On a difference between Italian, and English and French present participle relatives

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1. Introduction

Italian differs greatly from English and French in the use of present participles in ‘reduced’ relative clauses (RCs). Its -ant/-ent- present participles are a tiny subset of the -ing and -ant present participles of English and French.

Here I will try to characterize the classes of verbs that have a productive present participle in Italian (building on Benincà & Cinque 1991) and consider how Italian renders those English and French present participles that cannot be rendered with present participles in Italian.

2. What replaces the non-existent present participles of Italian

I start with the second question. While both English and French can use a present participle in such ‘reduced’ relative clauses as (1a,b), Italian cannot (1c):

(1) a. That noise? It’s some boys playing outside. (Felser 1999, 88 fn. 56, after Declerck 1981, 138)


*I thank Paola Benincà, Richard Kayne and Clemens Mayr for their helpful comments on a previous draft of the paper.

1And possibly German, which also allows for present participles of activity and subject-experiencer stative verbs in ‘reduced’ RCs:

These three in their offices working men
‘these three men working in their office’

b. Er ist ein [sein Studium seit langem hassender] Student (Cinque 2010, 54)
he is a his study since long hating student
‘He is a student who has been hating his studies for a long time.’
Italian renders the present participles of (1a,b) with a periphrasis that apparently involves a finite restrictive relative clause (see (2)).

(2) Quel rumore? Sono dei bambini che giocano fuori.
‘That noise? It’s some boys who are playing outside.’

The difference between (1a,b) and (2) is actually part of a larger difference between Italian and English and French, one suggesting that the apparent finite restrictive relative in (2) may actually not be a genuine relative clause. In all of the contexts in (3) and (4), which also involve present participles in English and French and which are demonstrably not relatives, Italian uses again what looks like a finite relative clause. See (5).

(3) a. I saw him running at full speed. (Kayne 1975, 126)
   b. She met him coming out of the movies. (Kayne 1975, 126)
   c. She is there weeping like a willow.

(4) a. Je l'ai vu courant à toute vitesse. (Kayne 1975, 128)
   ‘I saw him running at full speed.’
   b. Elle l'a rencontré sortant du cinéma. (Kayne 1975, 128)
   ‘She met him coming out of the movies.’
   c. Elle est là pleurant comme une Madeleine. (Kayne 1975, 128)
   ‘She's there weeping copiously.’

(5) a. L’ho visto che correva/*corrente a tutta velocità.
   ‘I saw him that he.was.running/running at full speed.’
   b. L’ha incontrato che usciva/*uscente dal cinema.
   ‘She met him that she.was.coming/coming out of the movies.’
   c. Lei è là che piange/*piangente come una disperata.
   ‘She is there that she.is.weeping/weeping desperately.’

French, in addition to the present participle cases in (4), also has a variant which looks like the Italian finite relative clause in (5). See (6).

(6) a. Je l’ai vu qui courait à toute vitesse. (Kayne 1975, 126)
   ‘I saw him that he.was.running at full speed.’
   b. Elle l’a rencontré qui sortait du cinéma. (Kayne 1975, 126)
   ‘She met him that he.was.coming out of the movies.’
   c. Elle est là qui pleure comme une Madeleine. (Kayne 1975, 126)
   ‘She is there that she.is.weeping copiously.’

Indeed, (6) as well as (5), have however been shown to be constructions differing from genuine relative clauses in a number of ways. For example, they cannot but ‘relativize’ subjects, and allow the ‘Head’ to be cliticized or passivized (see Kayne 1975, 126-129,
Different analyses have been proposed for these constructions, which are often referred to as ‘pseudo-relatives’. In addition to the works just cited, see, among others, Declerck 1981, 1982, Guasti 1992, 1993, Rizzi 1992, Cinque 1995, Felser 1999, Casalicchio 2013a,b, 2015, Cecchetto & Donati 2015, and for a recent overview of the literature Graffi 2016.

If they are not genuine relative clauses involving A-bar movement to Spec,CP within DP, what kind of empty category fills the subject position of the che/qui clause?

