Free relative clauses: a new teaching approach for Italian learners of Latin and German

Orações relativas sem antecedente: uma nova abordagem de ensino para estudantes italianos de Latim e Alemão

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Abstract

In this work we would like to present a new teaching proposal for free relative clauses, with a comparative perspective. The proposal is addressed to Italian learners of Latin and German with an advanced knowledge of the morpho-syntax of the three languages and tries to combine the theories proposed within the Generative Grammar framework with the needs which emerge from school teaching experiences. In the path we will develop, the students will be led to get familiar with this construction, first in the native language and then in German and Latin. Students will be stimulated to analyze the syntactic constraints, which are different in the three languages, so as to develop a new grammatical awareness and be in a position to correctly handle complex syntactic structures such as free relative clauses. This will be helpful to adequately cope with this specific construction, but it will also improve the overall skills.

Keywords: free relative clauses; Italian; Latin; German; syntax; teaching.

Resumo

Neste trabalho vimos propor uma nova técnica de ensino das orações relativas sem antecedente ou livres de uma perspetiva comparativa. A proposta dirige-se a italianos, alunos de Latim e Alemão, com conhecimentos avançados de morfosintaxe nas três línguas e procura combinar as teorias propostas no seio do enquadramento da gramática generativa com as necessidades que surgem da experiência de ensino na escola. No caminho delineado, os estudantes serão orientados para ganhar familiaridade com esta construção, primeiro na sua língua-mãe e depois em Alemão e Latim. Os estudantes serão incentivados a analisar os constrangimentos sintáticos, que são distintos nas três línguas, de forma a desenvolver consciência gramatical ficando aptos a manusear corretamente estruturas sintáticas complexas como as orações relativas sem antecedente. Esta técnica será útil para lidarem adequadamente com esta construção específica, e desenvolverá as suas competências em geral.

Palavras-chave: orações relativas sem antecedente; italiano; latim; alemão; sintaxe; ensino.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to propose a cross-linguistic teaching approach for free relative clauses, a topic which isn't organically treated by school grammars, but needs to be explicitly taught, as school teaching experiences clearly show. The path we will develop has been specifically planned for Italian High School students with an advanced knowledge of the morpho-syntax of the languages we will take into account (Latin and German). As the mother tongue of our students is Italian, we have thought of a path which takes into consideration the specific syntactic behavior of this construction in the three languages and we will adopt a comparative perspective.

We will first present the syntactic behavior of free relative clauses in Italian, by providing the students with examples in their native language to elicit grammaticality judgments and improve their familiarity with the construction. In the second part of the proposal we will present the syntactic behavior of free relative clauses in Latin and German to lead the students to compare the three languages and identify the different constraints which can be at work. We will show that this method turns to be very useful also in the active competence of the foreign languages: the new grammatical awareness will stimulate the students to increase their degree of control in the L2.

For our teaching proposal to be effective, it is essential that our target students have reached a very high level in the knowledge of the syntax of Latin and German, which enables them to tackle this theme with all the necessary tools and allows them to cope with a critical approach to the grammatical question.

The goals we expect to attain are:

o   Correct comprehension/formation of free relative clauses in German

o   Correct comprehension/translation of free relative clauses from Latin and German into Italian

The goals we have planned to achieve require that a series of cognitive processes take place. As for comprehension the students are led to analyze the structures of the target language, so that they fully understand the message without any ambiguity. Moreover the students are led to correctly learn the formation rules of free relative

clauses in German and to enrich their active syntactic competence on the basis of a new awareness. Finally the students are stimulated to make comparisons between languages and are led to initiate a complex transfer process, which is unavoidable to consciously translate from a language into another. Once they are aware of the specific constraints of the three languages, they have to appropriately deal with the syntactic structures and be prepared to model their translation according to the requirements of the target language.

