

VARIATIONS ON RELATIVE CLAUSES IN ITALIAN

DONNA JO NAPOLI

Georgetown University

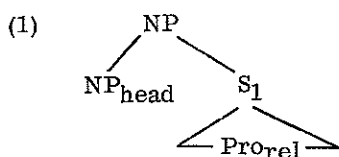
1.0. Introduction. All speakers of Italian produce at least two types of relative clauses, those introduced by a relative pronoun and those introduced by che 'that' with no pronoun coreferential with the head NP (call it Pro_{rel}) present. Many speakers also produce relatives introduced by che with Pro_{rel} present. For these speakers there is a deletion rule (call it DEL) which deletes Pro_{rel} in certain syntactic configurations.¹ DEL cannot apply, optionally applies, or must apply, depending on two factors which are shown to form a squish on the application of DEL.

I propose that for those speakers who never have Pro_{rel} present in the surface, DEL is an obligatory rule. Thus all relatives introduced by che are produced in the same way by all speakers. The fact that some speakers allow che relatives with Pro_{rel} and others do not is due to the sensitivity to syntactic structure of DEL for the first set of speakers but the obligatoriness of DEL (regardless of the structural configuration) for the second set of speakers.

2.0. The data. In the examples in this section we find relatives introduced by che with and without Pro_{rel} . We find that the two factors affecting the appearance of Pro_{rel} in the surface are the structure in which the relative clause appears² and the role Pro_{rel} plays in the relative clause. The data presented here are not new. Keenan (1972) has found similar data for many languages.

Four distinctive roles for Pro_{rel} are examined: subject, accusative object, nonaccusative cliticizable object,³ and noncliticizable object.⁴ We see these roles exemplified here in five different structures.⁵

2.1. S_1 . The lowest S dominating Pro_{rel} is S_1 :



(2a) Subject:

Ecco il ragazzo che (*lui) studia legge.
'Here's the boy that (*he) studies law.'

(2b) Accusative object:

Ecco il ragazzo che Maria (*lo) conosce.
'Here's the boy that Mary knows (*him).'

(2c) Nonaccusative cliticizable object:

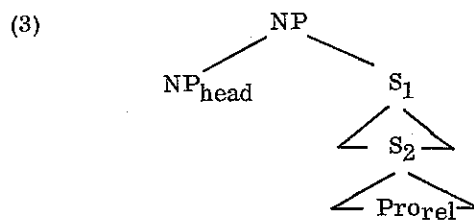
Ecco il ragazzo che gli parlavo.
'Here's the boy that I was talking to him.'

(2d) Noncliticizable object:

*Ecco il ragazzo che litigavo con (lui).
'Here's the boy that I was arguing with (him).'

In (2c) gli is optional for some speakers.

2.2. S_2 . Pro_{rel} appears in an S embedded in S_1 :



Now more roles exhibit a Pro_{rel} in the surface.

(4a) Subject:

Ecco il ragazzo che so bene che (??lui) studia legge.
'Here's the boy that I know well that (??he) studies law.'

(4b) Accusative object:

Ecco il ragazzo che so bene che Maria (lo) conosce.
'Here's the boy that I know well that Mary knows him.'

(4c) Nonaccusative cliticizable object:

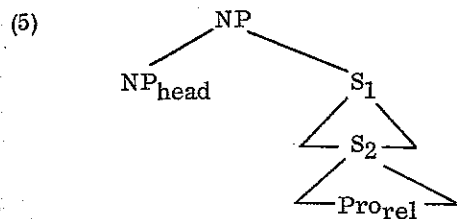
Ecco il ragazzo che so bene che ne parlavi.
'Here's the boy that I know well that you were talking about him.'

(4d) Noncliticizable object:

Ecco il ragazzo che so bene che litigavi con lui.
 'Here's the boy that I know well that you were arguing
 with him.'

Example (4d) is ungrammatical for some speakers.

2.3. Embedded Q. *Pro_{rel}* is in an embedded question:



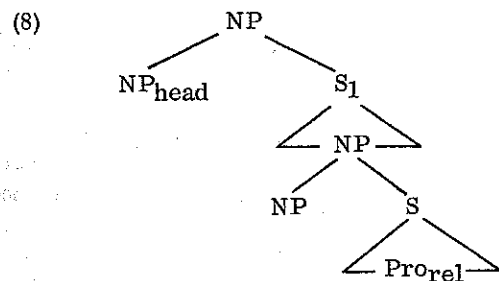
where *S₂* is a question. Now *Pro_{rel}* must appear in all roles except subject, where it is optional:

(6) Ecco il ragazzo che non capisco perchè (lui) studia legge.
 'Here's the boy that I don't understand why (he) studies law.'