Paduan, a dialect closely related to Italian, appears to provide direct evidence that the subject of the che clause in (5) contains a small pro in subject position rather than a variable bound from Spec,CP. In finite contexts Paduan, in contrast to Italian, has obligatory subject clitics for 2nd singular and 3rd singular and plural persons and a small pro for the other persons (see Benincà 1994,16 note 1). In contexts corresponding to those in (5), which contain 3rd person subjects a subject clitic is obligatory. The same would obtain with 2nd person singular subjects. See (7).2

(7)  a. Lo go visto ch*(el) coreva.  
    him I have seen that he ran  
    ‘I saw him running.’

    b. La lo ga incontrà ch*(el) veniva fora dal sinema.  
    she him has met that he came out from the cinema  
    ‘She met him coming out of the cinema.’

    c. La ze là che *(la) pianze a diroto.  
    she is there that she cries like a willow  
    ‘She is there weeping like a willow.’

If the constructions in (5) contain a small pro in subject position rather than a variable bound from Spec,CP, then the apparent restriction to the relativization of subjects follows directly as (non arbitrary) small pro is impossible in object position (Rizzi 1986 and Cattaneo 2007).

This opens up the possibility that the apparent finite relative clause in (2) could also be a pseudo-relative, although in this case one cannot show it clearly because of the existence of a distinct genuine relative clause modifying the Head NP. (Witness the possibility of it apparently relativizing also an object, as shown in (8).)

2In the same contexts, no subject clitic is required (or in fact possible) with 1st singular and plural and 2nd plural subjects (for the simple reason that no such person subject clitics exist in Paduan). See (ia,b), which plausibly contain a small pro, as the corresponding Italian sentences:

(i)  a. I me ga visto che corevo.  
    they me have seen that I ran  
    ‘They saw me running.’

    b. I ne/ve ga visto che corevimo/corevi.  
    they us/you have seen that we/youpl run  
    ‘They saw us/you(pl.) running.’

I thank Paola Benincà for originally pointing out to me the obligatoriness of the subject clitic in Paduan in the contexts in (7), and for providing the relevant examples.
Indeed, in Paduan, in a sentence corresponding to (2), the subject clitic is optional in contrast to (7). (More precisely, I would claim, obligatory in the pseudo-relative structure, just as in (7), and impossible in the genuine restrictive relative clause structure.)³ See (9).

(9) Sto rumore? Ze dei tozi che (i) zuga fora.
    ‘This noise? It’s some boys that (they) play outside.

3. Classes of verbs that have a present participle

Consider now the first question: what classes of verbs have a productive present participle in Italian that can be used in ‘reduced’ RCs? As mentioned above, most verb classes do not have a present participle. To see this, one must be sure that a genuine verbal present participle in -a/ent-form is involved rather than an adjective in the same -a/ent-form.⁴ Two diagnostics which clearly distinguish verbal participles in -a/ent-form from adjectives in -a/ent- are 1) the possibility of hosting clitics (available with finite and non-finite verbal forms but not with adjectives⁵) and 2) the possibility, in the case of present participles derived from transitive verbs, of licensing a direct object (again available with finite and non-finite verbal forms but not with adjectives).⁶

If we apply one or the other of these diagnostics it becomes clear that of the Vendlerian classes of verbs, neither activity nor achievement nor accomplishment verbs can form present participles (*i bambini cavalcanti un cavallo ‘the children riding a horse’; *gli aerei atterranti ‘the planes landing there’; *gli studenti ultimanti la loro tesi ‘the students terminating their dissertation’), nor can semelfactives (*il bambino tossente ci addosso ‘the child coughing over us’). This leaves verbs designating states, though Benincà

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³As shown by the ungrammaticality of a resumptive clitic in the relativization of a subject (ia) or object (ib) in ordinary restrictive relative clauses in Paduan:

(i) a. Un professore che (*el) gaveva dedicà la vita alla scola se gà ritirà.
   ‘A teacher that (he) had devoted his life to school has retired.’ (Benincà & Cinque 2014, 260)

   b. Ze dei tosi che (*i) gavemo mandà fora prima.
   (Paola Benincà, p.c.)
   ‘It’s some boys that them we have sent outside earlier.’