2. Theoretical framework

Free relative clauses have been thoroughly described by scientific literature and different models have been proposed. Within the Generative Grammar framework, one of the most relevant was outlined by Bresnan & Grimshaw (1978): they claimed that the *wh-* pronoun which introduces the free relative clause is an argument of the matrix clause. As we will see further on in the discussion, this approach is problematic as it doesn't account for the so-called *non-matching* cases, this means the instances in which the Case required by the matrix verb is not the same displayed by the *wh-* item. Another proposal - cited in Pittner (1991) – and first made up by Haider in 1988 supposes that the *wh-* item is both the complement of the matrix clause and the relative clause introducer. This approach has been partly unconsciously assumed by many Italian school grammars, which often refer to this kind of *wh-* pronouns as *mixed pronouns* being allegedly simultaneously both the complement of the matrix verb and a relative pronoun. Once again the main problem with this theoretical proposal is that it doesn't account for the *non-matching* cases displayed by languages, such as German and Latin, with a rich case morphology. Groos & van Riemsdijk (1981) are probably the first who hypothesize that there must be a null, silent element governed by the matrix clause, while the *wh-* pronoun is part only of the secondary clause. The model we will adopt is the one adapted by Benincà (2010) on the basis of Cinque (2003), which is one of the further developments of Groos & van Riemsdijk (1981):

(i) [DP_ [CP who/what THAT you saw]].

This model combines two main requests: it guarantees scientific accuracy and, if we adequately simplify it, it can serve as a basis to develop effective teaching paths.

We will now explain the model we have sketched above. Free relative clauses are introduced by a pronoun (*chi* in Italian) which can be syntactically compared to the English pronoun *who*. This pronoun always appears at the beginning of the relative clause, in the left periphery, which, in the Generative Grammar framework, is referred to as CP layer. The model contains also the THAT item, which accounts for the possible/obligatory presence of this element immediately after the relative pronoun.

Though this is not superficially visible in Italian – which is a language that doesn't display morphological distinction for Case – the introducer of the relative clause is assigned by the embedded verb both a Case and a thematic role. This is evident if we consider languages such as Latin or German, which have morphological marks for Case:

German:

(1)   Ich lade ein, wem   du geholfen hast.

         I   invite,   who$_{DAT}$ you helped   have$_{2nd\ SING}$

Latin:

(2)   Cui   permittit necessitas sua, circumspiciat exitum mollem

         Who$_{DAT}$ allows necessity   his, looks-for   exit   easy

         "The person to whom his personal situation allows it, has to look for an

         easy way to go out of this"   (Seneca, *Epist.* 70, 24)

The German and the Latin examples clearly show that the pronoun has received its Case from the verb of the subordinate clause. If the Case were assigned by the matrix verb, the pronoun would bear Nominative for the Latin clause and Accusative for the German. As we will see further on in the paper, the *wh-* item always has to meet the syntactic requirements of the embedded verb and can never remain silent.

Another element of the model is still to be explained: DP_. It indicates the nominal phrase, to which the entire relative clause refers. Intuitively, as headed relative clauses always have an antecedent, free relative clauses have one, as well, but the key point is that it remains silent, it is not lexicalized, though it is still there at an abstract level.

Thinking of a silent antecedent is not only epistemologically correct, but it also has the advantage of being very helpful in teaching this syntactic construction; in enables us, in fact, to ask our students to insert the lacking antecedent in all the cases in which the target language has to lexicalize it, while the source language doesn't need to.

Complex sentences in Latin and German that contain free relative clauses with formation rules which differ from Italian are very difficult for our students to process. Learning that this construction works differently in the three languages and specifying what these constraints actually are, enable the learners to adopt new strategies to correctly understand, translate and produce in the foreign language.

Before turning to the actual teaching proposal, however, it is essential to overtly make clear (first of all for teachers) what the syntactic configurations for free relative clauses in the three languages are, so as to effectively focalize on the difficulties students have to face. Naturally, when the formation rule of the clause is identical in the native and in the foreign language, the students don't encounter any specific difficulties, whereas they tend to wrongly extend the pattern of the native language to the foreign.

2.1 Free relative clauses in Italian

Italian introduces free relative clauses with the *wh-* item *chi,* which is not morphologically distinct for Case: it can serve as subject, object, or other complements (in case of matching of the P which governs the *wh-*):

(3)   Invito   a cena   chi   mi è simpatico

Invite$_{\text{1st SING}}$ to dinner, who$_{\text{NOM}}$ to me is nice

(4)   E' venuto anche chi   hai   avvertito ieri

Is come   also   who$_{\text{ACC}}$ have$_{\text{2nd SING}}$ told   yesterday

(5)   Mario parla solo con chi   gli conviene   parlare

Mario talks only with who$_{\text{IND}}$ him it is worth to talk

Italian can form the semantic equivalent of a free relative clause with a light headed relative clause, whose head is either a pronoun (*colui/quello* – with no deictic content) or a noun generically referring to a human being such as *la persona*. The relative clause is introduced by the complementizer CHE, or, in some specific contexts, it can be introduced also by the relative pronoun IL QUALE. The relative pronoun CUI can be used only in indirect cases[1].

