Changes from below, changes from above. Relative constructions in contemporary Italian

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(Article begins on next page)
Changes from below, changes from above: relative constructions in contemporary Italian

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Abstract

This chapter addresses the range of relative constructions in contemporary Italian as a case in point for the investigation of the main sociolinguistic dynamics characterizing the ongoing process of restandardization. I assume that standard Italian does not coincide with the highest poles of diaphasia and diastratia, and hence that there exist varieties lower than standard (i.e. informal speech and low social varieties), referred to as sub-standard varieties, and varieties higher than standard (i.e bureaucratic, refined formal and educated varieties), referred to as supra-standard varieties. Drawing on the results of recent corpus-based studies, evidence will be presented to show that both some sub-standard relative constructions and some supra-standard relative constructions are actually moving towards neo-standard Italian. Such changes may fit in with the Labovian distinction between changes from below and changes from above: sub-standard constructions are extending their reach beyond the vernacular by being used in speech across social classes (a few of them are even emerging in written formal varieties), while supra-standard constructions are emerging in model texts as prestigious features introduced by highly educated social classes (and do not occur in the vernacular).

Keywords: relative constructions, relativization strategies, sub-standard and supra-standard, changes from below and from above

1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the range of relative constructions occurring in contemporary Italian as a case in point for the investigation of the main sociolinguistic dynamics characterizing the ongoing process of restandardization. Firstly, a brief overview of both standard and sub-standard relative constructions will be provided (Section 2). Then, such constructions will be shown to mirror the major relativization strategies identified cross-linguistically, and the distribution of these strategies across Italian varieties will be accounted for by referring to the interplay between processing costs, triggering linguistic factors and contact with Italo-Romance dialects (Section 3). Finally, evidence will be presented to demonstrate that some constructions occurring in sub-standard varieties and some constructions occurring in varieties higher than standard are moving towards neo-standard Italian (Section 4). The concluding remarks will discuss how such changes may fit in with the well-known Labovian distinction between changes from below and changes from above (Section 5).
Within this framework, I assume that standard Italian does not coincide with the highest poles of diaphasia and diastratia: there exist varieties lower than standard and varieties higher than standard (cf. Section 4). Henceforth, the latter will be referred to as supra-standard varieties, whereas non-standard will act as the hyperonym of both sub-standard and supra-standard. The relative constructions occurring in non-standard varieties will here be considered as sociolinguistically marked; those moving towards neo-standard are hence in the process of losing their sociolinguistic markedness.

2. Standard and sub-standard relative constructions: an overview

Contemporary Italian displays a wide range of relative constructions when taking into account both standard and non-standard varieties. On the one hand, it adopts different relativization strategies depending on the syntactic role of the relativized item (i.e. the role that the head noun has within the relative clause); on the other hand, it may look to more than one strategy to relativize the same syntactic role. In this section, a brief overview will be provided of standard and sub-standard relative constructions across different syntactic roles.

In standard Italian, subjects and direct objects are relativized by an invariable element, the complementizer che, both in restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses. Moreover, especially in formal writing, subjects may be encoded by an element inflected for gender and number, the relative pronoun il quale; such a strategy is limited, however, to non-restrictive relative clauses (see e.g. Cinque 1988: 447; Serianni 1988: 270; Benincà 1993: 279). Below are examples of the two relativization strategies encoding subjects in standard Italian:

(1) ce l’ ho con quelle persone che fanno concorrenza sleale

LOC 3SG.F.OBJ have-PRS.1SG with those people that do-PRS.3PL

competition unfair

‘I have it in for those people who resort to unfair competition’

(LIP Corpus¹, Florence)

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¹ The LIP corpus consists of a collection of texts of spoken Italian recorded in four cities (Milan, Florence, Rome and Naples), ranging from more formal to less formal speech and amounting to approximately 490,000 tokens. It is searchable at http://badip.uni-graz.at.
ho incontrato anch'io il presidente Manzi, il quale mi ha confermato di aver convocato l’assemblea.

‘I too met President Manzi, who confirmed that he had called the meeting’

(LIP Corpus, Milan)

As for the other cases (indirect object, oblique, locative, temporal, possessor, partitive and object of comparison), standard Italian requires the use of a relative pronoun preceded by a preposition signaling the syntactic role of the relativized item; such a pronoun may be either il quale or cui. In utterance (3) this relativization strategy applies to an indirect object:

vi ringrazio a nome del presidente, a cui dopo passerò la parola.

‘I thank you on behalf of the President, to whom I will give the floor presently’

(LIP Corpus, Naples)

Standard Italian regards the above as the only possible strategy for clauses relativizing indirect objects, obliques, partitives and objects of comparison\(^2\), whereas it allows for further strategies when encoding locatives, temporals and possessors. In fact, locatives may also be relativized by the invariable element dove (‘where’), as in utterance (4):

il parco dove andiamo a passeggiare è poco distante da casa mia.

‘the park where we go for walks is a short distance from my home’

(Magno 2010: 55)

\(^2\) Nonetheless, especially in formal styles, cui is not necessarily preceded by a preposition when relativizing indirect objects; e.g. la ragazza cui ho spedito una lettera ‘the girl to whom I sent a letter’.
Temporals, on the other hand, may also be encoded by *che* on its own. *Che* tends to be preferred to *PREP+il quale/cui* when the referent of the time noun is nonspecific and semantically generic (see Cristofaro and Giacalone Ramat 2007: 78), and when the temporal complement may not be introduced by a preposition (see Cinque 1988: 463), as is evident by comparing utterances (5) and (6):

(5) nell’occasione in cui è venuto sotto casa mia in the-F.SG occasion in REL come-PST.3SG below home my per riscuotere la somma di 40 euro for collect-INF the amount of 40 euros ‘on the occasion in which he came to my doorstep to collect 40 euros’ (*Il Messaggero, 17.11.2013*)

(6) ogni volta che lo vedo mi do un pizzicotto every time that 3SG.M.OBJ see-PRS.1SG to me give-PRS.1SG a pinch ‘every time I see him I pinch myself’ (*La Stampa, 02.06.2011*)

