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All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

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Embedded stripping in Italian and Complementizer Deletion

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Abstract:

In this work I propose an experimental analysis of the role of Complementizer Deletion (CD) in embedded stripping in Italian. I follow Wurmbrand (2017), who proposes the existence of a typological bipartition of languages, namely those which only allow embedded stripping in the absence of the complementizer and those which allow embedded stripping without resorting to CD. In this article, I consider the results of a Likert scale on Italian sentences, on 58 subjects, and conclude that the availability of embedded stripping correlates with the absence of the complementizer. Unexpectedly, CD is preferred over complementizer realization even in indicative embedded sentences, which generally do not allow the complementizer to be deleted. In the article I propose an analysis of this phenomenon based on mood, epistemic heads, and Double Access Reading.

Keywords: Embedded Stripping, Italian, Complementizer Deletion, Ellipsis, Experimental Syntax

1. Introduction

Among the plethora of elliptical processes, one seems to have been overlooked until the last decade: *stripping*, also known as Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE). In their breakthrough article *Deep and Surface Anaphora*, Hankamer and Sag (1976: 409) define stripping as “a rule that deletes everything in a clause under identity with corresponding parts of a preceding clause, except for one constituent (and sometimes a clause-initial adverb or negative)”, as in (1):

(1) Alan likes to play volleyball, but not Sandy.

The structure has long been thought to pertain only to main coordinated clauses, without the possibility of appearing in embedded contexts, as reported in Merchant (2003) and Johnson (2009; 2018), among others. However, recent studies have

brought to linguists' attention the fact that some instances of embedded stripping are indeed allowed in some languages, such as German (Konietzko 2016) and English (Wurmbrand 2017). According to the author of this latter article, languages such as English and German are subject to what she calls the *Embedded Stripping Generalization* (ESG), according to which "[s]tripping of embedded clauses is only possible when the embedded clause lacks a CP" (Wurmbrand 2017: 345), as exemplified in (2) below:

- (2) a. *Abby claimed (that) Ben would ask her out, but she didn't think that Bill (too).
 b. Abby claimed (that) Ben would ask her out, but she didn't think Bill (too).

The author accounts for the English data (2a-b) by postulating that not only v*Ps and CPs are phases, but also TP can be phases, and that ellipsis is an instance of Zero Spell-Out, where elided constituents are unpronounced Spell Out Domains (SODs). When the sentence lacks a CP¹, as in (2b), if one postulates Merchant's (2003) position on remnants of stripping occupying focus positions, the structure of the embedded clause would be as follows:

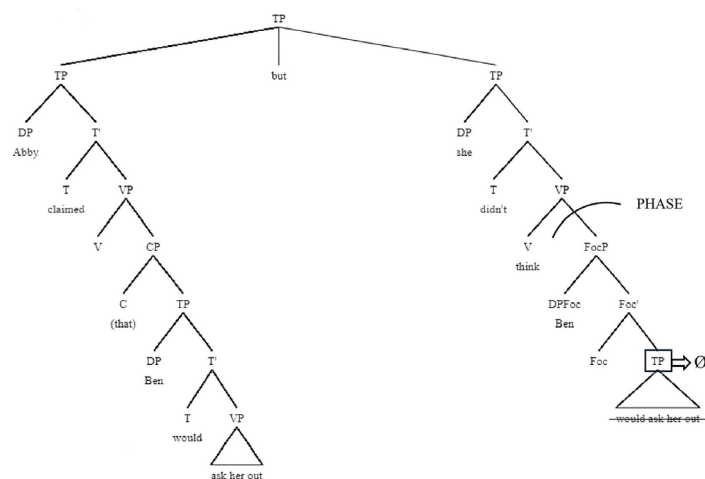


Figure 1. Wurmbrand's derivation of embedded stripping

Due to the lack of C, the Spell-Out Domain of the structure above would be TP, as the domain is defined as the complement of the head of the phase which, once the cycle is com-

¹ Crucially, CP here indicates the maximal projection of C. The author of the present work agrees with Rizzi's position (Rizzi 1997) whereby FocP is part of the CP-layer, not of the T-layer. In this sense, a CP-less clause means a clause where the complementizer head C is missing, and not where the C-layer is missing altogether. However, some scholars have challenged Rizzi's position, arguing that Focus cannot be restricted to a single position in the left periphery, but can appear also in the rightmost position of the sentence. With regard to this, interesting approaches are those by Samek-Lodovici (2005) and Bianchi, Bocci and Cruschina (2015).

pleted, is transferred to the two interfaces, the phono-articulatory one and the semantic one. Once the C layer is inserted, as in (2a), FocP is no longer a phase, and as a consequence TP is no longer a SOD, and thus cannot be elided.

Wurmbrand recognizes the existence of a second group of languages, containing among others Spanish and Hungarian, which do not appear to abide by the ESG, and therefore allow embedded stripping in the presence of a complementizer, as shown in (3):

- (3) *Me dijeron que si llueve (que) se queden aquí, y que si
me.DAT tell:PST-3PL that if rain:PRS.3SG (that) REFL stay:SBJV.3PL here and that if
nieva (que) también.
snow:SBJV-3SG (that) also*
'They told me that you must stay here if it rains, and if it snows too.'
(Villa-García 2012: 210)

It is then compelling to assess where Italian stands with respect to this typological bipartition, also considering its peculiar behavior with respect to Complementizer Deletion. Given the absence of previous literature on the topic, the investigation needs to be carried out experimentally, so as to collect empirical data that can feed a theoretical discussion. An experiment has indeed been carried out, and will be described and examined in the present paper. However, some preliminary theoretical considerations must be advanced before the experiment is presented.

1.1. Italian Complementizer Deletion and Double Access Reading

Italian appears to be the only Romance language where CD is allowed, although the phenomenon is submitted to rigid constraints. In fact, as noted by Poletto (1995), Giorgi and Pianesi (1997, 2004)² and Giorgi (2009, 2010) among others, Complementizer Deletion is only allowed with subjunctives, conditionals, or future tensed verbs³.

However, before dealing with Italian complementizer deletion, the readers need to be introduced to an interpretive phenomenon called Double Access Reading (DAR). This phenomenon, which pertains to the temporal interpretation of embedded sentences, will be useful in establishing some crucial characteristics of the Italian complementizer *che*, which will be pivotal in the analysis of Italian embedded stripping. Let us take into consideration a sentence such as (4) and its Italian counterpart (5):

- (4) Lucas said that Emma is 23 years old.
(5) Lucas ha detto che Emma ha 23 anni.

