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This is a contribution from *Structuring Variation in Romance Linguistics and Beyond*  
*In honour of Leonardo M. Savoia.*

Edited by Mirko Grimaldi, Rosangela Lai, Ludovico Franco and Benedetta Baldi.

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## Notes on infinitival relatives in Italian

Guglielmo Cinque and Paola Benincà

Ca' Foscari University of Venice / University of Padova

Here certain properties of Italian infinitival relatives will be discussed which to our knowledge have not been addressed in previous work on this topic (Napoli 1976; Cinque 1988: § 1.1.5; Bianchi 1991, 2007). In particular, we will point out a distinction between two ‘*da* + infinitive’ relative constructions and a difference between *da* infinitival relatives and infinitival relatives introduced by relative pronouns; furthermore, we will illustrate the bounded vs unbounded nature of relativization under restructuring, and the properties of restrictive vs non-restrictive infinitival relatives.

**Keywords:** *da* and *wh*-infinitival relatives, modal force, island constraints, restructuring

### 1. Introduction

Italian infinitival relative clauses have been the object of a number of studies (see Napoli 1976; Cinque 1988: § 1.1.5; Bianchi 1991, 2007, and others, who will be quoted in the course of the discussion). On the basis of these analyses Italian infinitival relative clauses appear to be characterized by the following properties:

When the relativization is on the direct object, the relative clause is introduced by the invariant preposition *da*, as in (1):<sup>1</sup>

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1. In colloquial Italian *da* may also be used when an oblique argument is relativized, provided that the oblique argument is locally bound by a resumptive clitic:

- (i) a. Ecco un vaso da metterci i fiori freschi  
here a vase to put-INF = LOC DET fresh flowers  
‘Here’s a vase to put fresh flowers in.’  
b. Ha trovato un ragazzo da uscirci assieme tutte le sere  
have-3SG found a boy to go.OUT with every DET evening  
‘S/he’s met a guy to go out with every night.’

- (1) a. Ho trovato [un libro<sub>i</sub> da recensire t<sub>i</sub>]  
 have-1SG found a book to review  
 'I have found a book to review.'
- b. [Il libro<sub>i</sub> da recensire t<sub>i</sub>] è lì sul tavolo.  
 the book to review is there on-DET table  
 'The book to review is there on the table.'

A relative pronoun (*cui* or art. + *quale*) can only be used if it is contained in a larger phrase, as in (2):

- (2) a. Ho regalato a Gianni [un libro<sub>i</sub> [con cui<sub>i</sub> [passare  
 have-1SG given to Gianni a book with which spend-INF  
 la serata [pp t]]].  
 DET evening  
 'I have given Gianni as a gift a book to spend the night with.'
- b. Ho presentato a Gianni [una persona<sub>i</sub> [ai cui<sub>i</sub> amici  
 have-1SG introduced to Gianni a person<sub>i</sub> to whose<sub>i</sub> friends  
 chiedere consiglio [pp t]].  
 ask-INF advice  
 'I have introduced to Gianni a person to whose friends he can ask for advice'

In this respect, infinitival relatives behave like finite restrictive relatives (compare (3a) with (3b)), and English infinitival relatives, (see (3c)), as they cannot involve a relative pronoun, (as (3c)), unless the DP is embedded in a PP (see (2)):<sup>2</sup>

- (3) a. \*Il vestito il quale/cui hai comprato non ti  
 DET suit which have-2SG bought not 2SG.DAT  
 sta bene (Cinque 1978: 35)  
 fit well
- b. \*Sto cercando un libro il quale leggere  
 stay-1SG looking a book which read-INF
- c. I'm looking for a book (\*which) to read vs. ...on which to work  
 (Pesetsky 1998: 350)

2. The rationale underlying this pattern remains unclear. For a review of (some of) the accounts that have been proposed see Hasegawa (1998), who adds another piece to the puzzle from Old and Middle English, where the relative pronoun could be deleted stranding a preposition: *a foot on to goo* (a foot on which to go) or *a hous in to drink and ete* (a house in which to drink and eat). For a stylistically more marked construction admitting object art + *quale* pronouns and pied pipings heavier than PP in finite restrictives and infinitival relatives see Cinque 1982: 281f, 1988: § 1.1.4, § 1.1.5.1, respectively).