Possessors may be relativized either by a noun phrase consisting of a modified noun followed by *PREP+il quale*, as in (7), or by a noun phrase consisting of a modified noun preceded by the relative pronoun *cui*, as in (8). Both strategies are currently ascribable to standard Italian. Nevertheless, the latter (which can be considered as “archaic”; see Fiorentino 2007a: 273) is only rarely used, even in writing and formal styles, and unlike the former it is not consistent with unmarked word order in Italian:

(7) Figlia di Franz Liszt, il padre del quale era daughter of Franz Liszt the father of the-M.SG REL.SG be-PST.3SG al servizio degli Esterhazy at the-M.SG service of the-M.PL Esterhazy ‘daughter of Franz Liszt, whose father attended upon Esterhazy’ (*Corriere della Sera, 18.09.1996*)

Furthermore, the relative clause tends not to overtly express the syntactic role of the relativized item when time nouns occur as circumstantials (which is consistent with a cross-linguistic tendency; see e.g. Haspelmath 1997).
Conversely, colloquial speech and informal styles, as well as *italiano popolare* (i.e. the social variety of Italian mastered by less educated speakers; see Cerruti, Crocco and Marzo, this volume), are characterized by a range of relative constructions which differs somewhat from that of standard Italian. The following examples illustrate some relative constructions that are typical of sub-standard varieties of Italian (see e.g. Berretta 1993: 231–232; Fiorentino 2007a; Berruto 2012 [1987]: 148; cf. Cerruti in press).

Firstly, all syntactic roles may be relativized by *che* alone (see “*che* polivalente”, i.e. ‘multifunctional *che*’; Berruto, this volume); hence, neither the syntactic role nor the gender and number of any relativized item is overtly expressed by the relative element. In (9) such a strategy applies to an indirect object:

(9) *non c’è nessuno che posso chiedere?*

> ‘isn’t there anyone I can ask?’

(Alfonzetti 2002: 59)

Moreover, the relative element *che* may combine with a resumptive personal pronoun providing overt indication about the syntactic role (and possibly the gender and number) of the relativized item, as demonstrated by the indirect object relativization in (10). A clitic pronoun may be used for all syntactic roles except for the subject\(^4\); when a subject is relativized, a tonic pronoun is retained, as in (11):

\(^4\) The one exception is Tuscan Italian, which may employ a clitic pronoun even in subject relativization: e.g.

(11) *uno che l’è andato a scuola da Brunetto Latini*  
> ‘a man who learned from Brunetto Latini’

(10) *i due americani che gli ho aperto l’ombrellone*
the two Americans that to them open-PST.1SG the beach umbrella
‘the two Americans for whom I opened the beach umbrella’
(Alfonzetti 2002: 59)

(11) *c’era [...] Cesarini, che lui all’ultimo minuto faceva*
LOC be-PST.3SG Cesarini that he at the last minute do-PST.3SG
sempre goal
always goal
‘there was Cesarini, who always scored a goal at the last minute’
(Berretta 1993: 232)

Finally, mainly among educated speakers (cf. Berretta 1993: 232), a preposition followed by *il quale/cui* may combine with a resumptive personal pronoun, as in (12) and (13)⁵. Such a strategy, in which both the preposition and the resumptive pronoun signal the syntactic role of the relativized item, may apply to roles lower than direct object on Keenan and Comrie’s (1977) Accessibility Hierarchy:

(12) *l’Inter è la squadra a cui gli hanno dato più rigori a favore*
Inter be-PRS.3SG the team to REL to it give-PST.3PL more penalties in favor
‘Inter is the team to whom more penalties have been awarded’
(www.finanzaonline.com, Forum *Rosetti per Inter-Roma*, accessed 22.02.2015)

(13) *questo suo ultimo romanzo [...] del quale ne*
this his latest novel of the-M.SG REL.SG of the

⁵ As for (13), however, the appearance of the clitic pronoun *ne* may be actually understood as lexically conditioned. A series of verbs in contemporary Italian indeed show a strong tendency to incorporate a clitic pronoun, and such may be the case with *parlare* as well (it is no coincidence that *parlarne* occurs in fixed expressions; see e.g. *parlarne di persona* ‘speak face to face’, *non se ne parla* ‘no way, no chance’, *manco a parlarne* ‘not worthwhile mentioning’, *bisognerebbe parlarne* ‘we should talk about it’, etc.).
Further sub-standard constructions apply to specific positions on the Accessibility Hierarchy. For example, lower positions (especially obliques, locatives and temporals) may be encoded by combining the complementizer *che* with a prepositional phrase (e.g. *grazie a lei* in (14)) or a stranded adverb (e.g. *insieme* in (15)) overtly expressing the syntactic role of the relativized item, whereas possessors may be relativized by combining *che* with a possessive adjective, inflected for the gender and number of the possessum (e.g. *suo* in (16)):

\[(14)\]
\[
l’amica che grazie a lei sono riuscito a recuperare
\]
\[
the friend-F that thanks to her succeed-PST.1SG in recover-INF
\]
\[
quei libri
those books
\]
\[
‘the friend thanks to whom I succeeded in recovering those books’
\]
\[(15)\]
\[
un partigiano che ero stato anni fa in prigione insieme
a partisan that be-PST.1SG years ago in imprisonment together
\]
\[
‘a partisan with whom I had been imprisoned years ago’
\]
\[(16)\]
\[
sei mai uscita con un ragazzo che il suo nome inizia per F?
ever go.out-PST.2SG with a boy that his name start-PRS.3SG with F
\]

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6 La Repubblica Corpus contains articles published between 1985 and 2000 by the national daily newspaper *La Repubblica* and amounts to approximately 380 million words. It is searchable at sslmit.unibo.it/repubblica.

7 This can also co-occur with a resumptive pronoun, as in the following example:

\[(17)\]
\[
una freccia che bisogna passar=ci intorno
an arrow that need-PRS.3SG pass-INF=LOC around
\]
\[
‘an arrow that we need to pass around’
\]
\[(CLIPS, DGmtB04F-101).\]
‘have you ever dated a boy whose name starts with F?’

