

Relativizers are not complementizers: evidence from Romance

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Setting the problem

Based on different morphosyntactic behaviors, Romance relativizers have been analyzed as belonging to two different categories: **pronouns** (a.) and **complementizers** (b.):

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| (1) It. | a. <i>Mario,</i> | <i>il quale</i> | <i>parla</i> | <i>sempre.</i> |
| | Mario | REL | talks | always |
| b. <i>La ragazza</i> | <i>che</i> | <i>parla</i> | <i>sempre.</i> | |
| | the girl | REL | talks | always |
-
- | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| (2) Pt. | a. <i>O Mario,</i> | <i>o qual</i> | <i>fala</i> | <i>sempre.</i> |
| | the Mario | REL | talks | always |
| b. <i>A menina</i> | <i>que</i> | <i>fala</i> | <i>sempre.</i> | |
| | the girl | REL | talks | always |
-
- a. 'Mario, who always talks'
b. 'The girl that always talks'

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Setting the problem

Recently, Kato & Nunes (2009), Kayne (2005, 2010), Manzini & Savoia (2011), Sportiche (2012) have questioned the strict dichotomy between relative complementizers and relative pronouns.

Research question:
Does this dichotomy really exist?

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The idea in a nutshell

- The dichotomy does not exist: there is no difference between so-called relative pronouns and relative complementizers in Romance.
- There is one single class of relativizers, which is of functional nominal nature.
- Relativizers can differ with respect to the features that they are specified for.

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Road map

1. Provide evidence that the proposed diagnoses to differentiate between relative complementizers and relative pronouns do not hold – on the contrary, they point towards a unified treatment of relativizers:
 1. P+que / sensitivity to animacy
 2. Invariable pronouns in NP relatives
 3. Agreeing complementizers in NP relatives
2. Unified treatment of relativizers: nominal functional category parallel to interrogative items

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Criteria for the two types of REL

The usual criteria (Klima 1964; Kayne 1975; Radford 1980) for distinguishing between complementizers and relative pronouns are:

- Contrary to pronouns,
- a. complementizers are incompatible with **prepositions**;
 - b. complementizers do not display **animacy sensitivity**;
 - c. complementizers do not display **φ-feature agreement**.

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Criteria for the two types of REL

	NP rel	PP rel
Italian	<i>che</i>	* <i>che</i>
Portuguese	<i>que</i>	✓ <i>que</i>

→ Italian *che* = complementizer (Cinque 1978, 1982)

→ Portuguese *que* = 2 types (Brito 1991)

Criteria for the two types of REL

Portuguese: two types of relative *que*

NP rel

- (3) *A mulher que está a falar é a minha tia.*
the woman REL is to speak is the my aunt
"The woman who is talking is my aunt."
- (4) *Gostei do filme que vi ontem.*
I.liked of.the movie REL I.saw yesterday
"I liked the movie that I saw yesterday."

→ Insensitivity to animacy in NP relatives:
***que*₁ = complementizer**

Criteria for the two types of REL

Portuguese: two types of relative *que*

PP rel

In spontaneous speech, a clear pattern is attested (Aßmann & Rinke submitted): *que* for [-human] and *quem* for [+human] antecedent

	headed [+human]	headed [-human]
<i>que</i>	0	45 (97.8%)
<i>quem</i>	6	1 (0.2%)
Σ	6 (100%)	46 (100%)

→ Sensitivity to animacy in PP relatives:
***que*₂ = pronoun**

I. argument: *que* as the complement of a preposition

Despite the empirically attested animacy effect, *que* is not completely incompatible with animate antecedents, thereby patterning with *quem*.

- (5) *O idiota [a que] / [a quem] emprestei esse livro*
the idiot to REL to REL I.lent that book
"The idiot to whom I lent that book."
(Veloso 2013:2083)

→ Insensitivity to animacy in PP relatives, so... *que*₁ or *que*₂?

I. argument: *que* as the complement of a preposition

Conclusions:

- Animacy sensitivity does not lead to unanimous results regarding the category of *que*.
- There is no clear ground for stating *que*₁ and *que*₂ in terms of complementizer vs. pronoun.