These sentences contain an embedded clause, namely *that Emma is 23 years old/ che Emma ha 23 anni*, introduced by a main clause with a verb of saying (*say/dire*). The temporal interpretation seems uncontroversial, and Emma's being 23 is interpreted by every English (or Italian) speaker as present i.e., holding at the time of the utterance. However, in order for (4-5) to be

² Giorgi and Pianesi (2004: fn1-2) provide some interesting commentary on the availability of CD in relative clauses, as well as in future and conditional embedded clauses. As the present analysis only deals with subjunctive CD, the readers are referred to their work for further elucidations.

³ As suggested by a kind reviewer, an interesting approach to CD which draws from non-standard varieties of Italian is Cocchi and Poletto (2002).

felicitous, Emma's age must be true also at the time of Lucas's saying. Thus, the embedded event is temporally evaluated twice, once with respect to the time of the saying, and once with respect to the time of the utterance. This is corroborated by (6), which is infelicitous as Emma's age could not be interpreted to hold at the time of the utterance, due to its being a state with a well-known inherent duration, which is 365 days.

- (6) #Tre anni fa, Luca ha detto che Emma ha 23 anni.
 three years ago Luca AUX;3SG say:PTCP that Emma have:3SG 23 years
 'Three years ago, Luca said that Emma is 23 years old'.

The twofold evaluation of the embedded event represents what has been referred to as Double Access Reading (DAR). As reported in the literature (Giorgi and Pianesi 2001, 2004; Giorgi 2009, 2010), languages divide in two groups: DAR languages, where DAR is obligatory, and non-DAR languages, where the embedded event is temporally evaluated only with respect to the time of the saying, meaning that a sentence such as (4-5) above could be felicitous also with the fact of being 23 holding only at the time of Lucas's saying. English and Italian belong to the former group, while languages such as Romanian or Russian to the latter; therefore, a sentence such as (6) is perfectly acceptable in non-DAR languages. It is to be noted that in DAR languages this property must be applied *obligatorily* and, crucially, only to *indicative* embedded clauses. But how is this double temporal anchoring syntactically achieved? The literature suggests that in the C-layer, and more specifically in the Spec,CP position, the spatiotemporal coordinates of the *utterer* are represented. The temporal evaluation appears to be operated via theta-identification, firstly with the spatio-temporal coordinates of the subject of the main verb, and in a second moment with a silent indexical situated in Spec,CP encoding the spatio-temporal coordinates of the utterer (Giorgi 2010).

Given the cruciality of the complementizer in the temporal anchoring of the subordinate clause, the possibility of Italian Complementizer Deletion must be accounted for. According to Giorgi and Pianesi (1997, 2004), the phenomenon is not to be considered independently from the context in which it occurs, namely the Italian subjunctive mood; in fact, as the authors claim, "CD phenomena stem from the interaction between the morphosyntactic properties of the Italian subjunctive and the requirement of the embedded clause" (Giorgi and Pianesi 2004: 198).

1.2. The Italian Subjunctive

As it has been discussed, the double temporal evaluation in DAR languages seems to hold only with embedded *indicative* events⁴, and obligatorily so. Note the minimal pair in (7a-b):

- (7) a. Luca ha detto che Roberta si è laureata ieri/ *domani.
 Luca AUX;3SG say:PTCP that Roberta REFL AUX;3SG graduate:PTCP yesterday tomorrow
 'Luca said that Roberta graduated yesterday/*tomorrow.'
 b. Luca crede-va che Roberta si laure-asse ieri / domani.
 Luca believe-IMPF;3SG that Roberta REFL graduate-SBJV.PST.3SG yesterday tomorrow
 'Luca believed that Roberta would graduate yesterday/tomorrow.'

z

⁴ The matter is indeed more complex, and DAR effect appears to hold also for a few subjunctive contexts, as in the case of *ipotizzare* (hypothesize) and the case of jussive verbs. However, both cases can be accounted for, as thoroughly explained in Giorgi and Pianesi (1997, 2004) and Giorgi (2010).

As can be noted, while (7a) does not allow a temporal indication referring to the future, given that it would contrast with the temporal evaluation of pastness with respect to the utterance time⁵, (7b) does allow it. This shows how the double DAR holds only with embedded events in the indicative mood. However, as can be noted in the gloss in (7b), the subjunctive does hold morphological inflection for present and for past (although not for future). The different inflection is explicit in (8a-b):

- (8) a. Luca cred-e che Roberta si laure-i oggi/ domani⁶.
 Luca believe-PRS.3SG that Roberta REFL graduate-SBJV.PRS.3SG today tomorrow
 ‘Luca believes that Roberta will graduate today/tomorrow.’
 b. Luca cred-eva che Roberta si laure-asse ieri/oggi/ domani.
 Luca believe-IMPE.3SG that Roberta REFL graduate-SBJV.PST.3SG yesterday today tomorrow
 ‘Luca believed that Roberta would graduate yesterday/today/tomorrow.’

As made evident by the temporal references, however, the morphological tense inflection of the subjunctive “does not instantiate a relational tense, i.e., a temporal relation between two temporal events” (Giorgi 2009: 1842), contrarily to the indicative one. More specifically, subjunctive morphology holds an agreement with the verb of the superordinate tense: this phenomenon is assimilable to the Latin *consecutio temporum et modorum* (sequence of tense and mood).

Therefore, there appears to be a connection between DAR and the complementizer, so much so that in the indicative contexts, where DAR is obligatory, the complementizer cannot be deleted, as the coordinates of the utterer that are encoded in it are needed for the double temporal interpretation, whereas in subjunctive contexts, where DAR does not come into play, CD is allowed.

Moreover, Giorgi and Pianesi (1997) propose that Italian subjunctive and indicative do not share the same complementizer, despite what may appear. In fact, by looking at (7a-b) above one may conclude that both sentences contain the complementizer *che* (that), which is considered to be a “high complementizer” in Rizzi’s (1997) terms, given its being it the lexical realization of Force. However, to a closer inspection, the characteristics of the complementizer in the two cases do not overlap. Giorgi and Pianesi (1997, 2004) and Giorgi (2009) carry out a thorough analysis of the phenomenon, and conclude that subjunctive *che* is part of its verbal morphology: “the Italian subjunctive exhibits a sort of *discontinuous morphology*, including both the verbal ending and the complementizer. The two can either be realized together [...]