The complementizer *che*, which in Italian introduces finite relative clauses on the direct object or the subject (see (4)), as well as the complementizer *that* in English (see the translations of (4)a.-b.), are completely impossible in infinitival relatives (see (5)):

- (4) a. Il vestito<sub>i</sub> che hai comprato t<sub>i</sub> non ti sta bene  
 DET dress that have-2SG bought not 2SG.DAT suit well  
 ‘The dress you have bought does not suit you.’  
 b. Il vestito<sub>i</sub> che t<sub>i</sub> era in vetrina era molto caro  
 DET dress that was in shop.WINDOW was very expensive  
 ‘The dress that was in the window was very expensive.’
- (5) \*Il vestito<sub>i</sub> che comprare t<sub>i</sub> era questo.  
 DET dress that buy-INF was this

Infinitival relatives can be of the restrictive kind:

- (6) a. Lo studente a cui affidare l’incarico è  
 DET student to whom entrust-INF DET-task is  
 purtroppo appena uscito.  
 unfortunately just left  
 ‘The student to whom to entrust the task has unfortunately just left.’  
 b. Abbiamo scelto la stoffa da usare per coprire il divano.  
 have-1PL chosen the cloth to use for cover DET sofa  
 ‘We have chosen the cloth we can use to cover the sofa.’

Perhaps the most natural examples of restrictive infinitival relatives are those with an indefinite antecedent (see (7)), and they seem to belong to the class of kind-defining relative clauses, as they do not identify the referent of the antecedent but express its characteristics (see Benincà 2012; Benincà & Cinque 2014):

- (7) a. Ho trovato un idraulico a cui affidare il lavoro.  
 have-1SG found a plumber to whom assign-INF DET job  
 ‘I’ve found a plumber I can assign the job to.’  
 b. Ho trovato una stoffa da usare per coprire il divano  
 have-1SG found a cloth to use-INF for cover the sofa  
 ‘I’ve found a cloth I can use to cover the sofa.’  
 c. Ho bisogno di un assistente da assumere con fiducia  
 have-1SG need of an assistant to hire with confidence  
 ‘I need an assistant I can hire with confidence.’



### 3. Two *da* infinitival relatives in Italian

Like English (object and oblique) infinitival relatives (Bhatt 2006; Hackl & Nissenbaum 2012), Italian infinitival relatives, as noted, can either have a ‘could’ (possibility) interpretation (cf. (11)a.) or a ‘should’ (deontic necessity) interpretation when they are introduced by strong determiners (like definite determiners in subject position or universal quantifiers) (cf. (11)b-c.) or contain a negation (cf. (11)d). In some cases both interpretations are available (in fact (11)a. admits a ‘should’ interpretation as well).<sup>3</sup>

- (11) a. Ho finalmente trovato un libro da regalare ai miei figli  
 have-1SG finally found a book to give-INF to my children  
 ‘I finally found a book to give to my children as a present.’
- b. Questo è il libro da regalare a Gianni.  
 this is DET book to give-INF to Gianni  
 ‘This is the book to give Gianni as a present.’
- c. Hanno elencato ogni libro da mettere all’indice.  
 have-3PL listed every book to put at-DET index  
 ‘They have listed every book to be blacklisted.’
- d. Mi hanno segnalato un libro da non regalare ai  
 1SG-DAT have-3PL pointed.OUT a book to not give-INF to-DET  
 miei figli.<sup>4</sup>  
 my children  
 ‘I have been shown a book not to be given to my children.’