Moreover, the use of *dove* as a relative element is currently extending beyond locative relativization, especially among educated speakers (see e.g. Berruto 2012 [1987]: 145)\(^8\). As a result of its over-extension, even the highest positions on the Accessibility Hierarchy may be relativized by *dove*; for example, *dove* encodes a subject in (17) and (18) (by combining with a personal pronoun in the latter). It is worth noting that *dove* may be used as a relative element not only when the head noun has the role of locative in the main clause, as in (17), but also when a location (or even a figurative space) is not referred to either in the relative clause or in the main clause, as in (18):

\[(17)\] le lingue si collocano in questa condizione dove
the languages REF big place-PRS.3PL in this condition where
naturalmente non è reversibile
of course not be-PRS.3SG reversible
‘languages are placed in this condition, which of course is not reversible’
(Alfonzetti 2002: 98)

\[(18)\] Orsi il carrettiere dove anche lui ci consiglia di smettere
Orsi the wagoner where too he to us advise-PRS.3SG of quit-INF
‘Orsi the wagoner, who advises us to quit too’
(Bernini 1989: 90)

Lastly, mention should be made of some sub-standard constructions displaying a specific socio-geographical distribution. For instance, the relativized item may be encoded without using any element, as in (19); such relative constructions with no subordination marking appear in the Italian spoken in Tuscany by less educated speakers\(^9\). The relative pronoun *il quale* may be treated as an invariable

\(^8\) Other invariable elements may be used to relativize obliques in sub-standard varieties of Italian, e.g. *come* (‘how’) to encode manner complements (cf. Magno 2010: 155) and *quando* (‘when’) to relativize temporals and locatives (cf. Benincà 1993: 280).

\(^9\) Actually, relative clauses introduced by no subordination marking have been claimed to occur throughout unplanned spoken varieties of Italian; for example, the utterance *vedi queste barche ci stanno qua* (taken from a corpus of spontaneous speech collected in Procida, a small island off the coast of Naples) is interpreted as ‘you see these boats (that are) here’ by
element (cf. Alisova 1965: 328–329; Fiorentino 1999: 117–118), as in (20); relative constructions of this kind, in which il quale does not agree with the relativized item, occur exclusively in italiano popolare. The same social meaning applies to those relative clauses introduced by che and also containing il quale, which in this case agrees with the relativized item, as in (21).

(19) 

tutte le volte la partorisce

all the times 3SG.F.SBJ procreate-PRS.3SG

‘every time she procreates’

(Berruto 2012 [1987]: 148)

(20) 

ci mettono le noci, il quale si seccheranno bene

LOC put-PRS.3PL the nuts that REFL dry.out-FUT.3PL well

‘here they put the nuts, which will dry out well’

(Alisova 1965: 329)

(21) 

la domenica vanno [...] a raccogliere i fiori che i quali
the Sunday go-PRS.3PL to pick-INF the flowers that the-M.PL REL.PL

sono i primi che io abbia visti
be-PRS.3PL the first that I see-PST.SBJV.1SG

‘on Sunday they pick flowers, which are the first I have seen’

(Alisova 1965: 329)

However, relative constructions such as those in (20) and (21) are scarcely present even in italiano popolare, in which case they are supposedly due to hypercorrection. In fact, what characterizes italiano popolare is the absence of relative clauses employing a relative pronoun (cf. Alfonzetti 2002: 167; Berruto 2012 [1987]: 159).

3. Accounting for sub-standardness: processing costs, language-internal motivations and contact-induced interference

Sornicola (2007: 104–105). Nevertheless, in such cases, the relative meaning of the utterance is clearly subject to a pragmatically driven interpretation (see Fiorentino 2007b for a discussion on pragmatic relative clauses).
The range of relative constructions observed in Section 2 mirrors the major relativization strategies identified by Comrie and Kuteva (2005). One of these, the so-called “relative pronoun strategy”, is typical of European languages. It covers those constructions in which the position relativized is indicated by a relative pronoun, and such a pronoun is case-marked to express the syntactic role of the relativized item. This occurs with standard constructions formed with *il quale* or *cui*; see e.g. utterances (2), (3) and (5). A second strategy, termed “pronoun retention”, concerns those constructions in which the position relativized is indicated by a resumptive personal pronoun. Such is the case with sub-standard constructions in which a clitic pronoun is retained; see e.g. utterance (10). A third strategy, called “gap strategy”, is employed when the relative construction does not overtly express the syntactic role of the relativized item. This occurs with standard and sub-standard constructions in which the relativized item is encoded by *che*; as well as with relative clauses introduced by zero marker, as in (19), by the invariable *il quale*, as in (20), or by an over-extended *dove*, as in (17) and (18).

Moreover, following Murelli (2011a), a “double encoding” strategy can be attested, in which the syntactic role of the relativized item is encoded by means of both a case-marked relative pronoun and a resumptive personal pronoun, as in (12) and (13). Instead, a fourth strategy identified by Comrie and Kuteva (2005), that of “non reduction”, seems to be essentially unattested in European languages. However, following Magno (2010: 44, 73), relative constructions in which the head noun occurs as a tonic pronoun within the relative clause, as in (11), can be considered as a particular case of such a strategy. The same may be said, for instance, of paratactic relative clauses containing the full-fledged head preceded by *il quale*, as in (22), which are allowed in standard Italian (see e.g. Serianni 1988: 267; Sensini 1988: 132; Salvi and Vanelli 2004: 291). Nevertheless, these constructions should be treated separately, since *il quale* acts as a relative adjective (cf. Cinque 1988: 448; see also Scarano 2002: 46; Ferrari 2007).