⁵ It is to be noted that there exists a way to indicate events where the temporal interpretation of the time of the utterance and the time of the communicative event do not coincide: in Italian, for instance, an event collocated *between* the time of the speaking and that of the utterance can be expressed through a past conditional, as in (1):

(1) Luca ha detto che Roberta si sarebbe laureata il giorno seguente.
 Luca AUX;IND;3SG say:PTCP that Roberta REFL AUX;COND;3SG graduate:PTCP the day following
 ‘Luca said that Roberta would graduate the following day’.

⁶ The impossibility of a temporal reference to the past is due to the time of the main event. In fact, as noted in Giorgi (2009:1842) “[a]nteriority can be expressed by means of the periphrastic perfective form”, entailing that it “is therefore derivative on aspectual properties (perfectivity), and not directly obtained by means of a temporal morpheme.”. (1) exemplifies the property:

(1) Luca crede che Roberta si sia laureata ieri.
 Luca believe:IND.PRS.3SG that Roberta REFL AUX;SUBJ;PRES;3SG graduate:PTCP yesterday
 ‘Luca believes that Roberta graduated yesterday’

As visible from the gloss, the present tense morphology is indicated on the auxiliary, and it follows the above-mentioned sequence of tense and mood.

or *scattered*.” (Giorgi 2009: 1847). In the latter case, the complementizer case would be a lexicalization of mood features, while tense would be expressed via verbal suffixation, resulting in a structure as (9):

- (9) a. Mario crede-va che tu fossi partito.
 Mario believe-IMPF.3SG that you AUX;SBJV;PST;2SG leave:PTCP
 ‘Mario believed that you had left.’
 b. [... [_V crede-va [_{MOOD} che [_{Agr} fossi...]]]]
 [... [_V believe-IMPF.3SG [_{MOOD} that [_{Agr} AUX;SBJV;PST;2SG ...]]]]]

Contrarily, the former case would see both mood and tense syncretically realized via verbal suffixation (as is normally considered to be the case for fusional languages as Italian):

- (10) a. Mario crede-va tu fossi partito.
 Mario believe-IMPF.3SG you AUX;SBJV.PST.2SG leave:PTCP
 ‘Mario believed you had left.’
 b. [... [_V crede-va [_{MOOD/Agr} fossi...]]]
 [... [_V believe-IMPF.3SG [_{MOOD/Agr} AUX;SBJV.PST.2SG ...]]]]]

On the other hand, the indicative complementizer has a completely different function, which does not concern morphology but rather interpretation and time anchoring. Therefore, there is no syncretic v. *scattered* realization, as the information that the indicative *che* encodes is not mood but the spatio-temporal coordinates of the speaker. This explanation goes beyond the mere “necessity of the complementizer”, but rather offers a syntactic formal rationale for the different behaviors of the complementizer *che* in indicative and subjunctive contexts.

2. Data and methodology

Building on the theoretical premises outlined above, the present study explores the acceptability of embedded stripping in Italian, with a specific focus on the presence or absence of the complementizer *che*. In particular, the investigation addresses whether the complementizer impacts the licensing of ellipsis in embedded clauses, and whether mood (indicative vs. subjunctive) interacts with this effect.

To empirically test these questions, an experiment was designed involving a set of 40 Italian sentences, including 20 test items and 20 control items. The test items were constructed to systematically vary along two dimensions: verbal mood (indicative vs. subjunctive) and complementizer realization (presence vs. absence of *che*). All items were constructed following the canonical structure of embedded stripping: a matrix clause containing a verb selecting an embedded complement, followed by an elliptical clause where only a single argument – the remnant – is overt, typically accompanied by the focus-sensitive particle *anche* (‘too’). The presence of this particle is crucial for licensing the ellipsis and maintaining comparability with previous literature (cf. Wurmbrand 2017).

To minimize confounds, all test and control items featured either the coordinating conjunction *e* (‘and’) or the adversative conjunction *ma* (‘but’) to introduce the elliptical clause. The lexical items were selected to be familiar and neutral in register, and care was taken to balance the number of indicative and subjunctive matrix predicates across the dataset⁷.

⁷ Following the kind suggestion of a reviewer, a second survey has been submitted to an additional pool of 17 subjects. This survey was conceived to support the claims of the author regarding the expected mood in the elided

The survey was administered on paper to 58 students (both undergraduate and graduate) enrolled at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Participation was voluntary. Before completing the survey, participants were asked to confirm Italian as their native language and to indicate whether they spoke any dialectal variety. This information was collected to control for potential dialectal influence on grammaticality judgments. Of the participants, 36 reported speaking a dialect from the Veneto area, 17 reported no dialectal competence, and 4 spoke other dialects.

Participants were instructed to evaluate the naturalness of each sentence using a 6-point Likert scale (Likert 1932), where 0 indicated complete unacceptability and 5 indicated full acceptability. No time limit was imposed, and participants were encouraged to rely on their intuitive judgments as native speakers.

As shown in Table 1 below, for each item, a weighted average (WA) of the scores was calculated. Based on these scores, the test items were grouped into three acceptability ranges for initial analysis:

- Group A: low acceptability ($WA \leq 2$),
- Group B: medium acceptability ($2.1 \leq WA \leq 2.9$),
- Group C: high acceptability ($WA \geq 3$).

Sentence	Weighted Average (WA)
2	1.3
4	2.9
8	2.7
9	1.4
10	1.4
12	1
15	2.4
17	2

secondary clauses, which had originally only been inferred based on the bridge verbs, without any empirical data to support such inferences. In this computer-based survey, the subjects were provided with the first conjunct and were asked to choose between four options regarding the second conjunct: one which contained the embedded indicative, one that contained the embedded subjunctive, the option “both the above options are correct”, and the option “neither of the above options are correct”. The data drawn from the secondary survey appear to confirm to a large extent the original predictions: in fact, only four cases diverge from the expected mood: sentences 4, 10, 22 and 29. In the first sentence, the expected mood would be indicative, given the bridge verb is a verb of saying (*dire*); however, the subjects have expressed inhomogeneous preference, with 7 subjects preferring the indicative, 6 the subjunctive mood, and 4 people indicating both moods as a viable option. Sentence 10 contains again a verb of saying (*dire*) introducing the secondary clause. However, 10 out of 17 subjects have indicated the subjunctive as the preferred option. As regards sentence 22, 7 out of 17 subjects have indicated that neither the subjunctive nor the indicative mood are a viable option. It is to be noted that the indicative mood presented in the survey was the present indicative (*regalano*): it is highly possible that this result is due to the fact that the verb in the main clause is in the future indicative (*regaleranno*), with the same tense and mood being required in the secondary clause as well. Lastly, the data have shown a strong preference for the subjunctive in sentence 29, albeit its secondary clause being introduced by a verb of saying (*affermare*, claim). This could be accounted for semantically, given that the saying in the sentence expresses a rumor and does not report the saying of a specific person. In this sense, in fact, *si dice* corresponds to the impersonal “it is said that” or the raised construction “Diego is said to”, expressing evidentiality rather than reporting a fact.