3. Cf. Cinque (1988: § 1.1.5.2). Bianchi (1991: 121; 2007, fn.7) in presenting a sentence like (i) says that infinitival relatives introduced by *da* modifying a subject are always interpreted deontically:

- (i) [Un cane da addestrare] ha morsicato l’istruttore  
 A dog to train-INF have-3SG bitten DET-instructor  
 ‘A dog to be trained bit the instructor.’

We agree with the judgment for (i), but we find cases similar to (i) to be acceptable with the possibility reading if they have a generic tense (even (i) perhaps can be marginally interpreted as ‘a dog of the kind that can be trained’):

- (ii) a. Un libro da (poter) leggere a letto non può essere troppo pesante  
 A book to (can) read-INF at bed not can-3SG be too heavy  
 ‘A book to (be able to) read in bed cannot be too heavy.’
- b. Cose da (poter) fare senza spendere troppo si trovano sempre.  
 things to (be able to) do-INF without spending too REFL find-3PL always  
 ‘Things to (be able to) do without spending too much can always be found.’

4. Giurgea and Soare (2010a: 75) note that negation blocks the possibility reading.

Hackl and Nissenbaum (2012: § 1.3.1) argue that under the ‘could’ interpretations the infinitival relative clause involves Raising or Promotion of the internal Head, while under the ‘should’ interpretation the Head can be internal or external. In this paper we do not pursue this aspect of the construction, but point out another difference between the two interpretations. The infinitival relatives with a ‘could’ interpretation are not (necessarily) islands for extraction ((12)a.) while the ones with a ‘should’ interpretation appear to be islands for extraction ((12)b.):

- (12) a. I miei figli, ai quali non ho un libro da (poter) leggere  
 DET my children to whom not have-1SG a book to (can-INF) read-INF  
 alla sera prima che si addormentino,...  
 at-DET evening before that REFL go.to.sleep-SBJV.3PL  
 ‘My children, who I do not have a book to read to at night before they go to sleep.’
- b. \*I miei figli, ai quali ci sono libri da non regalare,...  
 DET my children to whom there are books to not give

#### 4. A difference between the *da* + infinitive and the P *cui/art.* + *qual-* infinitive construction

Clitic Left Dislocation is possible with the latter but not with the former. See (13):

- (13) a. Cerco qualcuno a cui di questo poter parlare con calma.  
 look.for-1SG someone to whom of this can-INF speak-INF with calm  
 ‘I am looking for someone I can talk about this calmly.’
- b. \*Cerco qualcuno da a voi presentare al più presto/  
 look.FOR-1SG someone to to you introduce-INF quickly/  
 b’ \*Cerco qualcuno a voi da presentare al più presto.  
 look.for-1SG someone to you to introduce quickly

#### 5. Another difference between the *da* + infinitive and the P *cui/art.* + *qual-* infinitive construction

At first sight, in Italian the verb of *da* infinitival relatives cannot be passive ((14)a), while it can in P *cui/art.* + *qual-* (see (14)b) as well as in English (as shown in the English translation of (14)a)). However, in other examples of *da* relative clauses (as (14)c) the passive infinitive seems perfectly grammatical:

- (14) a. \*Gli hanno dato un libro da esser letto entro domani  
 3SG.DAT have-3PL given a book to be-INF read-PTCP by tomorrow

- b. Cercavano una medicina con cui essere curati.  
 look.FOR-IPFV.3PL a medicine with which be-INF cured-M.PL  
 ‘They were looking for a drug with which to be cured.’
- c. Cerco un libro da poter esser letto in due ore.  
 look.for-1SG a book to can-INF be-INF read-PTCP in two hours  
 ‘I am looking for a book I can read in two hours.’

The ungrammaticality of (14)a, which contrasts with the perfect grammaticality of (14)c containing the modal *potere*, suggests that (14)c is in fact a kind-defining relative clause: the relative in (14)c does not identify the referent of the antecedent, but only expresses its characteristics, as we have seen above in other cases of kind-defining relatives. (14)a qualifies instead as a genuine restrictive relative which identifies the referent of the antecedent.