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10 Herein I consider a certain relativization strategy as [+Case] if the syntactic role of the relativized item is overtly expressed (cf. Cristofaro and Giacalone Ramat 2002), regardless of whether this role may be identified unambiguously or not (differently from what is implied by Keenan and Comrie’s (1977) [+Case] vs. [-Case] distinction; see also Cristofaro and Giacalone Ramat 2007). As for the use of *il quale* in standard Italian, it may be argued that the relative pronoun signals the role of the relativized item even when occurring without a preposition, since is the case only with subject relativization (cf. Magno 2010: 9). Concerning subject relativization, the World Atlas of Language Structures ascribes Italian to those languages resorting to gap strategy (Comrie and Kuteva 2005); nevertheless, such a classification – which only accounts for restrictive relative clauses – presumptively refers not to *il quale*, whose use in standard Italian is limited to non-restrictive relative clauses, but rather to *che* (which, as is known, originates from the Latin personal pronoun *quem*).
It has been observed that some of these strategies are most frequently used in sub-standard and unplanned spoken varieties across languages. In Italian as well as in many European languages, sub-standard varieties witness the predominance of strategies that do not overtly express the role of the relativized item and strategies that retain a resumptive (pronominal or non-pronominal) element; double encoding strategies are widespread as well (cf. Murelli 2011a). Gap strategy tends to be preferred when relativizing higher syntactic positions, while strategies retaining a resumptive element tend to be preferred when relativizing lower positions. This is consistent with a well-known relativization pattern, according to which [-Case] strategies tend to relativize the most easily retrievable positions, whereas [+Case] strategies tend to encode those less easily retrievable (see also Section 3).

Further features are shared by sub-standard relative constructions of European languages (cf. Murelli 2011a: 9–12). For example, relative elements which are inflected in the standard variety do not inflect in sub-standard varieties; as for Italian, this is the case with *il quale* treated as an invariable element, as in (20). Moreover, relative elements acting as specialized elements in the standard variety can relativize more than a single syntactic role in sub-standard varieties; such is the case with the Italian *dove*, whose use is extending beyond locative realization, as seen in (17) and (18). Finally, sub-standard varieties are characterized by the combination of different relative elements, as is, for instance, the case with the co-occurrence of *che* and *il quale* in utterance (21).

The predominance of the same relativization strategies in the same varieties across languages has been linked to differences in processing costs; strategies occurring in sub-standard varieties have been argued to exact lower processing costs than their standard counterparts (cf. Fiorentino 2007a). Research on the so-called vernacular universals (cf. Filppula, Klemola, and Paulasto 2009) has indeed revealed that sub-standard varieties have some features in common across languages, and the factors underlying such commonalities seem to involve precisely the lowering of processing costs (see also Chambers 2004; cf. Berruto 1983, 1990).
As for Italian, the application of gap strategy to all syntactic positions, as well as the retention of a resumptive element within the relative clause, are typical of sub-standard varieties (see Section 2). This can be accounted for along the lines sketched above. To name but one processing advantage, both gap strategy and pronoun retention strategy employ the word order of an independent clause, as demonstrated by the relative clauses in (3), (9) and (10), each with a head noun functioning as an indirect object. The same can be said of those strategies involving a non-pronominal resumptive element, as evidenced by the relative clauses in (8) and (16), in which the head noun functions as a possessor. Retaining the word order of an independent clause represents a clear processing advantage, since it does not require planning the whole syntactic structure of the relative clause before its introductory element is expressed.\(^\text{11}\)

However, the choice of one relativization strategy over another is also influenced by linguistic factors (although, in turn, they may relate to processing factors). For example, non-restrictive relative clauses facilitate the use of those strategies retaining the word order of an independent clause and, in particular, seem to favor recourse to pronoun retention strategy (see e.g. Bernini 1989: 95; Benincà 1993: 280; Fiorentino 1999: 108; Alfonzetti 2002: 44; Berruto 2012 [1987]: 146); indeed, since non-restrictive relatives and independent clauses are semantically/pragmatically similar, the former may reflect the structure of the latter. Furthermore, strategies retaining a resumptive element are preferred when encoding a role which is not easily retrievable (as mentioned above) and a [+Animated] relativized item (see e.g. Fiorentino 1999: 171, Alfonzetti 2002: 58; Berruto 2012 [1987]: 146), or better yet, a [+Human] relativized item (cf. Bernini 1989: 87; see also Benincà 2010). Likewise, the gapped construction with che is favored when the relativized item has the same syntactic role in the main and relative clauses\(^\text{12}\) (see Alfonzetti 2002: 61; Murelli 2011a: 16, 2011b: 236) and the relative element is not adjacent either to the head noun (Alisova 1965: 312; Fiorentino 1999: 100) or to the verb of the relative clause (Bernini 1989: 94; Berretta 1993: 233; Alfonzetti 2002: 47); the occurrence of intervening words may indeed hamper case encoding\(^\text{13}\).

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\(^{11}\) Some deviant uses of clause-initial prepositions observable in speech may reflect processing drawbacks as well; see e.g. la ragazza di cui accennavo ‘the girl I mentioned’, wherein a cui would be the expected introductory element (cf. Fiorentino 2007a: 276).

\(^{12}\) Such a principle is variously referred to as equi type (Comrie 1981: 147), equi-case (Givón 2001: 192), case matching (Fleischer 2006:226), etc.

\(^{13}\) In addition, the preference for a given strategy may of course be related to the degree of explicitness required by the situation. As is known, for instance, speech requires a lower degree of explicitness than writing, since it may draw on easily retrievable context-dependent information (see also Section 4).
Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the predominance of a given strategy in certain varieties may relate to language-specific tendencies. For example, contemporary Italian has been argued to tend towards the development of verbal object marking (Berretta 1989). Object clitic doubling is indeed well attested, and its frequency increases in colloquial speech, informal styles and especially in italiano popolare. This may strengthen the presence in these varieties of strategies which retain a resumptive object clitic pronoun, such as pronoun retention strategy (particularly when applied to a direct object) or double encoding strategy (when applied to an indirect object, as in 12; cf. Alfonzetti 2002: 50–51). Moreover, standard Italian shows constraints on the movement of phrases (originally subsumed under the “subjacency principle”, Chomsky 1973), in which the relativization of a given position by means of relative pronoun strategy turns out to be ungrammatical. For instance, utterances such as (23) and (24) violate some wh-movement constraints affecting standard Italian (cf. Benincà 1993: 281; see also Cinque 1978):

(23) * Mario, il quale e suo figlio sono partiti per Andorra

Mario the-M.SG REL.SG and his son leave.PST.3PL for Andorra

‘Mario, who left with his son for Andorra’

(Benincà 1993: 281)

(24) * l’unica persona alla quale l’incarico di telefonare mi
touch-PRS.3SG be-PRS.3SG Piva