Another structure which behaves exactly as embedded questions do is an adverbial of the type demonstrated in (7).

(7) Ecco il biscotto che tu gridavi a me mentre lo facevo.
 'Here's the cookie that you were yelling at me while I made it.'

2.4. CNP. *Pro_{rel}* is in a Complex Noun Phrase.



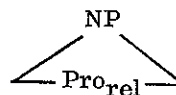
Pro_{rel} must appear in this structure in the surface regardless of its role.

- (9a) Ecco il ragazzo che conosco la maestra che lui odia.
 'Here's the boy that I know the teacher that he hates.'
- (9b) Ecco il ragazzo che il fatto che lui odia la maestra
 è ovvio.
 'Here's the boy that the fact that he hates the teacher
 is obvious.'

2.5. CS. When the relative clause is formed in a Coordinate Structure, Pro_{rel} must appear in the surface regardless of its role.⁶

- (10a) NP and NP
 (10b) Ecco il ragazzo che mia sorella e lui vanno al cinema
 domani.
 'Here's the boy that my sister and he are going to the
 movies tomorrow.'

(11a) NP and



- (11b) Ecco il ragazzo che ho raccomandato Maria e la
 signora che lui ha sposato per il posto.
 'Here's the boy that I recommended Mary and the
 woman that he married for the job.'

Note that in (11b) Pro_{rel} is not only in a CS, it is also in a CNP.

3.0. The Relative Squish. If we arrange the two factors, role and structure, in a matrix with structure heading each column and role heading each row, and if we then fill in each square with information about whether or not Pro_{rel} appears in the surface, we find the squish shown in Table 1.⁷ In this table x signifies that Pro_{rel} cannot appear in the surface; 0, that Pro_{rel} optionally appears; +, that Pro_{rel} must appear; and -, that no relative can be formed with che in this context. A square with two symbols signifies dialectal variation, with the first symbol representing the most frequently found data for my informants.

The roles in Table 1 have been arranged according to the Keenan and Comrie (1972) Accessibility Hierarchy. The structures have been arranged according to their degree of 'islandness', with those observing Ross's (1967) constraints being rightmost. Assuming that the positions get progressively more difficult as we go from NW to SE on the matrix, we see that Pro_{rel} does not appear in easy contexts, optionally appears in more difficult contexts, and must appear in the most difficult contexts.⁸

TABLE 1. Squish on the appearance of Pro_{rel}.

	S ₁	S ₂	em Q	CNP	CS
subject	x	x	0	+	+
acc. object	x	0	+	+	+
nonacc. clit. object	+, 0	+	+	+	+
nonclit. object	-	+, -	+	+	+

4.0. The Deletion Rule DEL. The squish in Table 1 is written as a squish on the appearance of Pro_{rel} in the surface. I argue here that there is a rule DEL which deletes Pro_{rel} and that DEL cannot apply, optionally applies, or obligatorily applies, depending upon the difficulty of the context. If it were possible to motivate such a rule, Table 1 would offer support for Lakoff's (1972) claim that 'rules of grammar do not simply apply or fail to apply; rather they apply to a degree'.⁹

One kind of evidence which would support the proposal of DEL would be something which would make us posit an underlying level for (2b), for example, in which Pro_{rel} was present.

(2b) Ecco il ragazzo che Maria (*lo) conosce.

Such evidence exists. Consider (12). Pensare a NP 'think about NP' is unusual in Italian, in that if a NP is replaced by a clitic we get an accusative clitic (having the same gender and number as the NP) but never a dative clitic. A NP in other predicates, however, is replaced by a dative clitic if the NP is animate.¹⁰

- (12a) Penso a mia madre.
'I'm thinking about my mother.'
- (12b) *Penso mia madre.
'I'm thinking my mother.'
- (12c) *Le (dative) penso.
'I'm thinking about her.'
- (12d) La penso.
'I'm thinking about her.'

In a relative clause with pensare a NP we find that Pro_{rel} cannot appear. All speakers of Italian, as far as I know, accept (13a):

- (13a) La signora che pensavi entra adesso.
'The woman that you were thinking about is entering now.'

- (13b) *La signora che la (accusative) pensavi entra adesso.
'The woman that you were thinking about her is entering now.'
- (13c) *La signora che le (dative) pensavi entra adesso.
'The woman that you were thinking about her is entering now.'