(6)   a. La persona che ha sbagliato   deve pagare

              The person who has made a mistake must pay

         b. Chi ha sbagliato   deve pagare

              Who has made a mistake must pay

Although there is not always full semantic equivalence between light headed relative clauses (6a) and free relative clauses (6b), the opportunity to transform free relatives into headed relatives has to be borne in mind, since – under certain syntactic configurations – it is the only possible solution to translate German and Latin sentences into Italian.

We will now see in detail what the Italian possible configurations are. As our purpose is to concretely deal with this construction, whenever it is problematic, we will just concentrate on the configurations in which the constraints are not the same in the three languages. In this respect, the contrastive perspective and the comparison with the native language are particularly helpful.

The Italian possible configurations are:

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[1]   OK Quello che ha chiesto il suo aiuto non prende mai bei voti
      *Quello il quale ….
   OK Colui che / colui il quale (very formal, less formal in the plural: coloro i quali)
   OK La persona che…
      * La persona la quale
   OK La persona con la/della/ per la/ … quale ho parlato ….
   OK La persona con/ di/ per/…cui

I. Both silent antecedent and *wh-* in a structural Case (not necessarily the same)

(7)   Chi   vuole del pane   lo chieda

         Who$_{NOM}$ wants some bread it ask

(8)   Ho   incontrato   chi   ha parlato alla conferenza

         Have$_{1st\ SING}$ met $\emptyset_{ACC}$ who$_{NOM}$ has talked at the conference

In (7) there is perfect matching between the Case required by the matrix verb and the Case governed by the embedded verb: they both require the Nominative. As happens in most languages there is no problem in forming free relative clauses under these conditions. In (8) there is no Case matching: the silent antecedent bears Accusative Case, while the *wh-* is the subject of the relative clause and has therefore Nominative Case. This configuration is fully grammatical in Italian and would be generally accepted by speakers.

II. P which governs a silent antecedent and *wh-* in a structural Case

(9)   Ho   dato   il libro a   chi   lo ha chiesto

         Have$_{1st\ SING}$ given the book to $\emptyset$ who$_{NOM}$ it has asked

(10)   Ho   comprato il regalo   per   chi   mi ha offeso

         Have$_{1st\ SING}$ bought   the present for $\emptyset$ who$_{NOM}$ me has injured

Also this type is always possible in Italian.

III. Silent antecedent in a structural Case and *wh-* governed by a P

(11)   *Ho   incontrato   per chi   lavori

         Have$_{1st\ SING}$ met $\emptyset_{ACC}$ for who$_{IND.OBJ}$ work$_{2nd\ SING}$

With the exception of a very specific range of cases, which we will not cope with in this paper, this configuration is always impossible in Italian. We won't discuss the reasons why this type is ungrammatical either[2]. For teaching purposes the important

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[2] For a detailed discussion on this see Bertollo and Cavallo (2012).

aspect is that (11) is only grammatical if it is rewritten as in (12) (or in an equivalent manner):

(12)   Ho incontrato la persona per cui lavori

It is necessary to bear in mind the ungrammaticality of this type, since it is responsible for most translation and production errors in Latin and German.

2.2 Free relative clauses in Latin and German

The configuration in I (always possible in Italian if the antecedent and the relative pronoun bear either the Nominative or the Accusative) regardless of the fact they have the same thematic role, is possible in German if

- the silent antecedent is inanimate:

(13)   Ich mache was mir am besten gefällt
          I do only what me$_{dat}$ best like

(14)   Ich lese nur was mein Lehrer mir empfohlen hat
          I read only what my teacher me recommended has

- The silent antecedent is animate provided that there is matching between its Case and the Case of the pronoun:

(15)   Wer mir geholfen hat ist ein guter Kerl
          Who me helped has is a good boy

(16)   Heute habe ich getroffen wen du gestern schon getroffen hattest
          Today have$_{1st\ SING}$ I met who$_{ACC}$ you yesterday already met had

This configuration is possible in Latin as well, even though it is generally avoided if the antecedent is animate and there is no Case matching between the pronoun and the antecedent.