II. argument: invariable "pronouns"

The "lack of agreement"-argument does not identify complementizers only.

Also relativizers usually considered as pronouns and not as complementizers do not always display agreement: e.g. *quale* in Old Neapolitan.

(cf. Sanfelici, Caloi and Poletto 2014)

II. argument: invariable "pronouns" *Quale* in Old Neapolitan

(6) *Tutte queste parole le quale*

all:PL.FEM this:PL.FEM word:PL.FEM the:PL.FEM REL

le disse lo re Peleo

CL. said the king Peleo

'All these words which the king Peleo said'

(LTD, 51.17-18)

(7) *Gloria de lesu Christo et dela Vergene matre, li quale*

glory of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin mother

the:PL.M REL

illumenenno lu intellectu

bright the mind

'Glory of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mother, who bright the mind'

(SDM, 65.14-16)

III. argument: agreeing complementizers

- As a counterpart to non-agreeing relative pronouns, we can find agreeing relative complementizers.
- We will show that elements that are usually dubbed as "relative complementizers" can indeed display gender, case and animacy features.

III. argument: agreeing complementizers – animacy

In Old Piedmontese and Old Ligurian, the complementizer has a different form with respect to the animacy and case of the head noun.

(8) *questa femena chi m' à spanyunto questo*

this:fem woman REL to_me has spread this

inguento adosso

unguent on_me

'This woman that spread this unguent on me.'

(Passione, 28)

(9) *Receveyva tuto zo che era dayto a Criste.*

received:3sg all that REL was given to Christ

'He received all that was given to Christ.'

(Passione, 28)

III. argument: agreeing complementizers – gender

In Old Neapolitan, the complementizer has a different form with respect to the gender and case of the head noun.

- Masculine Head Noun > CHI

(10) *Lo re de Cipre chi se clamao Eneo.*

the king of Cyprus REL refl called Eneo

'The king of Cyprus who was named Enea.'

(LTD, 153. 14-15)

- Feminine Head Noun > CHE

(11) *Questa Medea che desiderava tanto la soa dolce partenza*

this Medea REL desired so.much the her sweet departure

'Medea, who really desired her sweet departure.'

(LTD, 67.24)

Summary of the three arguments

1. We showed that in PP relatives, the relativizer seems to be insensitive to animacy – just like in NP relatives.
2. We showed that in NP relatives, supposed relative pronouns can be invariable to ϕ -feature agreement.
3. On the contrary, in NP relatives, the supposed relative complementizer can exhibit nominal agreement features.

Conclusion of the first part

- The usual properties distinguishing relative pronouns from relative complementizers do not necessarily go together, e.g. animacy and being selected by prepositions.
- Therefore, the proposed criteria do not reliably identify the categorial nature of the relativizer.
- What our data show, on the contrary, leads to propose that relativizers belong to one and only one category, which is of nominal nature.
- This nominal relativizer can be specified for different feature sets.

Conclusion of the first part

Latin	Old Neapolitan	Old Piedmontese / Old Ligurian	French	Old + Modern Italian / Portuguese
Case	Case	Case	Case	
Gender	Gender	Animacy		
Number	(Animacy)			

(cf. Poletto and Sanfelici 2015)

Second part: parallelism to interrogatives

We propose a unified treatment of relativizers in terms of a **nominal functional category parallel to interrogative items**.

Second part: parallelism to interrogatives

From a diachronic perspective, *ch/q*-relativizers and interrogative determiners developed from the same indefinite **K^wi-*, **K^wo-* (I.E. etymology: Delbrück 1988:24, 1990; Hahn 1946, 1949; Fortson 2010. Syntactic development: Cohen 1990, Mattos and Silva 1993; Poletto and Sanfelici *to appear*).

Second part: parallelism to interrogatives

In standard Italian, interrogatives and RCs display the same elements: *che* 'what, which', *quale* 'which'.