18	1.5
20	2.1
22	2.4
23	3.1
25	1.5
26	0.7
29	4
32	3.2
34	1.3
36	2.1
38	3.5
39	2.1

Table 1. Results of the survey

Of the 20 tested sentences, only 4 appear to have received an unquestionably positive judgment (i.e., WA>3): this datum alone is therefore not sufficient to claim the pertinence of embedded stripping to the Italian language. However, as has already been mentioned, the opening towards an acceptance of this construction is quite novel, as the literature has restrained Bare Argument Ellipsis to main coordinate clauses up until the 2010s. This means that embedded stripping is a construction that is not widespread and that might be restricted to some specific contexts and subject to some rigid constraints. The present analysis therefore moves in the direction of finding these constraints.

3. Discussion

3.1. Is embedded stripping available in Italian?

A first step in that direction is acknowledging that all the sentences having been judged acceptable share some common features. The four items are reported below (11-14):

- (11) Si dice che Diego port-i sempre una bussola con sé, e alcuni
 IMPR say:PRS.3SG that Diego carry-SBJV.PRS.3SG always a compass with REFL and some
 afferma-no anche un orologio da taschino.
 claim-PRS.3PL also a pocket watch
 'It is said that Diego always carries a compass with himself, and some claim a pocket watch too.'
- (12) Tutte le persone qui in coda sono dirette al-lo stadio,
 all the people here in line be.IND.PRS.3PL directed to-the stadium
 e io penso anche quelle lag-giù in fondo.
 and I think also those there down in bottom
 'All the people here in line are headed to the stadium, and I think those over there too.'

- (13) Sotto Natale la gente compr-a soprattutto il panettone,
 under Christmas the people buy-IND.PRS.3SG mainly the panettone
 ma io cred-o anche il pandoro.
 but I believe-IND.PRS.1SG also the pandoro
 ‘Around Christmas people buys mainly panettone, but I believe pandoro too.’
- (14) Anna sosten-eva che Riccardo le avrebbe chiesto di uscire, ma non
 Anna claim.IMPF.3SG that Riccardo her.DAT AUX;COND ask:PTCP COMPLINF go_out:INF but not
 pens-ava anche Matteo.
 think-IMPF.3SG also Matteo.
 ‘Anna claimed that Riccardo would ask her out, but she didn’t think Matteo too.’

These first sentences are undoubtedly instances of embedded stripping: they consist of a first conjunct, a conjunction, be it coordinating (*e*) or adversative (*ma*), and then a main verb followed by an embedded sentence which has been elided except for one argument and what in the literature has been referred to as a focusing adverb, *anche* ‘too’.

Interestingly, despite both (13) and (14) having received an acceptability judgment above 3, the results show a slightly less neat distribution of frequency with respect to their level of acceptability. In fact, as opposed to (11) and (12), the number of subjects having assigned a 0 or 1 value is higher; additionally, both have received an overall judgment below 3.5. This datum elicits further questions that will be explored later on. Nonetheless, all sentences are undoubtedly instances of embedded stripping: what is peculiar is that they both share the adversative conjunction *ma* (but) instead of *e* (and). It is important to highlight that (11) is the Italian translation of one of the sentences contained in Wurmbrand (2017: 344), specifically example (5b):

- (5b) Abby claimed (that) Ben would ask her out, but she didn’t think Bill (too)⁸.

This sentence appears to respect Wurmbrand’s Embedded Stripping Generalization, which states that embedded stripping is possible only in the absence of the complementizer *that*, as (5b) and its Italian counterpart (14) show. At a closer look, this property can be extended to all the four sentences included in Group C, as they all lack the complementizer *che* (that). Another shared property appears to be the nature of the verbs of the main clause: the sentences display verbs that in Italian normally call for the subjunctive mood in their complement clauses: *credere* (believe) and *pensare* (think). The only exception is represented by the sentence ranking the higher in terms of acceptability: (11) in fact, contains the verb *affermare* (claim, state), which is generally considered to require the indicative (Serianni, 1989). However, the unelided counterpart of the sentence, reported in (15) below, appears to be grammatical with

⁸ It would appear that English and Italian differ with respect to the obligatoriness of *too* (*anche*). The difference would appear to lie in the position that these two adverbs assume in the construction: Hoeksema and Zwarts (1991) distinguish between phrasal and sentential adverbial scope. Italian *anche* appears to have phrasal scope, being its position within the sentence, whereas English *too* seems to be mainly used with a sentential scope in embedded stripping contexts, with a sentence-final position. According to the authors, only sentential adverbs allow a stressed intonation, whereas phrasal adverbs lack this quality, being the phrases they modify the ones to be pronounced with a stress. As the authors suggest, “[t]he possibility of bearing stress also makes it possible to use these adverbs as remnants of the gapping construction.” (Hoeksema and Zwarts 1991: 57). Thus, there would appear to be a connection between the possibility of bearing stress, the sentence-final position and the possibility of omission of sentential adverbs such as *too*. However, further research is necessary in order to formalize these assumptions.

the subjunctive, and this datum has been confirmed by the secondary survey on embedded mood, where 12 subjects out of 17 preferred the subjunctive in the non-elided counterpart:

- (15) Si dice che Diego porti sempre una bussola con sé, e alcuni
 IMPR say:PRS.3SG that Diego carry-SBJV.PRS.3SG always a compass with REFL and some
 afferma-no port-i sempre con sé anche un orologio da taschino.
 claim-IND.PRS.3PL carry-SBJV.PRS.3SG always with REFL also a pocket watch
 ‘It is said that Diego always carries a compass with himself, and some claim that he always carries a pocket watch too’.

The same sentence appears marginally grammatical once an embedded indicative is selected (13), and this is corroborated by only 3 people over 17 selecting the indicative as the preferred mood; finally, 2 subjects indicated that both moods were equally acceptable:

- (16) ?? Si dice che Diego porti sempre una bussola con sé, e alcuni
 IMPR say:PRS.3SG that Diego carry-SBJV.PRS.3SG always a compass with REFL and some
 afferma-no che port-a sempre con sé anche un orologio da taschino.
 claim.IND.PRS.3PL that carry-IND.PRS.3SG always with REFL also a pocket watch
 ‘It is said that Diego always carries a compass with himself, and some claim that he carries a pocket watch too.’