The configuration in II (silent antecedent governed by a preposition and relative pronoun as subject or direct object of the clause) is widespread in Italian, is grammatical in Latin, although it is very rare, and is impossible in German. This is instantiated by the following sentences:

(17)   Ho   comprato un regalo per chi ha vinto

         Have$_{1st\ SING}$ bought   a present for who has won

(18)   Scipio cum   quos   paulo ante nominavi interiit

         Scipio with Ø who$_{ACC}$ short ago   cited   died

         Scipio died with those I mentioned a short time ago

                                                        (B. Afr. 96.2)

(19)   *I habe ein Geschenk gekauft, für wer   gewonnen hat

          I have a   present bought   for who$_{NOM}$ won   has

We won't further discuss why this configuration is marginally possible in Latin. It is however interesting to note that the ungrammaticality of (19) seems to be due to a morphological reason: while in Italian the *wh-* doesn't display any morphological distinction for Case, in German it does and *wer* can in no way serve as the superficial object of *für* which governs the Accusative. This seems to be confirmed by the [-animate] case of German, in which a similar configuration is possible with *was* being both the Accusative and the Nominative form (see Pittner 1991 and Vogel 2001 for a detailed discussion on this).

The configuration in III (the silent antecedent is either the subject or the object of the main clause, while the relative pronoun is governed by a preposition or bears a Case different from Nominative or Accusative) is basically always impossible in Italian, but is fully grammatical in Latin and German, as shown by examples such as:

(20)   Cui   permittit necessitas sua, circumspiciat exitum mollem

         Who$_{DAT}$ allows   necessity his,   looks-for   exit   easy

         "The person to whom his personal situation allows it, has to look for an easy way to go out of this"

         (Seneca, *Epist.* 70, 24)

(21)   Ich lade ein, wem   du geholfen hast

         I   invite,   who$_{DAT}$ you helped   have$_{2nd\ SING}$

(22)   *Ho incontrato con chi sei uscito ieri

         Have met Ø with whom are gone-out yesterday

This means that Latin and German can avoid to lexicalize their antecedent in a structural Case, also when the *wh-* bears an oblique Case (a prepositional phrase in Italian). The antecedent is somehow recovered in the syntactic chain and the sentence correctly works.

Table 1: Formation rules of free relative clauses

	P which governs a silent antecedent and *wh-* in structural Case	Silent antecedent in structural Case and *wh-* governed by a P
Italian	YES	NO
Latin	RARE	YES
German	NO	YES

In table 1 we will sum up the contrasts we would like to focus on in our teaching proposal.

2.3 The teaching proposal

After having shown what the distribution of this construction in the three languages is, we will now turn to the actual teaching proposal, which will be developed on the basis of a comparison between the three languages.

2.3.1 The most common errors

School teaching experience and, more specifically, a corpus formed by translation and analysis tasks submitted to Italian High School students show that the errors made by learners are very consistent and can be traced back to the contrasts between the three languages which have been outlined in the previous sections.

Translation and production difficulties of Italian students are basically due to the over-extension of the requirements and constraints of their mother tongue to the target languages:

- They form free relative clauses in German according to the pattern in II (first column of the table): they keep the antecedent silent, though it is governed by a preposition, and they introduce the relative clause either with the case governed by the preposition or with the case required by the embedded verb. It is in any case wrong.

- They wrongly translate into Italian the pattern in III (second column): they cannot correctly put into their native language a configuration in which the silent antecedent bearing a structural case has not been lexicalized. This means that they do not manage to insert the lacking antecedent and they look for last-resort solutions, which try to reproduce the Latin syntax, though the result is not grammatical in Italian. In most cases they fail to understand the meaning of the sentence.

- They have a poor production of free relative clauses in German: students tend to over-extend the constraints of Italian to German and avoid to produce free relative clauses which would instead be grammatical. This is of course not a real error if the student succeeds in finding an alternative solution. However, in the light of a general improvement of active competences, this goal can be legitimately pursued.

We claim that these errors are mainly due to at least three co-occuring factors, which aren't generally considered by many teaching approaches: there is no

systematic reflection on free relative clauses; an in-depth knowledge of the syntax of free relative clauses lacks; an effective contrasting analysis is absent. These aspects will be crucial in the teaching proposal we will outline.