⁴A similar distinction between verbal and adjectival present participles is made for Dutch by Bennis & Wehrmann (1990), for English and Hungarian by Laczkó (2001), for Swedish by Thurén (2006) and for English and Hebrew by Meltzer-Asscher (2010). As noted in Burzio (1986, Chapter 4, note 64) -a/ent- can also form nouns (amante ‘lover’, assistente ‘assistant’, etc.).

⁵Cf. Benincà & Cinque (1991, §2.3). This contrast was also noted by Luigi Burzio and Luigi Rizzi.

⁶Another diagnostic distinguishing -ant/-ent- verbal present participles from -ant/-ent- adjectives noted for Italian in Benincà & Cinque 1991, 608 is the possibility for the participle, but not for the adjective, to be modified by discontinuous negative adverbs, suggesting (optional) raising of the participles to a position higher than that occupied by adjectives (also see Siloni 1995, §3.1 on French present participles): le regioni non <più> comprendenti <più> aree a statuto speciale ‘regions not comprising any longer areas with special statutes’ vs. le regioni non <più> autosufficienti <*più> ‘the regions not selfsufficient any longer’.
& Cinque (1991) note that verbs designating permanent states but not those designating temporary states give rise to present participles, as shown by minimal pairs like (10).7

(10)  
(a) L’unica regione comprendente una sola provincia è la Valle d’Aosta.  
‘The only region comprising only one province is the Valle d’Aosta.’

(b) *L’unico studente comprendente il problema è Gianni.  
‘the only student understanding the problem is Gianni.’

Yet, not all verbs designating permanent states (stative verbs) can form present participles. The verbs that cannot include verbs of knowledge (*gli studenti conoscenti/sapenti il cinese ‘the students knowing Chinese’), verbs of possession (*le persone aventi/possedenti una seconda casa ‘people having/owning a second house’), verbs of existence (*le specie esistenti/viventiti ‘the species existing/living there’),8 subject or object experiencer verbs9 (*le persone amanti/prediligenti/preferenti/ tementi il mare ‘people loving/preferring/fearing the sea’; *i cibi piacenti a Gianni ‘the food appealing to G.’; *le sole cose preoccupanti/disturbanti/disgustanti Gianni ‘the only things worrying/disturbing/bothering G.’) stative measure verbs10 (*le strade misuranti 5 metri di larghezza ‘streets measuring five meters of width’; *vestiti costanti più di 1000 euro ‘clothes costing more than 1000 euros’), and stative usages of ‘promise/threaten’ verbs11 (*le case promettenti di/minaccianti di non resistere ai terremoti ‘the houses promising to/threatening not to resist earthquakes’).

The only predicates that seem to derive present participles productively (at least in the more formal variant of Italian) appear in first approximation to belong to the following classes.12

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7As noted there, the reading in (10b), but not that in (10a) is compatible with the progressive periphrasis, as expected of activities and states, respectively:

(i)  
(a) Lo studente sta comprendendo il problema.  
‘The student is understanding the problem’

(b) *Questa regione sta comprendendo una sola provincia.  
‘This region is comprising only one province.’

8Le specie esistenti/viventiti ‘the existing/living species’ are possible but here esistenti/viventivi are adjectives, as shown by their incompatibility (apparent in the text) with clitics and with the discontinuous negative adverbs mentioned in fn.6 (*le specie non esistenti/viventivi più ‘the species not existing/living any longer’).


10Cf. Rothmayr 2009, §4.3.

11Cf. Prinzhorn 1990, §3.2 and Rothmayr 2009, §3.4.

12(11b-d) are from Benincà and Cinque (1991, 605f.). The following cases not involving such classes of verbs appear to be fixed bureaucratic expressions:

(i)  
(a) gli aventi diritto (the having the right)

(b) nave battente bandiera panamense (Benincà & Cinque 1991, 608) (a ship flying a Panama flag)

(c) i senatori componenti la commissione giustizia (cf. Benincà & Cinque 1991, 605) (the senators composing the justice committee)
Transitive stative verbs with Location subjects and inanimate Theme objects