The issue of why a verb which would normally be classified as requiring indicative appears to be more grammatical with a subjunctive will be discussed later. For the time being, it is sufficient to observe that all four highly acceptable items do indeed share the same pattern, namely an embedded subjunctive with CD. Although consistent, four sentences are not enough to draw general conclusions on the matter; however, these data do corroborate the existence of embedded stripping in Italian. A quantitative analysis has been thus carried out in order to assess more rigorously the constraints to which Italian embedded stripping are subject to. In the following section, the results of this analysis will be presented.

3.2. Quantitative analysis

A first step in the quantitative analysis involved comparing the means (μ) of the four variables under scrutiny, as well as calculating the Standard Deviation (SD) for each condition. This initial comparison revealed significant differences in the acceptability ratings of sentences based on the presence or absence of the complementizer. Specifically, sentences where the complementizer was deleted were rated as significantly more acceptable than sentences where the complementizer was overtly realized. The mean acceptability rating for sentences without a complementizer was 2.89, while sentences with the overt complementizer had a much lower mean of 1.46. This stark contrast in ratings suggested that the deletion of the complementizer has a noticeable impact on sentence acceptability.

Similarly, the analysis examined the effect of verbal mood on acceptability ratings. Stimuli in the subjunctive mood received higher acceptability ratings ($\mu = 2.30$) compared to those in the indicative mood ($\mu = 1.80$). This difference indicated that, regardless of the presence of the complementizer, sentences where the elided verb was interpreted to be in the subjunctive mood were generally judged to be more acceptable than those in the indicative mood.

After this, the analysis turned to the interaction between the two variables: complementizer presence and verbal mood. This interaction was found to be quite revealing. In fact, when the complementizer was overtly realized, the acceptability ratings remained low across both

verbal moods. Specifically, sentences in the indicative mood received a mean rating of $\mu = 1.42$, whereas those in the subjunctive mood received a slightly higher mean of $\mu = 1.57$. This demonstrated that, in the presence of an overt complementizer, mood did not significantly influence acceptability ratings.

However, a striking difference emerged when the complementizer was deleted. In this case, there was a notable improvement in acceptability, with the indicative context showing a mean rating of $\mu = 2.60$, and the subjunctive context showing an even more favorable mean of $\mu = 3.17$, which was the highest mean across all conditions. This suggests that the deletion of the complementizer had a more pronounced positive effect in both moods, but the improvement was more substantial in the subjunctive mood.

These trends were further illustrated through graphical representations. The table below (Table 2) showcases a systematic advantage for complementizer deletion across both moods, and the interaction plot highlighted that the benefit of deletion was more pronounced in the subjunctive mood compared to the indicative mood.

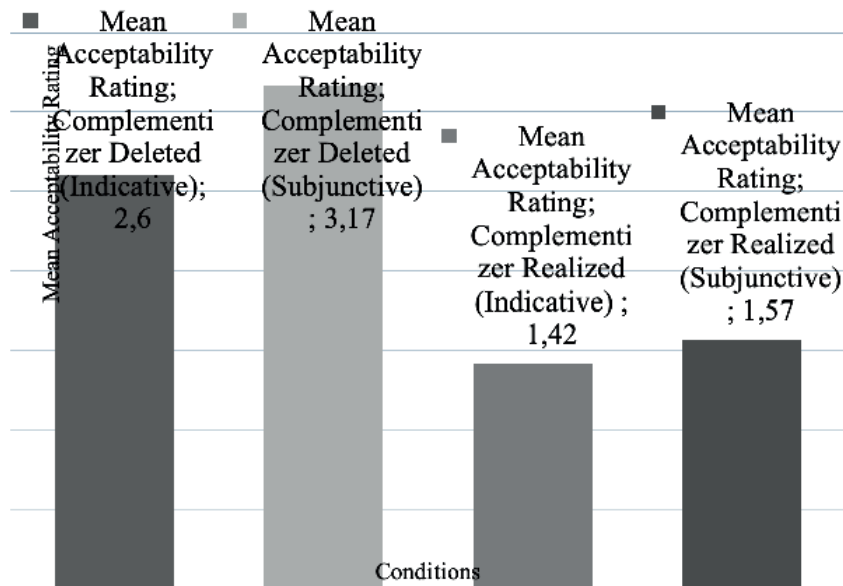


TABLE 2. Mean acceptability rating by condition and mood

3.3. Further remarks

In order to discuss the findings, one can organize the stimuli into four groups, resulting from a 2x2 matrix where the four variables interact, as shown in the table below, where the sentences have been grouped according to the variables under scrutiny.

	Indicative	Subjunctive

+ COMPL	2, 12, 17, 18, 34	9, 10, 20, 25, 26, 39
- COMPL	4, 22, 36	8, 15, 23, 29, 32, 38

Table 3. Sentences grouped according to the variables

As can be seen from Table 3 above, the test sentences which present both the indicative and an overt complementizer are number 2, 12, 17, 18, and 34, here reported:

2. Carlotta mangia sempre una caramella prima di andare a dormire,
 Carlotta eat-IND.PRS.3SG always one candy before COMPL.IND go:INF to sleep:INF
 e Laura dice
 and Laura say- IND.PRS.3SG
 che anche Sofia.
 that also Sofia.
 ‘Carlotta always eats a piece of candy before going to sleep, and Laura says that Sofia does, too.’
12. A Lucia piace studiare i minerali, e Giovanni dice che anche la geografia.
 to Lucia like-IND.PRS.3SG study:INF the minerals, and Giovanni say-IND.PRS.3SG that also the geography
 ‘Lucia likes studying minerals, and Giovanni says that geography too.’
17. Carlo Magno era altissimo, ma Luca ha letto che Napoleone no
 Charlemagne be.IMPF.3SG tall :SUP but Luca AUX;IND.3SG read.PTCP that Napoleon no
 ‘Charlemagne was very tall, but Luca has read that Napoleon wasn’t.’
18. La prof dice che solo io disturbo sempre,
 the prof. say- IND.PRS.3SG that only I disturb-IND.PRS.1SG always,
 ma io dico che anche gli altri
 but I say-IND.PRS.1SG that also the others
 ‘The teacher says that only I always disturb, but I say the others do too.’
34. L’avvocato ha convinto la giuria che l’ imputato è innocente,
 the lawyer AUX;IND.3SG convince.PTCP the jury that the defendant be-IND.PRS.3SG innocent,
 e ha dimostrato che anche il suo complice.
 and AUX;IND.3SG prove.PTCP that also the his accomplice
 ‘The lawyer has convinced the jury that the defendant is innocent, and she has proven that his accomplice is too.’

