

## Truncation vs Reduction in development.

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The starting point is the following seemingly contradictory observation, based on robust results from acquisition studies over several years: whereas young children are known to undergo a period in which they may use reduced portions of the clause structure in early stages, as in e.g. the Root infinitive/RI stage (up to around 3 years of age; Rizzi 1993/94 and much subsequent work), other reduced structures possible in adult grammars do not appear to be equally accessible to them, also in later stages (6 and later). Reduced relative clauses are a case in point. Results from elicited production studies in the domain of relative clauses have indicated (Contemori & Belletti 2014, Belletti & Chesi 2014 for Italian) that children virtually never produce reduced passive object relatives/PORs (when an object relative is elicited; Belletti 2017), in contrast with adults who resort to this structure a lot in the same experimental conditions (as in e.g. *il bambino abbracciato dalla mamma*). The talk will address the issue as to why this should be so, and what difference(s) between the two reduced structures may ultimately be held responsible for and be at the source of this clear developmental divide.

The RI stage may be characterized first as the manifestation of an early stage in the growing of the syntactic tree (Friedmann, Belletti and Rizzi 2021) and then as the outcome of a truncation operation, available to the developing grammar, resulting in a less complex syntactic computation (Rizzi 2006). Clearly, reduced relatives cannot be amenable to an analysis along similar lines: they are subordinate clauses, they are not root clauses; hence, their reduced status cannot be the result of either a not yet fully-grown syntactic tree nor of a truncated clausal structure, which is necessarily root, as truncation applies to the highest edge of the clausal projection.

Different reasons may be at the origin of the observed fact that reduced relatives are not readily accessible to the grammar of the young developing child. They will be explored in some detail. A crucial feature of the proposal will be the hypothesis that the embedded participial relative clause is not a complete CP; it is rather a verbal small clause (Siloni 1995, Harwood 2017; Sleeman 2017). This property may be at odds with the developmental trajectory, which leads children to establish that clauses are CPs. Furthermore, the reduced functional architecture of the passive participial small clause may also contribute to the complexity of the reduced relative structure in a stage of their development in which young children are in the process of acquiring the morphosyntax of passive, a computation that is known not to be fully mastered until after age 5/6 (and possibly later).

Thus, although shorter and composed of fewer words than the corresponding unreduced form (e.g.: *il bambino che è/viene abbracciato dalla mamma*), the reduced participial relative does not appear to be, for this simple reason, less complex for developing children; this contrasts with the status of truncated root clauses during development. In conclusion, a further robust finding from the above-mentioned results will be brought into the picture: a type of passive typically found in the PORs used by children is the *si*-causative passive (as in e.g. *Il bambino che si fa abbracciare dalla mamma*; see also parallel results from French reported in Délage 2008, and Belletti & Manetti 2019 for converging results in a different experimental setting). Thus, not only an unreduced relative appears to be mastered in contrast with a reduced participial one, which is not, but also the longer *si*-causative passive is adopted and characteristically preferred over the copular/*venire* one, within a fully inflected relative clause. Considerations on complexity are invited by these developmental results.

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