Had the relative clause in (13a) been formed directly on an underlying full dative NP as in (14),

- (14) [la signora [(tu) pensavi alla signora] entra adesso]

we would expect a dative clitic to appear in the surface obligatorily for most speakers and at least optionally for many others, since dative objects are nonaccusative cliticizable objects (see row 3 of Table 1). Yet no such clitic may appear, as (13c) shows. If, instead, the dative object in (13a) went through a pronominal stage first, it would become an accusative clitic, as (12d) shows. Then this clitic would be deleted by DEL, since accusative Pro_{rel} does not show up in a structure like that in (13) (see the first column of Table 1). And, in fact, no clitic appears.

Thus the positing of a pronominal stage in the history of (13a) explains the absence of a clitic in the che relative there. Note that if we formed a relative clause with a relative pronoun in the same environment, the relative pronoun would appear after the dative marker a and not as an accusative object.¹¹

- (15a) La signora alla quale/a cui pensavi entra adesso.
'The woman to whom you were talking is entering now.'
- (15b) *La signora la quale pensavi entra adesso.
'The woman who you were thinking is entering now.'

Example (15) shows that (13a) must be derived from a stage in which an accusative clitic was present and not from a stage in which a relative pronoun was present.¹²

Another argument in favor of proposing DEL depends on dialectal variation. The relative clauses given in Sections 2.1 through 2.5 are grammatical for a large number of speakers. Many other speakers reject many of the examples in Sections 2.1-2.5. All speakers, however, accept relative clauses introduced by che of the following types.

- (16a) La ragazza che canta bene è Maria.
'The girl that sings well is Mary.'

- (16b) *La ragazza che so che canta bene è Maria.*
'The girl that I know sings well is Mary.'
- (16c) *La ragazza che mi domando perchè piange è Maria.*
'The girl that I wonder why she's crying is Mary.'
- (16d) *La ragazza che conosco bene è Maria.*
'The girl that I know well is Mary.'
- (16e) *La ragazza che so che tu conosci bene è Maria.*
'The girl that I know that you know well is Mary.'

These examples are of the type given in row 1 of columns 1, 2, and 3, and row 2 of columns 1 and 2 of the squish seen in Table 1.

Assuming DEL exists, the fact that (16) is accepted by all speakers of Italian, while the other types of relative clauses given in Sections 2.1-2.5 are accepted only by some, can be explained if we propose that DEL is an obligatory rule for the speakers who accept relatives with *che* only of the types seen in (16). To see this, look back at the squish in Table 1. Italian observes Ross's (1967) constraints on deletion and movement out of CNP and CS. If DEL is obligatory for a given speaker, then the speaker must delete *Pro_{rel}* in the environments in columns 4 and 5. But the CNP Constraint and the CS Constraint block this deletion. Since an obligatory rule is blocked from applying, such a speaker cannot produce the types of relative clauses found in columns 4 and 5.

Likewise for these same speakers, DEL must delete *Pro_{rel}* in row 4, yielding sentences such as:

- (17a) **La ragazza che parlavi con è Maria.*
'The girl that you were talking with is Mary.'
- (17b) **La ragazza che so che parlavi con è Maria.*
'The girl that I know you were talking with is Mary.'
- (17c) **La ragazza che mi domando perchè parlavi con è Maria.*
'The girl that I wonder why you were talking with is Mary.'

However, there is a constraint against stranding prepositions in Italian.¹³ Since the application of DEL to sentences like those in (17) would result in a stranded preposition (*con* 'with'), such sentences are ungrammatical.

For the speakers with obligatory DEL the impossible grids left to be accounted for in Table 1 then, are those shown in (18).

(18)	<i>S</i> ₁	<i>S</i> ₂	embed Q
accusative object			✓
nonaccusative clit. object	✓	✓	✓

Note that all the speakers who produce the che relatives of columns 2 and 3 of (18) keep *Pro_{rel}* in the surface. That is, for these speakers the contexts represented in columns 2 and 3 of (18) are of a level of difficulty that requires the presence of *Pro_{rel}*. Thus there is some kind of constraint that blocks DEL from applying in these contexts. If this same constraint operates in the grammars of those speakers who have obligatory DEL, an obligatory rule is blocked from applying in these contexts and the relatives of columns 2 and 3 of (18) cannot be produced.

The only grid left to be accounted for is the nonaccusative cliticizable object in *S*₁. Most speakers who produce che relatives in this context keep *Pro_{rel}* in the surface. Thus there is a constraint blocking DEL here for them. However, there are also speakers for whom DEL optionally applies in this context. Thus we expect that for most speakers who produce (16) but not the other types of relatives exemplified in Sections 2.1-2.5, (19) should be out.¹⁴

- (19) Il gesto che sono capace è sputare in faccia al maestro.
'The act that I am capable (of) is spitting in the face of the teacher.'