‘the only person who the task of phoning touches me is Piva’

(Benincà 1993: 281)

Conversely, some relativization strategies that are at work in sub-standard varieties of Italian elude the structural conditions under which wh-movement would result in ungrammaticality, since such strategies do not involve any movement of phrases. Hence they allow the construction of relative clauses that would not be possible otherwise. Utterances (25) and (26), which employ non-reduction strategy and relative pronoun strategy respectively, represent the grammatically well-formed counterparts of (23) and (24):
Finally, the pervasive occurrence of certain relativization strategies in sub-standard varieties of Italian may be reinforced by contact with Italo-Romance dialects (see Cerruti, Crocco and Marzo, this volume). Indeed, sub-standard varieties of Italian are those most directly and heavily affected by substratum influence; most speakers of italiano popolare, in particular, were previously almost monolingual dialect speakers. It is hence worth noting that Italo-Romance dialects, as well as sub-standard varieties of Italian, are characterized by the predominance of gap strategy and pronoun retention strategy (see Cennamo 2007). The following utterances illustrate the use of gapping (27) and pronoun retention (28) in Milanese and Neapolitan, respectively.

(27) [ el ̣ grà ke se fa  el ̣ pā bjaŋk ]
    the wheat that one make-PRS.3SG the bread white
    ‘the wheat that one makes white bread with’
    (Cennamo 1997: 195)

(28) [ o waʕˈɔnano ka ʃ e prɔtsˈtato o ˈlibbrɔ ]
    the boy that to him lend-PST.2SG the book
    ‘the boy that you lent the book to’
    (Cennamo 1997: 194)

Other constructions are equally widespread in Italo-Romance dialects and sub-standard Italian. Such is the case, for example, with the use of a stranded adverb (as in the Paduan utterance in 29) or a
possessive adjective (as in the Casertan utterance in 30) to indicate the syntactic role of the relativized item:

(29) \[
\text{\textit{kel \ 'tozo ke g o \ 'fato el vi'ajo in'sjeme } }
\]
\text{DEM.DIST.M.SG boy that with him do-PST.1SG the travel together}

‘that boy that I travelled with’
(Cennamo 1997: 195)

(30) \[
\text{\textit{kell a'mika 'mia ka ro \ 'patrọ fa l avvo'kato } }
\]
\text{DEM.DIST.F.SG friend-F my-F.SG that her father do-PRS.3SG the lawyer}

‘that friend of mine whose father is a lawyer’
(Cennamo 1997: 197)

Only occasionally do Italo-Romance dialects resort to relative pronoun strategy, by employing an inflected element corresponding to the Italian \textit{il quale} (e.g. [el kwal] in Piedmontese and Milanese, [kali] in Campidanese, etc.; cf. Cennamo 1997: 192, 196). However, this relative element is mainly restricted to literary style and written texts oriented towards Italian (see also Parry 2007), which at any rate are learned and somewhat artificial in nature.

4. The move towards neo-standard: sub-standard constructions moving upwards, supra-standard constructions moving downwards

Recent studies suggest that some relative constructions typically occurring in sub-standard varieties of Italian (see Section 2) are actually becoming increasingly more frequent even in formal situations and among highly educated speakers. Let us first consider some quantitative findings concerning the frequency distribution of relative constructions in spoken Italian.

Table 1. LIP corpus: NP positions relativized (Magno 2010: 115)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NP positions</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>DO</th>
<th>IO</th>
<th>OBL</th>
<th>GEN</th>
<th>OCOMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>4123</td>
<td>1437</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>63.64%</td>
<td>22.18%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>12.02%</td>
<td>0.76%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (adapted from Magno 2010: 115) displays the frequency with which different syntactic positions are relativized in the LIP corpus. Spoken Italian is essentially in accordance with the Accessibility Hierarchy, in that the higher end of the hierarchy shows a higher percentage of relative constructions than the lower end; the frequency distribution of relative constructions ranges from more than 63% when applied to subjects to less than 1% when applied to genitives (the rightmost position, the object of comparison, is not relativized at all)\textsuperscript{14}. Therefore, the most easily retrievable positions are those most relativized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NP positions</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>DO</th>
<th>IO</th>
<th>OBL</th>
<th>GEN</th>
<th>OCOMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% pos.</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
<td>20.41%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% tot.</td>
<td>0.69%</td>
<td>0.39%</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conversely, the lower end of the hierarchy exhibits a higher percentage of sub-standard relative constructions than the higher end. The second to last row of Table 2 (based on data from Magno 2010: 165) shows the percentage of sub-standard constructions with respect to the number of constructions relativizing each position: subject relativization and object relativization each employ sub-standard constructions in less than 2% of cases, while positions lower than direct object are relativized by means of sub-standard constructions in percentages ranging from 15.15% to 20.41%. To put it simply, the less a position is easily retrievable, the more it is relativized by means of a sub-standard construction.

The last row of Table 2 indicates the frequency of sub-standard constructions as a percentage of the total number of relative constructions found in the corpus; depending on the different positions, sub-standard constructions are employed in percentages ranging from 0.15% to 1.82% of cases. The presence of sub-standard relative constructions is hence impressively scarce even in speech; nevertheless, it increases significantly when the investigation is restricted to texts of italiano popolare (cf. Berruto 2012 [1987]: 143-148).

As for the frequency distribution of each relativization strategy, research shows that spoken Italian is consistent with the cross-linguistic pattern mentioned in Section 2: there are preferred \(-\text{Case}\)
strategies when relativizing higher positions and [+Case] strategies when relativizing lower positions. More specifically, higher positions tend to be encoded by *che* on its own, while lower positions tend to be relativized by strategies retaining a pronominal or non-pronominal resumptive element (cf. Bernini 1989, Fiorentino 1999, Alfonzetti 2002); nonetheless, the use of a resumptive element tends to lose ground to the encoding of all positions by *che* alone (cf. Giacalone Ramat 2004: 118)\(^{15}\). Furthermore, double encoding with *il quale/cui* and the extension of *dove* beyond locative relativization are currently gaining ground primarily among educated speakers (see Berruto 2012 [1987]: 86, 159).