(11) a. gli alimenti contenenti glutine (google) [cf. il glutine è contenuto in molti alimenti]
   ‘the foods containing gluten’ [cf. ‘gluten is contained in many foods’]

b. una regione comprendente tre province [cf. tre province sono comprese nella regione]
   ‘a region comprising three provinces’ [cf. ‘three provinces are comprised in the region’]

c. un quadro raffigurante il giudizio universale [cf. il giudizio universale raffigurato nel quadro]
   ‘a painting portraying the Last Judgment’ [cf. ‘the Last Judgment portrayed in the painting’]

d. la statua riproducente il volto della donna amata [cf. il volto... è riprodotto nel la statua]
   ‘the statue reproducing the face of the beloved woman’ [cf. ‘the face... is reproduced in the statue’]

Transitive stative verbs with inanimate Agent subjects and inanimate Theme subjects

(12) a. gli elementi caratterizzanti il sistema [cf. il sistema è caratterizzato da questi elementi]
   ‘the elements characterizing the system’ [cf. ‘the system is characterized by these elements’]

b. le parole designanti oggetti (Benincà & Cinque 1991, 605) [cf. oggetti designati da parole]
   ‘words designating objects’ [cf. ‘objects which are designated by words’]

c. termini indicanti grandi quantità [cf. le quantità che sono indicate da questi termini’]
   terms indicating big quantities [cf. quantities which are indicated by these terms]

d. la montagna sovrastante il paese (Benincà & Cinque 1991, 607)
   ‘the mountain dominating the village’
   [cf. il paese è sovrastato dalla montagna
   ‘the village is dominated by the mountain’]

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Cf. Jackendoff (1972,31) based on Gruber (1965): “In The circle contains the dot it is not clear which NP is the Theme and which is the Location. But “The dot is contained in the circle” has the preposition in, an unmistakable mark of a Location phrase, so the dot must be the Theme.”
(13) **Intransitive stative verbs with Theme subjects and Location oblique objects**

a. i docenti afferentivi
   ‘the teachers being on the rolls there’

b. le persone e le cose appartenentivi
   ‘persons and things belonging there’

c. ... da ciocche disponentisi simmetricamente ai lati (google)
   ‘... by locks arranged symmetrically on the side’

d. i compensi spettantici (Benincà & Cinque 1991, 609)
   ‘the rewards due to us’

4. **Restrictions on present participles**

Present participles of the above verbs in reduced RCs in Italian appear to be subject to certain derivational restrictions (which need to be elucidated). The implicit subject can apparently be the subject of an unaccusative verb (cf. (14)), but not the subject of a passive verb (cf. (15a))14, or the subject of a raising verb (cf. (15b)).15

(14) a. Le conseguenze derivantine
   ‘the consequences deriving from it’

b. il denaro restantemi (Benincà & Cinque 1991, 609)
   ‘the money remaining to me’

(15) a. *gli oggetti essentivi rappresentati
   ‘the objects being represented there’

b. *un quadro sembrante/apparente raffigurare un paesaggio umbro
   ‘a painting seeming/appearing to represent an Umbrian landscape’

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14 This is possibly due to the non-existence of a present participle of the verb essere ‘be’ in Italian.
15 In contrast with English and German, where it is apparently possible. See (i) and (ii):

(i) A student appearing to be witty was accepted in the program (Burzio 1981, 230) (... seeming to be witty... is slightly less good – Jamie Douglas, p.c.).

(ii) a. der [die Wahlen verloren zu haben scheinende] Kanzler (Fanselow 1986, 352)
   the [the elections lost to have seeming] chancellor

b. der [über seine Ufer zu treten drohende] Fluss (Fanselow 1986, 352)
   the [over its bank to overflow threatening] river

While unaccusative and passive past participle reduced RCs are possible in Italian, Burzio (1986) notes the impossibility of reduced past participle RCs for unaccusative and raising verbs in English (*A student arrived yesterday, and *A man seemed to know the truth (ibid. 191) – also see Stanton (2011, 61) (with certain exceptions: the recently arrived letter (Kayne 1994, 99), although not, for him, *the letter arrived recently... ?the leaf fallen from the tree (Douglas 2016, 196)) and for raising verbs in Italian (*Un ragazzo sembrato conoscere Maria ‘A boy seemed to know Maria’) (ibid. 194).
5. The subject of present participle reduced RCs

I take the subject of present participle reduced RCs in Italian to be PRO. This is also the case in German, which provides direct evidence for this conclusion. See the discussion in Cinque 2010, 55f. on past participle reduced RCs, based on Fanselow’s (1986), which I summarize here, adding data on present participle reduced RCs (also see Cecchetto & Donati 2015 for the same conclusion concerning present participle in reduced RCs, within a different analysis).