2.3.2 What is a relative clause and how does it work?

First of all we will briefly remind the students the basic structure of a relative clause. The only way to tackle with a theme of such a complexity is to "decompose" the syntactic structure of relative clauses and to analyze their characteristics.

A relative clause is a subordinate clause that expands a nominal phrase. By means of a relative clause two sentences which share an argument can be joined:

      a. Gianni had an idea

      b. The idea convinces everybody

      a+b The idea that Gianni had convinces everybody

This argument receives two thematic roles, which are assigned by two different verbs. In a. *idea* is the object of the verb *to have*, while in b. the argument *idea* is the subject of the verb *to convince.* Free relative clauses differ from headed relative clauses in that they have no visible antecedent.

The mechanisms which are at work with free relative clauses are, however, not that different: they are formed by two units, which are syntactically different, though interdependent. The arguments selected by the verbs separately receive a thematic role and a Case. The separateness of these mechanisms is a basic assumption of the path we will propose. We will assume that the students have already been made familiar with these notions before starting a syntactic reflection on free relative clauses.

2.3.3 The actual proposal

To raise the students' familiarity with the construction, we will first provide them with some simple Italian free relative clauses and ask them to gradually reconstruct the thematic grids of both the matrix and the embedded verb.

A sentence of this type can be:

(23)   Ho   invitato chi è venuto

Have$_{1st\ SING}$ invited who is come

Intuitively, the sentence (which displays a mismatch between the Case of the silent antecedent and the Case of the wh-) is fully grammatical for any speaker of Italian. An overt analysis is therefore necessary to come to a syntactic awareness which otherwise would lack.

After stimulating the students' own reflection, we will come to the following analysis[3]:

(24)   **Io$_{Agent\ Nom}$ ho invitato $\emptyset_{ThemeAcc}$ [SUB[4] chi $_{Agent\ Nom}$ è venuto]**

The explicit syntactic analysis will clearly show the unaware mechanisms we apply whenever producing or even processing a free relative clause. The emergence of these mechanisms can lead the students to critically use these cognitive tools for the foreign languages as well.

The analysis in (24) is the starting point which will be crucial for the following steps of our path.

We will now go back to the two series of errors we have outlined, which are due to the contrasts we have formalized in table 1. We will now analyze them separately on the basis of the new grammatical awareness of (24).

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[3] For the present proposal we will adopt the following simplification of the classification of thematic roles: we will use the labels Agent and Patient only for verbs of process which involve volition and a change of state; Theme will be used for direct objects of verbs which do not involve an Agent.

[4] SUB stands for "subordinate clause"

Silent antecedent in a structural Case and wh- in oblique case

Most problems in this type of configuration emerge whenever a student has to translate from Latin and German into Italian. Italian learners of Latin (a language which in Italy is learned mainly passively and therefore is not spoken, but translated) generally make two errors when they put the sentence into Italian. A possible stimulus-sentence is the following:

(25)   Ille amat cui odio est   (adapted from Terence)

         He loves to-whom in hate is

If the students have to deal with a sentence such as (25), in which the Accusative antecedent is not lexicalized, two typically wrong translations they propose are:

(26)   *Egli ama a   chi è in odio

         He loves to whom is in hate

(27)   *Egli ama chi   è in odio

         He loves who is in hate

In (26) the student chooses to maintain the Case of Latin and doesn't insert the antecedent, which is compulsory in Italian, being this configuration ungrammatical. In (27) the student recovers the government of the Italian verb "amare" (to love), but the case required by the embedded verb is not signaled in any way and the interpretation is therefore wrong.

Following the model we proposed in (24), (25) can be analyzed as in (28):

(28)   Ille*Experiencer* Nom amat Ø*Theme* Acc [SUB cui *Experiencer* Dat odio est]

The Case and the thematic role of the null antecedent are selected by the verb "amare" and are easily recoverable in the context.

Table 1 warns us that it is impossible to translate the sentence into Italian without integrating the silent antecedent. Its lexicalization is compulsory.

It is anyway sufficient to take only one logical step: we only need to insert the pronoun (our head) in the Case required by the structure in (28).