Example (19) is out for these speakers because DEL is obligatory but at the same time it is blocked by a 'difficulty' constraint. However, there should be speakers who produce (16) and (19) but not the rest of the sentence types in Sections 2.1-2.5. That is, there should be speakers with obligatory DEL who do not consider the context in (19) difficult enough to block deletion, just as there are speakers with structure-sensitive DEL who do not consider the context in (19) difficult enough to block DEL. I have found no such speakers, and if they, in fact, do not exist, my explanations are greatly weakened. However, my sampling of speakers is small, so the possibility that such speakers exist remains.

Without a rule such as DEL, there must be a third relative clause strategy in Italian. This strategy would introduce relative clauses by che and leave no *Pro_{rel}*. Compare the two resulting che relative clause strategies. One has che plus *Pro_{rel}*. The other has che with no *Pro_{rel}*. If both strategies exist and are independent of one another, we would expect to find speakers with only the first of the two strategies as well as speakers with only the second of the two strategies. But, in fact, there are no speakers who produce che relatives with *Pro_{rel}* who cannot also produce che relatives without *Pro_{rel}* (of the type seen in (16)). Also, if the two strategies are independent, the fact that they are in complementary distribution (with only three exceptions) is unexplained.

4.1. Actual usage. While many speakers accept relative pronouns in relatives of the types seen in columns 1 through 3 of the squish in Table 1, 15 in actual usage relative pronouns are found in such structures usually only in the roles seen in rows 3 and 4. That is, il quale, the relative pronoun, rarely occurs as the subject or accusative object of its clause. In fact, many speakers do not even accept il quale as an accusative object.¹⁶ For rows 3 and 4, the roles in which the NP coreferential with the head is in a prepositional phrase at some point in the derivation, the relative pronoun relative is more common than the che relative, but the preferred choice of relative pronoun is not il quale, but rather cui. Thus (20a) is more frequently used than (20b):

(20a) La ragazza con cui parlavi è Maria.

(20b) La ragazza con la quale parlavi è Maria.

'The girl with whom you were speaking is Mary.'

The preference for che and cui relatives, as opposed to il quale relatives, may be related to the fact that che and cui are invariant forms whereas il quale has different forms, depending on the number and gender of the referent. I think there is a general tendency in colloquial Italian to use invariant forms whenever one has a choice, witness the preference of (21a) to (21b):

(21a) Noi donne siamo meglio (unmarked) degli uomini.

(21b) Noi donne siamo migliori (feminine plural) degli uomini.

'We women are better than men.'

5.0. Conclusion. All relative clauses introduced by che in Italian are produced by the same relative clause strategy by all speakers. The fact that some speakers exhibit relatives with Pro_{rel} in the surface while others do not is directly due to the fact that DEL is structure-sensitive for the first group of speakers but obligatory, regardless of structure, for the second group.

NOTES

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preliminary version of this paper was presented at the summer, 1974, LSA meeting.

1. Emonds (1970:169ff.) assumes for English that all relative clauses are introduced by that and go through a stage in which the NP coreferential with the head is pronominalized or deleted. In the case of pronominalization, wh-fronting applies, optionally pulling along a preceding preposition and replacing that in the COMP with the relative pronoun. In the case of deletion, that introduces the surface relative. (That may be deleted in certain instances.)

Chomsky (1973), alternatively, proposes that relative pronouns may delete and that then that may be inserted in COMP.

Both linguists see relative clauses introduced by wh forms and that as being produced by one basic strategy, with deletion (either of a pronoun within the relative clause or of a fronted wh pronoun) resulting in that appearing in the surface. If che relatives and wh relatives in Italian were the result of one basic strategy, then wh-fronting would apply to Pro_{rel} before Clitic Placement or else be inapplicable to clitics (because of sentences such as (14a) in the text) and wh-fronting would be obligatory for some speakers in certain contexts but optional for others in the same contexts. Of course, there are some contexts (such as Complex NP's or Coordinate Structures) in which wh-fronting could not apply. If wh-fronting did not apply, Clitic Placement would apply where applicable and then DEL would apply. Determining whether or not this is the proper characterization of relativization in general in Italian is beyond the scope of this paper. In particular, the interaction of wh-fronting and Clitic Placement must be explored.

2. Many linguists have noted that the structure in which the relative clause appears may affect whether or not a Pro_{rel} appears. See Ross (1967), Neubauer (1970), and Givon (1973), among others.