As noted in Fanselow 1986, ‘floating’ distributive phrases like *einer nach dem anderen* ‘one after the other’ agree in Case with the DP with which they are construed. See (16a,b).

(16) a. WirNom haben MariaAcc einerNom/*einenAcc nach dem anderen geküsst.
    we have Maria one after the other kissed
    ‘One after the other, we kissed Maria.’

    b. MariaNom hat die MännerAcc einenAcc/*einerNom nach dem anderen geküsst.
    Maria has the men one after the other kissed
    ‘Maria kissed the men one after the other’

As Fanselow further observes, if such floating phrases are construed with the PRO subject of an infinitive, they invariably bear nominative Case. This is particularly evident in such cases as (17), where the controller of PRO bears a different Case:

(17) Weil ich die MännerAcc überzeugte, PRO Renate
    as I the men convinced Renate
    einerNom/*einenAcc nach dem anderen zu küssen,...
    one after the other to kiss,...
    ‘As I convinced the men to kiss Renate one after the other,...’

Now, what we observe in the reduced relative clause case is that the floating distributive phrase also appears in nominative Case, irrespective of the Case borne by the Head with which it is construed:16

(18) a. Wir sahen die [einerNom/*einenAcc nach dem anderen angekommenen]... 
    we saw the one after the other arrived
    StudentenAcc students
    ‘We saw the students who arrived one after the other.’

16 I thank Gisbert Fanselow for providing the relevant judgments. Roland Hinterhölzl marginally accepts the accusative variant, though preferring the one with the nominative.
b. Wir sahen die [einerNom/*einenAcc nach dem anderen ankommenden]
   we saw the one after the other arriving
   FlüchtlingeAcc
   migrants
   ‘We saw the migrants who arrived one after the other.’

This clearly points to the presence of a PRO with which the floating distributive phrase is construed, for both past and present participle reduced RCs.\(^{17}\)

Another possible piece of evidence for the presence of PRO, at least for present participle RCs, comes from a contrast in French pseudo-relatives noted in Guasti 1988. She reports that her informants accept *qui* pseudo-relatives with 3rd person clitics (cf. (19)) but not with 1st and 2nd person clitics (cf. (20)).\(^{18}\)

\[
\text{(19) a. } \text{Pierre la/le voit qui parle à Jean (} = (44), (46) \text{ of Guasti 1988) } \\
\text{P. her/him sees that speaks to J.} \\
\text{b. } \text{Pierre les voit qui parlent à Jean } \\
\text{P. them sees that speak to J.}
\]

\[
\text{(20) a. } \text{*/Pierre nous voit qui parlons à Jean (} = (49)-(50) \text{ of Guasti 1988) } \\
\text{P. us sees that speak to J.} \\
\text{b. } \text{*/Pierre vous voit qui parlez à Marie } \\
\text{P. youpl sees that youpl speak to M.}
\]

The fact that non-3rd person agreement on the verb of the pseudo-relative is impossible suggests, as Guasti (1988, §4) herself proposed, that *qui* (in the absence of an operator raised to its left with which it agrees inheriting its feature specification)\(^{19}\) has a default

\[^{17}\text{That past and present participles occur in identical structures is also Burzio’s (1981,231f) conclusion based on the fact that they can be coordinated, as in examples like (i)\}

\[^{18}\text{I have restricted attention here to 1st and 2nd plural persons clitics as the judgments are clearer (Dominique Sportiche, p.c.) owing to the fact that their inflections on the pseudo-relative verb are clearly distinct from those of 3rd persons (1st and 2nd singular verbal inflections, on the other hand, are not as clearly distinct from 3rd person inflections, pronunciation-wise).}\]

\[^{19}\text{As in non-restrictive relative clauses (Guasti 1988, 47):}\]

\[
\text{(i) a. } \text{Moi, qui suis toujours la première à monter dans le bus, cette fois je l’ai raté.} \\
\text{‘I, who am always the first to enter the bus, this time I missed it’} \\
\text{b. } \text{Nous, qui jouons du piano, nous avons reçu un prix.} \\
\text{‘We, who play the piano, have received a prize’} \\
\text{c. } \text{Venez ici vous, qui êtes toujours les meilleurs.} \\
\text{‘Come here you, who are always the best’}
\]
3rd person feature, able to license a 3rd person small pro in the subjacent subject position but not a 1st or 2nd person small pro.