We easily come to (29):

(29)   Ille*Experiencer* *Nom* amat **eum** [SUB cui *Experiencer* *Dat* odio est]

The translation is now straightforward. The most effective translation strategy is to form a light-headed relative clause, which is, as already noted, semantically very similar to a free relative clause.

(30)   Egli ama colui a cui è in odio

This sentence, which is stylistically not particularly good, is at least grammatically correct and guarantees that the meaning of the sentence has been captured. Now a better version can be quickly found: e.g. "Egli ama chi lo odia".

When the silent antecedent is in the Nominative, the situation is even more complicated for students:

(31)   Cui permittit necessitas sua circumpspiciat exitum mollem

They tend to translate this sentence as in (32):

(32)   *A chi permette la sua condizione, cerchi una facile via di uscita

Once again, if there is no systematic grammatical reflection, the student tends to preserve the structure of the target language and confines Italian into syntactic possibilities that it does not have.

 (31) poses a further problem, which is common also to German: that is the prolepsis of the relativizer. The relative clause comes first and the matrix comes after it. This is particularly frequent in Latin with the Nominative as a silent antecedent, but can be found in German also when the antecedent is in the Accusative or Dative form[5].

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[5] Wem du geholfen hast, ist sicherlich ein guter Kerl.
Wen du geliebt hast, den liebt jetzt Maria
Wer wenig Geld hat, *(dem) verleihe ich gerne mein Auto.

This has nearly always pragmatic implications, which we do not necessarily aim to re-create in the target language, being it probably too difficult for our target students.

In Italian the antecedent must obligatorily precede the *wh-* and the sentence in (31) can be correctly translated as:

(33)   **Colui** al quale la propria condizione lo permette, cerchi una facile via d'uscita

To come to this result we need to make some logical steps explicit, so that the reconstruction of the sentence according to the syntax of Italian is easy attainable. (31) has therefore to be analyzed as (34):

(34) $\emptyset_i$ [SUB Cui permittit necessitas sua], circumspiciat exitum mollem

This enables the student to make visually clear that something is lacking in front of the *wh-*. The further step will be the co-indexation of the silent antecedent with the verb it agrees with in the matrix clause:

(35) $\emptyset_i$ [SUB Cui permittit necessitas sua], circumspiciat$_i$ exitum mollem

If we now use the scheme in (18) we will have the following result:

(36) $\emptyset_{i\textit{Agent}\text{Nom}}$ [SUB Cui$_{\textit{Beneficiary}\text{Dat}}$ permittit necessitas sua$_{\textit{Initiator}\text{Nom}}$], circumspiciat$_i$ exitum mollem$_{\textit{Theme}\text{Acc}}$

The lexicalization of the antecedent is the following step:

(37)   Is$_{i\textit{Agent}\text{Nom}}$ [SUB cui$_{\textit{Beneficiary}\text{Dat}}$ permittit necessitas sua$_{\textit{Initiator}\text{Nom}}$], circumspiciat$_i$ exitum mollem$_{\textit{Theme}\text{Acc}}$

The correct translation is the one we proposed in (33).

If we want to optimize the potentialities of our method, however, we have to show that it is effective in learning a spoken language such as German. This language doesn't display any peculiarity with respect to this construction, if we compare it with

Latin, therefore the pattern we proposed for Latin can be totally applied to German, with no substantial modification.

Sentences such as (38) can be analyzed exactly as we did for Italian and Latin (39):

(38)   Ich liebe wem du geholfen hast

    I love who$_{DAT}$ you helped have$_{2nd\ SING}$

(39)   Ich$_{ExperiencerNom}$ liebe Ø$_{ThemeAcc}$ [SUB wem$_{BeneficiaryDat}$ du geholfen hast

The sentence can be easily translated if we insert the antecedent, which in German can remain silent: "Io amo la persona a cui hai prestato aiuto".

German poses however a further problem of different nature: Italian native speakers tend to avoid the formation of sentences such as (38) because they extend the constraints of Italian to the target language. Ideally, if we aim at making the students reach proficiency, and be aware of all the possible structures of the foreign language and actually produce them, we can adopt the same pattern we outlined in (36-37) and just reverse it.