3. Possessive NP's behave the same as nonaccusative cliticizable objects.

4. In Italian, unemphatic pronominal forms appear as clitics on the verb unless they are the object of a preposition that cannot be stranded or they are a possessive NP or they cannot be moved because of some other constraint (for example, a pronoun that was a conjunct of a Coordinate Structure could not be cliticized).

5. I have not included relativization in Sentential Subjects because the resulting sentences may well be ruled out for independent reasons. Thus, in (i)

- (i) ?*Ecco il ragazzo che che (lui) ama Maria è ovvio.
'Here's the boy that that (he) loves Mary is obvious.'

the sequence che che is what most speakers say they object to. As in English, relativization into extraposed SS's is possible:

- (ii) Ecco il ragazzo che non mi piace che lui sposi mia figlia.
'Here's the boy that it doesn't please me that he should marry my daughter.'

Regardless of role, Pro_{rel} must appear in relatives formed in extraposed SS's.

6. For some Italians (11) is better than (10). Grosu (1973), because of similar data in English, has proposed that the CS Constraint is not unitary but rather consists of two separate constraints, the Conjunct Constraint (which is relevant to (10)) and the Element Constraint (which is relevant to (11)). Neeld (1973) points out further distinctions between the two constraints. Neubauer (1972) has noted that SuperEqui distinguishes between the two constraints.

7. For discussions of squishes, see Ross (1972) and Lakoff (1972), among others.

8. Keenan (1972) argues that 'the more a syntactic process, such as relative clause formation, preserves logical structure, the greater the variety of contexts in which it applies and the more "difficult" the positions it applies to.' Assuming that a relative clause with a Pro_{rel} in the surface is closer to the 'logical' structure than a relative clause with a relative pronoun in clause initial position, the squish in Table 1 bears out Keenan's claim. Relative clauses introduced by relative pronouns cannot even be formed for columns 4 and 5, since Italian observes Ross's (1967) constraints on movement out of CNP and CS.

Relatives with relative pronouns also cannot be formed for the bottom square in column 3. I do not know why.

9. For another approach to the same kind of problem, see Neeld (1973), among others.

10. A NP of pensare a NP may also be replaced by the locative clitic ci, as in:

- (i) Ci penso.
'I'm thinking about it.'

The major point in this example in the text is the contrast between a predicate like parlare a NP 'speak to NP' and pensare a NP. In the first, a NP is replaced by a dative clitic,

- (ii) Gli parlo. (dative)
'I'm speaking to him.'

whereas in the second it is replaced by an accusative.

Also, I found a speaker from Padova who accepted (12b). For such speakers the following argument in the text is vitiated, since the NP coreferential with the head could have been an underlying accusative object, regardless of any pronominal stage.

11. Many speakers do not allow the relative pronoun to be used as the accusative object of its clause. (For a discussion of similar facts in French, see Kayne 1976.) However, even those speakers who do use the relative pronoun for accusative objects reject (15b).

12. There are some relative clauses introduced by che for which the positing of an underlying stage with Pro_{rel} present amounts to positing an underlying ungrammatical stage. For example, in (i)

- (i) *La ragazza che dicevo ieri è Carla.*
'The girl I was talking about yesterday is Carla.'

since no Pro_{rel} can appear in the surface, we would posit an underlying accusative clitic. Thus the relative clause in (i) would derive from the ungrammatical (ii),

- (ii) **La dicevo ieri.*
'I was talking about her yesterday.'

The problem is that dire with the sense of 'refer to' or 'talk about' (rather than its usual meaning of 'assert') does not appear other than in relative clauses of the type seen in (i). Thus one cannot say:

- (iii) **Dicevo Carlo quando tu sei entrato.*
'I was talking of Carlo when you entered.'
(iv) **Dicevo di Carlo quando tu sei entrato.*
(v) **Il ragazzo il quale dicevo è Carlo.*
'The boy who I was talking about is Carlo.'
(vi) **Il ragazzo di cui dicevo è Carlo.*
'The boy of whom I was talking is Carlo.'

Examples such as (i) are not evidence against the existence of DEL, however. Rather, since (iii)-(vi) are also bad, they are problems for any analysis of these relative clauses, regardless of the positing of a pronominal stage.

13. So-called prepositions like dietro 'behind', attorno 'around', davanti 'before', etc., which can be stranded, are really adverbs. See Napoli (1974) for evidence.

14. The version of (19) with Pro_{rel} present has ne.

(i) Il gesto che ne sono capace è sputare in faccia al maestro.

15. Relative pronouns cannot be used in columns 4 and 5 because of Ross's constraints.

16. See note 11.

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