All these sentences have been judged only slightly acceptable, with the lowest score being assigned to sentence 12 (with the average of the judgments amounting to 1) and the highest to sentence 17 (WA: 2). The overall mean of the group is 1.42, the lowest among all four groups. The degraded acceptability of these items holds despite their being instances of Bare Argument Ellipsis and, more specifically of embedded stripping. In fact, all the sentences contain instances of elided second conjuncts, either introduced by *e* (and) or *ma* (but), followed by only one argument as remnant and a focusing particle *anche* (too); only sentence (14) displays a negative polar particle *no* in the rightmost position, thus being an example of what Depiante (2000) refers to as pseudostripping. Interestingly, this latter sentence is the one that has received the

highest score in acceptability, opening the matter of whether embedded pseudostripping is subject to the same constraints as embedded stripping. However interesting, this matter will not be addressed in the present work.

The sentences belonging to the second group, i.e., those showcasing an overt complementizer and an elided subjunctive mood, are sentences 9, 10, 20, 25, 26, and 39:

9. Tra tutti gli animali pericolos-i che ci sono in Africa,
among all the animals dangerous-PL that there be-IND.PRS.3PL in Africa,
non mi aspettavo che anche l'elefante.
not REFL.1SG expect- IPFV.1SG that also the elephant
'Among all the dangerous animals that there are in Africa, I didn't expect the elephant too.'
10. Eleonora immaginava che ballare danza classica fosse difficile,
Eleonora imagine-IPFV.3SG that dance:INF dance classical be.SUBJ.PAST.3SG difficult,
ma non le avevano detto che anche la danza moderna.
but not DAT.3SG.F AUX.IPFV.3PL tell.PTCP. that also the dance modern
'Eleonora imagined that dancing ballet was difficult, but she didn't imagine that modern dance was too'.
20. Ginevra vinc-e tutte le gare di corsa campestre,
Ginevra win-IND.PRS.3SG all the races of run cross-country
e io pens-o anche le gare di salto in lungo
and I think-IND.PRS.1SG also the competitions of jump in long
'Ginevra wins all the cross-country races, and I think the long jump competitions too.'
25. Elena scriv-e sempre il suo diario prima di andare a dormire,
Elena write-IND.PRS.3SG always the her diary before COMPL.IND go:INF to sleep.INF
ma sua mamma non immagin-ava che anche una poesia.
but her mom not imagine-IMPF.3SG that also a poem
'Elena always writes in her diary before going to sleep, but her mom didn't imagine that a poem too'.
39. Giulio Cesare sapeva che molti senatori erano coinvolti nel-la sua congiura,
Julius Caesar know-IPFV.3SG that many senators be-IPFV.3PL involve-PTCP in-the his conspiracy,
ma non immaginava che anche Bruto.
but not imagine-IPFV.3SG that also Brutus
'Julius Caesar knew many senators were involved in the conspiracy against him, but he didn't imagine that Brutus, too'.

This group has received overall a slightly better score than the previous one, although the mean of its acceptability scores remains low ($\mu = 1.57$).

- (17) a. Ginevra vince tutte le gare di corsa campestre, e io penso che anche
Ginevra win:IND.PRS.3SG all the races of run cross-country and I think:IND.PRS.1SG that also
le gare di salto in lungo.
the competitions of jump in long.
'Ginevra wins all the cross-country races, and I think the long jump competitions.'
- b. Ginevra vince tutte le gare di corsa campestre, e io penso che
Ginevra win:IND.PRS.3SG all the races of run cross-country and I think:IND.PRS.1SG that
[Ginevra vinca] anche le gare di salto in lungo.
Ginevra win:SBJV.PRS.3SG also the competitions of jump in long
- c. ...*e io penso che [Ginevra vince] anche le gare di salto in lungo.
and I think:IND.PRS.1SG that Ginevra win:IND.PRS.3SG also the competitions of jump in long

- (18) a. Elena scrive sempre il suo diario prima di andare a dormire, ma sua mamma
 Elena write:IND.PRS.3SG always the her diary before COMPL;INF go:INF to sleep:INF; but her mom
 non immaginava che anche una poesia.
 not imagine:IMPF.3SG that also a poem
 ‘Elena always writes in her diary before going to sleep, ut her mom didn’t imagine a poem too.’
 b. Elena scrive sempre il suo diario prima di andare a dormire, ma sua mamma
 Elena write:IND.PRS.3SG always the her diary before COMPL;INF go:INF to sleep:INF; but her mom
 non immaginava che [Elena scrivesse] anche una poesia.
 not imagine:IMPF.3SG that Elena write:SBJV.PST.3SG also a poem
 c. ...*ma sua mamma non immaginava che [Elena scrive] anche una poesia.
 But her mom not imagine:IMPF.3SG that Elena write:IND.PRS.3SG also a poem

If one considers Giorgi and Pianesi’s position on the nature of the complementizer *che* in the subjunctive mood, a possible explanation for the degraded acceptability of this group could be the fact that during predicate elision the whole predicate must be elided: given that the complementizer *che* would be the marker for subjunctive mood in the scattered realization, its non-elision could be problematic, as it would result in a partial elision of the verb. Moreover, one should not ignore the issue of *identity conditions in ellipsis*, whereby “elided material (call it XP_E) must be identical or resolvable by some antecedent phrase (YP_A), where the identity (or parallelism, or resolution) may be semantic or syntactic, or some mix of the two” (Merchant 2018: 21). By looking at examples (17a-c) and (18a-c) above, it is clear that there is a mood mismatch between the antecedents in the first conjuncts and the elided material in the subordinate clauses. It is not in the scope of the present paper to assess the nature of this identity; however, it is necessary to point out that Bare Argument Ellipsis is subject to this constraint. The fact that this rule seems to hold in embedded contexts, and cross-linguistically so, corroborates the existence of embedded stripping.

Let us now move to the groups where the complementizer is not overtly realized. Group 3 contains the sentences without a complementizer that are introduced by a bridge verb requiring the indicative, namely sentences 4, 22, and 36.

4. Giorgia ha prepar-ato un pranzo buonissimo, e mi hanno detto
 Giorgia AUX;IND.3SG prepare-PTCP a lunch great and me.DAT AUX;IND.3PL say.PTCP
 anche un’ottima cena
 also a great dinner
 ‘Giorgia has prepared a great lunch, and they have told me a very tasty dinner too.’
 22. I miei genitori dic-ono che mi regaleranno solo un gatto, ma io dic-o
 the my parents say-IND.PRS.3PL that me.DAT gift.IND.FUT.3PL only a cat but I say-IND.PRS.1SG
 anche un cane.
 also a dog
 ‘My parents say that they will only gift me a cat, but I say a dog too.’
 36. Sandro dorm-e sempre senza il cuscino, e Roberto dic-e anche Clara.
 Sandro sleep-IND.PRS.3SG always without the pillow, and Roberto say-IND.PRS.3SG also Clara
 ‘Sandro always sleeps without any pillows, and Roberto says Clara too.’