Starting from an Italian input such as (40), table 1 suggests that in German we can simply delete the antecedent and the sentence can be re-analyzed and translated into German as in (41):

(40)   Io$_{Agent\ Nom}$ ho   incontrato ~~colui$_{ThemeAcc}$~~ [SUB a cui$_{BeneficiaryAcc}$ hai

    I   have met   the guy   to whom   have$_{2ndSing}$

    dato   il libro

    given the book

(41)   Ich$_{Agent\ Nom}$ habe Ø$_{ThemeAcc}$ getroffen [SUB wem$_{BeneficiaryDat}$ du das Buch

    gegeben hast

Antecedent governed by a preposition and wh- in a structural Case

We will repeat as (42 - 43) the sentences which exemplify the typical contrasts of this configuration:

(42)   Ho comprato un regalo per chi ha vinto

(43)   Scipio cum quos paulo ante nominavi interiit (B. Afr. 96.2)

(44)   *Ich habe ein Geschenk gekauft für wer gewonnen hat

As the type in (43) is very rare in Latin, we will focus on the problem posed by German. The most common error this time is the inappropriate formation of sentences such as (44) because this type is possible in Italian. Students do not take into consideration that in German morphology blocks this configuration.

For this type of error we have to carefully analyze the structure of the sentence in Italian and use the model in (24):

(45)   Io$_{AgentNom}$ ho comprato un regalo$_{PatientAcc}$ per Ø$_{BeneficiaryAcc}$[6] [SUB chi$_{AgentNom}$ ha vinto

The table 1 reminds us that this configuration is impossible for German: the silent antecedent must be somehow lexicalized. This can be done for instance through a light head.

Starting from (42), we insert the antecedent where required, before we translate into German:

(46)   Io$_{AgentNom}$ ho comprato un regalo$_{PatientAcc}$ per **colui**$_{BeneficiaryAcc}$ [SUB che ha vinto

To form a correct sentence in German of course the student has to pay attention to the Case that the preposition governs. *Per* is translated into German as *für* and requires the Accusative Case.

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[6] We assume that the P in Italian always assigns the Accusative Case on the basis of Caha (2009).

(47) Ich~AgentNom~ habe ein Geschenk~PatientAcc~ gekauft für~(+ACC)~

denjenigen~BeneficiaryAcc~, [SUB der~AgentNom~ gewonnen hat

Naturally in (47) we cannot use the *wh-* item we normally use for free relative clauses, because this is not a free relative clause but a light-headed relative clause, which requires the insertion of the *d-* pronoun.

3. Final remarks

The teaching proposal we have outlined offers many advantages. It enables the students:

- To deeply understand the syntactic structures of their own language: they have learned them spontaneously and use them with no awareness.
- To think of the universality of the syntactic structures used by the human brain to process language.
- To further develop their awareness of the differences among natural languages in the domain of syntax and in its interface with morphology.
- To pass from a language to another with a new grammatical awareness.

What led us to think of this teaching proposal is the idea that the methods we use to learn languages must have solid epistemological bases. The aim is to offer the students the tools to reflect on human languages, so as to improve their skills and, indirectly, to develop their cognitive abilities as well. Generative Grammar combined with formal syntax is, in our opinion, a very robust basis from which we can start to create an effective path which improves the grammatical reflection of the students and pursues the goals we have prefixed. Previous attempts of joining formal syntax and, more specifically, Generative Grammar with school teaching practice have been successfully carried out for instance with headed relative clauses, interrogative clauses

in English, negation in German, the concept of transitivity, the noun phrase in French[7].

Further research and future developments

The work we are carrying out is *in fieri.* Much research still has to be done also in the field of teaching, specifically in the perspective of combining formal linguistics and school praxis. As the path we have proposed is specifically restricted to a small chunk of the bigger topic of free relative clauses, many other themes could be developed and proposed in the schools. We will just cite some of these possible developments:

- Teaching proposals on the pragmatics of free relative clauses (how to translate a focused or topicalized free relative clause into the target language). The problem emerges both for Latin and German.

- Reflections on how to teach the type with the [- animate] antecedent.

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[7] A good number of articles on these topics have appeared in the on-line journal *Grammatica e Didattica* which was started in 2007 within the Department of Linguistics at the University of Padova (Italy). Articles are downloadable for free from the website: http://www.maldura.unipd.it/ddlcs/GeD/quaderni_grammatica_didattica.html. Further projects involving the introduction of Generative Grammar schemas into school practice have been led by Prof. Renato Oniga at the University of Udine (Italy).

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