Prepositional Phrases and manner-of-motion verbs in Italian
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It is assumed that Italian is exceptional with respect to the Talmyan bipartite typology which distinguishes two major types of languages called satellite framed languages- where the verbal root encodes only manner and motion while paths are rendered by other elements particles or affixes (the so-called satellites) as in (1) and verb framed languages-which conflate motion and path in the verbal root and need to employ other means to express manner-of-motion as in (2).

(1) Mary walked into the room
(2) Maria è andata nella stanza camminando ‘Mary went into the room walking’

Italian, indeed, allows some manner of motion verbs like correre, ‘run’ to express directed motion with PP complements. When they are used with a prepositional phrase they express directed motion and they select auxiliary essere ‘be’ as in (3) hence all three components (Motion, Manner and Path) are expressed by the composition of a verb with a PP and the overall syntactic structure brings about a path reading;

(3) Maria è corsa a casa ‘Mary ran home’

According to Folli (2008) Italian gives rise to goal of motion constructions in two ways: I) Verbs as correre allow a directional interpretation and they trigger two different derivations: one where the verb itself identifies the path of motion and the preposition gives the final location and one where each one of the two prepositions, making up a complex PPs, identifies a portion of motion;

II) Verbs as camminare, ‘walk’, which express a non-directional motion, can produce a goal of motion interpretation only if they are combined with a complex PPs encoding path and place such as phrases like fino a ‘as far as’, dentro a ‘inside to’ etc.

Folli claims that Italian complex prepositions as fino a have a complex structure as in (4):

(4) Fino a casa ‘as far as home’

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\begin{align*}
P_{\text{PATH}} & \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \ quad
2) The status of the monosyllabic preposition a in complex prepositions is still controversial. Even though it denotes the final locating position in goal of motion constructions, it is not a pure directional preposition like English to, as it can be complement of a stative verb, while to cannot be (6a, 6b);

(6) a Marco vive a Londra b.* Mark lives to London

Moreover the interpretation of a depends on the context since it can be referred to point-like spaces when used with the name of a city as in (6a) or a small island as in (7) or to extended places as in (8) and it can also appear with infinitives verbs without a locative meaning, e.g. abituarsi a, ‘to be used to’, cominciare a, ‘to begin to’ continuare a, ‘to continue to’, etc.

(7) Marco vive a Capri ‘Mark lives in Capri’
(8) Marco è andato a scuola/ all’università/ al parco ‘Mark went to the school/university/park’

3) Italian complex prepositions don’t identify a Path head but only a Place head, therefore they lack a path/process component. I propose the following structure in (9);

(9) Dietro all’albero ‘behind the tree’

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\begin{array}{c}
P_{PLACE} \\
P_{PLACE} P' \\
P_{PLACE} \\
\text{Dietro} \\
\text{all’albero}
\end{array}
\]

In the prepositional minimal pair of the following type dietro/dietro a, dentro/dentro a etc. a expresses a certain locative value further specified by the polysyllabic prepositions as dietro, since a, by itself, has no locative value;

Italian doesn’t present a satellite-framed behaviour because complex prepositions are not interpreted as accomplishment and goal of motion interpretation is produced only in one way: when the verb itself (as corriere) identifies the path of motion and the preposition gives the final location. I conclude in line with Mateu&Rigau (2010), despite many qualifications, that the following relevant Talmyan generalization can be maintained: [pure manner verbs+ small clause result] constructions are predicted to be systematically absent from Romance. Italian consistently obeys to the Talmyan generalization that non directional manner of motion verbs do not coappear with non adjunct paths in Romance.

References