

The aim of this paper is to offer a complete picture of alteration in Italian, of the suffixes used, their meaning, and the frequency of their use. Apart of the necessary technical literature, we have employed the following work tools: electronic dictionaries (Lo Zingarelli 2007, Sabatini Coletti 2006, *Il Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*), corpora (CORIS, *La Repubblica*) and text databases (*Letteratura italiana Zanichelli 4.0*, *Factiva*). We have also made use of examples manually excerpted from literary texts.

The paper is structured into two basic parts. The first part (chapters I to V) is rather theory-focused and its aim is to present the actual knowledge on alteration in Italian. In chapter I we describe basic proprieties of alteration and demonstrate them on examples. In chapters II and III we study the semantics of alteration, first in general, then with regard to the single alterative suffixes. We draw up a very complete list of alterative suffixes and provide their characteristics, we attempt to systemize the suffixes according to their meaning, and we investigate historical background of some suffixes. Chapter IV deals with suffix accumulation and with interfixes. In chapter V we investigate pragmatic meanings of alterative suffixes and also those of interfixes.

The second part of the paper (chapters VI to VIII) is focused on the verification, demonstration and correction of the findings presented in the first part. In chapter VI we examine the productivity of alterative suffixes, exploiting the Zingarelli 2007 dictionary. In chapter VII we study the frequency of use of single alteratives within selected alterative paradigms, exploiting the above mentioned corpora and text databases. In chapter VIII we provide commented examples for each of the most productive suffixes; our examples are drawn from printed media and from literary texts.

Let us now sum up our conclusions.

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