Table 3. A sample of LIP texts: Sub-standard constructions relativizing obliques in formal and informal styles (Fiorentino 1999: 115)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Informal styles</th>
<th></th>
<th>Formal styles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>24/84</td>
<td>23/39</td>
<td>22/179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>58.97%</td>
<td>12.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of sub-standard relative constructions varies, of course, according to different styles and levels of education. Differences concerning style variation may be hinted at by examining Table 3, which displays the frequency count and the percentage of sub-standard constructions relativizing obliques (the position most frequently relativized by means of sub-standard constructions, as seen in Table 2) in a sample of 180 texts from the LIP corpus. Data are taken from Fiorentino (1999: 115) and arranged according to differences in formality (A, B, C and D refer to LIP text types\(^{16}\); see De Mauro et al. 1993: 35). Sub-standard constructions mostly occur in informal styles, as expected, but emerge in formal styles as well (especially in face to face dialogues with regulated turn-taking: type C).

Table 4. Sub-standard relative constructions in spoken Sicilian Italian: highly vs. poorly educated speakers (cf. Alfonzetti 2002: 42, 54, 63, 67)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NP positions</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>DO</th>
<th>IO</th>
<th>OBL</th>
<th>GEN</th>
<th>OCOMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^{15}\) It is worth recalling that some lower positions may be semantically specified to a high degree (as is, for instance, the case of temporals); hence, the syntactic role of the relativized item may be easily inferred even when using *che* on its own (cf. Bernini 1989: 86–87, Fiorentino 1999: 34; see also Larsson 1990:90).

\(^{16}\) LIP’s E-type texts, characterized by unidirectional exchanges recorded during television and radio shows, are here disregarded.
As mentioned above, the frequency distribution of sub-standard constructions is sensitive to the speakers’ level of education; however, such constructions are anything but rare even among highly educated speakers and may occur in both unplanned and planned speech. Data presented in Table 4 refer to a speech corpus collected in Sicily (Alfonzetti 2002: 28–31) and show the frequency with which different syntactic positions are relativized among poorly educated and highly educated speakers. The sub-corpus concerning poorly educated speakers consists mostly of unplanned speech, whereas that pertaining to highly educated speakers contains a great deal of planned discourse. Therefore, it is apparent from the table that highly educated speakers employ a considerable number of sub-standard relative constructions, even in planned speech; roles lower than direct object are indeed encoded by sub-standard constructions in percentages ranging from 36.84% to 50%.

The presence of sub-standard relative constructions in spoken Italian differs from place to place; the LIP corpus shows that such a presence differs in frequency across cities, amounting to 15.2% of cases in Milan, 20.7% in Naples, 22.8% in Florence and 41.3% in Rome (see Fiorentino 1999: 113; cf. Aureli 2004). Further research is needed to ascertain whether even the occurrence of sub-standard relative constructions in formal styles and among educated speakers differs in frequency across local or regional varieties of Italian. However, there is evidence that some relative constructions which were previously typical of informal styles and uneducated speakers are now emerging even among educated speakers in domains that regard formal varieties as appropriate; thus, they are beginning to lose their markedness as features of low socio-situational varieties. Nevertheless, they are still scarcely used in speech (see Table 2 above) and, a fortiori, not yet regularly present in formal spoken varieties. All things considered, it may be argued that they have taken only a first step towards that type of norm referred to as standard by mere usage (or uncodified standard) by Ammon (2003: 2–5); nor is this case unique, as neo-standard Italian largely consists of features that are standard by mere usage (cf. Berruto 2012 [1987]: 67–126; see Cerruti, Crocco and Marzo, this volume).

Moreover, it is worth considering that most sub-standard constructions that now occasionally occur in formal and public speech do not appear in formal and public writing; this is, for instance, the case with the over-extension of che and the retention of a resumptive pronoun, as noted by Alfonzetti (2002: 165). Only a few constructions which were previously limited to informal speech are now

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poorly educated</th>
<th>1/227 (0.44%)</th>
<th>7/111 (6.3%)</th>
<th>3/3 (100%)</th>
<th>57/59 (96.61%)</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly educated</td>
<td>8/1060 (0.75%)</td>
<td>17/369 (4.6%)</td>
<td>7/19 (36.84%)</td>
<td>121/246 (49.18%)</td>
<td>3/6 (50%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
emerging even in formal and public writing. This is especially the case with those constructions mainly occurring among educated speakers, such as double encoding with *il quale/cui* (see e.g. 13) and the over-extension of *dove*, (e.g. 31); both (13) and (31) are taken from a corpus of newspaper articles (la Repubblica Corpus, see Section 2)\(^{17}\).

\begin{equation}
\text{(31) una professione dove vestirsi deve allo stesso tempo essere pratico, bello, comodo}
\end{equation}

\begin{equation}
\text{a profession where clothing has to at the same time be-practical, attractive and comfortable}
\end{equation}

\begin{quote}
\text{‘a profession in which clothing be practical, attractive and comfortable at the same time’}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\text{(La Repubblica Corpus)}
\end{quote}

Table 5. Language attitudes: sub-standard relative constructions rated as acceptable (cf. Aureli 2003: 54)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gap (<em>che</em>)</th>
<th>Pronoun retention</th>
<th>Double encoding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speech</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>517/1680</td>
<td>84/1680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above-mentioned dynamics are essentially reflected by language attitudes. Table 5 (taken from Aureli 2003: 54, with some adjustments) reports the outcome of a study of speakers’ attitudes towards sub-standard relative constructions. A sample of 420 Roman high school students was presented with a set of sentences, each containing a sub-standard relative construction, and asked to assess which sentences differ from acceptable Italian usage. Sub-standard constructions were realized by means of gap strategy (i.e. *che*), pronoun retention or double encoding (the over-extension of *dove* was disregarded). The set of sentences was first listened to and then read; each sentence was hence rated twice, once with respect to speech and once with respect to writing.