A survey of the ASIt data base (150 dialects) has shown that the following generalizations hold:

- (G1) If a variety uses the form **qual-** as a determiner in interrogatives, it will display the form **qual-** as a relativizer as well.
- (G2) If a variety has **che** as a determiner in interrogatives, then it also has **che** as a relativizer.

→ **The form of the relativizer and the form of interrogative determiners is the same.**

(cf. Poletto and Sanfelici *to appear*)

Second part: parallelism to interrogatives

Example I:

In the Friulian variety spoken in Qualso, *quale* is found as relativizer in indirect object RCs (12). Interestingly, in this variety *quale* also appears as an interrogative determiner (13).

(12) *El frutat al qual tu volevis dà el libri al è partit.*
the boy to.the REL you wanted give the book s.cl is left
'The boy to whom you wanted to give the book left.'

(13) *Qual libri ha-tu let?*
which books have-you read
'Which books have you read?'

Second part: parallelism to interrogatives

Example II:

Veneto does not have *qual* in either interrogatives or relatives:

(14) a. **el fio al qual te volevi dar(ghe) un libro*
b. *el fio che te volevi dar-ghe un libro*
the boy REL you wanted to.give-him a book
'The boy to whom you wanted to give a book....'

(15) a. **qual(i) libri ze che te ga leto?*
b. *che libri ze che te ga leto?*
which books CL REL you have read
'Which books have you read?'

Second part: parallelism to interrogatives

The generalizations G1 and G2 also hold for EP: *qual* and *que* can both be used as interrogative determiners and as relativizers:

- (16) a. *Que livro leste?*
which book you.read
"Which book did you read?"
b. *O livro que leste.*
the book REL you.read
"The book that you read."
- (17) a. *Qual livro escolheste?*
which book you.chose
"Which book did you choose?"
b. *O livro do qual me falaste.*
the book of.the rel to.me you.spoke
"The book that you told me about."

Second part: parallelism to interrogatives

(18) *Che ragazzo hai visto?*
which boy you.have seen
"Which/what boy did you see?"

(19) *Il ragazzo che ho visto.*
the boy REL I.have seen
'The boy that I saw.'

- Interrogatives: [che +N]
- Relatives: [N [che + N]]

→ unified analysis for "pronoun-based"- and "complementizer-based"-RCs

Theoretical evidence 1: licensing of nominals in argument position

The assumption that all relativizers are nominal functional categories parallel to interrogative determiners accounts for the licensing of the RC-internal XP:

The RC-internal XP is an **argument**. It has been proposed that argument positions in Romance can only be filled by **DPs** (Longobardi 1994).

Interrogative determiners are able to license nominals in argument positions.

Since we have argued that interrogative determiners and relativizers are similar, the RC-internal XP is licensed as an argument in a similar way.

Theoretical evidence 1: licensing of nominals in argument position

If *que/che* were the complementizer, we would have to assume

- the argument XP to be a **bare nominal**, which is hardly possible in Romance (Longobardi 1994; Borsley 1997; Kato & Nunes 2009); or
- construction-specific licensing** mechanisms (Bianchi 1999; de Vries 2002).

Theoretical evidence 2: movement to the COMP domain

It is usually assumed that the relativized argument moves to the COMP domain.

This movement in our account follows without further stipulation from the **presence of a CP-related feature on the relativizer**.

In Romance, items with a CP-related feature can only be interpreted in the COMP domain (Rizzi 1997).

Conclusion of the second part

- We have proposed a parallelism between relative *che/que* and interrogative *che/que* being both nominal functional elements.
- This parallelism was based on empirical evidence in both synchrony and diachrony.
- We further showed the theoretical advantages of such a parallelism.

General conclusion

- A) Relative clauses in Italian and Portuguese are introduced by elements of one single category.
- B) Relativizers are nominal elements parallel to interrogative determiners.
- C) In different languages and in different stages of the same language, this nominal element can spell out different features.
- D) This analysis offers a unified treatment for “pronoun-based” RCs and “complementizer-based” RCs in Romance.

Thank you for your attention

Selected references

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