As Guasti (1988, 45) further observes, this asymmetry disappears when present participles are involved (see (21)), which suggests that a different empty category is licensed, which is compatible with all persons.

(21) a. Pierre le/la/les voit parlant à Jean (= (51) of Guasti 1988)
    P. him/her/them sees speaking to J.

b. Pierre nous voit parlant à Jean (= (54) of Guasti 1988)
    P. us sees speaking to J.

c. Pierre vous voit parlant à Marie (= (55) of Guasti 1988)
    P. you_{pl} sees speaking to M.

It cannot be a trace of the clitic in an exceptional case-marking configuration like that shown in (22).

(22) Pierre le/i la/i les/i nous/i vous/i voit [XP t_i parlant à Jean]
    P. him/her/them/us/you_{pl} sees talking to J.

    ‘P. sees him/her/them/us/you_{pl} talking to J.’

The reason is that XP (as noted in Kayne 1975, Chapter 2, note 75 and Kayne 1981, 202) is an island for extraction, just like the corresponding pseudo-relative (cf. (23a,b)), and unlike the bare infinitive complement of verbs of perception (see (23c) – adapted from Burzio 1986, 301):

(23) a. *La fille que_i je l'ai vu embrassant t_i.
    the girl that I him-have seen embracing

b. *La fille que_i je l' ai vu qui embrassait t_i.
    the girl that I him-have seen that embraced

c. Il libro che_i l’ ho visto leggere t_i è Moby Dick.
    the book that him I-have seen read is M.D.

    ‘The book which I saw him read is M.D.’

The island character of the present participle phrase and of the pseudo-relative in (23a,b) (as well as of the Italian equivalent of (23b) – Burzio 1986, 300) is arguably due to the island character of object secondary predicates (cf. Kayne 1975, 128f.). Indeed, even simple AP object secondary predicates appear to be islands (in Italian).20 See (24).21

As Dominique Sportiche (p.c.) tells me, for him in fact both agreement with 1st/2nd person (more formal) and with 3rd person (more colloquial: Moi, qui est…) are possible.

20 Richard Kayne pointed out to me (p.c.) that in English extraction of a DP is apparently possible (The blood that they saw him covered with was not his own) as is generally the case with DP extraction out of adjuncts, Extraction of a PP, however, is worse (The blood with which they saw him covered was not his own) when compared with the acceptable the coat with which they covered him. This is reminiscent of the DP/PP contrast mentioned in Chomsky 1986, 32, crediting Adriana Belletti with the observation, which I
   the blood with which everybody saw-him covered was his own

b. *L’uomo con cui abbiamo visto Maria [ furiosa t]
   The man with whom we saw Maria furious

c. *Questo è l’unico lavoro di cui vedo anche Mario [ stanco t]
   this is the only work of which I have-seen even M. tired

It cannot be an A-bar bound trace either, otherwise the following should also be possible.\(^{22}\)

(25) *Je l’ai rencontré Jean emmenant au cinéma (Kayne 1981, 201)
I her-have seen J. taking to the movies

This leaves PRO as the most plausible candidate for the subject of such present participles (cf. Kayne 1981).\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\) Hazout (2001) (pace Siloni 1995) also analyses Hebrew and Standard Arabic participial relatives as involving no operator movement.

\(^{23}\) Additional evidence that the overt Head of present participle RCs is merged externally rather than being raised from within the RC, with PRO as the internal Head may come from the following contrast mentioned to me by Richard Kayne (p.c.)?the only headway that appears/seems to have been made vs. *the only headway appearing/seeming to have been made. Here the latter contrasts with (i) of fn.15, which is well-formed as it involves no idiom chunk Head. However he accepts The only headway being made these days is in their heads.
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