As is apparent from Table 5, the students’ assessments differ considerably from speech to writing. As for speech, sub-standard constructions formed by gap, pronoun retention and double encoding were rated as acceptable in 30.77%, 23.24%, and 37.52% of cases, respectively; as for writing, relative constructions encoded by gap and pronoun retention were mostly assessed as

\(^{17}\) See also utterance (17), Section 2, which was spoken by a university professor while giving a conference talk (Alfonzetti 2002: 98).
 unacceptable, while double encoding was rated as acceptable in about 22% of cases. This is consistent with both the emergence of previously stigmatized relative constructions in formal and educated speech and the appearance of only a few of them in formal and public writing.

Finally, it is worth recalling that the relative constructions which are currently advancing towards the standard are consistently found from Old Italian onward (cf. Cinque and Benincà 2010), albeit excluded from the standard literary variety. This reflects one of the main restandardization dynamics of contemporary Italian: restandardization does not lead so much to true innovations, but rather to the acceptance into the norm of linguistic traits which, though rejected by the literary standard, have remained a constant feature in the historical development of Italian (cf. D’Achille 1990).

Other non-standard constructions show a different socio-stylistic markedness. As mentioned in Section 2, standard Italian allows for the use of the relative pronoun *il quale* to encode subjects of non-restrictive relative clauses and positions lower than direct object. Nevertheless, additional uses of *il quale* are attested as well; this is the case with *il quale* relativizing subjects of restrictive relative clauses, direct objects of both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses and indefinite relative clauses. Such constructions occur almost only in bureaucratic, refined formal and educated varieties (cf. Cinque 1988: 447–451; Sensini 1988: 132; Dardano and Trifone 1995: 285; Cinque and Benincà 2010: 482); hence they typically pertain to specific – mainly written – varieties located above the standard.

Indeed, according to Berruto’s (2012 [1987]: 24) multidimensional model of Italian’s “architecture” (see also Berruto 2010), standard Italian is not to be conceived as coinciding with the highest poles of diaphasia and diastatia; although located in the upper half of these dimensions, it has lower varieties below and higher varieties above. In this framework, the so-called *italiano burocratico* (‘bureaucratic Italian’), *italiano formale aulico* (‘refined formal Italian’) and *italiano colto* (‘educated Italian’) are higher than standard Italian. It is thus appropriate to distinguish between the language space below the standard, known as sub-standard, and the language space above the standard, which I refer to here as supra-standard. Therefore, I will consider the use of *il quale* as supra-standard when applying to subjects of restrictive relatives, direct objects and indefinite relatives. However, there is evidence that such uses of *il quale* are extending beyond supra-standard varieties; more specifically,

---

18 Supra-standard features and sub-standard features differ basically in that the former enjoy high prestige (despite being non-standard), while the latter are stigmatized and hence generally subject to correction in school education. I prefer supra-standard to super-standard (the latter is found to occur, for instance, in some works in German: see e.g. Johanson 1989: 85; cf. Holtus and Radtke 1990: x) to avoid the interpretation that varieties higher than standard are characterized by a higher proportion of standard features than the standard variety.
they currently appear in journalistic prose. The language of newspapers is particularly relevant to the investigation of (re)standardization tendencies, as newspaper articles number among the so-called model texts, i.e. those texts on which the codification of a (new) standard variety is based. Journalists indeed “count among the inner circle of model writers and speakers” (Ammon 2003: 2); in other words, they may raise non-standard features to standard (as well as create new standard features) by regularly using these forms in their own texts. The linguistic usage characterizing newspapers is hence a prominent carrier of (re)standardization. The same holds true for contemporary Italian, and it has even been suggested that neo-standard Italian be renamed *italiano giornalistico* (‘journalistic Italian’) (cf. Antonelli 2011).

Table 6. La Repubblica Corpus (1999–2000): standard and supra-standard uses of the relative pronoun *il quale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th></th>
<th>Supra-standard</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject of non-</td>
<td>Subject of object of non-</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrictive relatives</td>
<td>restrictive restrictive relatives</td>
<td>relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject of restrictive relatives</td>
<td>Object of restrictive relatives</td>
<td>relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject of non-</td>
<td>Subject of object of non-</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrictive relatives</td>
<td>restrictive restrictive relatives</td>
<td>relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject of restrictive relatives</td>
<td>Object of restrictive relatives</td>
<td>relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>85.32%</td>
<td>5.68%</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
<td>2.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 illustrates the results of a search in a corpus of articles from a national daily newspaper, *la Repubblica*, showing the presence of standard and supra-standard uses of *il quale* in 1999 and 2000. Among supra-standard constructions, the use of *il quale* prevails in restrictive relative clauses encoding subjects (5.68%), an example of which is given in utterance (32):

(32) *ci sono stati illustri esponenti del centro-sinistra*  
    *LOC be.PST.3PL illustrious spokespersons of the-M.SG centre-left*  
    *i quali sono arrivati a dire “ridurremo Berlusconi*  
    *the-M.PL REL.PL arrive.PST.3PL to say-INF reduce-FUT.1PL Berlusconi*

---

Kloss (1978: 46–55) has pointed out that non-belletristic texts produced by journalists are more relevant than belletristic texts for determining what is standard in a language, “since belletristic texts often intentionally make extensive use of language forms that are undoubtedly non standard, and which do not become standard through use only in belletristic texts” (Ammon 2003: 2).
‘there were illustrious spokespersons of the centre-left wing who went so far as to say ‘we’ll leave Berlusconi penniless’’

(La Repubblica Corpus)

Below are examples of some of the other supra-standard constructions investigated; *il quale* relativizes the direct object of a non-restrictive relative clause in (33) and introduces an indefinite relative clause in (34). The presence of supra-standard constructions amounts to about 15% of the total uses of *il quale*:

(33) *mondi particolari simili a questo della Terra; la quale –
  worlds unique similar to this of the-F.SG Earth the-F.SG REL.SG
  con Pitagora – io intendo un astro
  with Pitagora I consider a star
  ‘unique worlds similar to Earth, which I – like Pitagora – consider a star’
  (La Repubblica Corpus)

(34) *una società la quale non abbia alla sua base
  a society the-F.SG REL.SG not have.PRS.SBJV.3SG at the-F.SG her basis
  la trascendenza, non è degna di essere vissuta
  the transcendence not be-PRS.3SG deserving of be-INF experienced
  ‘a society which is not grounded on transcendence does not deserve to be experienced’
  (La Repubblica Corpus)

Moreover, although supra-standard uses of *il quale* are rare, they are not entirely absent even in speech; in fact, they occur sporadically in spoken formal varieties of Italian. A search among LIP’s C-type and D-type texts (i.e. those considered as representative of formal styles, as mentioned above) yields a few examples of *il quale* relativizing subjects and direct objects of both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, as in (35) (cf. Magno 2010: 381–383).