This group has received an overall score of 2.6: the speakers do not deem the items completely acceptable, but it would seem that they judge an elided indicative with absence of the

complementizer more acceptable than an elided indicative with overt complementizer realization. However, as has been largely discussed so far, Italian bridge verbs requiring an indicative do not allow CD. One should then address the issue of how it is possible that these items have received a positive judgment given the apparent discrepancy with the theoretical assumptions on indicative, DAR, and complementizer deletion. This inconsistency inevitably leads towards a questioning of the nature of this complementizer deletion.

- (19) *... ma io dico — i miei genitori mi regaleranno anche un cane.
 But I say-IND.PRS.1SG the my parents me:DAT gift-IND.FUT.3PL also a dog
- (20) *... e mi hanno detto — Giorgia ha preparato anche un'ottima cena.
 And me:DAT AUX;IND.3PL say:PRTC Giorgia AUX;IND.3SG prepare-PRTC also a great dinner

Given the ungrammaticality of (19) and (20) above, one must assume that in the derivation of the elided sentences the complementizer is at some point present. It would be therefore inaccurate to talk about complementizer *deletion*, as one should rather talk about complementizer *elision*. This means that the complementizer is indeed present in the derivation, but it is elided together with the TP, thus resulting in the whole CP being deleted. This must not be confused with complementizer deletion: CD in fact, as has been discussed above, gives rise to CP-less clauses; on the contrary, in this case the clause would have a C-layer in its derivation, which subsequently undergoes elision resulting in the elliptical constructions above. What remains open is why embedded stripping with indicative-bound verbs seems to be preferred when the complementizer is elided together with TP. One assumption could be that, as the complementizer in embedded DAR contexts is needed for the temporal interpretation of the embedded verb, when the embedded verb is missing there is no need for the temporal anchoring, as the elided part of the sentence can be temporally interpreted via principle of identity with the first conjunct. Thus, in a sentence such as 4 above, the tense features on the embedded verb in the second conjunct are retrieved from the tense features of the verb in the first conjunct, which is taken to be identical to the elided segment.

Lastly, let us move to the group presenting those sentences that are considered to abide to both the ECD and Italian complementizer deletion rule, i.e., sentences 8, 15, 23, 29, 32, and 38.

8. A Chiara avevano detto che ci sarebbero stati i suoi amici al-la festa,
 To Chiara AUX;IMPF.3PL say:PRTC that there be:COND.PST.3PL the her friends at-the party,
 but think-IMPF.3SG also the her relatives
 ma crede-va anche i suoi parenti.
 ‘Chiara had been told her friends would be at the party, but she believed her relatives too.’
15. Ad Andrea avevano detto che cucinare la cassata era complicato, ma non
 To Andrea AUX;IMPF.3PL say:PTCP that cook:INF the cassata be:IMPF.3SG complicated but not
 immagin-ava anche la crostata.
 imagine-IMPF.3SG also the pie
 ‘Andrea had been told that cooking the cassata was complicated, but he didn’t imagine the crostata too.’
23. Si dice che Diego port-i sempre una bussola con sé, e alcuni
 IMPR say:PRS.3SG that Diego carry-SBJV.PRS.3SG always a compass with REFL and some
 afferma-no anche un orologio da taschino.
 Claim-PRS.3PL also a pocket watch
 ‘It is said that Diego always carries a compass with himself, and some claim a pocket watch too.’

29. Anna sosten-eva che Riccardo le avrebbe chiesto di uscire,
 Anna claim.IMPF.3SG that Riccardo her.DAT AUX;COND ask:PTCP COMPL.INF go_out:INF
 ma non pens-ava anche Matteo.
 but not think-IMPF.3SG also Matteo
 'Anna claimed that Riccardo would ask her out, but she didn't think Matteo too.'
32. Sotto Natale la gente compr-a soprattutto il panettone, ma io cred-o
 Under Christmas the people buy-IND.PRS.3SG mainly the panettone, but I believe-IND.PRS.1SG
 anche il pandoro.
 Also the pandoro
 'Around Christmas people buys mainly panettone, but I believe pandoro too.'
38. Tutte le persone qui in coda sono dirette al-lo stadio, e io penso anche quelle
 all the people here in line be.IND.PRS.3PL directed to-the stadium, and I think also those
 laggiù in fondo.
 down there.
 'All the people here in line are headed to the stadium, and I think those over there too.'

This group of sentences has received the highest score in the study, with a mean of 3.17. Thus, the absence of a complementizer and elision of a subjunctive verb appears to significantly improve the acceptability of embedded Bare Argument Ellipsis, positioning the Italian language with English and German with respect to Wurmbrand's bipartition. However, it is worth discussing that some of the items belonging to this group have individually received an acceptability score below 3, meaning that their acceptability is medium. These sentences are reported here for clarity:

- (21) A Chiara avevano detto che ci sarebbero stati i suoi amici al-la festa,
 To Chiara AUX;IMPF.3PL say:PTC that there be:COND.PST.3PL the her friends at-the party,
 but think-IMPF.3SG also the her relatives
 ma crede-va anche i suoi parenti.
 'Chiara had been told her friends would be at the party, but she believed her relatives too.'
- (22) Ad Andrea avevano detto che cucinare la cassata era complicato, ma non
 To Andrea AUX;IMPF.3PL say:PTCP that cook:INF the cassata be:IMPF.3SG complicated, but not
 immagin-ava anche la crostata.
 imagine-IMPF.3SG also the pie.
 'Andrea had been told that cooking the cassata was complicated, but he didn't imagine the crostata too.'

Could these data disprove what has been discussed until now? One could explain the slightly degraded acceptability of the pair above by considering the adversative conjunction *ma* (but), which has previously been acknowledged to hinder the full acceptability of an item. However, as has been seen above, there are sentences that have received a high acceptability rate despite displaying an adversative conjunction, namely sentences 29 and 32 above.

An alternative explanation could be the mood mismatch between the embedded verb and the verb in the first conjunct, which would result in a non-observance of the identity constraint, generating a situation akin to the one discussed in (17) and (18). However, such an analysis seems unsupported by the data: if on the one hand it is true that (21) does display a mismatch between the verb in the elided string and the non-elided counterpart in the first conjunct, the same can be said for sentences 38 and 32 as well, which are reported in 23 and 24.

