This week I’m kind of half-heartedly following the diet without counting calories’
- (25) *Al liceo prendevo voti decenti limitandomi a segugiochiare le lezioni*
 ‘In high school I got decent grades just by kind of half-paying attention in class’

5. Conclusions

This work focused on the interaction between evaluation and manner expressed in evaluative verbs derived from motion bases. In particular, we sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How and through which properties is the notion of manner specified in the case of motion DEVs, and how does it interact with evaluation?
2. What role does the context in which the DEV occurs play in determining the specific evaluative nuance?

The data were extracted from the ItWac corpus and then analysed on the basis of WordNet lexical classes. The quantitative analysis showed a predominance of manner of motion bases, which is fully consistent with what has been already observed in the literature on the topic, that is, DEVs strongly prefer activity verbs, which encode atelic, dynamic, and durative events and exhibit unergative morphosyntax (Bertinetto 2004; Grandi 2008; Stosic 2019; Tovenà 2011, 2015).

The qualitative analysis of the contexts in which DEVs occur (reinforced by some targeted search on the Web) has made it possible to refine the overall picture. In particular, it was found that:

- (i) DEVs derived from low manner bases express, like their bases, atelic and agentive events; the suffix helps to specify the manner as non-prototypical motion realised with little agentive effort and/or in a non-homogeneous space (*corricchiare di qua e*

- di là* ‘to run around’). These meanings are typically supported by contextual elements (adverbs, prepositional phrases, etc.).
- (ii) Only in cases where the manner is highly specific, as is the case with high manner verbs (*si pedalicchia un po’* ‘one pedals a bit’), do the suffix and context suggest an attenuative interpretation of the properties of the base.
 - (iii) However, the suffix does not merely reiterate the manner value of the base, but itself conveys a meaning of manner, as demonstrated by the fact that even bases expressing path give rise to manner DEVs (*girellare qua e là* ‘wandering here and there’); in this case too, we are dealing with agentive and typically atelic situations, in which a certain event is realised with little agentive effort and/or is connoted in a pluractional sense.
 - (iv) Atelicity represents a strong restriction both in the selection of bases and in the output of the evaluative process, as widely observed in the literature; however, it is not a total constraint: motion DEVs in telic constructions are rare and marginal, but not entirely absent, although telicity is entirely entrusted to other context elements (*saltelliamo giù* ‘we jump down’).
 - (v) The only real restriction in manner reading is agentivity, which is therefore a defining characteristic of the concept. In fact, where there is a decrease in agentivity, as is the case with some high manner verbs (e.g. *zoppicchiare* ‘to limp a little’), a manner reading seems to be inhibited.

The alternation of manner and attenuative meanings in motion DEVs occurs entirely within the subjective domain of evaluation. In other words, we are dealing with a manner evaluation that operates on the semantic characteristics of the base and manifests itself in exclusively agentive contexts, indicating low commitment and/or non-uniform movement on the part of the agent. Manner evaluation and attenuation are specifications of approximation operations, through which the speaker grades the distance of the referent from the centre of the category in which it is classified.

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