## 6. Are there subject infinitival relatives in Italian?

The answer seems to be negative. Cases which in English are often interpreted as subject infinitival relatives (see (15)) are perhaps more accurately analyzed as either purpose control structures (in Italian they are rendered by a modal finite relative clause (see (16)a)) or, in contexts where the noun is modified by ordinals, superlatives, or *solo* ‘only’, by an infinitive introduced by the preposition *a* (see (16)b):

- (15) a. The man to fix the sink is here. (Bhatt 2006: 9)  
 b. The first to walk on the moon visited my school yesterday. (*Ibidem*)
- (16) a. L'uomo che deve aggiustare il lavandino è qua.  
 DET-man that must fix the sink is here  
 ‘The man who must fix the sink is here.’  
 b. Il primo a camminare sulla luna è stato Armstrong.  
 DET first to walk on-DET moon is be-PCTP Armstrong  
 ‘The first one to walk on the moon was Armstrong.’

In fact, Williams (1980: § 2.3.2) takes English subject ‘infinitival relatives’ to involve PRO rather than the trace of an empty operator. The fact that object infinitival relatives ((17)a.) but not subject infinitival relatives ((17)b) permit long-distance extraction in English also seems to suggest that the former but not the latter involve A-bar movement (as the trace is case-marked in the former though not in the latter case):

- (17) a. Here's the book<sub>i</sub> to try to get John to read t<sub>i</sub> (Bhatt 2006: 12)  
 b. \*The man<sub>i</sub> for us to try t<sub>i</sub> to fix the sink is here (cf. Bhatt 2006: 6)



Maiden and Robustelli (2013: 141) observe another apparent case of subject infinitival relative in English (*He's not a man to abandon his friends*, meaning 'He is not a man of the kind that abandons his friends/who would abandon his friends') and note that in Italian the same construction is introduced by *da* (*Non è un uomo da abbandonare i suoi amici*), but here there is possibly a silent *tale* 'such', which can actually be overt (*..tale da..*); in other words, this is another case of kind-defining relative clause.

A third case of an (apparent) subject infinitival relative in English mentioned in Bhatt (2006: 9) (*The book to be read for tomorrow's class is kept on the table*) has no counterpart in Italian (*\*Il libro da essere letto per la lezione di domani...*); it is possibly based on the modal construction containing the *is to* modal periphrasis in English (Kayne 2016), which can contain a passivized verb (*This is to be read by tomorrow*), as opposed to the corresponding modal periphrasis *è da* in Italian, which cannot (*\*Questo è da essere letto per domani*). Maiden and Robustelli (2013: § 7.2.7) note that "in this construction the infinitive may not be passivized [...]. However, the passive formed with reflexive *si* is possible" (p. 141): *Questo è da leggersi per domani*. Also see Burzio (1986: 77, fn 36), after Belletti (1982): *Sono cose da farsi al più presto* '(they) are things to do SI as soon as possible'.

## 7. *Da* infinitival relatives and restructuring

As opposed to English, where (non-subject) infinitival relatives are not clause-bounded (can span across two, or more, clauses) (see (18)), Italian *da* infinitival relatives, as noted in Burzio (1986: 346ff), are clause-bounded (compare (19) with (18)).<sup>5</sup>

(18)a. He is a person  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{to regret to have admired} \\ \text{to convince Maria to invite} \\ \text{to suggest that Maria invite} \end{array} \right\}$  (Burzio 1986: 346)

(19) \*E' una persona  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{da rimpiangere di aver ammirato} \\ \text{da convincere Maria a invitare} \\ \text{da suggerire che Maria inviti} \end{array} \right\}$  (Burzio 1986: 346)

5. This is also true of French and Romanian (Giurgea and Soare (2010a: 76; 2010b: § 2), though certain examples appear to be acceptable. See Huot (1981: 171), cited in Abeillé, Godard, Miller and Sag (1996, fn.10):