- (23) Tutte le persone qui in coda sono dirette al-lo stadio, e io penso anche quelle
 All the people here in line be.IND.PRS.3PL directed to-the stadium, and I think also those
 laggiù in fondo.
 down there
 ‘All the people here in line are headed to the stadium, and I think those over there too.’
- (24) Sotto Natale la gente compr-a soprattutto il panettone, ma io cred-o
 Under Christmas the people buy-IND.PRS.3SG mainly the panettone, but I believe-IND.PRS.1SG
 anche il pandoro.
 also the pandoro.
 ‘Around Christmas people buys mainly panettone, but I believe pandoro too.’

The two sentences above have been judged unquestionably acceptable by the speakers, thus apparently undermining what has been discussed so far. Interestingly, however, both sentences display the 1st singular person of the verbs *credere* (believe) and *pensare* (think) as the main verbs of the second conjunct. In some recent work on these verbal forms (Giorgi 2010), *credo* has been analyzed as an epistemic head. In fact, it appears to be used more as an adverb expressing the grade of certainty that the utterer attributes to the asserted embedded proposition. With the form *credo* (I believe), the utterer qualifies the embedded assertion as “something less than a certainty” (Giorgi 2010: 69). Thus, the epistemic head selects a subjunctive as its embedded verb but, as stated by Giorgi (2010: 69): “the embedded clause is in fact more similar to a main one, in spite of the fact that it appears with the subjunctive mood.” This property could be extended to the 1st singular person of the verb *pensare* (think) as well. In this way, the alleged inobservance of the identity constraint in sentences 28 and 29 can actually be accounted for.

Finally, the inhomogeneity of the individual scores in this latter group appears to be in contrast with a relative congruity of the items belonging to the first group, namely the one containing the complementizer and an elided indicative. Crucially, this datum would appear to indicate that speakers agree more on the conditions that make embedded stripping unacceptable than on the conditions that favor acceptability of this construction in Italian. In other words, the characteristics that have been argued to disfavor embedded stripping, namely a subordinate indicative with overt complementizer realization, do not seem to generate disagreement among speakers.

4. Conclusions

The present experimental study takes its moves from Wurmband (2017), where English embedded stripping is acknowledged and characterized. According to the article, English embedded stripping can occur only in absence of the complementizer, as the Embedded Stripping Generalization states. Such a restriction seems to be due to the fact that only Spell-Out Domains can be elided, ellipsis being an instance of Zero Spell-Out. The presence of the complementizer would prevent the stripped TP from being a Spell-Out Domain, thus hindering its elision. Wurmband notes that these considerations hold for a group of languages (English, German), while they are irrelevant in other languages such as Spanish, Hungarian and Russian, among others, where embedded stripping is allowed with an overt complementizer realization, and obligatorily so. The present paper has sought to assess a. whether embedded stripping exists in Italian; b. to what category Italian language belongs with respect to complementizer behavior; c. what characteristics Italian embedded stripping presents, in case it is an available construction.

According to the results of the survey, which was presented to a pool of 58 subjects, embedded stripping appears to be a viable construction in the Italian language, and seems to be subject to the same restriction to which non-embedded stripping must abide, i.e., identity constraint, whereby the elided segment must be identical with respect to a previously uttered linguistic segment in the first conjunct. Moreover, given the peculiarity of Italian with respect to the selection of mood in embedded contexts and Complementizer Deletion, a further analysis of its behavior with respect to this feature has been carried out. More specifically, Italian seems to have two different *che* (that), one for indicative embedded verbs and one for subjunctive embedded verbs. While in the former case it is a non-elidable complementizer needed for the temporal anchoring of the embedded verb, in the latter case it is a part of the subjunctive verbal morphology that is an overt realization of the feature MOOD that can be realized both syncretically on the verb via inflexion or separately via *che*_{MOOD}.

The analysis of the data shows that Italian embedded stripping does parallel with English embedded stripping, as it strongly favors the absence of the complementizer, even with indicative embedded verbs. This apparently contrasts with the patterns of Italian complementizer deletion, as this latter phenomenon is not allowed with verbs in the indicative mood. However, the phenomenon should be analyzed from a different perspective, i.e., the two apparent complementizer deletions must be read as instances of two different elliptical processes. On the one hand, in fact, embedded stripping with subjunctive verbs would prefer the absence of the complementizer due to morphological reasons: once it has been established that the subjunctive *che* is a lexicalized MOOD realization connected to the morphology of the verb, it is evident that there is no need to express a MOOD feature once the subjunctive verb has been elided in stripping. On the other hand, it has been discussed how indicative complementizer deletion in embedded stripping should rather be referred to as complementizer elision, as the complementizer is at some point present in the derivation, and is later elided together with the TP: this has been theorized to happen because the Italian indicative complementizer is the locus of the spatio-temporal coordinates of the utterer, which are needed to anchor the embedded event to the time of the utterance. However, in a stripping environment, due to the identity constraints to which such construction is subject, the elided segment is identical to its antecedent in the first conjunct. Thus, the temporal anchoring of the stripped embedded verb can be achieved through identity with the verb in the first conjunct, rendering the complementizer functionless and therefore elidable.

These findings suggest that complementizer deletion functions as a necessary, though not always sufficient, licensing condition for subordinate stripping in Italian, aligning with Wurmbrand's (2017) observations. Moreover, the results indicate that subjunctive clauses are more amenable to ellipsis phenomena than indicative clauses, potentially reflecting deeper syntactic properties related to the structure of embedded clauses and the licensing of empty categories.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that even in the most favorable condition (subjunctive mood with complementizer deletion), mean ratings did not approach the ceiling of the scale (maximum 5), but stabilized around 3.17. This suggests that while some subordinate stripping constructions are perceived as relatively acceptable, they remain somewhat marked and possibly restricted in natural Italian usage. The moderate standard deviations across conditions (ranging from 0.33 to 0.98) further point to inter-speaker variability, indicating that subordinate stripping may not be equally grammatical for all speakers.

Moreover, it would appear that in most cases the adversative coordinator *ma* (but) gives rise to a lower acceptability rate than the conjunctive coordinator *e* (and). Further studies on the impact of adversatives vs. conjunctives in embedded stripping might be insightful and deepen the understanding of such construction. A preliminary consideration which might be worth

exploring is the fact that, due to the inherently counter-expectational nature of stripping, the insertion of an adversative conjunction might be considered redundant.

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