(35) *un ostacolo il quale l’uomo non può superare
  an obstacle the-M.SG REL.SG the man not can-PRS.3SG overcome-INF
‘an obstacle that man cannot overcome’
(LIP Corpus, Naples, text type: C)

Such uses are traceable back to Old Italian. Indeed, in Old Italian il quale may encode both the subject and the direct object, regardless of the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relatives, as well as the relativized item of indefinite relatives (cf. Fiorentino 1999: 68; Giacalone Ramat 2004; De Roberto 2007; Cinque and Benincà 2010). It may be no coincidence that these very uses are nowadays typical of supra-standard varieties; the current spread of il quale in relative clauses encoding both subjects and direct objects, as well as in indefinite relatives, may indeed reflect the well-known role played by Old Italian as a model for refined formal varieties (see e.g. Rovere 2011). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that neither common nor “model” speakers (in the Ammonian sense of the term mentioned above) are necessarily conscious of the Old Italian flavor of these constructions. Moreover, while on the one hand the stylistic markedness of il quale is socially well-known, on the other the existence of supra-standard uses of such a relative pronoun lacks social awareness. From this viewpoint, it may be argued that speakers are unaware of the boundaries between standard and supra-standard uses of il quale and tend to over-extend it simply because it functions as a marker of formal style.

However, regardless of extra-linguistic motivations, il quale is the relative pronoun which best meets “the requirements of explicitness” (Giacalone Ramat 2004: 124) and “integration” (in the sense of Chafe 1982) for written texts, as it is the only one that can be inflected for gender and number in Italian. More broadly, relative pronoun strategy characterizes written varieties across European languages and has spread among these “culturally related languages primarily through the (literary) written tradition” (Fiorentino 2007a: 284; see also Giacalone Ramat 2004).

5. Concluding remarks: changes from below and from above

In sum, there is evidence that some relative constructions which were previously limited to either sub-standard or supra-standard varieties of Italian are emerging into texts whose linguistic usage represents a prominent carrier of restandardization. Some sub-standard constructions and some supra-standard constructions are hence moving towards neo-standard Italian. Nevertheless, they are doing so along different paths.

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20 Significantly, the appearance of il quale in italiano popolare is presumptively due to hypercorrection; see (20) and (21).
The use of sub-standard constructions such as those employing gap strategy or pronoun retention strategy seems to meet a need which is typically ascribed to colloquial speech: the lowering of processing costs (the occurrence of these constructions also being influenced by linguistic factors and possibly reinforced by contact with Italo-Romance dialects). Instead, recourse to relative pronoun strategy, both in standard and supra-standard varieties, meets the requirements of explicitness and integration for formal writing. It is no coincidence that the sociolinguistic markedness of such strategies, as well as that of double encoding, is widely shared across European languages.

The advancement of sub-standard constructions towards neo-standard reflects the foremost sociolinguistic dynamic in the current restandardization process of Italian, which is the “downward convergence” (cf. Auer and Hinskens 1996, Auer 2005) of the standard variety towards informal speech and low social varieties; such a convergence results from what may be referred to as “demotization” of the standard language\(^\text{21}\) (cf. Cerruti and Regis 2014, 2015). Conversely, the spreading of supra-standard constructions in journalistic prose is presumably due to the relevance of *il quale* as a marker of formal style, either due to its Old Italian flavor (when encoding subjects of restrictive relatives, direct objects and indefinite relatives) or the unawareness of the boundaries between its standard and supra-standard uses.

The main sociolinguistic differences between the advancement of sub-standard constructions and the spread of supra-standard constructions reflect to some extent the Labovian distinction between changes from below and changes from above. Leaving aside any consideration regarding the respective level of social awareness, changes from below “appear first in the vernacular and [...] may be introduced by any social class” (Labov 1994: 78), whereas changes from above “are introduced by the dominant social class [and] do not immediately affect the vernacular patterns of the dominant class or other social classes” (*ibidem*). Sub-standard constructions are hence advancing towards neo-standard in a way that resembles the social diffusion of a change from below: they are extending their reach beyond the vernacular by being used in speech across social classes. Supra-standard constructions are instead spreading in a way that resembles a change from above: they are emerging in model texts as prestigious features introduced by highly educated social classes and do not occur in the vernacular.

Moreover, the opposition between below and above may be argued to refer not only to the speakers’ position “in the socioeconomic hierarchy” (Labov 1994:78), but also to the location of language varieties in the *Architektur der Sprache*, i.e. to the distinction between varieties located below the standard and varieties located above the standard (cf. Section 4). In this sense, with respect to the

---

\(^{21}\) See the notion of *Demotisierung* in Mattheier (1997); cf. Auer and Spiekermann (2011).
case study at hand, some sub-standard constructions are affected by changes from below in that they are moving upwards from informal and uneducated speech, i.e. from varieties below the standard, whereas some supra-standard constructions are affected by changes from above in that they are moving downwards from bureaucratic, refined formal and educated varieties, i.e. from varieties above the standard.

Lastly, it is worth recalling that most sub-standard constructions now appearing in formal and public speech still do not occur in formal and public writing; only a few of them (double encoding with il quale/cui and the over-extension of dove) are emerging in written formal varieties. Conversely, supra-standard constructions moving downwards rarely occur in speech; they are most frequently used in writing and formal styles. Such behavior is somewhat different from that of a change from above as conceived by Labov; indeed, both kinds of change – from below and from above – are meant to pertain to the spread of linguistic features through speech. However, educated speakers act as “the innovating group” (Labov 1994: 78) in the progressive acceptance of non-standard features in writing by adopting some constructions moving upwards from the vernacular and some constructions moving downwards from supra-standard varieties.

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