- (i) a. Je cherche un projet auquel lui proposer de participer  
I look for a project in which to propose to him to take part  
b. Je ne vois personne à qui lui conseiller de s'adresser  
I don't see anyone to whom to advise to refer

As Burzio (1986: 346f.) also noted, there are, however, systematic exceptions to the clause-boundedness of *da* infinitival relatives. These are provided by restructuring configurations (but such exceptions are only apparent since restructuring configurations are arguably mono-clausal):<sup>6</sup>

- (20) a. C'è solo una cosa da **dover** fare per domani.  
 LOC-be-3SG only one thing to need do-INF for tomorrow  
 'There's only one thing we must do by tomorrow.'
- b. Ho trovato un libro da **poter** leggere in vacanza.  
 have-1SG find-PCTP a book to can read-INF on holiday  
 'I have found a book I can read during my holidays.'
- c. L'unica cosa da **saper** fare era questa.  
 DET-only thing to know do-INF is this  
 'The only thing one needs to know how to do is this one.'
- d. Cercavano un problema da **riuscire a** risolvere subito.  
 look.FOR-IPFV a problem to manage to solve immediately  
 'They were looking for a problem they would be able to solve immediately.'
- e. Se c'è una cosa da **provare a** fare subito è questa.  
 if LOC-be-3SG one thing to try-INF to do-INF immediately is this  
 'If there is one thing one needs to try to do immediately, it is this one.'
- f. Ho trovato qualcosa da **farvi** fare.  
 have-1SG find-PTCP something to make-INF = 2SG.DAT do- INF  
 'I have found something for you to do.'
- g. C'è una sola cosa da **cominciare a** fare.  
 LOC-be-3SG one only thing to begin-INF to do-INF  
 'There is only one thing that we must start doing.'
- h. L'unica cosa da **continuare a** fare è questa.  
 DET-only thing to continue-INF to do-INF is this  
 'The only thing that we must keep on doing is this one.'
- i. L'unica cosa da **andare a** fare subito è questa.  
 DET-only thing to go-INF to do-INF immediately is this  
 'The only thing that we should go and do immediately is this one.'
- l. C'è un solo libro da **finire** di leggere per domani.  
 LOC-be-3SG one only book to finish-INF of read-INF by tomorrow  
 'There is only one book that must be finished reading by tomorrow.'
- m. L'unica cosa da non **torinare a** fare è questa.  
 DET-only thing to not return-INF to do-INF is this  
 'The only thing not to do again is this one.'

6. Sentences similar to some of those reported in (20) are also noted in Napoli (1976: 307).

Yet, not all restructuring configurations qualify as exceptions. There appears to be a generalization: only those restructuring predicates which are lower than *potere/dovere* are possible. All higher ones (according to Cinque's 2006 hierarchy) are impossible. See (21):

- (21) a. \*Cercava una cosa da non **sembrare** apprezzare.  
 look.FOR-IPFV a thing to not seem-INF appreciate-INF
- b. \*Questa è una cosa da **soler** fare con calma.  
 this is a thing to use-INF do-INF with calm
- c. \*Un errore da non **tendere** a fare è proprio questo.  
 a mistake to not tend-INF to do-INF is precisely this
- d. \*L'unico lavoro da **finire** per accettare è questo.  
 DET-only job to end-INF for accept-INF is this
- e. \*Se trovate una cosa da **voler/intendere/desiderare** di fare  
 if find-2PL a thing to want/intend/desire-INF of do-INF  
 ditemelo.  
 tell-IMP = 1SG.DAT-2SG.ACC
- f. \*L'unica cosa da **smettere** di fare è proprio questa.  
 DET-only thing to stop-INF of do-INF is precisely this

## Acknowledgments

We dedicate this squib to Leonardo, a true friend and an inspiring colleague through the many years we have known one another.

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